

MINDS IN MOTION

Creating a Community of Collaborative Learners

Professional Learning Resource Guide

Rochester City School District
Office of Professional Learning

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Professional Learning Resource Guide

Minds in Motion: Creating a Community of Collaborative Learners

is the result of a series of focus groups within Rochester City School District hosted by the Office of Professional Learning and a collaboration between RCSD and Learning Forward.



Every child is a work of art.
Create a masterpiece.

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MODULE 1

What is collaborative professional learning?

Collaborative professional learning that improves student learning

Tool 1.1: Standards for Professional Learning Quick Reference Guide

A rationale for collaborative professional learning

An essential component: Collaboration

Tool 1.2: Learning Forward's definition and key points of professional development

Tool 1.3: Team learning scenario task

Tool 1.4: Will collaboration work?

Tool 1.5: Video resources for collaborative professional learning

Schoolwide or team-based collaborative learning

Tool 1.6: Assessment of current reality of professional development

Tool 1.7: The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop

When do we use schoolwide or team-based collaborative learning

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

1. Professional development helps teachers deepen their understanding of the content they teach.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. One strategy we use to improve our teaching is peer observation of each other's classroom instruction.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. Teachers analyze student work collaboratively with each other.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. We receive support to implement new classroom practices until they become a natural part of instruction.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. We have created a regularly scheduled time for teachers to work together to enhance student learning.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

In 1994, the National Staff Development Council (now Learning Forward), in cooperation with other national education organizations and associations, developed standards that define high-quality professional development that improves student achievement. Three sets of standards, one each for elementary, middle, and high school, were published between 1994 and 1995. Representatives from education associations and organizations convened again in 2001 and revised the standards. The standards were collapsed into a single set of 12 standards. In 2011, representatives from 40 education organizations and associations contributed to the revision of the standards so that they reflected current research.

Tool 1.1 is the Standards for Professional Learning Quick Reference Guide. The newly revised standards describe the essential attributes of effective professional learning. The seven standards are research-based and reflect what all professional learning needs to produce results for both educators and students. The standards are not, however, a solution to all the ills of education. Rather, they recognize that any improvements in education are dependent

on the capacity of educators. Continuous, career-long professional learning contributes to educators' ongoing development so that they can meet new challenges in education and implement new initiatives. The standards describe what professional learning for educators must include if it hopes to yield continuous development in professional practice and increases in student learning.

Each standard begins with a common stem: *Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students . . .* The words in this stem are purposeful. **Educator** refers to all members of the education workforce who have a direct or indirect connection to student learning. **Effectiveness** refers to educators' capacity to meet all performance expectations for their specific roles. **Results** refer to various indicators of student success including academic, social, and behavioral. **All students** stresses equity in the educational system for every student.

The standards address the context, process, and content of professional learning. **Table 1.1** on the following page depicts this organization.

The standards make it clear from the beginning that collaboration among educators is essential

TABLE 1.1: 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.

to their professional learning, especially if it is to produce long-term changes in educator practice and student learning. The standards also stress that every educator has a role in planning, implementing, and evaluating effective professional learning. School and school system leaders are responsible for providing the resources needed to support effective professional learning. Effective professional learning focuses on student content standards and educator performance standards, uses data, integrates multiple designs for educator learning, and provides sustained support for long-term change.

A RATIONALE FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

“Teachers do not learn best from outside experts or by attending conferences or implementing ‘programs’ installed by outsiders. Teachers learn best from other teachers in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching. For this to happen, collaboration had to occur in radically different ways. Productive collaboration could not be casual or general; it was instead characterized by frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice . . . adequate to the complexities of teaching and capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtue from another.”

— *Judith Warren Little, in DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005*

The purpose of professional learning is to support and continuously develop teachers’ skills and competencies in order to improve the learning of all students. Most educational improvement work rec-

ognizes that a skillful and competent teacher has one of the most powerful influences on student learning (Marzano, 2003). Yet a recent study found that although a large percentage of teachers reported that they participate in professional development, they did not feel that the professional development was either connected to their content or useful to their work in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). An honest assessment of professional development over the past few decades reveals meager long-term impacts on instruction or student learning (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

Investments in teacher knowledge and skills net greater increases in student achievement than other uses of educational funding, according to research by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996). Of particular importance is the development of teachers’ conceptual understanding of content, content-specific instructional strategies, and deeper understanding of how students learn. When teachers implement this new knowledge in the classroom, student achievement increases (Yoon et al., 2007).

AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: COLLABORATION

Practitioners and researchers recently have begun to examine professional learning practices to identify the features that result in long-lasting changes to teacher practices and improved student learning. An emerging consensus suggests that the most effective professional development focuses directly on teachers’ instructional content and materials, takes place in their own schools and classrooms, includes coaching

and ongoing feedback, and seeks to involve all teachers so that learning is schoolwide rather than developing each individual's capacity independently (Miles, Odden, Fermanich, & Archibald, 2005, p. 9).

Judith Warren Little's research contributes some of the earliest and most definitive findings about the benefits of teachers learning together. She studied teachers as they worked together and found that regular, authentic, joint work focused on explicit goals for student learning “pays off richly in the form of higher-quality solutions to instructional problems, increased teacher confidence, and not surprisingly, remarkable gains in student achievement” (Schmoker, 2005, p. 178).

Collaboration among educators builds shared responsibility and improves student learning. Schools where teachers focus on examining and diagnosing student work, engage in collegial conversations about teaching, and continuously improve classroom instructional practices produce the best results for students (National Education Association Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 2000).

Hayes Mizell (2010) points out “that professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of educators' daily work” (p. 7), in part because it provides an opportunity for educators to immediately apply what they are learning in their classrooms. The most effective professional development is done in collaboration with colleagues rather than in isolation and follows a **cycle of continuous improvement** that involves:

- Analyzing student, teacher, and school data to identify educator learning needs;
- Identifying specific educator learning goals based on the analysis of data;

- Improving educator effectiveness by implementing sustained, evidence-based learning strategies;
- Transferring new instructional strategies into the classroom by engaging in job-embedded coaching and classroom assistance;
- Assessing professional learning continuously to determine the effectiveness of activities and strategies in achieving identified learning goals;
- Adjusting educator efforts and practices based on the continuous assessment of student and teacher learning; and
- Involving external assistance when appropriate to help educators accomplish their goals (Hirsh, 2009).

Tool 1.2 provides additional information about the cycle of continuous improvement.

Professional collaboration can take many forms. One of the first steps for schools and learning teams is to develop a common understanding to ensure that collaborative professional learning produces results for students. **Tool 1.3** is an inquiry-based activity that can help educators understand the attributes of collaborative professional learning. This tool provides four descriptions of collaborative learning in practice. **Tool 1.4** involves faculty members in thinking about how professional learning might work in their school and barriers that might need to be addressed. It will also engage faculty members in a discussion to identify factors they believe are important for making professional learning teams work in their school. **Tool 1.5** is a list of video resources that faculty members can use to view collaborative professional learning *in action*. These video clips also provide examples of a wide range of job-embedded strategies that schools or teams can use.

SCHOOLWIDE AND TEAM-BASED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Educational change research has found that the most effective school improvement and professional learning activities are centered at the school-level (Fullan, 2007; Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010; Marzano, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009). More and more schools around the country are transferring professional development responsibilities to school improvement teams and grade-level or content-area teams (Honig et al., 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009). School-based personnel therefore will need more information about how to design collaborative learning strategies that can be used effectively with their colleagues and result in improved educator and student learning.

Both schoolwide and team-based collaborative learning formats are crucial. A school functioning as a professional learning community builds the faculty's collective responsibility for student learning, shared values about the importance of effective instruction, and common goals related to achievement for *all* students. These shared beliefs compel school members to accomplish their collective vision for student success (Hord, 2004).

Team-based learning focuses directly on current student learning needs through the analysis of student data. This analysis can reveal different needs between grade levels or content areas. First-grade teachers may need to focus on mathematical concepts, whereas 6th-grade teachers may need to focus on writing persuasive arguments. The English

FIGURE 1.1: MACRO AND MICRO COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

<p>Macro: Attainment of knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Micro: Classroom application of new knowledge and skills supported by collaboration with other faculty members.</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book studies. • Working with external providers. • Online courses. • Training sessions. • Workshops. 	<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing problems of practice. • Reflecting on, reviewing, or adjusting classroom procedures and routines. • Determining student needs based on analysis of data. • Collaboratively planning interdisciplinary units and lessons. • Sharing instructional strategies. • Monitoring application of learning in the classroom.

Source: Curry & Killion, 2009.

department may need to work on writing, and the science department may need to focus on genetics. Team-based learning can focus specifically on the immediate needs of students and result in teachers feeling satisfied that their efforts are making a difference.

WHEN DO WE USE SCHOOLWIDE OR TEAM-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Meredith Curry and Joellen Killion (2009) explored and defined the differences between schoolwide (macro) and team-based (micro) professional learning. These distinctions can help each school-based leadership team decide whether collaborative learning should be conducted as a whole school or within teams. Curry and Killion define macro, or schoolwide, learning as broad in scope and performed primarily to “acquire knowledge and skills” (p. 58). All teachers may need to learn information about 21st-century skills and instruction. Teachers then can work together to ensure shared understanding of key terms, practices, and procedures. This knowledge serves as a foundational piece and is put into practice during the microlearning phase.

Micro, or team-based, learning provides educators with the time and opportunity to apply the new knowledge and skills they gained through macro learning (Curry & Killion, 2009, p. 59). Micro learning experiences occur during classroom instruction and include reflection on those experiences with colleagues or independently. This is the practical, concrete, and hands-on kind of work that makes a powerful impact on student learning. Research and practice would suggest that this micro-level work is best done with colleagues who have a shared under-

standing of students, curriculum, and context and can help to brainstorm possibilities or problem-solve barriers to implementation.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the differences between macro and micro collaborative learning strategies.

Tools 1.6 and **1.7** help faculty discuss their understanding of collaborative professional learning and provide a rationale for making the shift to school-based, collaborative professional learning.

MODULE TWO: HOW DO WE PLAN COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Regardless of whether collaborative professional learning is schoolwide or team-based, the process is the same. **Module 2** explains a seven-step planning process that is useful for either schoolwide or team-based collaborative professional learning.

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Reflections

1. How could our school and/or team benefit from collaborative professional learning?
2. What already exists in our school that supports collaborative professional learning?
3. After reading the collaborative learning scenarios (**Tool 1.3**), what components of collaborative learning matched our experience and what components were new or surprised us?
4. Consider the difference between schoolwide and team-based learning strategies. Do those definitions make sense to us? Why or why not? What strategies would our team add?
5. Using **Tool 1.2** as a reference, what are the greatest differences we expect in professional development that aligns with the definition from the professional development we currently experience?

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
1.1	Standards for Professional Learning Quick Reference Guide	Tool 1.1 is a brief overview of the Standards for Professional Learning.
1.2	Learning Forward's definition and key points of professional development	Tool 1.2 provides a definition to build a common understanding of effective professional development.
1.3	Team learning scenario task	Tool 1.3 recommends a learning activity to develop a common vision of what team learning looks like in practice.
1.4	Will collaboration work?	Tool 1.4 tool offers an activity to help staff members explore the benefits and barriers to collaborative professional learning in their school.
1.5	Video resources for collaborative professional learning	Tool 1.5 is a list of online resources, many freely available, to support the understanding and implementation of collaborative professional learning teams.
1.6	Assessment of current reality of professional development	Tool 1.6 is useful to facilitate an assessment of your school's current reality related to collaborative professional learning teams.
1.7	The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop	Tool 1.7 contains a brief article to provide background information about the value of collaborative professional learning teams.

MODULE 2

How do we plan for schoolwide and team-based collaborative learning?

The components of effective planning for collaborative professional learning

Analyze student learning needs

Tool 2.1: The numbers game

Identify characteristics of community, district, school, department, and staff

Develop improvement goals and specific student outcomes

Tool 2.2: Work smarter, not harder

Identify educator (teacher and administrator) learning needs

Tool 2.3: Extreme makeover: Needs assessment edition

Study the research for specific professional learning programs, strategies, or interventions

Tool 2.4: Professional development program review

Plan intervention, implementation, and evaluation

Implement, sustain, and evaluate the professional development intervention

Tool 2.5: Clarify your vision with an Innovation Configuration

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

1. Our school utilizes both team-based *and* schoolwide collaborative learning to improve our professional knowledge and skills.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. Teachers identify their professional development focus based on the needs of their students.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. Teachers learn within teams several times a week.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. One component of our professional learning plan includes team support for implementing new instructional strategies.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. One way we evaluate the results of our professional learning is by examining student work.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

Productive schoolwide and team-based collaborative learning is deliberately planned. It involves a deep analysis of student and educator learning needs, clear and specific learning goals, a variety of purposeful learning processes, supported implementation, and ongoing evaluation of impact. The Backmapping Model for Planning Results-Based Professional Learning, shown in Figure 2.1, describes a seven-step process for planning professional learning (Killion & Roy, 2009).

Many of the steps from this model are similar to those used in school improvement planning. In fact, school improvement and professional development should complement and align with each other. School improvement identifies student learning needs, while professional development identifies new knowledge and skills needed by educators to attain those student goals.

Each of the seven steps of the Backmapping Model will be defined, and key questions that need to be answered during each step will be provided. These steps are used by the school-based planning team and grade-level or content-area learning teams with appropriate student learning data.

Step 1: Analyze student learning needs.

Results-based professional learning assures an increase in student achievement through the enhancement of teachers’ skills and knowledge. For professional learning to accomplish those results, it must be directly tied to student learning needs.

Before selecting or designing professional development, a careful and thorough analysis of student achievement data needs to

occur. This analysis will help identify specific student achievement strengths and areas of need and will be used to make decisions about the design of professional development. This step correlates to the Rochester City School District’s first component of the cycle of continuous improvement: **Recognition**.

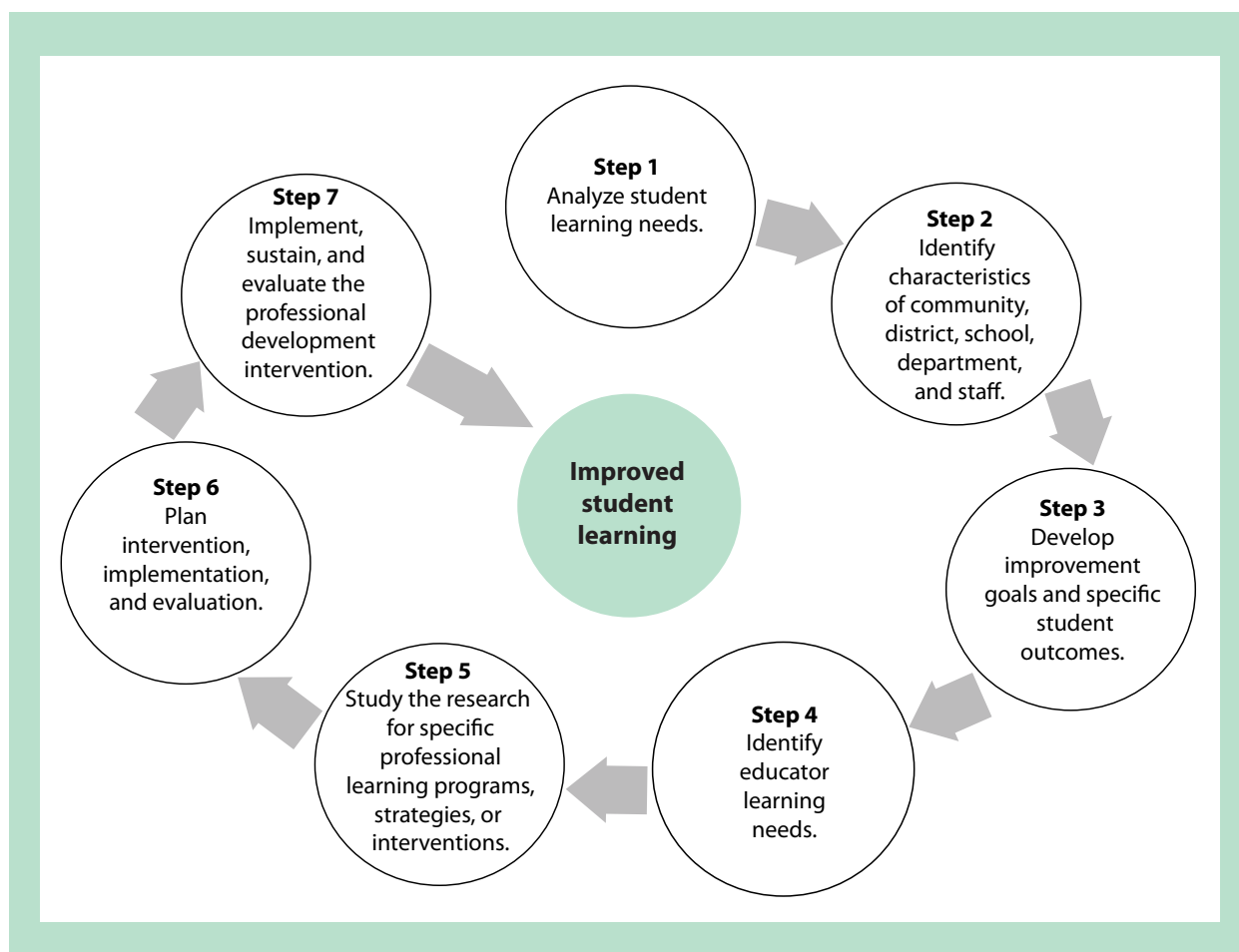
Key questions to answer during Step 1 include:

- What standardized, interim, and school-based

ROCHESTER’S CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- **Recognition**
- Intervention
- Adjustment

FIGURE 2.1: BACKMAPPING MODEL FOR PLANNING RESULTS-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



Source: Killion & Roy, 2009, p. 99.

- assessment data are available?
- What is being measured in each assessment?
 - What areas of student performance are meeting or exceeding expectations?
 - What areas of student performance are below expectations?
 - What patterns exist within the data? How are the data similar or different in various grade levels, content areas, and individual classes?
 - How did various subpopulations of student perform? (Consider gender, race, and socioeconomic status.)
 - What are other data telling us about student performance?
 - What surprises us?
 - What confirms what we already know?
- The data analysis process results in staff knowing or identifying:
1. Specific areas of student need;
 2. Specific knowledge and skills that students need

in order to improve achievement results; and

3. Specific students or groups of students for whom the need is most prevalent or pronounced.

Assume an elementary school's scores on a state assessment in mathematics are below the expected or desired level. Now assume that the faculty analyzes subtest and subpopulation scores and finds a particular group of students is performing poorly in the area of probability and statistics. They review the curriculum to determine which learning objectives are most closely tied to students' knowledge and skills required to master probability and statistics. The school planning team uses this information to establish schoolwide and/or grade-level improvement goals, identify specific actions necessary to achieve those goals, and guide the selection and/or design of a professional development intervention to address the need for improving student achievement in probability and statistics.

In the example above, simply identifying mathematics as a focus did not provide enough information to allow staff to design professional learning to address specific student learning problems. *Scores alone are insufficient to use for planning professional development interventions.* A detailed list of student skills and student groups provide the information that is specific enough for planners to identify what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to improve student performance in probability and statistics.

While state assessment data are important, school or team-based analysis should include other data as well. District or school interim assessments, grades, attendance, discipline issues, graduation rates, demographics, and other student data are analyzed.

The school planning team initially is responsible for analyzing schoolwide data. Then, team members involve the remaining faculty in a parallel analysis using appropriate grade-level or content-based data. Parallel analysis is conducted during faculty or learning team meetings and provides an opportunity for all teachers to develop the skills needed to accomplish the first step of backward planning — clearly identifying student learning needs.

School leadership team and staff will need strategies for analyzing student achievement data, identifying student learning needs, and translating student data into improvement goals. **Tool 2.1** describes skills and strategies useful for analyzing student learning data and identifying student learning goals.

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 1

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Analyzes a variety of student achievement data including state assessment results;
- Identifies specific knowledge and skills that students need in order to improve achievement results.
- Identifies specific students or groups of students for whom the need is most prevalent or pronounced.
- Engages teachers in data analysis to determine student learning needs.
- Analyzes student learning data several times throughout the school year to measure progress toward goals or to make adjustments to strategies.

Step 2: Identify characteristics of community, district, school, department, and staff.

Designing appropriate professional learning and follow-up support requires that faculty also be familiar with the characteristics of the school's adult learners. Professional learning for experienced teachers may be quite different than learning for novices. The level of experience and comfort with classroom coaching might differ between new teachers and veterans. The level of funding and amount of time available also influences the complexity of the professional learning design. Identifying the details about the context helps administrators and teachers make informed decisions about appropriate professional learning for the school.

Key questions to answer during Step 2 include:

- What are the characteristics of the students (i.e., ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, mobility, retention rates)?
- What are the characteristics of the staff (i.e., years of experience, years at grade level, years in the school, attitude toward collegiality, response to change)?
- What are some characteristics of formal and informal leadership for both teachers and administrators (i.e., leadership style, roles, level of participation, trust in leadership, support by leadership, communication styles)?
- What are some characteristics of the community (i.e., support for education and/or school, involvement in school activities, support for student learning)?
- What resources are available to support professional development (i.e., budget, time, special-

ists, incentives, school or district expertise)?

An intermediate school wanted to reduce the achievement gap between white and Hispanic students. Grade-level learning teams seemed an appropriate professional learning design until the leadership team noted that the experienced teaching staff from five different schools recently had been merged into a single faculty. Faculty members had five different ways of doing everything, and everyone still believed his or her way was the right way. The school improvement committee selected a more structured professional learning approach, the use of protocols, to help faculty develop collaborative skills before they worked more independently in small learning teams.

Once the analysis of context is complete, use this information to consider which interventions are most appropriate for schoolwide or team-based professional learning and follow-up support.

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 2

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Identifies which professional learning interventions/designs are most appropriate given the characteristics or demographics of the staff.
- Identifies any implications for professional learning that result from the characteristics of the community.
- Identifies resources that can be used to support professional learning in the school or team.

Step 3: Develop improvement goals and specific student outcomes.

Clear and specific statements describing the intended student and teacher learning outcomes drive results-based professional learning. The measure of effective professional learning is improved student learning that results from changes in teachers' practice. A professional learning goal might be: *Teachers consistently use 21st-century teaching skills, including critical thinking skills and problem solving in the classroom, which will result in a 10% improvement in students' inferential, synthesis, and analysis skills as measured by interim assessments.* Professional learning is a strategy to accomplish the outcome of improved student learning.

Key questions to answer during Step 3 include:

- What results do we desire for students? *What do we want them to know and be able to do?*
- What new or improved practices do we expect from staff? *What do educators need to know and be able to do to ensure student success?*
- What practices, procedures, and policies will help us achieve these goals? *What professional development will ensure educators acquire the necessary knowledge and skills* (Munger & von Frank, 2010, p. 39)?

Goals for professional learning specify what students will learn and will incorporate the components of a SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) goal format. Here are two examples of professional development goals written in a SMART goal format:

In three years, 90% of 3rd-grade students will read on grade level as a result of teachers learning and implementing new instructional strategies for word decoding.

Within three years, 5% of all 5th through 8th graders will improve their mathematical problem solving as measured on the state assessment test and on school-based performance tasks as teachers learn and use strategies for integrating word problems into instruction (Munger & von Frank, 2010, p. 40).

Tool 2.2 provides information about each component of a SMART goal and sample SMART goals for professional learning.

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 3

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Writes professional learning goals that align with student learning needs.
- Writes professional learning goals in the SMART goal format.
- Identifies final results and benchmarks so that the school knows when key benchmarks have been accomplished.

Step 4: Identify educator (teacher and administrator) learning needs.

The next step is to identify what teachers need to know and be able to do to ensure student success in the area(s) of need identified through data analysis. Identifying educator learning needs may require a shift in thinking. Planning professional learning frequently begins with a needs assessment survey that asks adult learners to identify what they *want* to learn rather than need to learn to address the identified student learning goal. Teachers are often eager to learn about educational innovations, and principals may want to learn how to shortcut nagging managerial tasks. However, if the goal is to increase student reading performance, and students' greatest deficits are comprehending and interpreting informational texts, teachers and principals need to develop their skills and knowledge about how to help students read and understand nonfiction text. Professional learning on other topics deflects time and resources away from the established school improvement and team learning goals. **Tool 2.3** provides a rationale for eliminating the traditional needs assessment survey in favor of analyzing educator learning needs.

Key questions to answer during Step 4 include:

- What experience, background, and knowledge do staff currently have in the focus area (i.e., experience, coursework, or knowledge of differentiated instruction)?
- What do our teachers already know, and what do they need to know next?
- What practices are teachers currently using in the classroom? How different are current practices from desired practices?

- What classroom practices do teachers need to learn next?
- Is the professional learning goal supported by data about the school's current practices (i.e., what classroom practices are currently being used by a majority of instructors?)?

Classroom walk-throughs are one way to determine teachers' learning needs. Classroom walk-throughs are quick observations of a variety of classrooms to create a general impression of instruction in the school. Walk-throughs do not focus on an individual teacher's practice but compile the information into a general instructional profile. Effective walk-throughs use clear descriptions of the research-based practices that are aligned with identified student needs — for example, reading comprehension strategies related to informational texts. Administrators and learning teams conduct walk-throughs to gather information about the current use of specified instructional strategies in classrooms, to determine the school's strengths and needs, and to identify patterns and trends of practice within the school. The walk-through descriptions provide a framework for talking about instruction and coming to agreement about what is needed to improve student learning.

Once educator learning needs have been identified, the leadership or collaborative learning team can decide which actions to take to meet those needs. The results might reveal that while teachers have been exposed to appropriate instructional strategies, the level of classroom use is low. Thus, professional learning might focus on writing lesson plans that include new strategies, classroom observations of new strategies, or co-teaching new lessons with the support of the reading coach.

The scope and content of professional learning will be understood and accepted when student learning needs, school context and characteristics, the specific goal, and educator learning needs all are clear and aligned.

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 4

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Establishes a clear relationship between student learning needs and professional learning focus or topic.
- Gathers a variety of data from staff to help determine professional development needs and focus (observations, lesson plans, logs, surveys, interviews).
- Plans for educator knowledge about and classroom use of new instructional strategies.

Step 5: Study the research for specific professional learning programs, strategies, or interventions.

Decision makers need to become critical consumers of research by identifying evidence-based instructional strategies that help improve student learning in the targeted area. In their urgency and

ROCHESTER'S CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Recognition
- **Intervention**
- Adjustment

enthusiasm to improve student performance, school staff may pass over this critical step and select or adapt unfamiliar programs. They often fail to critically review available practices

to determine whether research has shown these practices to be successful in improving student learning. This step correlates to Rochester City School District's second component of continuous improvement: **Intervention**.

Key questions to answer during Step 5 include:

- Which designs for professional learning will develop the skills and knowledge we have identified as our educator learning needs?
- What designs or programs for professional learning are schools with similar student demographics using?
- If our school's characteristics do not match the schools in which the professional learning was successful, what are the key differences? How likely are those differences to interfere with the program's success? What changes might increase the likelihood of success?

- What support do teachers need in order to implement new strategies?
- What are teachers' current levels of understanding of content related to state standards?
- What school, district, and community support was required to make the professional learning successful? Do we currently have that support?

Even well-designed, popular, or established professional development initiatives need to be reviewed for their effect on student learning. A series of *What Works* books reviewed professional development programs in various content areas for elementary, middle, and high school levels (Killion, 1999; Killion, 2002a; Killion, 2002b). These books provide each program's evidence of impact on student learning. **Tool 2.4** is a professional development review form, based on this work. It identifies the essential research-based evidence to collect for programs or practices being considered by the school.

Other Internet-based clearinghouses are available through the Institute of Education Sciences (<http://ies.ed.gov/>) and the What Works Clearinghouse, which collects, screens, and identifies studies of educational interventions for programs such as beginning reading, dropout prevention, elementary school math, and English language learners (www.whatworksclearinghouse.org).

After examining research-based evidence and weighing the options, the context factors identified in Step 2 become criteria for selecting an intervention appropriate for the school, the staff, and the student population. A school staff might assign a higher priority to a practice found successful with urban, Hispanic students because that matches their students' demographics. Based on findings from this

step, school leaders could decide to adopt or adapt an existing professional development program or to create a new one that aligns with their unique school characteristics, their goals, and current research.

This is a significant decision that needs to be made with careful thought and thorough discussion. This decision determines where faculty members will place their energy and resources for the long run until new practices become common classroom practices in the school.

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 5

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Selects a variety of professional learning designs that will develop the knowledge and skills identified as the school's educator learning needs.
- Establishes a strong research base for use of any new practices, programs, or procedures.
- Considers context factors when selecting a professional learning design for the school or team.

Step 6: Plan intervention, implementation, and evaluation.

Some educators have commented that the typical planning sequence for professional learning includes only two steps: the analysis of student data and then a jump to initiate a new program. Yet planning effective professional development, which impacts both teacher and student learning, requires thorough diagnosis and thoughtful discussion.

Key questions to answer during Step 6 include:

- What kind of ongoing support and assistance is needed to accomplish student and teacher results?
- How will we support the individuals involved so that they *use* new practices with students?
- What are we equipped to do to support and implement the professional learning, and what external resources will we need?
- What is our timeline for full implementation by all faculty members?
- What benchmarks along the way will help us know if we are successful or whether we need to change our professional development approach?
- Are we willing to commit time, energy, and financial resources to this effort for the long term — possibly two to three years?
- How will we align this new initiative with existing efforts? What might we need to eliminate to make resources available for this program?
- How will we assess how well the program is initiated, implemented, and sustained?

Plan professional-learning interventions. Initiating new professional development takes time and energy. The consistent use of new classroom practices requires that leaders and faculty provide follow-up

or long-term support beyond the immediate school year. A progression of professional development interventions needs to be carefully selected, sequenced, and executed to match teachers' evolving learning needs. There are many questions to ask and answer to get the best fit between educator needs and appropriate professional development design. Many of the job-embedded professional development strategies can be used in combination to help educators learn about, begin implementing, and consistently use new practices. Each of these three aspects of learning new classroom strategies requires different kinds of professional development experiences. The ultimate goal is to enhance the instructional practices used in the classroom so that student learning is improved.

Powerful Designs for Professional Learning (Easton, 2008) describes 23 job-embedded professional development practices, along with information to help administrators and teachers decide when and why to use these strategies. This information helps school faculty determine which strategies fit their needs and match their goals, and facilitates teachers learning specific content. Each learning goal has an accompanying list of job-embedded strategies. To create professional learning communities, use: Critical Friends Groups, Mentoring, Peer Coaching, Tuning Protocols, and Visual Dialogue.

To focus on standards, curriculum, and assessments, use: Action Research, Assessment as Professional Learning, Case Discussions, Curriculum Design, Lesson Study, Standards in Practice, Study Groups, and Visual Dialogue.

To focus on instructional practices or pedagogy, use: Action Research, Case Discussions, Critical Friends Groups, Journaling, Lesson Study, Mentoring,

Peer Coaching, Portfolios, and Tuning Protocols.

Module 4 in this tool kit provides more detailed examples of various collaborative learning designs that can develop awareness, build knowledge of new instructional strategies, apply new knowledge into classroom practice, and help teachers reflect on the use of new practice.

Plan professional-learning implementation.

After selecting, adapting, or designing a professional development intervention and before implementation, the school planning or grade-level team should create a sequence of professional learning designs. A series of experiences is necessary to provide the support and assistance needed to help educators learn and use new instructional strategies in the classroom (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

The implementation plan uses a sequence of professional development strategies. An elementary school found that educators needed to develop deeper knowledge of mathematics content. A district mathematics specialist provided professional learning for all teachers designed to help them deepen their understanding of content embedded in the standards. She conducted four two-hour sessions every two weeks after school. Study groups were established for each grade-level, and the schedule was arranged so that teams could meet twice a week to follow up on the sessions using grade-level appropriate materials. The teams also read and discussed articles and reviewed videos of mathematics lessons that included the teacher reflecting on the strengths and needs of the lesson. Finally, once a month during staff meetings, each grade level shared a student math problem and conducted a think-aloud about the variety of ways to solve the problem, sometimes

using manipulatives.

Planning evaluation. Planning program evaluation at the same time as planning implementation of professional learning leads to a higher-quality evaluation. Considering both the program and evaluation at the same time allows planners to identify what important baseline data to collect, data which will be necessary to demonstrate the impact of professional learning.

When planning an evaluation of a professional development program, the school planning team needs to:

- Assess the professional development design to determine whether it is thorough, well-conceived, and able to be implemented;
- Identify key questions the team wants to answer through the evaluation; and
- Design the evaluation framework — the plan for conducting the evaluation.

More information on evaluating professional development can be found in **Module 8** of this tool kit.

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 6

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Designs a professional learning plan that spans at least one to two years and includes classroom support, collegial interaction, and monitoring strategies.
- Identifies a variety of monitoring tools that measure the use of new practices over time.
- Includes specific, realistic milestones for implementing new teacher practices.
- Identifies key questions to answer through the evaluation of professional learning.

Step 7: Implement, sustain, and evaluate the professional development intervention.

Any new professional development intervention requires constant nurturing, support, and coaching for it to be consistently implemented with high quality. Professional development decision makers,

ROCHESTER'S CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Recognition
- Intervention
- **Adjustment**

including the principal and school planning teams, are primarily responsible for monitoring and making adjustments to ensure the initiative's success.

Key questions

to answer during Step 7 include:

- Is the professional learning being implemented as planned?
- Are resources adequate to implement the plan? If not, how do we acquire more resources or adjust our implementation benchmarks?
- To what degree are differences occurring in classroom implementation that may influence the program's results? What other kinds of support might enhance classroom implementation?
- Has the learning design achieved the intended results? If not, how will we change the learning design to accomplish our results?
- What changes for teachers have resulted from the professional learning?
- What changes for students have resulted from the professional learning?

Those responsible for implementation first need a clear definition of what high-quality performance looks like. One tool for reaching consensus on an

acceptable level of implementation is an Innovation Configuration (IC) map. IC maps describe and define the essential features of new practice (Hall & Hord, 2001). **Tool 2.5** describes the components of an IC map as well as strategies for designing your own.

Establishing and communicating expectations and standards for implementation make a significant difference in attaining high-quality implementation. Using formative and summative evaluation data to continually make adjustments to professional learning increases the likelihood that professional learning

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS FOR STEP 7

The school planning team or collaborative learning team:

- Describes clearly what new classroom practices look like *in operation*.
- Uses a variety of monitoring tools that measure use of new practices over time; includes specific, realistic milestones for teacher practices.
- Adjusts professional learning designs when monitoring data indicate the program is not progressing as planned.
- Conducts summative evaluations of professional development to determine whether student learning has improved as a result of implementation of improved classroom practices.
- Evaluates impact on student learning only when it is clear that a majority of staff have consistently implemented new practices with high fidelity.

will achieve the result it was designed to achieve. Formative assessments, data gathered during the professional development process, provide information that can be used to continually adjust and refine the program. This step correlates to Rochester City School District's third component of continuous improvement: **Adjustment**.

Summative evaluation, data gathered at the end of a process, provides information about the impact of professional learning on student achievement and offers valuable data to improve its results. More information about evaluating professional learning is provided in **Module 8** of this tool kit.

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Reflections

1. Consider the components of the backmapping model. Which of these steps are we currently using? How can we refine these activities to bring them in line with the model?
2. What steps have we not implemented in our planning?
3. What attitudes and understanding, or lack of, do we need to address in our school or within our team to begin collaborative professional learning?
4. What is one action we can take to begin or strengthen our practice of collaborative professional learning?
5. As a team, what commitments will we make to ensure that we are using the steps of the backmapping model?

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
2.1	The numbers game	Tool 2.1 describes skills and strategies useful for analyzing student learning data and identifying student learning needs.
2.2	Work smarter, not harder	Tool 2.2 describes the components of a SMART goal, provides examples, and includes a tree diagram to help develop SMART goals.
2.3	Extreme makeover: Needs assessment edition	Tool 2.3 explains why the typical needs assessment survey does not truly assess educator learning needs. This article can be used to start a discussion among administrators and the school-based planning team about alternative ways to collect evidence of educator needs.
2.4	Professional development program review	Tool 2.4 provides a framework for collecting information about programs and comparing programs before selecting and implementing one. The completed worksheet is a handy reference guide for each program being considered.
2.5	Clarify your vision with an Innovation Configuration map	Tool 2.5 provides information about creating an Innovation Configuration for a writing program in Arizona. It also includes worksheets and tips about developing an Innovation Configuration map for your own program.

MODULE 3

How do we use data to plan collaborative professional development?

The components of the cycle of continuous improvement

Using data to plan collaborative professional development

Data sources we can use to plan professional development

Tool 3.1: Data use

Tool 3.2: What *are* data?

Tool 3.3: Data dialogue

Tool 3.4: Mix it up

Tool 3.5: Snapshots of learning

Data analysis tools

Tool 3.6: Data analysis protocols — formal and informal

Tool 3.7: Response sheet for discussing school data

Tool 3.8: Crafting data summary statements

Tool 3.9: Fishbone diagram

Tool 3.10: Deciding on a team focus

Using data to improve instruction

Tool 3.11: Striking a balance

Sequence of learning team work

SELF-ASSESSMENT ON THE USE OF DATA FOR PLANNING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

1. We analyze multiple types of data (achievement, process, demographic, and perception) to determine school, educator, and student learning goals.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. We analyze school and team (grade-level, department, course, etc.) data to set annual and short-term goals for student growth and teacher learning.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. We analyze school, team, and classroom data continuously throughout the school year to identify student learning needs.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. We analyze school and team data to measure progress toward annual and short-term goals for student and teacher learning.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. We analyze school, team, and classroom data to make ongoing adjustments in both goals and strategies for attaining the goals.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

“What separates the schools that will be successful in their reform efforts from the ones that won’t is the use of one often-neglected element — data.”

— *Bernhardt, 2004, p. 1*

The No Child Left Behind Act changed education’s access to and use of data. As a result, data abound. Yet education is data-rich and information-poor. Educators are increasingly learning to use data to make informed decisions about school improvement, professional development, instruction, and lesson planning.

Not all educators, whether teachers or central office staff, embrace data’s new role in their profession. Data, particularly concerning student achievement, have been the sole evidence used to illustrate how schools are meeting high expectations for student learning. In some cases, educators view data as skewed or incomplete because the data do not present a full picture of educators’ efforts to improve student learning. Yet, data can be an important tool to uncover and understand student learning needs,

identify areas of success and improvements, and monitor progress.

Module 1 introduced the cycle of continuous improvement for professional development. Data permeate this cycle. (See **Figure 3.1**.) Data are used initially to determine the learning needs of students and teachers and to define educator learning goals. Ongoing assessment of classroom practices and student learning shapes the support activities required for classroom use of new strategies. Finally, the effectiveness of professional development is determined by assessing how new practices have impacted student learning. (Note: Using data to support classroom implementation is addressed in this module and measuring progress is found in **Module 8** of this resource guide.)

To use data to accomplish these results, school faculty need to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills about how to analyze and use data. Using data effectively requires several competencies. The first competency is knowledge of assessments: What assessments are used within the district and the school, what are the assessments measuring, what is their purpose, who is being assessed, and how are

FIGURE 3.1: CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Analyzing **student, teacher, and school data** to identify educator learning needs;
- Identifying specific educator learning goals based on the **analysis of data**;
- Improving educator effectiveness by implementing sustained, evidence-based learning strategies;
- Transferring new instructional strategies into the classroom by engaging in job-embedded coaching and classroom assistance;
- **Assessing** professional learning continuously to determine the effectiveness of activities and strategies in achieving identified learning goals;
- Adjusting teachers' efforts and practices based on **continuous assessment** of student and teacher learning; and
- Involving **external assistance** when appropriate to help teachers accomplish their goals.

Source: Hirsh, 2009.

the results calculated? Principals, teacher leaders, and district staff can help schools or learning teams acquire this information. A second competency is data analysis. Analysis involves looking for strengths, needs, trends, and root causes. Some schools and districts hold data conferences or data days, which provides a structured process for staff members while simultaneously developing their data analysis skills. The third competency is integrating data routinely into school and classroom decision making. Data can be used to set instructional goals, to pinpoint areas for improvement, to set standards for success, and to measure progress.

USING DATA TO PLAN COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Before the school faculty or teams begin their work, members need to identify specifically what they want to accomplish together. The analysis of student learning data is the initial step for identify-

ing the focus of a school or team's work.

Four examples use the same initial steps to identify the focus of professional learning:

- Analyzing and identifying student learning needs;
- Diagnosing and identifying what educators need to know and do; and
- Planning and implementing professional development to improve educator knowledge, skills, and practice.

Example 1: A middle school faculty analyzes the achievement gap in reading between its white and black students. A thorough examination shows that the curriculum materials used to differentiate instruction do not align with the state's reading standards. Materials used for lower-achieving students focus primarily on phonics rather than comprehension strategies. The school planning team decides that grade-level teams need to review the state reading standards for their grade level and determine if existing curriculum materials are aligned

with the reading standards and appropriate for use with students at different reading levels. Some teams also decide to identify other reading resources and develop differentiated reading lessons that match the state standards.

Example 2: A team of 4th-grade teachers analyzes district writing samples and state language arts assessments and finds that student organizational skills are inadequate. Team members decide to deepen their understanding of writing organization and to apply what they learn by designing three lessons to develop student organizational skills before the next writing assessment. After the lessons are used in the classroom, team members analyze each other's student writing samples to determine whether organizational skills have improved.

Example 3: World history teachers collaboratively analyze a set of student essays using a schoolwide rubric and are disappointed that their students' work fails to demonstrate critical thinking. They decide that students would benefit from more explicit instruction in critical thinking. As a team, they identify four critical thinking skills, study how to teach those skills to high school students, and use lesson study protocol to develop and refine a model lesson for each thinking skill. Student data is collected continuously to determine the effectiveness of the lessons. (See lesson study in **Module 4**.)

Example 4: A group of algebra teachers meets to review semester exam results and discovers that more than half of the students missed the same set of questions. After discussing the possible causes of this pattern, teachers decide that the method they used to assess the skill was different from the way it was presented in the textbook. They study the pros

and cons of various methods of assessing the particular skills and determine how they want students to demonstrate an understanding of that particular skill. They design new formative assessments to use in all the algebra classrooms. Student results on the new assessments are analyzed to determine whether their learning improved.

When working collaboratively to improve teaching and learning, educators, either schoolwide or working in small teams, first identify the specific area of student learning they want to focus on. When data drive decisions about the focus of learning, whole-school and team collaborative work will be more satisfying and productive because of that focus on students' specific needs. Data alone do not tell educators what to do. A deep and thoughtful analysis is necessary to transform data into information that is useful to decision making.

DATA SOURCES WE CAN USE TO PLAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Multiple types of data can be used by educators to make decisions about professional development, instruction, and student learning. Victoria Bernhardt (2004) identifies four data categories that provide valuable information to help school teams and schools understand student learners and the school context. The data include process, perceptual, demographic, and student learning.

School process data define the normal routines or *the way things work around here* process and procedures. Processes are hard to detect and can be best visualized through the use of a process map. For example, what process is used to identify which students receive special services?

Perceptual data include what teachers, students, and stakeholders think about the school’s climate, learning environment, and concern about student learning. These data are usually collected through surveys using a five-point scale.

Demographic data provide descriptive information about students, teachers, and community. This might include attendance and graduation rates, gender and ethnicity, and disaggregated special education population.

Student learning data include disaggregated information about student achievement on standardized tests, interim assessment, grade-point averages, and gap analysis among various student groups, genders, etc.

These data can be used artfully to create a big-picture perspective of both student and teacher learning needs. **Tool 3.1** provides examples of the types of data used by a school to determine its focus

for improvement and professional learning. **Tool 3.2** outlines a variety of data sources that can be used for schoolwide and team-based improvement efforts.

Data analysis is conducted by many groups within the organization: whole-school, department and/or grade-level teams, one-on-one, and individual student goal setting. The purpose, frequency, and data vary according to the group, yet each conversation has the same purpose in mind — to use the data to make informed decisions about teaching and learning. **Tool 3.3** describes a variety of data-dialogue conversations for teams and school faculty members. It provides an overview of the range of data and topics that can occur within a school and team.

Typically educators assume that data mean standardized achievement test results. Whole-school and team-based learning require a wide range of data — some that are rich and powerful yet not always considered when gathering data. **Tool 3.4** outlines a variety of alternative data sources to consider when planning a well-rounded data analysis plan.

Classroom walk-throughs can provide an in-depth picture of the school’s current instructional practices. (See **Module 2**, Step 4 for more information on walk-throughs.) Successful walk-throughs identify specific instructional elements that support the school’s goals. If a school was focused on improving word choice in writing, word walls might be one element on a walk-through observation chart. When teachers are informed upfront of the purpose and expectations of walk-throughs, they are more likely to accept the walk-throughs. When staff participate as members of walk-through teams, walk-throughs gain further acceptance. Staff involvement helps create a vision of schoolwide strengths and needs. **Tool 3.5**

PROCESS DATA SOURCE

Two 20-minute podcasts from the National Middle School Association contain a two-part discussion about formative assessments. Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback about student learning and teacher instruction. Formative assessments provide ongoing information to assess students’ level of understanding. It can provide another source of data about classroom instruction and student learning. Podcasts can be found at: www.nmsa.org/Publications/TodaysMiddleLevelEducator/tabid/1409/Default.aspx.

is an article about the purpose of classroom walk-throughs, steps in creating a walk-through plan, and individual and group feedback forms.

DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS

“Data have no meaning. Meaning is imposed through interpretation. Frames of reference, the way we see the world, influence the meaning we derive from data. Effective data users become aware of and critically examine their frames of reference and assumptions. Conversely, data can also be a catalyst to question assumptions and changing practices based on new ways of thinking.”

— Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008, pp. 11-12

Analyze the data. Successful schools and teams establish structures and routines for analyzing data. Data analysis is the process of reviewing, studying, examining, and probing data to find patterns, anomalies, and trends. Only by studying data can teachers find information they need to improve their practice and results. When teachers use a process or protocol that offers structure for looking at data, they discover both strengths and areas for improvement. This information enables them to focus change on areas that improve student results.

A thorough and complete structured analysis results in team members identifying:

- Specific areas of strength or improvement;
 - Specific area of need;
 - Knowledge and skills that students need to be able to improve results;
 - Possible root causes of identified problems.
- Data analysis is powerful when an inquiry-based

approach is used. Deciding what questions each team would like to answer or identifying surprises or confirming expectations energizes the analysis. When all members of collaborative professional learning teams are involved in analyzing data, their multiple perspectives enrich the findings. **Tool 3.6** provides a formal and informal set of questions that guide teachers in examining data. **Tool 3.7** provides a data response form that can be used for whole-school analysis and improvement activities.

Summarize the analysis. Once the school faculty or team members analyze data, members will often want to share their findings with the whole faculty or other teams. When findings are written as descriptive statement, the results can be more readily accepted. These statements can be called either data summary statements or needs statements. Note that the sample data summary statement does not place blame or find fault with people or programs; it merely describes the current reality based on data.

In this step, the school faculty or team members identify the problem, but do *not* solve it. Creating data summary statements compels team members to spell out specifically what the data indicate rather than falling back on their opinions or assumptions. Summary statements also require team

SAMPLE DATA SUMMARY STATEMENT

Eighth-grade male students' average performance on the interim reading assessment is 10% lower in comprehension than female 8th-grade students.

members to come to consensus on the identifications of the problem — an important step in the process. Faculty or team members can write a single or a dozen summary statements depending on the depth of their analysis. **Tool 3.8** provides a description and examples of data summary statements.

At this stage, the team avoids the urge to brainstorm solutions. First, they reach agreement about what the data indicate before moving on to the next steps of action planning. Data summary statements sometimes can be difficult to develop. Some team members may want to jump to the action stage before fully understanding or probing the issues. At this stage, it is essential that team members just state the facts.

Generate possible causes. Data analysis identifies patterns, anomalies, and trends within the data, but this analysis is insufficient to determine a course of action to address the identified problem. Once the school or team has objectively analyzed the data, the next step is to propose possible explanations. Possible causes for gaps in student learning can include curriculum, instruction, resources, assessment, teacher content knowledge, or external factors. **Tool 3.9** provides two ways to generate, categorize, and decide on possible causes.

Set educator learning goals. Now it is important to categorize the causes and narrow them to concentrate only on those where teachers and the school as a whole have the greatest influence. Since educators do not control most external factors, they should concentrate on those areas where they have direct impact. If teachers focus on decisions they routinely make about teaching and learning as well as their own skillfulness with the curriculum, assessment, and instruction, they will be more empowered

to take action to address identified problems rather than feel victimized by circumstances beyond their sphere of control (for example, selection of instructional strategies versus student/family demographics). **Tool 3.10** provides a set of questions to help learning teams decide on a focus and a template for creating a learning goal based on student needs.

USING DATA TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

Teachers care about data that will improve classroom instruction. Standardized test scores do not always fulfill that need. There are many other types of readily available classroom data that can address instruction. Along with standardized results, most schools and classrooms also have:

- Benchmark assessments that measure group performance in comparison to an established set point;
- Common assessments by grade level or content area that are collaboratively developed to measure both individual and group performance in comparison to an established target;
- Classroom-based assessments that provide information to modify teaching and learning activities; and
- Progress monitoring data to determine academic growth of individual students or an entire class (Pijanowski, 2008).

Staff members can reflect and dialogue about these data on three levels: individual teacher, grade-level/content-team, and schoolwide. Each of these discussions has different purposes but shares the same goal of improvements in classroom instruction and student learning. **Tool 3.11** is an article that describes one district's three-level conversation

TABLE 3.1: SEQUENCE OF LEARNING TEAM WORK

MEETING	TEAM ACTIONS
1	<p>Team members examine data from formal and informal student assessments to identify goals for student learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What meaning can we make from the results of student assessments and data? • What trends, patterns, or anomalies exist within the data? • What is one primary outcome we want students to accomplish?
2	<p>Team members set goals for educator learning and identify professional development designs/strategies for accomplishing those goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we need to know and be able to do to help our students accomplish the learning goals? • What professional development strategies or designs will help us develop the necessary knowledge? • What professional development strategies or designs will help us develop the necessary skills to accomplish our learning goals?
3	<p>Team members engage in professional learning aligned with established learning goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we use a variety of strategies that match various members' learning styles (for example: hands-on, visual, auditory, exploratory)? • How will we assess whether the professional learning has helped us acquire new knowledge? • How will we assess whether the professional learning has helped us acquire new skills?
4	<p>Team members apply new knowledge and strategies learned from professional development to classroom practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are we going to support each other to ensure that new practices are used in members' classrooms? • Are there instructional coaches, internal experts, or administrators who could support peer coaching or classroom observation? • What student work or assessments will we collect to determine the effectiveness of new practices?
5	<p>Team members examine student work and/or assessments and reflect on how the new practices influenced student learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What protocol(s) can help us examine student work? (See protocols in Module 4.) • What rubric or standard will we use to determine the level and quality of student improvement? • Are new classroom practices resulting in improved student learning?
6	<p>Team members decide how to refine instruction as well as team practices and structures. If results have been accomplished, the process begins again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we refine our strategies to promote better student learning results? • How well did our collaborative work go? What was a strength for our team? What could we change to be an even better collaborative team? • If we are satisfied with progress within our target area, what is the next most urgent area of need?

about assessment data that resulted in improved student learning and schools earning Adequate Yearly Progress. Key to this process was collaborative dialogue and reflection that was focused on real-time discussions about instruction. Also included in the article are recommendations concerning professional development topics for central office, principals, and school-based planning teams.

SEQUENCE OF LEARNING TEAM WORK

Learning Forward recommends that learning teams meet multiple times per week. The focus or purpose of these meetings follows a sequence and continues to use data to inform the work throughout the sequence. Data are used to identify needs and determine common goals. Data are also used to determine the effectiveness of professional development and the impact on student learning. This sequence and possible discussion questions are shown in **Table 3.1**.

This is a sequence of actions and not a schedule of activities. Given that schools and teams might vary in the amount of time they have to meet, it might take a single meeting to examine student learning data and multiple meetings to participate in collaborative professional learning. Each step might require more than a single meeting, but all the steps should be addressed over the course of a quarter or semester. This sequence will more likely be accomplished when there is a single, high-priority student and educator learning goal.

Data provide a wealth of information for teachers about student learning, yet simply having the data is insufficient. When a school or learning team uses data to target student learning needs and create its own learning goals, data become a powerful stimulus for continuous improvement. Connecting student learning needs and professional development goals typically results in improved student learning because staff members can focus on critical learning needs rather than personal interests. Teams that have a goal of improved teaching and student learning take time in nearly every meeting to use data to focus their own learning and their collaborative work. Becoming more proficient in collecting, analyzing, and moving from needs data to goals and from goals to actions are important skills for schoolwide and small learning teams.

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Reflections

1. How are teachers currently using data? What data are they using most often? What barriers do we face that make it challenging for teachers to use data to make classroom and schoolwide decisions about increasing student achievement?
2. How do teachers feel about using data? Do they trust the data, do they see data as a helpful tool, do they find schoolwide data useful for improving student performance? Are there some teachers who feel differently about the use of data?
3. How confident are teachers about interpreting a variety of data (from standardized achievement tests to interim assessments)? If not, how could that confidence be developed?
4. What data would we like to have that would help us make better decisions about teaching and learning? What would it take to acquire those data?
5. Why is it important to have all staff members involved in analyzing data? If we do not involve everyone, what is the reason for that decision? If all staff do not want to be involved, what is the reason for that choice?

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
3.1	Data use	Tool 3.1 provides examples of multiple types of data used by a school to determine its focus for improvement and professional development.
3.2	What <i>are</i> data?	Tool 3.2 provides a list of possible data sources that schools and teams could use that go beyond grades and test results.
3.3	Data dialogue	Tool 3.3 is an article that describes the purpose, audience, and data used in a variety of data dialogues helpful for teams and whole faculties.
3.4	Mix it up	Tool 3.4 is an article about alternative data sources such as student interviews and walk-throughs that can add classroom-based information useful to teams and whole faculties.
3.5	Snapshots of learning	Tool 3.5 is an article about how to use walk-throughs as a way to capture data that describes which classroom practices are being implemented with students.
3.6	Data analysis protocols — formal and informal	Tool 3.6 includes a set of data analysis questions that can be used with classroom assessments, annual student assessments, end-of-course assessments, or high-stakes assessments.
3.7	Response sheet for discussing school data	Tool 3.7 is a response sheet for a school-based planning team to use to structure discussions about whole-school data.
3.8	Crafting data summary statements	Tool 3.8 guides teams or whole faculties in writing summary statements — one way to synthesize the data analysis process.
3.9	Fishbone diagram	Tool 3.9 is a tool to assist whole faculties or teams to analyze root causes for the needs they have identified through data analysis.
3.10	Deciding on a team focus	Tool 3.10 is guided discussion that helps teams decide on their instructional focus for the year. It also includes a template for moving from needs, identified from data analysis, to school or team goals.
3.11	Striking a balance	Tool 3.11 is an article that describes a three-level reflection and dialogue process about benchmark data that is focused on real-time discussion about instruction. Reflection questions appropriate for each level are included.

MODULE 4

What will we do in our collaborative professional learning teams?

What we will do in our team

Tool 4.1: Tap the power of peers

Learning team decisions: Cycle of continuous improvement

Tool 4.2: Expanding your vision of professional development

Team decision: Design

Tool 4.3: Transform your group into a team

Building communication, consistency, collaboration, and coaching

Tool 4.4: Protocols: A facilitator's best friend

Tool 4.5: Say something protocol

Tool 4.6: Author assumptions

Examining student work

Tool 4.7: Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together

Tool 4.8: Success analysis protocol

Planning instruction

Tool 4.9: Peeling a standard

Co-teaching

Tool 4.10: From isolation to partnership

Peer observation

Tool 4.11: Dear colleague, please come for a visit

Tool 4.12: Classroom visits

Tool 4.13: Peer learning labs put teacher practice under the microscope

Lesson study

Tool 4.14: Lesson study

Action research

Tool 4.15: Teacher research leads to learning, action

Supporting implementation

Tool 4.16: Build a bridge between workshop and classroom

Tool 4.17: A fresh look at follow-up

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DESIGNS AND ACTIVITIES

1. At our school, teacher leaders and a majority of staff members give input into the design of professional learning.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. We use varied designs of professional development for schoolwide and team-based learning (e.g., protocols, peer observation, co-teaching, examining student work).

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. The focus of our professional development is tightly aligned with our student learning goals.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. The designs of our professional development encourage inquiry into our practice, problem solving, and collaborative learning with colleagues.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. The professional development at our school includes support for classroom implementation of new strategies and practices.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

This resource guide started with the idea that effective professional learning results in changes in teacher practice and improved student learning. One of the clear goals of collaborative learning is building educator knowledge and skills while expecting and supporting classroom implementation of new practices. Collaboration is a crucial component of this learning. Collaborative professional learning can be rewarding and productive as well as informative and enriching.

What collaborative professional learning looks like will differ among schools. Size, length of tenure of a staff, culture, leadership, and experience with collaboration are some factors influencing variations. Schools of different sizes will have different opportunities for collaboration. In larger schools, grade-level, department, or course teams may be possible. In smaller schools, cross-grade-level or department teams may make more sense. Size and experience with collaboration will influence the role of the principal and teacher leaders. If staff members have limited experience working collaboratively, the principal may take a more prominent role in struc-

turing teams and building a culture of collaboration. When there are more teams at a school, coordination and communication among teams, often led by the principal, will be more important.

The school's goals and student achievement needs, as well as its size, may affect how teams are configured. Teachers may serve on one or more teams: grade-level, content-specific, course-specific, or topic-focused teams. Some teams may be cross-level or interdisciplinary teams. A 5th-grade teacher may be a member of his grade-level team and the school's literacy vertical team. An algebra teacher at the high school may be a member of the math department team and an algebra team. Both teachers may also serve on their school's team focused on increasing student engagement in the classroom.

How teams are formed, how many teams a teacher serves on, and the focus of the teams grows out of the needs of each school and its goals for improving student learning and building strong collaborative culture among professionals. **Tool 4.1** is an article that describes collaboration as a critical component of professional learning and illustrates a variety of forms that collaboration can take.

Collaborative learning and collegial work, whether in small or large schools, can be messy and challenging, yet professionally rewarding and personally satisfying. Team-based learning requires team members to make joint decisions about their common student and professional learning goals, create strategies for working together, and plan how to use their collaborative time. Collaborative time will be used effectively when team members understand that there is a wide range of learning designs they can use to accomplish their goals. The purpose of **Module 4** is to provide information about a variety of designs and purposes for collaborative learning.

LEARNING TEAM DECISIONS: CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The cycle of continuous improvement describes the numerous decisions required to implement effective collaborative learning (see **Figure 4.1**). Once the team has been formed, members analyze

student learning, teacher, and school data to determine students' learning needs. The team develops its professional learning goal, which aligns with student needs and uses the components of a SMART goal: It is specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound. A professional learning goal will involve building knowledge, developing skills, examining assumptions and beliefs, putting new skills into practice, and reflecting on results. Next, team members decide how they will learn and work together to attain their goal. Professional development designs are identified. These designs are selected purposefully to help the team accomplish its learning goals.

A school might set a goal of increasing student achievement by implementing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. Grade-level or content-based teams might break the goal into four components: 1) learning about the purpose of and strategies for differentiating instruction; 2) developing skills such as diagnosing student needs or design-

FIGURE 4.1: CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Analyzing **student, teacher, and school data** to identify educator learning needs;
- Identifying specific educator learning goals based on the **analysis of data**;
- Improving educator effectiveness by implementing sustained, evidence-based learning strategies;
- Transferring new instructional strategies into the classroom by engaging in job-embedded coaching and classroom assistance;
- **Assessing** professional learning continuously to determine the effectiveness of activities and strategies in achieving identified learning goals;
- Adjusting teachers' efforts and practices based on **continuous assessment** of student and teacher learning; and
- Involving **external assistance** when appropriate to help teachers accomplish their goals.

Source: Hirsh, 2009.

ing differentiated lessons for students; 3) implementing those strategies consistently during instruction; and 4) evaluating the effects of their efforts. Each of these elements will most likely require different learning designs. Book study or a distance-learning course might be used to build knowledge, developing lesson plans could be accomplished through lesson study or co-planning lessons with grade-level teams or by participating in a coaching session, and implementation can be supported through co-teaching, coaching, or peer observation. One of the team's decisions is to identify which professional learning design will help all members reach their common goal. **Tool 4.2** provides a list of possible professional learning designs that could be used to support a variety of learning goals. In addition, an article is included that provides a rationale for why different designs are needed to accomplish different kinds of professional learning goals.

TEAM DECISION: DESIGN

Teams should carefully consider when to use various learning designs to ensure that members feel comfortable in the collaborative process and that the learning outcomes are achieved efficiently and effectively. When the staff is new to collaborative professional learning, designs that have greater

structure, explicit expectations, and processes for team members offer more personal and professional safety because they are likely to be less intrusive into teachers' practice. When a school's culture supports collaboration and teachers are more familiar with collaborative learning processes, they might select designs that require more disclosure, less structure, and a greater focus on classroom practices.

In addition to members' level of comfort with collaboration, a team's stage of development matters. If a team is in the forming stage, it is better to use more structured designs for professional learning that offer members a greater sense of safety. When a team progresses to the performing stage, members are more likely to choose designs that challenge their beliefs and routine practices. **Table 4.1** summarizes the stages of team development and the safety and structure levels recommended for each stage. Safety refers to the level of risk that members might feel. A high level of safety means a need for low levels of risk. **Tool 4.3** provides additional information about the stages of group development. It also includes a quick assessment to determine a team's current stage of development.

Table 4.2 summarizes the safety and structure levels of the learning designs and protocols included in **Module 4**. This summary can help teams decide which professional development designs to use to

TABLE 4.1: STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT BY SAFETY AND STRUCTURE LEVEL

Stage of development	Recommended safety level	Recommended structure level
Forming	High	High
Storming/Norming	High	Mid
Performing	Low	Low

Source: Killion & Roy, 2009, p. 122.

TABLE 4.2: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DESIGNS BY SAFETY AND STRUCTURE LEVEL

Designs for professional learning	Safety level	Structure level
Wagon wheel	High	High
3 levels of text	High	High
Say something protocol	High	High
Author assumptions	Mid	Mid
Tuning protocol	Mid	High
Collaborative assessment conference	Mid	High
Standards in Practice	Low	Mid
Descriptive review	Mid	Mid
Success analysis	Low	High
Peel a standard	High	Mid
Planning	Mid	Mid
Co-teaching	Low	Low
Peer observation	Low	Low
Lesson study	Low	Mid
Action research	Low	Mid

Source: Adapted from Killion & Roy, 2009, p. 123.

accomplish their learning goals.

Whether or not a team is new to collaborative learning and work, teachers have the majority voice in designing their own learning process. Coaches and principals may offer advice or guidance. Teachers, though, are ultimately responsible for their learning and have the final decision. This also means that each team might create a different goal and use different designs to accomplish its goal. **Tables 4.3a and 4.3b** describe characteristics of the designs from the module, which can help the learning team make decisions about which designs to use to support their learning.

BUILDING COMMUNICATION, CONSISTENCY, COLLABORATION, AND COACHING

Because faculty members have worked alongside each other for years and have developed congenial relationships, they may believe team work will be easy. But collaborative professional learning requires a different set of communication and decision-making processes. Teams need to identify a common goal and then identify learning designs that will help them attain those goals. The first set of collaborative learning designs included in this tool kit focuses on high-structure, high-safety processes. **Tool 4.4**

TABLE 4.3A: PURPOSE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGNS

Designs for professional learning	Purpose and characteristics of professional development designs						
	Safety level	Structure level	Builds knowledge	Develops skills	Supports implementation	Particularly helpful in creating a learning community	Looks at standards, curriculum, assessments
Wagon wheel	High	High	X			X	
3 levels of text	High	High	X			X	
Say something protocol	High	High	X			X	
Author assumptions	Mid	Mid	X			X	
Tuning protocol	Mid	High	X			X	
Collaborative assessment conference	Mid	High				X	X
Standards in Practice	Low	Mid	X			X	X
Descriptive review	Mid	Mid				X	X
Success analysis	Low	High				X	
Peel a standard	High	Mid	X			X	X
Planning instruction	Mid	Mid	X	X		X	X
Co-teaching	Low	Low	X	X	X		X
Peer observation	Low	Low	X		X	X	X
Lesson study	Low	Mid	X	X	X	X	X
Action research	Low	Mid	X	X	X	X	
Coaching	Low	Low		X	X		
Mentoring	Low	Low	X	X	X		

Source: Easton, 2008.

TABLE 4.3B: PURPOSE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGNS

Designs for professional learning	Purpose and characteristics of professional development designs						
	Focuses on pedagogy and teaching	Is particularly reflective	Involves looking at student work or students	Helpful in problem solving	Results in a concrete product	Is experiential	Involves modeling
Wagon wheel							
3 levels of text		X					
Say something protocol							
Author assumptions							
Tuning protocol	X		X	X			
Collaborative assessment conference	X		X				
Standards in Practice	X	X	X		X		
Descriptive review		X	X				
Success analysis	X	X					
Peel a standard	X				X		
Planning instruction	X				X		
Co-teaching	X		X	X	X	X	X
Peer observation	X	X	X			X	X
Lesson study	X	X	X		X	X	X
Action research	X	X	X	X		X	
Coaching	X	X	X	X		X	X
Mentoring	X	X	X	X		X	

Source: Easton, 2008.

provides an overview of protocols, an agreed-upon set of guidelines for conversations about teaching and learning. Most protocols ensure that everyone has an opportunity to talk and to listen. When teams follow protocol structures, off-task or one-member-

For more protocols on a variety of purposes, see the National School Reform website: www.nsrffharmony.org.

dominated conversations are less likely to occur. These highly structured conversations are the building blocks for collabora-

tive work and begin processes and routines that help build trust, safety, and risk taking. **Tools 4.5** and **4.6** are additional protocols that engage team members in deepening their understanding of text.

EXAMINING STUDENT WORK

Examining student work helps teachers better understand what individual or groups of students have learned. It can also be used to help a team of teachers calibrate its expectations for student learning for greater consistency classroom to classroom. Teachers can learn a tremendous amount by looking at a teacher’s assignment and the student work that resulted from the assignment. **Tool 4.7** is a brief article that overviews the process of looking at student work. The process typically involves teachers bringing one or more samples of student work and creating a focus question about that work for the group to discuss. These protocols help teachers make the connection between their instruction, assignments, and student learning results. **Tool 4.8** is a success analysis protocol, which helps a team identify

successful classroom practices that contribute to student learning.

These processes are a starting point for teams with little or no experience working together; they also help build a collaborative culture. Team members can add more complex protocols that call for critical feedback after they are comfortable with one another and with publicly sharing their own and their students’ work.

PLANNING INSTRUCTION

One of the primary functions of a learning team is to determine what students are expected to learn at each grade level or within each content area. Many districts and states have developed content standards or have adopted the common core standards to help teachers and curriculum developers understand expected student learning outcomes. Team members review, study, and analyze these content standards along with the district curriculum to identify essential student learning. **Tool 4.9** outlines a process for determining the specific content and skills embedded within the standards. With this information and an assessment of students’ current understanding, teachers can decide what to teach, in what sequence, and to what depth and scope.

CO-TEACHING

Learning from the experiences within special education, co-teaching has become a new collaborative partnership between general education teachers and specialists from literacy, English language learners, math, and gifted/talented areas, as well as among peers. Co-teachers can provide short minilessons for small groups of students or can serve as instructional

partners during whole-class instruction. Co-teachers can also modify or adapt lesson materials, scaffold assignments, develop alternative assessments, and support and remediate student learning by differentiating instruction for students with varied learning needs. Co-teachers provide side-by-side coaching, tap into individual expertise to benefit all students, and work in partnership with the classroom teacher. **Tool 4.10** describes co-teaching strategies with English language learner specialists. It identifies five co-teaching models that can be adapted to create a collaborative partnership between classroom teachers and specialists.

PEER OBSERVATION

Many teachers feel that one of the disadvantages of more traditional professional development is that it focuses primarily on building knowledge of new practices. What many teachers want is to see what new instructional strategies actually look like in operation with students. They want to see how the strategies are set up, how other teachers integrate new practices, and how to prevent some of the potential pitfalls. Peer or collegial observation is a collaborative professional learning design that helps colleagues understand how to translate knowledge into practice. Peer observation is not for remediation but rather for practical experience. It is focused on specific aspects of instruction. It is confidential, it includes an agreement to be observed, and it involves reflection. When done effectively, it can be a powerful collaborative strategy among team members, between grade-level or content-area teachers, or within a whole school. **Tool 4.11** is an article that describes the components of peer observation and includes a

tool for planning the focus of an observation. **Tool 4.12** provides a sample invitation, a preliminary plan, debriefing questions, and potential focus areas for peer visits. **Tool 4.13** describes peer learning labs, another way to incorporate peer observation and assistance into a school's professional learning.

LESSON STUDY

Lesson study is another powerful design for collaborative learning. In lesson study, teachers collaboratively design a lesson, observe one team member teaching that lesson, debrief, revise the lesson based on their observations, and repeat the cycle. Lesson study makes public the work teachers do each day in isolation. Through the lesson-study process, teachers develop a deeper understanding of content and pedagogy. They gain new understanding about how students learn and about how their instructional decisions influence student success. Lesson study helps teachers learn not only what to improve but how to improve. **Tool 4.14** provides a useful resource to help teachers conduct lesson study. During the observed teaching and revising phases of lesson study, members of a lesson-study team depend on a high level of safety among team members to work openly with a focus on student learning. Through the process, they develop a new appreciation for the complex decisions involved in lesson planning and instruction.

ACTION RESEARCH

Learning from the results of actual classroom practice is the goal of action research. Action research involves teachers designing and conducting a systematic research study of their work in their own classrooms and schools. Action research can be car-

ried out by individuals but is an especially powerful strategy for a collaborative team. The process begins with identifying a research question that interests or perplexes a team. A team of teachers might want to know if its differentiated instruction is actually resulting in higher levels of student learning or whether a positive classroom relationship with the teacher results in higher levels of learning for underperforming students. Then the group decides what classroom data to collect, analyzes the data, and makes decisions about the implication of the results for members' practice. Teachers who have participated in action research report how the process has energized their work and built positive professional relationships with other teachers. **Tool 4.15** outlines the action research process and provides tools for conducting action research in the classroom.

SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

Supporting implementation of new practices is an essential component of effective professional learning. We cannot merely expect staff to use new practices once they have learned about them. There must be active and intentional support for teachers as they learn to use new practices in the classroom. One of the most powerful strategies for supporting implementation is to provide classroom coaching. Research has shown that when teachers work in collaborative teams, they are just as effective as external experts in supporting each other's implementation.

Follow-up to professional learning is another

kind of support. Follow-up can take many forms and includes conversations that help bridge the knowing-doing gap. **Tool 4.16** describes the importance of follow-up, as well as some tools that can provide assistance to teachers as they transfer knowledge into classroom practice. **Tool 4.17** provides a rationale for follow-up and provides ideas for a variety of follow-up strategies.

Teachers who have committed to work in communities of learners report that getting started requires an investment of time and effort, but the rewards are significant. They say that their work is more satisfying, that they save time because they are sharing responsibilities with peers, that their work is more focused, and that they would not return to the way they previously worked on their own. Schools in which teachers work in collaborative teams make steady progress toward improvement goals, have clear focus, share goals, and produce results for their students in new ways. This approach to professional learning and working is worthy of their time and effort.

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Reflections

1. What assumptions do school administrators and teachers have about teachers' ability to choose their own designs for professional learning?
2. Of the designs described in this chapter, which are the most appropriate for accomplishing our team's learning goals? Which are inappropriate? Explain why.
3. What are our predictions about how staff members will respond to the expectation for and support of the implementation of new professional practices? What conditions, policies, or practices already exist that will support implementation? What conditions, policies, or practices exist that will make support for implementation difficult?
4. What are our biggest hopes and primary fears concerning implementing collaborative professional learning at our school?
5. Of the designs described in this chapter, which are the most appropriate for accomplishing our team's learning goals? Which are inappropriate? Which might we not be ready to use yet? Explain why.

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
4.1	Tap the power of peers	Tool 4.1 describes the components of effective collaborative learning. It describes a variety of learning designs that can be used within collaborative learning teams.
4.2	Expanding your vision of professional development	Tool 4.2 provides a list of possible professional learning designs that could be used to support a variety of learning goals. An article is included that provides a rationale for the use of a variety of professional learning designs.
4.3	Transform your group into a team	Tool 4.3 is an article that provides information about the four stages of team development (forming, storming, norming, and performing) and a questionnaire for a team to use to determine its current stage.
4.4	Protocols: A facilitator's best friend	Tool 4.4 is an article that explains the purpose and structure of protocols. It includes directions for three protocols: wagon wheel, 3 levels of text, and success analysis protocol.
4.5	Say something protocol	Tool 4.5 is a protocol that engages readers with text. If team members will be reading an article at a meeting, this protocol helps them use the text to inform their work.
4.6	Author assumptions	Tool 4.6 is used to uncover an author's assumptions and deepen a reader's understanding of text. It provides the reader an opportunity to make more informed interpretations or judgments about the text.
4.7	Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together	Tool 4.7 describes the purpose of examining student work. It provides four protocols for looking at student work plus a list of additional resources.
4.8	Success analysis protocol	Tool 4.8 is a protocol for identifying and sharing successful classroom practices.
4.9	Peeling a standard	Tool 4.9 helps a team dissect a content standard to identify the grade- or content-specific knowledge and skills that guide instruction and assessment decisions.

4.10	From isolation to partnership	Tool 4.10 describes co-teaching within an English language learning setting. It also provides descriptions of five other co-teaching models that can be adapted within other areas.
4.11	Dear colleague, please come for a visit	Tool 4.11 is an article that describes the purpose and steps of a structured peer observation. A planning tool is included.
4.12	Classroom visits	Tool 4.12 provides a sample invitation, a preliminary plan, debriefing questions, and potential focus areas for peer visits.
4.13	Peer learning labs put teacher practice under the microscope	Tool 4.13 is an article that describes the components of peer learning labs. It includes a pre-observation planning tool.
4.14	Lesson study	Tool 4.14 is an article that includes strategies for conducting lesson study.
4.15	Teacher research leads to learning, action	Tool 4.15 is an article that includes steps for conducting action research.
4.16	Build a bridge between workshop and classroom	Tool 4.16 is an article that describes the importance of follow-up to ensure that teachers transfer their learning into practice. Strategies are provided that can help with transfer.
4.17	A fresh look at follow-up	Tool 4.17 is an article that provides a variety of strategies that support classroom implementation of new practices.

MODULE 5

Does our culture support collaborative professional learning?

Defining culture

Why culture matters

Tool 5.1: 'Collaboration lite' puts student achievement on a starvation diet

Attributes of a collaborative culture

Tools and strategies that create a collaborative culture

Tool 5.2: A leadership conundrum

Tool 5.3: Trust matters — for educators, parents, and students

Tool 5.4: An audit of the culture starts with two handy tools

Tool 5.5: Culture is...

Tool 5.6: Learning about your school's culture

Tool 5.7: Strategies for strengthening culture

Tool 5.8: Positive or negative

Stages of team collaboration

Tool 5.9: The evolution of a professional learning team

Tool 5.10: One step at a time

Strategies for successful teams

Tool 5.11: Norms put the 'Golden Rule' into practice for groups

Tool 5.12: Trust factors

Tool 5.13: Zones of comfort, risk, and danger

Tool 5.14: Common goals override individual interests

Handling conflict

Tool 5.15: Quick check

Tool 5.16: How to turn conflict into an effective learning process

Handling resistance

Tool 5.17: 4 key strategies help educators overcome resistance to change

Tool 5.18: Shhhh, the dragon is asleep and its name is Resistance

Plan to succeed

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

1. **Our school's culture encourages faculty members' willingness to be continuous learners.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. **Accomplishing our students' learning goals depends on staff's ability to work together effectively as colleagues.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. **A high level of trust exists between teachers and administrators in our school and district.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. **Our professional development taps in-house expertise in instruction, curriculum, and assessment.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. **Educators in our school challenge each other to ensure all students achieve.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

We can accomplish more together than any one of us can accomplish working alone. When teachers work together, they can solve complex problems of practice. They share their expertise so that all students benefit. When teachers come together in this way, they can bring about unstoppable change. The question is, does the school's culture compel teachers to work collaboratively or drive them to work alone?

Culture and collaboration are inextricably intertwined. Teachers are more likely to change their practice when they have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and address mutual interests. Peer effects research confirms that teachers perform at higher levels when their peers do (Jackson &

Bruegmann, 2009). As teachers work together, their collaboration transforms the school's culture and climate. Conversely, a school's culture shapes teachers' attitudes about collaboration and learning.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

What is school culture? It's more than morale. Louise Stoll, a leading British researcher, defined school culture as "how things are done around here." School culture manifests itself in customs, routines, rituals, symbols, stories, expectations, and language — culture's "artifacts." **Table 5.1** outlines Stoll's indicators of school culture.

Culture includes "everything from the bell schedules to how people treat each other on a daily basis. Contexts are not things we study; they are

"The most successful learning occurs when teachers teach effectively in their own classrooms but also find solutions together. In such schools, teachers operate as team members, with shared goals and time routinely designated for professional collaboration. Under these conditions, teachers are more likely to be consistently well-informed, professionally renewed, and inspired so that they inspire students."

— Hord, 1997, p. 42

TABLE 5.1: STOLL'S INDICATORS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL CULTURE	VISIBLE EVIDENCE
Celebrations	How staff and student successes and achievements are recognized and celebrated.
Stories	How the school community talks about the school itself — its history and myths, whose stories are told and whose are overlooked, stories the community and the school tell about the school.
Shared sayings	The language the school uses to talk about itself: e.g., “We’re a community school.”
Taboos	What is not allowed within the school, explicitly and implicitly, from types of behavior to how certain groups or people are treated.
Ways of rewarding	Intrinsic or extrinsic rewards to staff and students; acknowledgements.
Rituals	How everyday events are run and what is emphasized at them — athletic achievement? Discipline? Academic achievement? Community contributions?
Communications	How messages, positive and negative, are delivered to the school or wider community; the channels for, levels of, and path for communication within the school.
Behaviors	How students and staff treat each other; the levels of respect, trust, collaboration, and sharing that are evident; how guests are treated.
Rites of exit and entry	How new staff members are inducted, how farewells for staff and students are conducted, how new students and new parents are welcomed.
Events	The focus of significant annual events like awards, school plays, field day, homecoming, prom, etc.

Source: Stoll, 1999.

what we do. They range from daily routines to how schools solve their problems. And they are well within any school's power to change" (Fullan & St. Germain, 2006, p. x). Culture shapes and molds the ways people think, act, and feel, and, more importantly, it affects individuals' performances.

WHY CULTURE MATTERS

The importance of school culture was recognized as early as the 1930s, yet the link between school culture and educational outcomes was not forged until the 1970s (Jerald, 2006). Researchers have found that healthy and sound school cultures correlate strongly with increased student achievement and motivation, as well as with teacher productivity and satisfaction (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Robert Marzano identified professionalism and collegiality as school factors that result in high levels of student learning (2003). According to Marzano's research, next to a highly effective teacher, the second most powerful factor in increased student achievement is an effective school culture that encourages, supports, and expects teachers to work together to improve their own practice as well as student learning.

In a study of thousands of teachers from 134 randomly selected schools, Craig Jerald (2006) asked teachers to describe their school culture and sorted the results according to whether schools were considered high- or low-performing. The results indicate the following.

High-performing schools focused on:

- Hunger for improvement;
- Passion for their work;
- Raising capability — helping people learn and get better at what they do;
- Adding value to their work — going beyond the minimum expectation;
- Promoting excellence — pushing the boundaries of achievement; and
- Making sacrifices to put pupils first.

Low-performing schools focused on:

- Warmth, humor, and repartee;
- Recognizing personal circumstances — making allowances ("it's the effort that counts"); and
- Creating a pleasant and collegial working environment.

WEBSITE RESOURCE

The site www.learningforward.org/standfor/definition.cfm offers examples of teams of teachers in action and teams talking about the value of collaboration.

Studies of school culture have found that positive school culture was a prime contributor to student academic success, could determine whether improvement efforts withered or succeeded, and cultivated school effectiveness and productivity (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Tool 5.1 defines the characteristics of high-powered, high-quality professional collaboration. Along with a discussion protocol, this tool will help faculty members discuss the definition of collaboration.

ATTRIBUTES OF A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

A collaborative culture differs from a congenial environment. Most school staff care about one

another. Educators have incredible capacity to attend to personal events or challenges: the birth of a baby, a wedding, or the need for sick days because of catastrophic illness. Those are the characteristics of a congenial environment, a comfortable work setting. To achieve high levels of student learning, a school must grow beyond congeniality to also include genuine professional collegiality.

Roland Barth (2006), an author and former principal who developed collaborative environments with his staff, has documented some specific actions that are evident within a collegial culture. Teachers:

1. Talk with one another about their practice;
2. Share their craft knowledge;
3. Observe one another while they are engaged in their practice; and
4. Root for one another's success.

School cultures characterized by collegiality and professionalism rather than congeniality emphasize the importance of teachers' conversation about their work (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). A collegial school staff works together with a tight focus on learning, high-quality teaching, student success, and overcoming barriers — the traits that distinguish a good school from a great one.

Judith Warren Little's early and more recent research (1981, 2006), conducted by listening to conversations in the teachers' work area, identified four norms that support changes in classroom instruction leading to high-performing cultures:

- **Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice.** These conversations result in a shared language among teachers. A shared language enables teachers

to go beyond the surface and explore the complexities of high-quality instruction. The concreteness, precision, and coherence of the shared language lead to high-quality experimentation with new instructional practices and more rigorous collegial interaction, according to Little.

- **Teachers and administrators frequently observe each other teaching and provide each other with useful ... evaluations of their teaching.** Most people experience a gap between knowing and doing. The best feedback is based on actual observation of classroom practice that focuses on common terminology and critical attributes of practice. While this kind of collegial interaction can be sensitive and requires many skills, it remains one of the most powerful strategies for building collaborative skills and transforming classroom practice.
- **Teachers and administrators plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together.** Before new practices or materials are actually used in the classroom, most teachers need time to prepare. When teachers and administrators work together, their collaboration reinforces the idea that joint work takes less time, builds a common understanding of the new approach, and supports each person to attain high-quality use of new practices.
- **Teachers and administrators teach each other the practice of teaching.** This norm goes beyond creating formal mentor or lead teacher positions to allowing teachers

to share practices that help students succeed. Teaching each other is the essence of job-embedded professional learning. When small learning teams work on developing new practices, review student work, and solve problems together, they create a collaborative culture that benefits both adults and students (Little, 1981, pp. 10–11).

School and district cultures either encourage or discourage collaboration. “Schools’ conditions function either as a *centripetal* force pulling teachers to pursue common purpose or as a *centrifugal* force pushing teachers to pursue individual purpose” (Rosenholtz, 1991, p. 63).

As many researchers have noted, a collaborative school culture is still comparatively rare. Collaborative cultures are built through the intentional and purposeful efforts of administrators, lead teachers, and the entire staff. This culture can be shaped by and pay off for the adults as well as students. The next section will address how to build and sustain a positive, professional collaborative culture.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES THAT CREATE A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Does teacher collaboration create a collegial culture, or does a positive, professional culture inspire, promote, and sustain teacher collaboration? There is no definitive answer to this question. Positive school cultures increase teachers’ willingness to engage in collaborative professional learning, and teachers’ willingness to collaborate improves school culture. The reciprocal relationship between culture and collaboration sometimes makes it difficult to determine whether to begin working toward change by try-

ing first to establish a culture that supports teacher interdependence or to begin substantive work within communities of learners.

Conditions needed to build teacher collaborative learning and positive culture include trust, opportunity for input, and focus on student learning. Jody Westbrook and Shirley Hord (2000) describe these as the necessary preconditions for establishing professional learning communities. The presence of these readiness factors contributes to a professional learning community’s success; their absence often presages difficulty or failure in professional learning community implementation.

Trust. High levels of trust among teachers, between teachers and administrators, between a school and its community, and between school and district-level personnel promote willingness to learn and change, honest communication, and deep commitments to school initiatives. The absence of trust distracts personnel from instructional issues to focus on conflicts of personality and practice. Conscious efforts to build trust among all members of the district and school community are an essential component of successful learning teams and learning schools.

Teacher input. Schools in which administrators share leadership and solicit and use teachers’ input increase collective learning. Administrators foster engagement and ownership of the schools and their results, model trust, and support staff collaboration on shared goals.

The plethora of new initiatives and multiple reform efforts, combined with the hefty demands of teaching, have led many schools to experience what Douglas Reeves labels as initiative overload (2010). Rather than being a sign of resistance, teachers’

questions about additional responsibilities and the time required for collaborative learning teams might uncover essential missing conditions required for collaboration to succeed. When teachers and administrators share their concerns with one another, they more fully commit to building collaboration within their school.

A focus on students. Although one might expect every school to focus on students, visitors to a cross-section of schools will quickly discover many ways teachers and administrators can be distracted from student learning. Administrators and teachers alike can be consumed by issues such as test scores and their implications for funding, status, and consequences; staff turnover and political concerns; personality clashes; and equity issues within and between schools.

School staff need to reflect frequently together on whether their programs, practices, and initiatives are improving teaching and student learning. Reflective conversations empower staff to adopt and adapt more common practices, including frequent collaboration, which focus on attaining the school's student learning goals.

Creating a healthy school culture is a collaborative activity among teachers, students, parents, staff, and the principal. Teacher leaders are increasingly viewed as linchpins to the development of a professional context and culture. Cultural leadership “must come from teachers if schools are to improve and teaching is to achieve professional status” (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995, p. 16). One of principals' lead responsibilities is actively supporting the development of teacher leaders who contribute to the creation of a shared vision and new cultural norms. **Tool 5.2** is an

article that describes the new role for teacher leaders in reculturing their schools. The principal, then, is a leader of leaders.

Another important role for principals is developing and sustaining trust within the building and influencing the culture. To change a school's culture, the principal models personal and professional regard for others, engages others in developing a shared vision of the school as a center for learning for students and adults, and builds teams within the school (Stolp, 1994). School leaders can also review the current situation, act to strengthen relationships among staff, and support the positive aspects that already exist, as described in the following sections.

Build trust. Trust among school community members can make or break efforts to reform classroom practices, implement curriculum, or improve student performance (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Tony Bryk and Barbara Schneider's research suggests that the levels of trust, respect, and collegial interaction among school staff may be more critical than the structural changes that are typically focused on during reform efforts.

Trust is so crucial because many change efforts inherently involve risk. “When school professionals trust one another and sense support from parents,

“Schools reporting strong trust levels were three times more likely to show improvement in reading and mathematics. Schools showing weak trust had virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading or mathematics.”

—Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 113

they feel safe to experiment with new practices” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 43).

Susan Stephenson (2009) reports that trust falls across a continuum, which she illustrates as a glass. An empty glass expresses distrust, and the full glass is mature trust. She finds that most schools hover around levels of distrust or early trust at best. Some schools move into the developing trust stage, and a few special schools attain the highest level of mature trust. She also reports that the principal and teacher leaders cannot ignore distrust but need to work to actively repair it. Principals and faculty need to have public conversations about trust and make specific plans to build it. **Tool 5.3** is an article about the importance of trust, the elements of trust, a principal survey, and tools for building trust.

Assess the current culture. The first step in developing a school culture that supports continuous, job-embedded professional learning is to assess the current culture. Determining how to assess school culture is a decision that is best made collaboratively by the principal and school leadership team. Before selecting a tool to use, both the principal and teacher leaders will want to study options, weigh the pros

and cons of each, and select one that will be informative, not overwhelming. The tools included in this module are examples of ways to assess school culture. If the school has not conducted a formal cultural audit, a better choice may be a simpler tool.

As the school develops a culture of openness and inquiry, other tools may be used. Regardless of the tool or process, regularly assessing school culture ensures that actions to strengthen the culture are data-driven and focused on areas of need.

Tool 5.4 is an article that describes how to conduct a formal school culture audit. **Tool 5.5** is an informal strategy for identifying the current culture of a school. **Tool 5.6** combines a survey with a staff conversation to discuss current school culture. When the current culture has been assessed, **Tool 5.7** can be used for ideas to strengthen the culture and as a format for developing cultural action plans.

Reinforce the positive. The next step is to transform the culture by “reinforcing positive aspects and working to transform negative aspects” (Peterson, 2002, p. 14). By first assessing the current culture, school leaders — both administrators and teachers — know what behaviors and values to reinforce and which to transform. In their work on school culture, Deal and Peterson (1999) suggest the following strategies for overcoming a negative culture:

- Confront negativity head-on; give people a chance to vent publicly.
- Shield and support positive cultural elements and staff.
- Focus energy on recruiting, selecting, and retaining effective, positive staff members.
- Celebrate the positive and the possible.
- Focus consciously and directly on eradicating

TABLE 5.2: STAGES OF TRUST

+3	Mature trust: High-performing
+2	Developing trust: Visible signs of trust
+1	Early trust: Some signs of trust
0	No trust: Trust is not in evidence
-1	Distrust: Lack of energy, open hostility

Source: Stephenson, 2009.

negatives and rebuilding around positive norms and beliefs.

- Develop new stories of success, renewal, and accomplishment.
- Help those who might succeed and thrive in a new district make the move to a new school (Deal & Peterson, 1999, pp. 127–128).

Tool 5.8 is an article that describes the elements of positive and negative school culture and strategies for strengthening culture.

Developing a collaborative school culture may seem challenging. Yet the evidence is quite clear that strong, positive school cultures benefit not only student learning but also the educators who work within those cultures. Staff members report feeling invigorated and renewed by this work. Practitioners and researchers continue to recommend that the intentional development of collaborative cultures is worth the effort.

STAGES OF TEAM COLLABORATION

Developing trust is necessary, yet it is insufficient by itself to develop strong cultures that strengthen teaching and increase student learning. For many schools, launching learning teams involves *only* forming teams among members of the staff and constructing a team meeting schedule without paying attention to building a trusting culture and the infrastructure for productive collaboration. Developing powerful collaborative learning teams that focus on student learning takes concerted effort to increase the likelihood that the teams will be effective and efficient and provide equitable opportunities for educator and student learning (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

Anne Jolly (2008) found that while many teach-

ers feel they already collaborate, there is a continuum of practices that can be called collaboration. Jolly identified four types of collaboration.

Informal conversations take place between teachers as they talk in the hallway, lunchroom, or workroom. These conversations help to build congenial and collegial relationships that are a necessary foundation for professional collaborative learning. They might not go deep enough to truly result in the shared language or shared understanding that is required for collaborative work.

Individual assistance happens between teachers who provide advice or solve problems of practice — usually by request. This collaboration is not typically sought within a group setting but in a one-on-one conversation between trusted colleagues. There is little evidence that these interactions will “overcome the norms of isolation and individualism that pervade a school’s culture” (Jolly, 2008, p. 3).

Group sharing occurs when teachers share ideas, lesson plans, and materials with one another. This is an initial activity for many learning teams and may be necessary so that more meaningful collaboration can develop later. However, this activity can be viewed by some educators as nice but not necessary; some feel that individual planning is a better use of their time.

Joint work occurs when teachers “work together as interdependent colleagues and rigorously examine together teaching and learning” (Jolly, 2008, p. 3). This behavior is considered a more mature and powerful form of collaboration. Teachers *intentionally learn* together while developing materials and instructional expertise.

Jolly points out that all teams will not necessarily

move through all the stages to the most powerful forms of collaboration. External guidance or internal coaching will most likely be needed to help all learning teams develop powerful forms of collaboration. **Tool 5.9** is an article that describes the evolution of a professional learning team. It also includes an activity to help build a common understanding of the purpose and appropriate use of professional learning teams.

Similarly, Parry Graham and Bill Ferriter (2008) worked together to build professional learning teams in a new North Carolina middle school. They also identified a sequence of activities that learning teams moved through. Overall, the work began with a focus on teaching and eventually targeted student learning. Graham and Ferriter observed seven stages of the development of learning teams.

Stage 1: Filling the time.

Unless there is a clear set of expectations and results, initial team meetings can be consumed with members trying to determine a focus and purpose. Members can either struggle to fill the time or put too many items on their agenda. Members might feel frustrated and resentful, and they may wonder whether this is a good use of their time.

To help resolve these issues, teams need time to analyze their students' learning data and identify a common student-learning goal that they can work on together (see **Module 2** on data).

Stage 2: Sharing personal practice.

Many schools are organized in ways that make it difficult for educators to know what and how their colleagues are teaching. So, learning teams naturally begin by sharing their personal practices with

each other. One outcome might be that instruction becomes more transparent among team members. Graham and Ferriter believe these conversations are a needed and helpful foundation on which to build advanced forms of powerful collaboration.

Teams may be so comfortable with this sharing that they do not continue to develop their collaboration. To help move teams beyond this stage, refer back to the cycle of continuous improvement in **Module 1**.

Stage 3: Planning.

Teams now are ready to undertake shared planning of lessons and units. To set the stage for planning, teams might also need to explore student content standards, curriculum, and instructional strategies. When that background has been established, team members will find that they can share the work so that each teacher does not have to individually plan each lesson. Team members will see this planning as a time saver — a wonderful benefit to their work.

While planning is important, it does not always focus the collaborative work on whether the lessons have resulted in improved student learning. Teams can be encouraged to take the next step by asking them to provide evidence of student learning that resulted from their shared lessons.

Stage 4: Developing common assessments.

Once learning team members focus on student learning, creating common assessments becomes a necessary task. This task, though, will require deep thinking about student learning outcomes and the kind of evidence that is required to demonstrate

those outcomes. Some educators might expect fill-in-the-blank assessments, while others will require essays and products to demonstrate deep learning of concept. Team members will need a variety of skills to explore the varying philosophies about teaching and learning that undergird this work. There might be conflict among members as they challenge each other's thinking about what it means for students to truly master content.

This stage will require additional information about creating assessments and will require refining discussion and dialogue skills to air differences of opinion and beliefs and to reach consensus.

Stage 5: Analyzing student learning.

Once common assessments have been developed, the next task for the team is analyzing student data to determine the extent of student learning. The question team members need to answer is whether students are learning what they need to learn. This stage can be one of the most difficult for teams and the time when they might need the “most technical and emotional support” (Graham & Ferriter, 2008, p. 41).

Module 3 offered a number of structured protocols that focus on looking at student work. These protocols provide a structure for conversations about student learning that ensures a high-safety environment for team members to explore their practice.

Stage 6: Differentiating follow-up.

An interesting change typically occurs at this stage: Team members transition from an individual to a collective responsibility toward student learning. They rely on each other to determine how to help all students learn the content. They can work indepen-

dently and need little direction from school leaders. Teams now will probably require differentiated opportunities, resources, and support.

Stage 7: Reflecting on instruction.

Teams are now ready to deeply reflect on instruction by determining which practices are most effective with their students. It will naturally bring them to ask new questions and begin a new round of exploration about teaching and learning. They are ready to conduct their own action research studies or participate in a structured lesson study.

Tool 5.10 is an article by Graham and Ferriter that explains each stage in more detail, the inherent challenges within each stage, and steps administrators and coaches can take to help teams continue to develop through the stages.

The descriptions of the continuum of collaboration practices by Jolly, Graham, and Ferriter propose that more powerful forms of collaboration will occur when external assistance or internal facilitation is provided. Providing time for teams to meet is a necessary but not sufficient condition for powerful collaborative learning. The next section will describe strategies for building effective learning teams.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

Successful teams have members who commit to refine the interpersonal skills necessary to move through all of the stages of collaborative team development that were provided in the earlier section. High-functioning teams result from a combination of skillful team members and agreed-upon structures and norms that help the team clarify how members will treat each other, foster collegial trust, enable

members to refrain from ineffective behaviors, and allow team members to engage in constructive communication. Working in a successful collaborative learning team requires teams to establish norms, build trust, and continuously monitor and assess team productivity.

ESTABLISH TEAM NORMS

Team norms identify the preferred behaviors required for a team to work productively while maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. Productive teams accomplish their tasks while working well with each other. Norms identify how decisions are made, outline how members treat each other, and describe effective ways to work together. Helpful norms are identified, posted, and used to monitor team interactions.

Many educators have engaged in activities to identify norms but have not always participated in ongoing team meetings where these norms were reviewed, used, and monitored. Each collaborative learning team identifies its own norms to reflect the uniqueness of the team. Establishing norms generates ownership and commitment to adhere to the norms. Teams also establish how they will notify one another when a norm is not honored.

Tool 5.11 is a newsletter about establishing team norms. Along with background information on norms, it provides a structure for team members to identify norms, samples of norms, and prompts for considering a range of norms. A quick test for the need for norms is also included.

BUILD TRUST

Trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be

vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Trust is the expectation that another's word, promise, or statement can be relied upon (Rotter, 1980). Trust is confidence that team members' motives, intentions, and behaviors are supportive and beneficial to one's own interests. Trust is the foundation of collaborative work and giving and accepting feedback in order to work toward improvement.

Relational trust develops through ongoing interactions each day as people work together to improve student learning. When trust exists, teams share more, think more creatively, help each other out, and take more risks. There is a feeling of being supported.

Whether team members are new to each other or have worked with each other for a long time, trust needs attention. The absence of trust will affect team development, learning, and confidence.

Tool 5.12 is an activity that helps the team build trust and assess the current level of trust among the team members. **Tool 5.13** can be used to determine which professional learning activities team members feel comfortable using and which seem beyond their comfort zone.

MONITOR TEAM PRODUCTIVITY

Effective teams reflect on their use of norms. Periodic reflection results in team members continuing to value the norms and intentionally working to use them during meetings. When teams consistently debrief, they are more likely to improve their interpersonal relationships and become more productive. They are able to deepen the honesty and authenticity

of their communication. Teams develop constructive ways to address disagreements rather than viewing them as threats to the team's existence.

Assessing team productivity is not a common activity for many teams. Using a highly structured and high-safety instrument will make the debriefing easier to conduct. **Tool 5.14** is a team self-assessment tool.

HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS

Disagreements signal that a team is doing significant work that is important to all team members. Disagreements and conflict are a natural part of any change process. What matters is how team members respond to and handle disagreements. Some adults are uncomfortable with disagreement or conflict, yet effective strategies for handling disagreements or conflict require specific skills that team members can learn and practice together. **Tool 5.15** is a set of team assessment instruments. It also includes information to help the team develop a strategy for resolving conflicts. **Tool 5.16** is an article that describes how to turn conflict into a productive learning experience.

HANDLING RESISTANCE

Resistance to any initiative is inevitable. Newton's third law of physics says that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In organizations, resistance can take many forms. There is aggressive resistance, which is overt and not easy to miss. There is passive-aggressive resistance, in which staff members appear willing to change, but only when specific conditions exist. There is passive resistance to change, which looks like enthusiastic willingness to

change, yet actions never take place.

Leaders cannot ignore resistance and expect it to dissipate. Resistance requires attention and effort. If it is ignored, resistance can grow stronger and derail change. If resistance is dealt with by force, it might lead to more nonproductive behaviors. Some individuals' resistance will be best handled with deep listening, trust, clarity of expectations, a commitment to support individuals, opportunities for learning, and adequate resources. For some, time and staying the course will make a difference. Ultimately, commitment and willingness to support the change will determine whether the change moves from a temporary to permanent state.

Tool 5.17 describes four key strategies to help educators overcome resistance to change. **Tool 5.18** lists 10 specific strategies for handling resistance.

PLAN TO SUCCEED

Changing practices, procedures, and policies is never easy, even for those who understand and have committed to the change. Some teachers whose practice has long been independent and isolated can find collaboration difficult. The rewards of collaboration may not be immediately evident because learning to collaborate takes time. Some educators will even find that their individual work multiplies rather than lessens. Yet as team members become more productive and focused on their work and increasingly trust one another, their work will be more professionally rewarding and their workload will be reduced.

To ensure success, leaders, including both administrators and teacher leaders, work hand-in-hand with all staff to plan thoughtfully to launch this new approach to professional learning, design and imple-

ment comprehensive plans that move from goals and vision to schoolwide practice, monitor progress and results, conduct formative assessments of their strategies and results based on data rather than hunches, build cross-team communication systems, and celebrate successes along the way. They invest in people, systems, and structures and recognize that what is worth doing well takes time, effort, and resources, along with commitment and courage.

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Reflections

1. Some researchers say that trust is more important to the success of collaborative professional learning than structural changes are. Do you agree? Why?
2. What examples or experiences do you have that support the argument that a positive, collaborative culture leads to higher levels of student achievement?
3. Do you believe that school culture can be shaped? If so, why?
4. Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson propose that principals and teacher leaders share the responsibility to attack negativity within the culture. What support do these leaders need in order to do so?
5. Storming is one stage of group development. Currently, how well do collaborative learning teams, school leadership teams, and faculty members deal with disagreements? What could be done to enhance or improve conflict resolution skills in your school?

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
5.1	'Collaboration lite' puts student achievement on a starvation diet	Tool 5.1 defines the characteristics of high-powered, high-quality professional collaboration.
5.2	A leadership conundrum	Tool 5.2 is an article that describes the new role for teacher leaders in reculturing their schools.
5.3	Trust matters — for educators, parents, and students	Tool 5.3 is an article explaining the importance of trust, the elements of trust, a principal survey, and tools for building trust.
5.4	An audit of the culture starts with two handy tools	Tool 5.4 describes a multistep approach for assessing the current culture.
5.5	Culture is...	Tool 5.5 describes a conversation that helps explain how the organization's culture is viewed by staff members.
5.6	Learning about your school's culture	Tool 5.6 is a survey that assesses school culture based on the 12 norms of a healthy school identified by Jon Saphier and Matthew King.
5.7	Strategies for strengthening culture	Tool 5.7 provides strategies for strengthening culture and a format for developing cultural action plans.
5.8	Positive or negative	Tool 5.8 examines the characteristics of positive and negative school culture. This article also describes methods for assessing current culture.
5.9	The evolution of a professional learning team	Tool 5.9 is an article that describes the evolution of a professional learning team. It also includes an activity that can be conducted during a schoolwide staff meeting to help build a common understanding of the purpose and appropriate use of professional learning teams.

5.10	One step at a time	Tool 5.10 is an article that explains each stage of team development, the inherent challenges of each stage, and steps administrators and coaches can take to help teams move through these stages.
5.11	Norms put the 'Golden Rule' into practice for groups	Tool 5.11 is devoted to explaining the purpose and importance of group norms, a procedure for involving team members in establishing norms, and samples of norms.
5.12	Trust factors	Tool 5.12 is an activity to help team members build trust and to assess the current level of trust among team members.
5.13	Zones of comfort, risk, and danger	Tool 5.13 is an article that helps team members determine which professional learning activities they are comfortable using.
5.14	Quick check	Tool 5.14 is a set of team self-assessment instruments.
5.15	Common goals override individual interests	Tool 5.15 provides a tool for assessing team members' current approaches to dealing with conflict.
5.16	How to turn conflict into an effective learning process	Tool 5.16 explains the skills and tools necessary for turning conflict into a learning experience.
5.17	4 key strategies help educators overcome resistance to change	Tool 5.17 addresses strategies for addressing resistance to change.
5.18	Shhhh, the dragon is asleep and its name is Resistance	Tool 5.18 describes a three-step process for managing resistance that includes understanding why it occurs. The article includes 10 ideas for handling resistance.

MODULE 6

How can instructional coaches contribute to collaborative professional learning teams?

The contributions of coaches

Knowledgeable resource

Tool 6.1: Collaboration takes center stage

Data collector

Tool 6.2: Let data do the talking

Tool 6.3: Tools of engagement

Tool 6.4: Coaching request form

Tool 6.5: Preobservation map

Tool 6.6: Reflective feedback protocol

Team facilitator

Tool 6.7: From group to team

Team coach

Tool 6.8: 3 steps lead to differentiation

Dedicated learning team

Tool 6.9: From solo to ensemble

SELF-ASSESSMENT ON CURRENT INVOLVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES IN COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS

1. **Instructional coaches participate as members of the school’s collaborative learning teams.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. **Instructional coaches have opportunities to meet in job-alike learning teams with coaches from other schools.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. **Our school has established procedures that permit our learning team to request assistance from instructional coaches.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. **When it comes to professional learning, data that describe classroom instructional processes complement data about student achievement.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

As an urban district, Rochester City Schools face a confluence of challenges — an increasingly diverse student population, greater accountability for student learning results, and limited financial resources. The district’s strategic plan commits to help every child “graduate with the skills to be successful in the global economy” (Rochester City Schools, n.d., p. 4). Because each school’s student population has different needs, instructional coaches are available to provide specialized support to faculty members within each school.

Jon Saphier and Lucy West (2009) describe “the primary role of school-based coaches as one that raises the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom in the school by building a culture in which teaching is public . . . , planning is thorough and collaborative . . . and [teacher] conversations and questions about improving student results . . . are constant, evidence-based and nondefensive” (p. 46). They add that the coach is the primary (and only) role in the present system that is designed specifically to improve instruction by working side-by-side with teachers on all aspects of the instructional core.

Alexander Russo (2004) asserts that “many of the more conventional forms of professional development — such as conferences, lectures, and mass teacher institute days — are unpopular with educators because they are often led by outside experts who tell teachers what to do and are never heard from again. To be effective, scores of researchers say, professional development must be ongoing, deeply embedded into teachers’ classroom work with children, specific to grade-level or academic content, and focused on research-based approaches. It also must help to open classroom doors and create more collaboration and a sense of community among teachers in a school” (p. 2).

Successful school-based coaching meets these criteria remarkably well. “What school-based coaching provides that other forms of traditional teacher inservice has not is the close connection to teachers’ classroom work” (Killion & Harrison, 2006, p. 13). Coaching occurs in many different ways. Sometimes, teacher leaders with expertise in particular content areas or instructional methodologies coach teachers as they learn a new set of instructional strategies. In other situations, peers observe each other and provide

feedback to each other. “Regardless of the approach to coaching in schools and districts,” say Killion and Harrison, “all coaching programs share the same goals — to improve performance and results for students” (Killion & Harrison, 2006, p. 13).

In a series of repeated research studies between the early 1980s and the mid-2000s, Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1995, 2003) explored the effects of various designs of professional development on teacher practice. Each study confirmed that professional development that combined the presentation of theory, modeling, and low-risk practice with coaching or other related forms of support designed to facilitate the implementation of learning significantly increased the application of new learning. “Recent analyses of the literature on training confirm what many trainers, teacher educators, and supervisors have long suspected — transfer of learned knowledge and skill is by no means a sure bet. In studies that have asked transfer questions (e.g., did

participants use new skills in the classroom, did they use them appropriately, did they integrate new skills with the existing repertoire, and was there long-term retention of the products of training?), several findings emerge. First, the gradual addition of training elements does not appear to impact transfer noticeably (effect size .00 for information or theory; theory plus demonstration; theory, demonstration, and feedback; effect size of .39 for theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback). However, a large and dramatic increase in transfer of training — effect size 1.68 — occurs when in-class coaching is added to an initial training experience comprised of theory explanation, demonstration, and practice with feedback” (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 112).

Administrators and faculty may wonder how a school’s instructional coach contributes to grade-level or content-based collaborative learning teams. Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison (2006) conclude that “to make deep changes in teachers’ instruc-

TABLE 6.1: EFFECT SIZES

TRAINING ELEMENTS	EFFECT SIZE
Information or theory	.00
Theory plus demonstration	.00
Theory plus demonstration and feedback	.00
Theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback	.39
Theory explanation, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching	1.68

Source: Joyce & Showers, 1995.

tional practice and content knowledge, educators need opportunities for continuous learning focused on improving student learning and overall school success rather than individual success, grounded in the realities of practice, and located within school as close to the classroom as possible; collaboration with peers about problems of practice; regular feedback about their practice; and opportunities to examine their beliefs related to teaching and learning” (p. 8).

Instructional coaches facilitate learning for their peers. In order to be effective in leading learning within teams and working individually with teachers, coaches need opportunities to participate in their own collaborative learning teams to further their development and skills. Central office staff facilitate these cross-school teams of instructional coaches and provide them support to meet the expectations of their role.

KNOWLEDGEABLE RESOURCE

The collaborative learning team begins by analyzing its students’ data, identifying a shared need within the team, and creating a learning goal for students and members of the team — the initial steps of the backmapping model that were introduced in **Module 2**. The principal and the school planning team review the teams’ goals and create a schedule for an instructional coach to work with specific teams. The coach may work with one team for a quarter or semester while working with another for only a few weeks. The instructional coach does not serve as the team leader but provides content knowledge, instructional strategies, and other background information related to the team’s goal.

The instructional coach should work with

the team for three to four weeks in order to create trust, understand students’ backgrounds and needs, identify past strategies used to address the need, and allow time to support classroom application of new strategies. The instructional coach can also help team members identify their own professional learning needs, provide articles and background information, facilitate discussions, and support the team’s application of new knowledge to lesson or unit planning.

A work sequence within a collaborative learning team might include the following steps:

1. The grade-level or content-area learning team identifies student learning needs and goals through data analysis.
2. The team and instructional coach identify teacher professional learning needs and develop new knowledge and skills.
3. The team and instructional coach collaborate on how to apply new learning in planning lessons.
4. The instructional coach spends two hours in each classroom as a co-teacher, conducting the lesson with the teacher, modeling best practices, and co-teaching.
5. The team reflects together on the lessons, documents new learning, and makes commitments for next steps and continued learning.

Tool 6.1 describes a coach’s work with grade-level teams in a school focused on integrating the performing arts into the curriculum.

DATA COLLECTOR

According to Mike Murphy (2009), another valuable role for the instructional coach is collecting classroom data. Classroom data create a picture of classrooms and help identify the relationship be-

tween those practices and student learning. The data prompt conversations with the teacher or a learning team about classroom practices and outcomes. Because the data collection tool is shared before the classroom visit, teachers know what to expect and may feel more comfortable with the process (Murphy, 2009). Comparing classroom data to student achievement scores provides a way to support team members' growth and reveals the overall strengths and needs in the team or school. **Tool 6.2** is an article that explains how teachers and instructional coaches together can use data to refine instructional practice and student learning.

The team can develop its own observation tool based on student learning goals. The creation of an observation tool could be a culminating activity of the team's professional learning work by identifying critical observable factors related to instruction and learning. If a learning team were focused on student engagement, for example, the team might identify asking higher-level questions and extensions, calling on students, providing specific praise, and seeking students' ideas, thoughts, and opinions as instructional behaviors that increase student involvement.

The learning team and coach work collaboratively to develop an observation tool. The coach or peer collects classroom data in the team's classrooms and shares the results at a team meeting. The data are used to determine the next steps for the team, including identifying any instructional strategies team members need to learn more about, strengths shared across the team, needs for ongoing learning, and ways to support each other's use of student engagement strategies.

Tool 6.3 is an article describing student engage-

ment. It includes a student engagement visit tool that describes both student and teacher actions.

Tools 6.4 through **6.6** are useful tools for planning and conducting classroom visits.

TEAM FACILITATOR

When collaborative professional learning teams are new to a school, the first few meetings require a clear purpose and obvious team structure. Team members want to know why they are meeting, what they are going to be doing, how they will work together, and what is expected of them. An instructional coach can serve as a team facilitator to structure initial meetings and help the team determine its direction, focus, and procedures.

Teams benefit from building strong relationships based on trust to be successful with their work tasks. "Groups need to examine and resolve core relational and operational questions before they can work together effectively" (Lee, 2009, p. 46). The instructional coach may serve as a neutral facilitator or a mediator to resolve interpersonal challenges if interactions among team members become difficult.

The instructional coach distributes facilitation and leadership to team members so that eventually they are shared among members. Shared leadership builds a team norm that everyone is an equal partner and accepts equal responsibility for the team's success (Jolly, 2008). **Tool 6.7** is an article that describes the stages of team development and the facilitator's role in helping teams become productive and focused.

TEAM COACH

The ultimate goal of professional learning is improved student learning. Improved student learn-

ing occurs when teachers' new knowledge is applied to classroom practice. Transferring new instructional strategies into the classroom is accomplished most effectively through job-embedded coaching and classroom assistance. Brian Cambourne (2000) reports that new classroom practices are more likely to become routine when clear and specific models of the instruction are provided, feedback occurs, peer support is involved, and there are multiple opportunities to practice the new behaviors until they become automatic and comfortable. The instructional coach's goal is to build the teacher's independent proficiency and confidence in new instructional strategies.

The instructional coach can use a three-step process for this gradual development of teacher proficiency and confidence. This process involves the "I do," "We do," and "You do" steps.

In the "I do" stage, the instructional coach demonstrates or models new instructional practices with a group of students while team members observe. This step can develop vocabulary, clarify key concepts, and answer teacher questions.

In the "We do" stage, the instructional coach now works individually with team members based on members' needs. This step can include co-planning, co-teaching, or additional demonstrations. The goal of this stage is to build skills through one-on-one support.

In the third stage, "You do," each teacher plans and teaches a lesson independently. The instructional coach is still available to answer questions or provide feedback. The coach can provide continued support through face-to-face meetings, e-mails, journaling, and team sharing time.

This model can be used just as effectively with

a team of teachers. **Tool 6.8** is an article that describes the use of the three-step model with teachers involved in improving literacy. It also describes how this model can be used with learning teams.

DEDICATED LEARNING TEAM

Learning teams work most effectively when there is a clear, relevant, and common task that can be identified by its members. Instructional coaches need the opportunity to meet with other coaches in their area of expertise to continue to develop their skills and knowledge. Face-to-face meetings can be a challenge because of the distance between schools. With the support of district office staff, technology can facilitate the instructional coaches' learning teams. **Tool 6.9** describes how technology supported a fine arts teachers' professional learning community.

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Reflections

1. Trust between the instructional coach and team members is crucial. What are the characteristics of trust, and how can we tell when trust exists among team members and the coach? What can be done to develop/repair trust?
2. In most schools, assigning one coach to every team is not possible. What criteria should be used when assigning coaches to teams?
3. How do you feel about the "I do, We do, You do" process? What are the benefits of this process? What are the limitations?
4. Teams need to address relationship and trust issues before they can turn their attention to their work tasks. Does this statement match our experience? Do we agree or disagree? Explain.

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
6.1	Collaboration takes center stage	Tool 6.1 describes a coach's work with grade-level teams in a school focused on integrating the performing arts into the curriculum.
6.2	Let data do the talking	Tool 6.2 is an article explaining how data can be used by instructional coaches to focus on classroom work.
6.3	Tools of engagement	Tool 6.3 is an article describing student engagement. It includes an engagement visit tool that describes both student and teacher actions.
6.4	Coaching request form	Tool 6.4 presents a form for requesting support from a coach.
6.5	Preobservation map	Tool 6.5 offers a planning guide for a coaching visit.
6.6	Reflective feedback protocol	Tool 6.6 identifies a protocol for debriefing a coaching visit.
6.7	From group to team	Tool 6.7 is an article that describes the stages of team development and the facilitator's role in helping teams become productive and focused.
6.8	3 steps lead to differentiation	Tool 6.8 is an article that describes the use of the three-step model with teachers involved in improving literacy. It also describes how this model can be used with learning teams.
6.9	From solo to ensemble	Tool 6.9 describes how technology supported a fine arts teachers' professional learning community.

MODULE 7

What are the principal and central office responsibilities for collaborative professional learning?

Central office's responsibilities for collaborative professional learning

Tool 7.1: Urban renewal

Tool 7.2: Activity: 7 major responsibilities for central office

Support strategies

Tool 7.3: Boost the learning power of school-based staff

Leading and supporting principals

Providing district support

Reporting process

Tool 7.4: School professional development plan synthesis

The principal's responsibilities for collaborative professional learning

Tool 7.5: Innovation Configuration maps: The principal

Support strategies

Leading and supporting team leaders

Providing external support

Tool 7.6: Identifying organizational support

Reporting processes

Tool 7.7: Collaborative professional learning team walk-through guide

Tool 7.8: Team spirit

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PRINCIPAL AND CENTRAL OFFICE SUPPORT OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

1. **Central office staff build the capacity of principals and teacher leaders to make high-quality decisions concerning student achievement and collaborative professional learning.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. **Central office staff customize district-provided professional development to support the school in achieving its professional development goals.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. **Collaborative school-based professional learning is a priority for central office staff.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. **Collaborative team-based professional learning is a priority for the principal.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. **Our principal provides the resources and supports required to design, manage, and implement collaborative professional learning.**

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

What are the central office’s responsibilities for collaborative professional learning? More than a decade ago, professional development experts began describing a necessary shift in school systems to guarantee powerful, effective professional learning for their teachers — professional learning that leads to improved student learning. This shift requires central office staff to adopt a new role: to build the capacity of school-level personnel to design, manage, implement, and monitor improvement efforts. New research studies are further defining central office roles and responsibilities that can be connected to successful school improvement efforts (Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010).

When it comes to educational reform, the individual school is considered the “center of change” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 203). The school — not the district — needs to be in control of planning and implementing change. In his meta-analyses of educational research, Robert Marzano (2003) found that “the school (as opposed to the district) is the proper focus for reform. Indeed, this is a consistent

conclusion in the research literature” (p. 10).

Yet Marzano’s findings should not be misinterpreted to mean that district-level staff have no responsibility for school-level change. The district administrator’s charge is to “develop the management capabilities of administrators — other district administrators and principals — to lead change,” according to Michael Fullan (2007, p. 229). Neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies are adequate to leverage desired changes in schools and classrooms. Centralized (top-down) change seems not to work because it uses a uniform or one-size-fits-all approach “that is inappropriate and ineffective except for the narrowest of goals” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 200). Decentralized (bottom-up) change can be difficult because of the “lack of capacity to manage change” (p. 200). The district administrator’s goal is not to install a specific program but to “build the capacity of the district and the school to handle any and all innovations” (p. 214).

Marzano and Timothy Waters (2009) identified five central office leadership responsibilities that correlate to improved student learning. Generally, these responsibilities involve working directly with schools,

principals, and staff to agree upon nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction; building capacities; monitoring implementation; and allocating resources to support instructional and learning goals.

The Wallace Foundation’s study of improving urban school districts found that central office leaders “fundamentally transformed their work and relationships with schools to support districtwide teaching and learning improvement” (Honig et al., 2010, p. iii). The central offices transformed into a support system for schools to ensure the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. The study found that generally there are not “districtwide improvements in teaching and learning without substantial engagement by their central office in helping all schools build their

capacity for improvement” (p. iii). **Tool 7.1** is an article about The Wallace Foundation study on improving urban central office responsibilities.

A common theme among these studies is the central office’s responsibility to build the staff’s capacity to use new practices. This development work will also be necessary for collaborative professional learning. Principals and teacher leaders need to know how to design, manage, and implement collaborative professional learning. Central office staff responsibilities for collaborative professional learning also include allocating resources, coordinating efforts across schools, and monitoring implementation. **Tool 7.2** is an article that describes in more detail the responsibilities of central office staff in supporting collaborative professional

FIGURE 7.1: DATA-DRIVEN STANDARD INNOVATION CONFIGURATION — CENTRAL OFFICE

Desired Outcome 4.4: Support administrator and teacher analysis of data.				
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Respond to requests for assistance from school staff and administrators concerning analysis and data-driven decision making. Create charts and graphs of data in order to help school staff and administrators analyze data for decision making. Collect pertinent data for school staff and administrators to use.	Create charts and graphs of data to help school staff and administrators analyze data and make decisions using data. Collect pertinent data for school staff and administrators to use.	Collect pertinent data for school staff and administrators to use.	Deny principals and teachers access to student data.	

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003.

learning. It also includes a self-assessment activity and structured conversation for central office leaders.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

A set of Innovation Configuration (IC) maps was developed to describe central office staff responsibilities in supporting high-quality collaborative professional learning. IC maps describe a continuum of practices (see **Figure 7.1**). Level 1 describes ideal implementation, while Level 4 describes nonuse of new practices. IC maps are based on two underlying assumptions: Change develops incrementally over time, and high-quality implementation of new practices will have greater impact than lower-quality implementation. Central office staff can use IC maps as a self-assessment instrument to compare their current behaviors to ideal practice. **Tool 7.3** includes selected Innovation Configuration maps that describe the central office staff responsibilities in promoting collaborative professional learning. It also describes how these continuums can be used as a self-assessment instrument.

In Rochester City School District schools, there are specialists or coaches with no role-alike colleagues at their school, such as teachers of singleton classes, resources personnel, and specialists. These staff members benefit from participating in cross-school or districtwide teams facilitated by a district instructional specialist and lead teacher. Instructional coaches might meet in collaborative learning teams to develop facilitation skills, create new data analysis formats, or improve their expertise in coaching, curriculum, and instruction. Noninstructional staff, such as nurses, counselors, social workers, and so on, might also meet in cross-school teams to address top-

ics unique to their field and their interactions with students and staff. Librarians from schools throughout a district may form a collaborative professional learning team to identify how to support classroom reading instruction within their library programs.

LEADING AND SUPPORTING PRINCIPALS

Each school principal benefits from having additional knowledge and skills to lead collaborative professional learning within his or her school. Effective collaborative professional learning requires more than organizing teams of learners. Principals need to understand the rationale for collaborative professional learning, know how to create structures for it, develop staff members' skills in collaborating, and monitor and assess teams' effectiveness and results.

Rochester City School District central office has an essential role in developing the principal's leadership capacity. A helpful strategy is to form principal collaborative professional learning teams. This strategy gives principals firsthand experience with the skills their teachers will use to learn with and from their colleagues. The teams are facilitated by central office staff members who model how to help teams identify their learning goal, analyze appropriate data, monitor progress, and maintain accountability for attaining goals. Among the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate collaborative learning teams are:

- Defining the purpose and function of effective collaborative professional learning teams;
- Building a positive learning environment for teachers;
- Using a variety of data;
- Analyzing data with specific processes and protocols;

- Building monitoring and accountability systems for learning teams;
- Building trust and communication;
- Facilitating conflict management;
- Developing collaborative skills of learning team members; and
- Understanding the purpose of a variety of collaborative learning designs.

PROVIDING DISTRICT SUPPORT

To support collaborative learning in schools, central office staff might review district policies, procedures, and culture to ensure they support collaborative learning. As schools transition to collaborative professional learning teams, they will benefit from increased district support. District support includes:

- Preparing principals and teacher leaders to facilitate learning teams;
- Providing school leaders the flexibility to make critical decisions related to their daily schedule;
- Making relevant data easily accessible to school leaders and providing the appropriate development in using data effectively;
- Creating a districtwide resource bank via a district portal or other means using current research on how professional learning is linked to student achievement; and
- Conducting ongoing school-based support in the form of walk-throughs, coaching for school leadership teams and the school principal, and giving feedback and evaluations.

District leaders make a difference in whether schools successfully implement collaborative professional learning. While some schools are able to make the transition to collaborative professional learning

without district support, the presence of intensive support signals the district's commitment to increasing teaching capacity and student learning.

REPORTING PROCESS

In order to provide support and assistance, the central office reviews each school's professional learning plans and summarizes the learning goals, key actions planned, and desired results. This summary is used to bring schools with common goals together to provide ongoing support and assistance and build cross-school collaboration among various schools. A school cluster (e.g. zone) can share plans, resources, and solutions. The cluster can also be a more efficient way for central office staff to streamline support of common goals rather than supporting one school at a time. **Tool 7.4** provides a chart to summarize schools' professional learning goals in order to identify commonalities among building plans.

THE PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The principal's commitment, investment, and involvement are essential for collaborative professional learning to succeed within a school. The principal creates trust within the building, shares responsibility for student learning, and develops a school culture that fosters collaborative professional learning opportunities. To create, organize, and sustain collaborative professional learning, principals build the capacity of faculty members to work collaboratively, analyze data, agree to shared goals, monitor their team's work and results, facilitate team development, manage conflict, handle resistance,

and identify and provide organizational support for high-quality professional learning teams.

The principal’s role in developing and sustaining collaborative professional learning involves many new skills and strategies. To help principals identify specific strategies for supporting collaborative professional learning, a set of Innovation Configuration (IC) maps is available (see **Figure 7.2**). Principals can use the IC maps as a self-assessment instrument to compare their current behaviors to ideal practice. **Tool 7.5** provides Innovation Configuration maps that describe the principal’s responsibilities for supporting collaborative professional learning. It also describes how these continuums can be used as a self-assessment instrument.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Along with high-quality teaching, the principal’s

role is one of the most crucial elements affecting student achievement. Yet the principal alone will be unable to achieve the school’s goals. Distributed leadership is an essential skill for school leaders (CCSSO, 2008; Honig, et al., 2010; NAESP, 2003). Principals need to identify and nurture teacher leaders. Teachers have developed expertise in many areas, and principals need to activate these skills to solve schoolwide challenges and issues. The principal can continuously develop the leadership skills of the school’s planning team and learning team leaders through readings, discussions, and problem-solving sessions.

Many staff members assume that collaboration will be easy because staff members know each other and are congenial. However, congeniality and collaboration are different. Collaboration entails a team setting mutual goals, using shared strategies, and agreeing to collective results. Faculty members

FIGURE 7.2: LEARNING COMMUNITIES INNOVATION CONFIGURATION — PRINCIPAL

Desired Outcome 1.4: Creates and maintains a learning community to support teacher and student learning.				
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Builds a culture that respects risk taking, encourages collegial exchange, identifies and resolves conflict, sustains trust, and engages the whole staff as a learning community to improve the learning of all students.	Works with faculty to create a variety of learning teams to attain different goals. Facilitates conflict resolution among group members. Supports learning teams by providing articles, videos, and other activities for use during team meetings.	Works with faculty to create learning teams with clear goals, outcomes, and results outlined in writing. Expects and reviews team logs each month in order to coordinate activities within and among the teams.	Creates ad hoc study teams without clear direction or accountability.	Does not create learning teams.

Source: Killion & Roy, 2009.

benefit from opportunities to learn about the value of collaborating, setting team norms of operation, the essential skills for developing productive teams, data analysis strategies, and understanding the essential elements of collaborative professional learning. The tools in **Modules 1, 2, and 5** can facilitate the development of these skills.

LEADING AND SUPPORTING TEAM LEADERS

Collaborative professional learning teams require an internal facilitator, often a teacher leader, to help team members use data, target student and teacher learning, manage collaborative relationships, and handle disagreements. Facilitating peer interactions and building norms may be new skills for some team leaders, who will need to develop background information about collaborative learning teams and ongoing support to feel confident in their role.

To ensure that initial collaborative learning team meetings are productive, the principal should help team leaders or facilitators have a clear definition of the purpose for collaborative professional learning teams as well as a specific agenda for the first few meetings. Learning team facilitators can be brought together to form their own professional learning team to review, discuss, and apply the text and tools from this resource guide. Meeting times can be used to determine appropriate learning team agenda items, although each team may require slightly different agendas to meet members' needs. Team-facilitator meetings might also include time to identify barriers and brainstorm solutions. The first few collaborative professional learning team meetings are crucial to ensure that faculty members view the meetings as a worthwhile and productive use of

their time. The tools from **Modules 3, 4, and 5** will be helpful in setting the purpose and structure of initial meetings.

PROVIDING EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Thomas Guskey (2000) found that many educational reform initiatives are not fully implemented because the necessary organizational support is not identified or provided. “As a result,” Guskey states, “educators end up trying to implement innovations that they do not fully understand in organizations that do not fully support their efforts” (p. 149).

Guskey (2000) summarized the organizational conditions and resources that are critical to successfully implementing new processes, practices, and policies:

- **Resources** such as articles about the benefits of collaboration, professional learning designs, or protocols;
- **Access to colleagues** who are also using the innovation, such as those holding meetings for team leaders within the building or from other buildings within the district;
- **Assessment** of and **feedback** about collaborative professional learning meetings from walk-throughs, reviews of team plans, or monitoring team logs;
- **Time** to participate productively within a collaborative professional learning team;
- **Protection from outside intrusions** so that time, energy, and attention are not diverted from collaborative professional learning team meetings;
- **Openness to experimentation** so that a trusting environment is established in which faculty members feel comfortable trying new classroom practices;

- **Recognition of success and of progress** so that new practices are reinforced, celebrated, and honored; and
- **Support at all levels of administration** so that there is a common message about the importance of collaborative professional learning from every department throughout the district.

When these organizational support conditions exist, change is more likely to happen. When they do not exist, efforts to adopt new practices wither. The principal and faculty, working together, need to identify what organizational supports are needed within their context to create effective collaborative professional learning teams. The principal and central office are responsible for providing the supports that are within their control to encourage and sustain these efforts. **Tool 7.6** can be used by administrators and faculty to identify the organizational supports that are needed to support the use of collaborative professional learning within their school.

REPORTING PROCESSES

To support learning teams, maintain coherence within the school, and monitor team effectiveness and results, principals review each learning team's plans, provide feedback, assist in identifying resources and support, and help teams accomplish their goals. Principals visit team meetings periodically to learn about the team's work and to offer support. The teams need to update the principal about team activity and progress so that the principal stays informed, knows what each team is learning, provides opportunities for teams to share what they have learned with other school teams, and celebrates team progress and results.

Monitoring team progress is a crucial principal

responsibility. Monitoring allows principals who are paying attention to priority initiatives ensure they stay in the forefront of everyone's daily work (Reeves, 2006). Principals monitor team progress primarily by reviewing team meeting logs (see **Module 8** for sample team log). Principals can also meet with team leaders or with specific teams to learn about their work, provide feedback, examine student learning results, or observe members' interactions. Regular feedback helps teams clarify expectations, become more productive, and focus on the work that will improve teaching and learning. **Tool 7.7** is a walk-through tool principals can use to gather data about and provide feedback to collaborative learning teams. **Tool 7.8** is an article that describes the conditions and components of a highly productive learning team and provides a self-assessment tool for learning teams. This information can help the principal understand the interactions of effective learning teams as well as the data that can be used for team feedback.

School-based professional learning teams take time to develop and refine. The district and schools need to prepare staff, provide organizational support, and deliver services so that learning teams become a critical element of a larger effort to improve student learning. High-quality collaborative learning teams are a strategy for accomplishing the school and district strategic vision of learning for all students. To ensure that all learning teams accomplish the results for student learning, active support and assistance from the central office and school leaders are required.

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Reflections

1. What do central office staff members see as the advantages and disadvantages of school-based professional learning?
2. What district policies and procedures might need to change to support school-based, collaborative professional learning?
3. How do school leaders create a culture of trust and risk taking with the school?
4. What skills, knowledge, and capacities do school staff members need in order to be able to implement collaborative professional development?
5. What opportunities are available for principals to learn how to lead and facilitate collaborative professional learning within their schools?

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
7.1	Urban renewal	Tool 7.1 is an article about The Wallace Foundation study on improving urban district central office responsibilities.
7.2	Activity: 7 major responsibilities for central office	Tool 7.2 is an article that describes in more detail the responsibilities of central office staff in supporting collaborative professional learning. It also includes a self-assessment activity and structured conversation for central office leaders.
7.3	Boost the learning power of school-based staff	Tool 7.3 includes selected Innovation Configuration maps that describe the central office staff responsibilities in promoting collaborative professional learning. It also describes how these continuums can be used as a self-assessment instrument.
7.4	School professional development plan synthesis	Tool 7.4 provides a chart to summarize schools' professional learning goals in order to identify commonalities among building plans.
7.5	Innovation Configuration maps: The principal	Tool 7.5 provides selected Innovation Configuration maps that describe the principal's responsibilities for supporting collaborative professional learning. It describes how these continuums can be used as a self-assessment instrument.
7.6	Identifying organizational support	Tool 7.6 can be used by administrators and faculty to identify the organizational supports that are needed to support the use of collaborative professional learning within their school.
7.7	Collaborative professional learning team walk-through guide	Tool 7.7 is a walk-through tool principals can use to gather data about and provide feedback to collaborative learning teams.
7.8	Team spirit	Tool 7.8 is an article that describes the conditions and components of a highly productive learning team and provides a self-assessment tool for learning teams. This information can help the principal understand the interactions of effective learning teams, as well as the data that can be used for team feedback.

MODULE 8

How can collaborative learning teams measure their progress?

Measuring progress

Team productivity

Tool 8.1: Learning team logs

Tool 8.2: Learning team surveys

Tool 8.3: Protocol for discussing survey results about team effectiveness and/or team meetings

Tool 8.4: Learning team survey

Teacher knowledge and skills

Tool 8.5: The real measure of a professional development program's effectiveness lies in what participants learn

Changes in instruction

Tool 8.6: Smart moves

Tool 8.7: Focus, feedback, follow-through

Tool 8.8: Learning walk

Student learning

Tool 8.9: Wake-up call

Tool 8.10: Teamwork on assessments creates powerful professional development.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PRINCIPAL AND CENTRAL OFFICE SUPPORT OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

1. Collaborative professional learning teams use student and teacher data to assess the achievement of their professional learning goals.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. Members of collaborative professional learning teams evaluate their team’s productivity and efficiency.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. Collaborative professional learning teams analyze student work to determine whether they have accomplished their student learning goals.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

4. Collaborative professional learning teams set short-term benchmarks for their student learning goals.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

5. Collaborative professional learning teams reflect on their individual and team commitment to the collaborative learning team process.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

Module 1 introduced the definition of effective professional learning outlined in the cycle of continuous improvement (see **Figure 8.1**). Collaborative professional learning teams begin by analyzing data to identify student needs, which are the springboard for teacher learning needs. Along with enhancing professional knowledge and skills, another aspect of the teacher learning goal is trans-

ferring new strategies into the classroom through long-term support and coaching. To determine whether collaborative professional learning has accomplished its goals, members collect evidence. Assessment of collaborative professional learning measures whether collaborative learning teams are effective and efficient, professional learning strategies have contributed to teachers' development and implementation of new knowledge and skills, educa-

FIGURE 8.1: CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Analyzing **student, teacher, and school data** to identify educator learning needs;
- Identifying specific educator learning goals based on the **analysis of data**;
- Improving educator effectiveness by implementing sustained, evidence-based learning strategies;
- Transferring new instructional strategies into the classroom by engaging in job-embedded coaching and classroom assistance;
- **Assessing** professional learning continuously to determine the effectiveness of activities and strategies in achieving identified learning goals;
- Adjusting teachers' efforts and practices based on **continuous assessment** of student and teacher learning; and
- Involving **external assistance** when appropriate to assist teachers to accomplish their goals.

Source: Hirsh, 2009.

tors are consistently using new classroom strategies with students, and student learning has improved using the measures described in the SMART goal.

Student work, benchmark assessment results, meeting logs, meeting process and productivity surveys, and walk-through data are used to determine whether team members and their students are making steady progress over the course of the school year. Used as a formative assessment, these data also provide evidence that a team may need to change its strategies to accomplish its intended goals.

Different types of evidence are used to assess the effectiveness of collaborative professional learning over time. Early in the process, the focus is on whether the teamwork is efficient, effective, and productive. Next, data are collected to determine whether teacher knowledge and skills are enhanced. Then, evidence of changes in instructional practice and strategies is gathered. Finally, data that determine whether student learning has improved are used (see **Figure 8.2**).

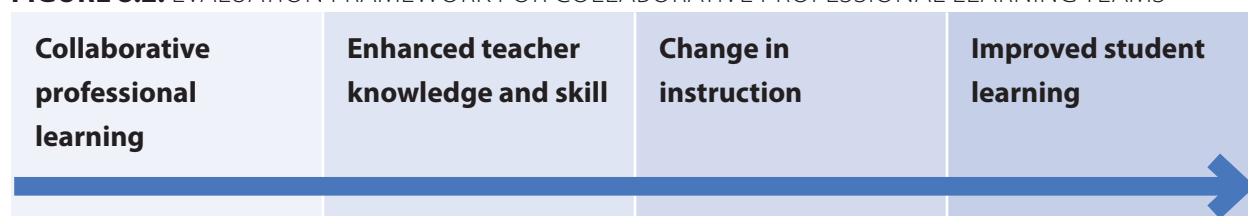
TEAM PRODUCTIVITY

Initiating and sustaining a collaborative professional learning team requires ongoing maintenance of the team structure. A safe and productive environment in which all members feel valued, respected,

and equally responsible for team results requires continuous effort. Teams move through many stages before becoming independently productive; internal and external monitoring and feedback support the team’s development. (See **Module 5** for more information on team development.) Principals monitor the work of collaborative professional learning teams in order to provide feedback, offer support and assistance, and bring teams with similar goals together to share what they have learned and their instructional strategies. Team logs can simplify monitoring by providing summaries of the team’s work. **Tool 8.1** is a sample of a team log that can be completed during team meetings and used to report team activities, accomplishments, and requests for assistance.

Collaborative professional learning teams also continuously reflect on their own processes and procedures. Using a variety of assessment tools allows a team to monitor members’ own progress and to identify goals for continued development as a team. **Tool 8.2** is a set of team meeting surveys. **Tool 8.3** is a protocol for discussing team survey results. **Tool 8.4** is an extensive learning team survey that would be appropriate for all teams to take. Teams can determine which surveys are most appropriate and keep the results along with meeting logs. When learning teams are newly formed, members should

FIGURE 8.2: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS



Source: Adapted from Desimone, 2009.

reflect frequently to ensure building a culture of collaboration, trust, and clarity of purpose to assist with the change process, and should add details about what they are reflecting about. As teams develop and become more effective, their reflections can be less frequent, although never eliminated. The principal and school leadership team use these results to assess progress for the whole school and can identify common needs for professional learning that transcend individual teams.

TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The second stage in the evaluation framework for collaborative professional learning teams is assessing the enhancement of teachers' knowledge and skills (see **Figure 8.2**). Many program evaluations assume that educators automatically understand the key concepts and how to transfer new information to their classrooms.

Thomas Guskey (2000) believes there are two important reasons for gathering evidence of participant learning. First, gathering evidence of enhanced knowledge and skills validates the effectiveness of professional learning. As Guskey (2000) puts it, “The human mind is not a tape recorder” (p. 122) — what people remember is sometimes oversimplified or misunderstood because of the learning design. If teachers have misunderstood, then additional learning opportunities can be designed to correct those errors. Team members use evidence of their learning to determine whether their learning activities are effective and to identify what changes they may want to make.

Second, deep understanding is essential for transferring new knowledge into classroom practice.

Teachers need deep conceptual understanding of new ideas and practices in order to implement them with high quality. They need to know which components of a new approach are most likely to result in high levels of student learning. When there is deep understanding of the new method, appropriate adaptations can be made to match student needs. “In the absence of such knowledge and skills, applications are likely to be mechanistic, inappropriate, and ineffective” (Guskey, 2000, p. 123). Through their conversations, development of instructional resources, and examination of student work, team members will be able to check their understanding of new learning.

In the context of collaborative professional learning, the best way to determine whether team members have learned and understood new methods and approaches is through oral or written reflections, work samples, discussions and protocols, and team products. If a team were studying differentiation, for example, they might develop a walk-through observation form that describes the critical attributes of differentiation. This tool can be reviewed by an instructional coach or central office staff and used to correct any misconceptions on the part of the team. Team members then could use the guide to visit one another's classrooms and bring the data back to the whole team for analysis. **Tool 8.5** is an article that describes methods for collecting information about participants' learning as a result of professional development.

CHANGES IN INSTRUCTION

The third stage of the evaluation framework for collaborative professional learning teams is assessing the quality of classroom implementation of new

FIGURE 8.3: SAMPLE 30-60-90 CHART FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION

	30 DAYS	60 DAYS	90 DAYS
Our major focus	Reading comprehension	Reading comprehension	Reading comprehension
What adults are doing	Focusing on developing a range of comprehension questions	Focusing on developing a range of comprehension questions	Focusing on developing a range of comprehension questions
What students are doing	Majority of time students are using higher-order thinking skills	Majority of time students are using higher-order thinking skills	Majority of time students are using higher-order thinking skills
Skills being learned	Classifying: organize according to similarities	Compare and contrast	Compare and contrast
Tools and materials being used	Graphic organizers: bubble chart	Graphic organizers: comparison matrix	Graphic organizers: Venn diagram
Challenges, benefits, and frustrations	Teachers and students frustrated because students won't be good at answering higher-level questions	Student frustration, matching questions to those found on the state assessment	Teachers' time to develop higher-order questions for primary students — these questions are rare in textbooks

strategies or methodologies. Research conducted by a team at SEDL, a Texas-based research and development center, found that implementation takes time, and high-quality implementation does not happen automatically (Hall & Hord, 2001). Gene Hall and Shirley Hord found that the change process seems naturally to entail adapting, modifying, and altering an innovation. Yet, they found that high-fidelity use of new practices resulted in higher levels of student learning. Hall and Hord contend that when an instructional strategy is used as it was intended, student outcomes improve. Further, they assert that

principals, central office staff, and other leaders of learning are responsible to ensure that educators know what those practice look like so that they will be successful in implementing them.

Classroom implementation is divided into two phases. Phase 1 involves practicing new strategies and methods. Phase 2 entails the high-quality or high-fidelity implementation of new strategies and practices. Both phases require team and classroom support and coaching.

Breaking down the new strategies into specific steps facilitates Phase 1 implementation. The

learning team can identify implementation steps in 30-day increments (see **Figure 8.3**). The major focus can remain constant while specific teacher and student strategies change. The tool identifies the teacher and student work that will be collected for each implementation step, such as examples of the teachers’ comprehension questions and samples of students’ graphic organizers matched to teacher questions. Everett Rodgers (1995) found that when an innovation can be divided into smaller steps, it is more likely to be implemented. **Tool 8.6** is an article that explains why creating intermediate goals can help a team or school accomplish their goals. It also provides more information about ways to use the 30-60-90 format.

Innovation Configuration (IC) maps for new initiatives describe high-fidelity implementation (see **Module 2**, Step 7). In order to link student learning to new strategies, it is important to have evidence about teacher practice. It is also essential that teachers know what high-quality practice looks like in operation. High-fidelity teacher writing practices, for example, involve asking students to assess their own writing using a scoring rubric, providing time

for student and peer writing assessments, providing prompt and detailed verbal and written feedback to students, and conducting one-on-one writing conferences. Teachers who follow these research-based practices can expect higher assessment scores in writing.

Douglas Reeves (2009) finds that “Implementation that was moderate or occasional was no better than implementation that was completely absent. Only *deep* implementation had the desired effect on student achievement” (p. 44). Further, Reeves (2009) found that when schools attained 90% implementation, achievement gains were three to five times higher than those of schools with less than 10% implementation (p. 37).

Innovation Configuration maps define deep implementation by describing a continuum of practice for the innovation’s major components (see **Figure 8.4**). Level 1 describes high-fidelity practice, while Level 5 describes nonuse of the innovation. Teams or whole schools can develop IC maps for priority initiatives. IC maps are used as self-assessment tools and observation or walk-through tools for monitoring the quality of implementation. They

FIGURE 8.4: SAMPLE INNOVATION CONFIGURATION MAP FOR ONE ASPECT OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Component 2: Selects and states learning objectives.				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Uses verbal and written learning objective that is relevant to students and states it in student terms/language.	Provides a learning objective but not in student language.	Uses a learning objective to design instruction that is relevant to students but seldom states it or writes it for students.	Seldom identifies or states a learning objective during instruction.	Does not identify or state a learning objective during instruction.

are *not* designed to be used for teacher evaluation but rather are for providing continuous support and assistance. **Tool 8.7** is an article that describes how a district in Arizona used IC maps to support reading instruction. **Tool 8.8** is an article that describes how a learning walk can be used by learning teams to determine the quality of implementation of new practices. The process can be adapted for any content or instructional area, and the process of developing an IC map serves to clarify the new practices and to develop a deeper understanding of the critical elements of the new practices.

STUDENT LEARNING

Improved student learning is the ultimate goal of effective professional development. Collecting and analyzing student learning data is the final step in the evaluation framework for collaborative professional learning (see **Figure 8.2**). The collaborative learning team has already established how members will measure student success by developing a SMART goal. The SMART goal specifies the expected level of improvement as well as the measurement tool (see **Module 2**, Step 3). If the SMART goal was “5th-grade male students will increase 10% on the spring mathematics benchmark assessment,” then the learning team would collect and analyze the results for 5th-grade male students on the spring benchmark assessment to determine whether that goal had been reached.

The learning team might have established its SMART goal at the beginning of the school year. To know whether teachers were making progress toward that goal, the team would also create intermediate benchmarks for the student learning goal.

Short-term benchmarks permit the team to measure student progress throughout the year and determine whether collaborative learning work is making a difference for students. The 30-60-90 format mentioned above and in **Tool 8.6** is useful in establishing informal short-term benchmarks, as well as identifying which student work to collect.

The learning team might also develop a rubric to score a broad sample of student work. The learning team randomly pulls student work from every member’s classrooms, trades the work, and scores it using the rubric. Scoring a representative sample of student work has three effects. First, it establishes a common understanding among the learning team members about the standards for student work. Second, it provides a result for the whole learning team rather than for only the individual classroom teacher. Building a belief in collective responsibility for students’ learning is one of the attributes of an effective learning team and professional learning community. Third, the student results provide feedback about the effectiveness of the learning team’s work. If the student results have not been accomplished, the team can decide to alter their learning activities, extend their learning about the content area or instructional strategies, or bring in an external specialist for additional support.

Tool 8.9 describes a school that used common assessments and scoring rubrics to improve student learning. **Tool 8.10** describes a process for developing common assessments and scoring rubrics aligned with standards for student learning.

Assessing the impact of collaborative professional learning teams, as described in this module, provides the learning team with critical feedback

about the team's work and results. Feedback is an integral component of collaborative learning, providing information that helps the team verify its progress or confront its challenges. Assessing each component of the evaluation framework can be completed in a variety of ways, and it is essential to gather data about each component in order to link professional development with student results. The assessment can determine whether teacher practices impact student learning and which components of professional learning have the most powerful impact in changing classroom practice.

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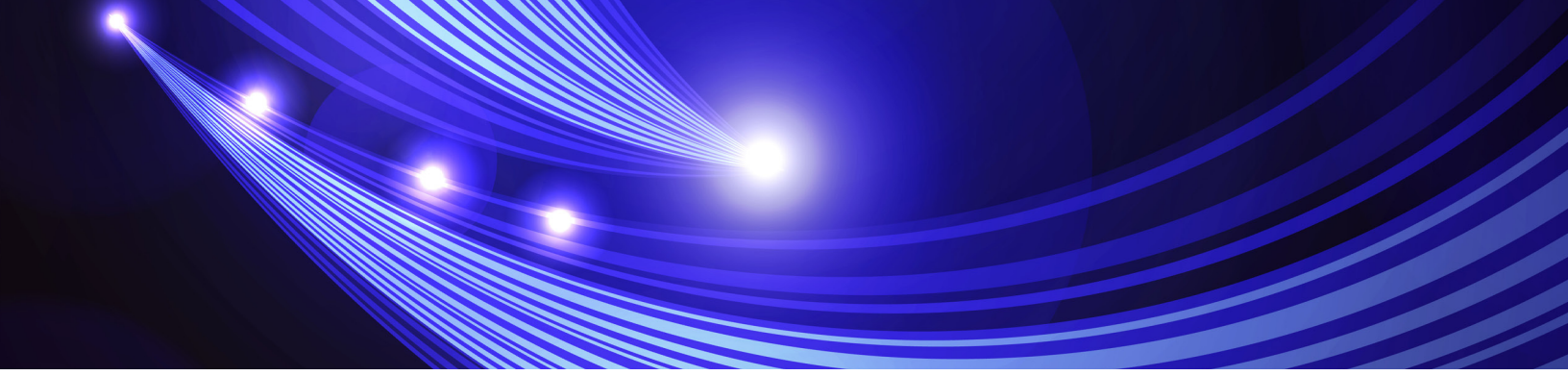
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Reflections

1. The evaluation framework for collaborative professional learning teams (**Figure 8.2**) describes four areas of a learning team's progress — team productivity, teacher knowledge and skills, changes in instruction, and student learning. What are the benefits of this framework? What concerns does it raise?
2. How much experience does the team currently have in establishing short-term, intermediate goals? What are the benefits and concerns about establishing intermediate goals?
3. How much experience does the team have in creating common scoring rubrics? What benefits and concerns do team members have about using common scoring rubrics?
4. How will the 30-60-90 format help learning teams?
5. What resources and support will teams need to use the evaluation framework for collaborative professional learning?
6. Innovation Configuration maps describe high-fidelity practice. As a team, identify the benefits of and concerns about describing high-fidelity practice.

Tool index

Tool	Title	Use
8.1	Learning team logs	Tool 8.1 is a sample team log that can be completed during team meetings and used to monitor team activities, accomplishments, and requests for assistance.
8.2	Learning team surveys	Tool 8.2 is a set of team meeting surveys.
8.3	Protocol for discussing survey results about team effectiveness and/or team meetings	Tool 8.3 is a protocol for discussing team survey results.
8.4	Learning team survey	Tool 8.4 is an extensive learning team survey appropriate for all teams to take. The results may be aggregated to determine the productivity of learning teams schoolwide.
8.5	The real measure of a professional development program's effectiveness lies in what participants learn	Tool 8.5 is an article that describes methods for collecting information about what participants learn from professional development.
8.6	Smart moves	Tool 8.6 is an article that explains why creating intermediate goals can help a team or school accomplish its goals. The article also outlines ways to use the 30-60-90 format.
8.7	Focus, feedback, follow-through	Tool 8.7 is an article that describes how a district in Arizona used Innovation Configuration maps to support reading instruction.
8.8	Learning walk	Tool 8.8 is an article that describes how a learning walk can be used by learning teams to determine the quality of implementation of new practices. The process can be adapted for any content or instructional area.
8.9	Wake-up call	Tool 8.9 describes a school that used common assessments and scoring rubrics to improve student learning.
8.10	Teamwork on assessments creates powerful professional development	Tool 8.10 describes a process for developing common assessments and scoring rubrics aligned with standards for student learning.



MODULE 1

What is collaborative professional learning?

- Tool 1.1: Standards for Professional Learning Quick Reference Guide
- Tool 1.2: Learning Forward's definition and key points of professional development
- Tool 1.3: Team learning scenario task
- Tool 1.4: Will collaboration work?
- Tool 1.5: Video resources for collaborative professional learning
- Tool 1.6: Assessment of current reality of professional development
- Tool 1.7: The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop

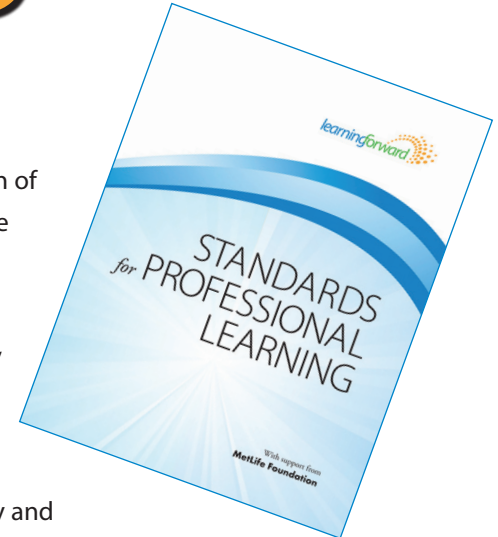
STANDARDS *for* PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Quick reference guide

About the standards

This is the third version of standards that outline the characteristics of effective professional learning. This edition, drawn from research and based on evidence-based practice, describes a set of expectations for effective professional learning to ensure equity and excellence in educator learning. The standards serve as indicators that guide the learning, facilitation, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning.

As with earlier versions of the standards, including the last revision in 2001, Learning Forward invited representatives from leading education associations and organizations to contribute to the development of the standards. Together, these representatives reviewed research and best practice literature to contribute to the standards revision with consideration of their own constituencies, including teachers, principals, superintendents, and local and state school board members.



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Quick reference guide STANDARDS for PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING			
<i>Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...</i>	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.

Relationship between professional learning and student results

1. When professional learning is standards-based, it has greater potential to change what educators know, are able to do, and believe.
2. When educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions change, they have a broader repertoire of effective strategies to use to adapt their practices to meet performance expectations and student learning needs.
3. When educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results.
4. When student results improve, the cycle repeats for continuous improvement.

This cycle works two ways: If educators are not achieving the results they want, they determine what changes in practice are needed and then what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to make the desired changes. They then consider how to apply the standards so that they can engage in the learning needed to strengthen their practice.



Quick reference guide STANDARDS for PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

4 prerequisites for effective professional learning

The seven new standards focus attention on educator learning that relates to successful student learning. Implicit in the standards are several prerequisites for effective professional learning. They are so fundamental that the standards do not identify or describe them. These prerequisites reside where professional learning intersects with professional ethics.

Professional learning is not the answer to all the challenges educators face, but it can significantly increase their capacities to succeed. When school systems, schools, and education leaders organize professional learning aligned with the standards, and when educators engage in professional learning to increase their effectiveness, student learning will increase.

1 Educators' commitment to students, *all* students, is the foundation of effective professional learning.

Committed educators understand that they must engage in continuous improvement to know enough and be skilled enough to meet the learning needs of all students. As professionals, they seek to deepen their knowledge and expand their portfolio of skills and practices, always striving to increase each student's performance. If adults responsible for student learning do not continuously seek new learning, it is not only their knowledge, skills, and practices that erode over time. They also become less able to adapt to change, less self-confident, and less able to make a positive difference in the lives of their colleagues and students.

2 Each educator involved in professional learning comes to the experience ready to learn.

Professional learning is a partnership among professionals who engage with one another to access or construct knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions. However, it cannot be effective if educators resist learning. Educators want and deserve high-quality professional learning that is relevant and useful. They are more likely to fully engage in learning with receptive hearts and minds when their school systems, schools, and colleagues align professional learning with the standards.

3 Because there are disparate experience levels and use of practice among educators, professional learning can foster collaborative inquiry and learning that enhances individual and collective performance.

This cannot happen unless educators listen to one another, respect one another's experiences and perspectives, hold students' best interests at the forefront, trust that their colleagues share a common vision and goals, and are honest about their abilities, practices, challenges, and results. Professional accountability for individual and peer results strengthens the profession and results for students.

4 Like all learners, educators learn in different ways and at different rates.

Because some educators have different learning needs than others, professional learning must engage each educator in timely, high-quality learning that meets his or her particular learning needs. Some may benefit from more time than others, different types of learning experiences, or more support as they seek to translate new learning into more productive practices. For some educators, this requires courage to acknowledge their learning needs, and determination and patience to continue learning until the practices are effective and comfortable.

Quick reference guide STANDARDS for PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE

Standards for Professional Learning are designed to set policies and shape practice in professional learning. Improvement is a continuous process without a beginning or end. Because professional learning is at the core of every effort to increase educator effectiveness and results for all students, its quality and effectiveness cannot be left to chance. The standards will guide the efforts of individuals, teams, school and school system staff, public agencies and officials, and nonprofit and for-profit associations or organizations engaged in setting policy, organizing, providing, facilitating, managing, participating in, monitoring, or measuring professional learning to increase educator effectiveness and results for all students.

These standards stimulate dialogue, discussion, and analysis that lead to increased effectiveness in professional learning regardless of the state of current practice. Here are several suggestions for how various types of educators may use the standards to deepen their understanding of effective professional learning and how to strengthen professional learning for all educators. The book *Standards for Professional Learning* (Learning Forward, 2011; see ordering information at right) offers a more comprehensive list.

INDIVIDUALS CAN:

- Study the standards to develop a foundational knowledge about effective professional learning.
- Use the standards to request improvements in professional learning in which they participate.
- Apply the standards to the planning, design, facilitation, and evaluation of professional learning they lead.

SCHOOL STAFF CAN:

- Share the standards with external assistance providers who facilitate professional learning with school staff.
- Share the standards with parents, guardians, and community members to foster their support for professional learning as a means to increase student learning.
- Bring the standards into all program implementation or improvement discussions.

SCHOOL SYSTEM STAFF CAN:

- Post the standards on or link to the standards from the school system's website.
- Use the standards as criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of all professional learning.
- Prepare a resolution that the school trustees adopt the standards as expectations for all professional learning.

MORE TO COME



Learning Forward, with continuing support from MetLife Foundation, will develop additional tools to support the implementation and evaluation of the standards.

“Using the standards to shape more effective professional learning will require study, thought, discussion, and planning.”

— *Standards for Professional Learning*

ORDER THE STANDARDS TODAY

Have at your fingertips the full text of the standards, including in-depth elaborations for all seven standards, related research citations, a comprehensive introduction, crosswalk between the previous and current versions, and more complete suggestions for use.

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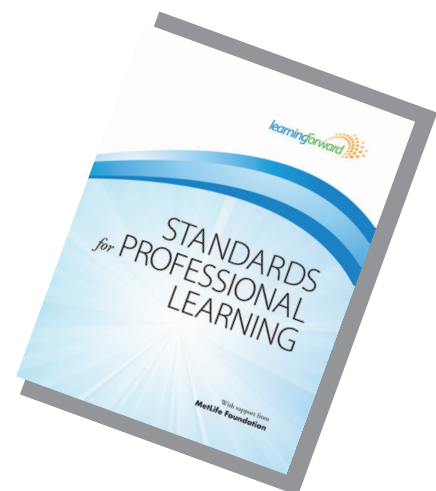
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Learning Forward's definition and key points of professional development

Recognizing the need to ensure high-quality professional learning for every educator, Learning Forward is advocating for a powerful new definition of professional development based on a model of continuous improvement. Learning Forward is seeking legislative amendments to the definition of professional development being outlined in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. These amendments clarify which practices qualify for federal, state, and district funding, and specify Learning Forward's position that professional development should directly impact a teacher's classroom practices and student achievement.

When schools become "learning schools," every student benefits from every educator's expertise, and every educator grows professionally with the support of his or her colleagues. Collaborative professional learning is a powerful way to ensure great teaching for every student every day.

The following table provides the elements of Learning Forward's definition of professional development, along with key points to support highlighted sections.

NSDC'S DEFINITION	KEY POINTS IN THE DEFINITION
<p>(34) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT— The term “professional development” means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement —</p> <hr/> <p>(A) Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:</p> <p>(1) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals;</p> <p>(2) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders;</p> <hr/> <p>(3) primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a ...</p>	<p>Several significant research studies in the last decade have concluded that the length and focus of professional development matter in its impact on teaching quality and student achievement. Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley (2007) found that when teachers have an average of 49 hours of professional development in a single school year focused specifically on the curriculum they teach, student achievement increases 21 percentile points. Other researchers, including Garet, Birman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman (1999) and Cohen & Hill (2001) found similar results for sustained professional development.</p> <hr/> <p>Because teachers have traditionally worked in isolation and pursued their own professional development, their learning has benefited them individually and the students assigned to their classes.</p> <p>Successful corporations build teams, and all employees feel accountable and responsible for the company’s operation and success (Farren, 1999; Gregory, 1999). High-quality professional development that includes teamwork fosters educators’ sense of collective responsibility for all students rather than individuals’ feelings of responsibility for some students. Professional development conducted in teams creates an environment of shared responsibility.</p> <hr/> <p>Professionals are responsible for continuously improving their knowledge and practice. High-performing businesses understand this. Randy Nelson, dean of Pixar University, the professional development arm at one of this country’s most successful movie production companies, said learning is the secret to the company’s success. “We’re trying to create a culture of learning, filled with lifelong learners,” Nelson said (Taylor & LaBarre, 2006). “Every employee is encouraged to devote up to four hours a week, every week, to his or her education.” Learning is part of everyone’s work.</p> <p>In education, continuous improvement requires that districts make time for teachers to learn and improve their practice during the workday. Many schools set regular learning time in before- and after-school meetings, early release days, or other scheduled times. When teacher learning is a priority, schools can find strategies to schedule time for it.</p>

NSDC'S DEFINITION	KEY POINTS IN THE DEFINITION
<p>... continuous cycle of improvement that —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) evaluates student, teacher, and school learning needs through a thorough review of data on teacher and student performance; (ii) defines a clear set of educator learning goals based on the rigorous analysis of the data; (iii) achieves the educator learning goals identified in subsection (A)(3)(ii) by implementing coherent, sustained, and evidence-based learning strategies, such as lesson study and the development of formative assessments, that improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) provides job-embedded coaching or other forms of assistance to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom; 	<p>American businesses compete for the Baldrige Award, which recognizes continuous improvement and associated results. While most schools believe in continuous improvement, they may not practice the process proven to produce results for students, including reviewing performance data, setting goals based on the data, implementing strategies to reach those goals, and then beginning the cycle again.</p> <hr/> <p>A preponderance of research in both business and education shows that adults exposed to new practices in workshops and team meetings need on-the-job support to make new ideas part of their daily routines (Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Odden et al. (2007) conclude that states that invest in classroom-based coaches who provide such support reap greater benefits in student achievement as opposed to those implementing more costly and less effective innovations, including smaller class sizes or full-day kindergarten.</p> <p>In addition, when experienced employees with a system-level understanding regularly share their individual insights about their company's processes and problems, they successfully build employees' knowledge (Leonard & Swap, 2004).</p>

NSDC'S DEFINITION	KEY POINTS IN THE DEFINITION
<p>(v) regularly assesses the effectiveness of the professional development in achieving identified learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting challenging state academic achievement standards;</p> <hr/> <p>(vi) informs ongoing improvements in teaching and student learning; and</p>	<p>Continually assessing professional practice and student learning can be challenging. Using formative assessments requires technical knowledge. Gaining this knowledge and using it effectively is essential to ensuring continuous improvement.</p> <p>School improvement specialist Mike Schmoker (2002) said substantial evidence shows that results are virtually inevitable when teachers work in teams to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus substantially, though not exclusively, on assessed standards. • Review simple, readily available achievement data to set a limited number of measurable achievement goals in the lowest-scoring subjects or courses. • Work regularly together to design, adapt, and assess instructional strategies targeted directly at specific standards that students are not achieving according to assessment data (e.g. "measurement" in math; "voice" in writing; "sight reading" in music). <p>Professional development and team-based learning must improve educators' practice and student learning. Educators must use ongoing assessments of their practices and their students' learning to determine the effect of learning teams' decisions. They then can determine whether the lessons they planned, the new strategies they used, and the explanations they devised helped students achieve what the teachers intended.</p> <hr/> <p>Michael Fullan (2000) said successful schools are places where teachers regularly focus their efforts on student work through assessment and then adjust their instructional practice to get better results.</p> <p>Few initiatives are backed by evidence that they raise achievement. Formative assessment is one of the few approaches proven to make a difference. Continuously identifying areas to improve, however, can occur only when teachers and principals have information about how instruction is affecting students. To have the information they need to determine where they have succeeded, where they may need slight modifications, or where they must completely change plans, educators need continuous evaluation. Continually evaluating practice and outcomes produces actions that lead to sustained improvement as opposed to incremental improvement or no improvement.</p>

NSDC'S DEFINITION	KEY POINTS IN THE DEFINITION
<p>(vii) that may be supported by external assistance.</p> <hr/> <p>(B) The process outlined in (A) may be supported by activities such as courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences that: (1) must address the learning goals and objectives established for professional development by educators at the school level; (2) advance the ongoing school-based professional development; and (3) are provided by for-profit and nonprofit entities outside the school such as universities, education service agencies, technical assistance providers, networks of content-area specialists, and other education organizations and associations.</p>	<p>Educators who are guided by data on their students and school are in the best position to identify what help they need to address their most important challenges. Occasionally, the school may not have answers and must seek assistance from outside experts. King and Newmann (2000) found that “ensuring the constant interaction of great ideas inside and outside an organization promotes improvement for all.”</p> <p>When GE wanted to boost its leadership practices, CEO Jack Welch sought help from an outside expert, Noel Tichy. The result: an organizational culture developed in which employees embraced teaching and learning, emphasized results, and were able to adapt and change (Rothenberg, 2003). The company achieved its goals under Tichy’s skillful guidance.</p> <p>Any organization that enlists external assistance, however, must ensure that the assistance aligns with the organization’s internal goals.</p> <hr/> <p>Teachers often criticize professional development for not addressing their students’ specific needs. Principals’ criticism is that professional development rarely addresses the school’s specific needs.</p> <p>Traditionally, central office administrators plan principals’ and teachers’ professional development although they have limited capacity to specifically address the needs identified in each teacher’s or school’s student data. As a result, they design professional learning that may impact some, but not all, teachers. Some districts have allowed teachers to plan their own professional development, primarily by having teachers choose workshops or conferences to attend. This approach, too, leads to impact for some teachers and their students as opposed to more powerful approaches designed to improve the practices of all teachers to affect all students. Traditional professional development relies almost exclusively on outside experts and materials without integrating these resources into existing systems of peer collaboration.</p> <p>The intent of the new definition is to leverage outside expertise to inform and improve the practice of educators inside schools. The definition suggests that outside experts make important contributions, but the tremendous expertise of teachers within the school is required to determine their specific learning needs and then to seek others’ help to address these needs. King and Newmann (2000) found that teachers are most likely to learn when they collaborate with colleagues both within and outside of their schools and when they access external researchers and program developers.</p> <p>Under this scenario, schools and teams become continuous improvement organizations, and, as Brandt (2003) states, true learning organizations exchange information frequently with relevant external sources.</p>

Team learning scenario task

TASKS

- Select one of the following scenarios to read, or ask different members of the group to read different ones.
- Read the selected scenario(s) to identify attributes of collaborative professional learning.
- Compare your notes with those of a colleague.
- Using your collective notes, develop a definition of collaborative professional learning.

DEFINITION

SCENARIO 1**SCHOOL-BASED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: Fremont Elementary School 4th-grade teachers**

The school year starts differently at Fremont Elementary School. Instead of the normal whole-school professional development day with a presentation, Principal Frieda Jackson leads teachers through an analysis of student achievement data.

All morning, teachers dig through data and work in various group configurations to learn how students performed on the most recent state tests. They brainstorm actions the school might take in the areas they want to target. The school's leadership team will consider these ideas in greater depth.

Teachers spend the afternoon in grade-level teams planning how to improve student performance in at least one target area they identify in the data from their incoming students. Jackson, helped by the district testing specialist, prepared data for each grade level and for each teacher's new class. The teachers study the class composite and content-specific scores from incoming students' performance on the prior year's test using a simple data analysis protocol Jackson gave them that morning. They identify strengths and weaknesses in student reading, writing, and math subskill areas.

The 4th-grade teachers are listing their observations on a chart and are about to choose a focus area when Jackson stops by to ask how things are going. She expresses her appreciation for the team's efforts last year and notes the 4th graders' improvements on the state tests. As she talks, she reads over the teachers' chart and smiles when she sees writing as a possible focus. She, too, knows that these incoming 4th graders need work on writing.

As Jackson leaves to visit other teams, she

reminds the team that a plan is due Friday and that she is available to assist. Walking toward the 5th-grade pod, Jackson thinks, "It will be interesting to see what they decide to focus on this year. If they have thoroughly analyzed the data, they will see writing is the appropriate focus. I trust them. If they make a wrong choice, they'll discover that on their own. They work well as a team."

After Jackson leaves, the team decides to collaborate on improving writing. They plan the first several weeks of school, including giving students a writing assessment within the first three days, scoring a select sample together, and developing lesson plans to address areas of deficit. One team member recommends cross-classroom flexible grouping, but the team decides to wait to see how students perform first. They also choose books to read aloud in the first week that best use figurative language, an area they identified in which students need specific attention. Together, they craft questions to address about teaching figurative language and one team member volunteers to type them up to e-mail to everyone.

They agree to meet Tuesdays and Thursdays during team-planning time to discuss student writing. At their next team meeting, they plan to bring writing samples to score and analyze, and hope by the end of the first week to identify major areas to concentrate on and to begin planning specific instruction.

The grade-level chair asks for a volunteer to help her write the plan due Friday to Jackson identifying their area of focus, a SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, timely) goal, three benchmarks, ways they will assess student performance at these benchmarks, and actions they will take to achieve the goals. All the teachers agree to stay and help develop the plan, knowing they

are free to change it when they have more specific actions they want to take.

When the grade-level chair meets with Jackson to review the draft plan, Jackson reassures her that the plan is a living document and says she hopes the team will continue to review and refine it throughout the year. She helps revise the goal to include all the elements of a SMART goal and suggests actions for the team to consider at the action planning stage. Jackson shares a copy of the 2nd-grade teachers' plan because they, too, have identified writing. She recommends that the two teams connect to share what they are learning when it seems appropriate.

SCENARIO 2

SCHOOL-BASED TEAM LEARNING:

Martin Middle School

The 8th-grade state test scores are back and the school must improve or face sanctions. As they have for the last five years, 8th-grade teachers say they spend too much of their time reteaching the 7th-grade curriculum to unprepared students.

Principal Theresa Sanchez has talked repeatedly with team leaders about the number of 7th graders failing. The 7th-grade teachers acknowledge the failure rate, but attribute it to their high expectations. They want students to learn to be responsible for their actions — an important skill, both for high school and life — so they have agreed to be less lenient on work that is late, incomplete, or poor quality. The lack of leniency leads to more failures, but the teachers say they prefer that students experience those failures now rather than in high school.

Sanchez knows about the tensions between 7th- and 8th-grade teachers and can no longer avoid

addressing the matter. She asks the 7th- and 8th-grade team leaders to a meeting Tuesday after school, where she expresses her concern about the increasing ill feelings. She shares some data to support her conclusion, then lays out a plan to form a new professional learning community and asks the team leaders to identify members for the team. She listens as they talk about including a counselor and at least one 6th-grade teacher on the team, along with an equal number of 7th- and 8th-grade teachers. Sanchez asks about including a parent or student, but the group decides to consider adding them later. Sanchez asks for one representative from 7th and 8th grades to co-facilitate the team. She arranges released time for a half-day meeting and offers to help the facilitators plan the agenda.

At the first meeting of the new team — three 7th- and three 8th-grade teachers, a 6th-grade teacher, a counselor, the school social worker, and Sanchez — members start with a team-building activity, then hear the history of what brought them to this point, review the team's purpose and goals, and suggest minor revisions. The team plans to identify the causes of 7th-grade failures, to plan ways to reduce failures by 50% in the next school year, and to plan how to eliminate failures by increasing student success within three years. The team will also identify and support professional learning on effective instructional strategies to engage disengaged students. Members will meet over at least two months.

The school counselor has assembled data, including absentee rates, state test performance for 8th graders, CAT test scores for 6th graders, grade distributions for each grade, retention numbers, and parent and student climate survey results. The facilitators share a protocol for examining the data, then team members divide into pairs to analyze the

data. Each team identifies patterns within the data and teachers begin to discuss these patterns across pairs. The facilitators ask each pair to report out and chart their findings. Then pairs exchange data sets with another team and repeat the process so that two pairs review each data set, adding findings to the chart.

The first meeting ends with a lengthy list of findings. The facilitators ask team members to share the findings with their respective grade levels and to discuss which factors teachers believe may contribute most to 8th graders' performance on the state tests, gathering input to guide the team's planning in the next meeting. Team members also discuss how to let other stakeholders know about the team's work. They agree to write a news release for each meeting and to spend a few minutes at each team meeting to answer questions that arise from other team members. In addition, team members agree to encourage teachers to identify disengaged students and strategies for improvement. Sanchez agrees to collect the students' names and the strategies and to compile them for the next meeting.

Over the next few weeks, Sanchez notices that the 7th- and 8th-grade teams have invested time discussing students and strategies for change. A few teams have even decided to try action research on strategies to assess their effectiveness, and teachers have been discussing the results.

SCENARIO 3

SCHOOL-BASED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: **Peterson High School science department**

Most students in the school's upper-level science courses are white and Asian males, an issue the teachers recognize. The school's curriculum

coach meets with the teaching team and asks how they differentiate instruction and materials, how they link students' background knowledge when they introduce concepts, and about students' readiness for high school science. Teachers talk about student motivation, high absenteeism, lack of basic study skills, and general lack of interest in science.

Together, they identify underenrollment of black, Hispanic, and female students in upper-level science courses as a problem and agree to gather data. First, the coach suggests teachers ask the counselor for data about female students who succeed in upper-level science classes; successful black and Hispanic students; and students in those groups who have performed poorly in basic science classes and choose not to enroll in other science classes. Teachers want to study how these students performed in other classes, their attendance, how many hours they work outside of school, any extracurricular activities, and their scores on the 10th-grade achievement test.

The coach and teachers analyze the data during the department's common planning time and discover no correlation between science achievement and school attendance, extracurriculars, or employment outside of school. Achievement test data told them what they already knew — some students performed better than others. But they found that students who performed poorly in basic science also performed poorly in other classes involving a lot of reading and writing. The same students performed much better in classes that required more physical activity or creative expression, including physical education, family and consumer science, technology classes, drama, art, and music. The teachers decide to study more the type of learner these students are.

The physics teacher wants to study whether

using different instructional processes changes how students learn and volunteers to use more physical and nonlinguistic activities in an upcoming unit. The other teachers point out that their concern is students continuing from lower classes and ask the physics teacher to help them develop a unit in physical science. All agree on this action research, and other teachers volunteer to help plan.

At the next meeting, teachers invite a physical education teacher to help them figure out what activities might engage students in the concept of resistance, and they plan a unit. An Introduction to Science teacher agrees to teach it first. The physics teacher and the other Introduction to Science teacher ask the assistant principal for coverage for their classes so they can observe the first two lessons. After each class, the three teachers debrief over lunch, discussing how to tweak what they designed and how to know if students really understand the concept. On the third day, other science teachers and the physical education teacher ask how the unit is progressing. The three agree to debrief in the department's next common planning meeting.

To prepare, the Introduction to Science teacher takes pictures of her students in class, gathers some of their notes and work, and charts the results of the unit test. She plans to talk about two students in particular, students in their target groups who had failing grades before the unit and who aced the work on resistance. The assistant principal provides two articles about multiple intelligences and differentiation to share. The physics teacher agrees to facilitate the meeting and set the agenda.

At the meeting, teachers agree that collaboration is essential for them to learn instructional strategies that meet the needs of learners who are not typically successful in science. They know their instructional practices often do not accommodate those with

different learning styles from the majority of the teachers. They acknowledge that cross-departmental collaboration, such as with the physical education teacher, is critical and identify the next problem they want to tackle as a department — a high failure rate in chemistry. They know they still have a long way to go to incorporate different strategies to engage all students. The physical education teacher sits quietly, already thinking about how to use movement to help students understand electrons, molecules, nuclei, and the periodic chart.

Later, the principal meets with the department chair and asks that the department set improvement goals for the next two years of increasing the number of female and underrepresented students in upper-level classes, decreasing the failure rate in all science classes, and improving the performance of students in science on the state achievement test.

SCENARIO 4

CROSS-SCHOOL TEAM SCENARIO:

West Grove Township School District

Teachers have mixed reactions when the West Grove superintendent begins talking about transforming professional development days into weekly time for collaboration. Some are enthusiastic. Lauren Garibaldi appreciates the idea of professional development that would be more valuable to her, but wonders who will be on her team since she is the only high school calculus teacher. Other single-class teachers, some elective teachers, the school's two counselors, the media specialist, and some special educators have similar questions.

Garibaldi and several others meet with the principal to discuss the plan. Garibaldi is delighted to learn that she will meet with her counterpart

in the other high school to focus specifically on the content of calculus, ways to teach some of its complex concepts, lesson ideas, common assessments, and to plan units.

When the collaborative professional learning teams begin meeting weekly in January, Garibaldi joins Ben Simpson for the district's half-day training on essential skills for collaborative teams. In the afternoon, teachers work in groups to discuss how to set up the teams, data to study, preliminary goals for their own and student learning, and where to meet. Garibaldi and Simpson set a schedule for their team meetings, identify a location, and discuss what to bring to their first meeting to analyze student data and set professional learning goals. They agree to bring Advanced Placement, SAT, and ACT math scores to see what they can discern about student math achievement in their district and respective schools.

After pouring through the data at their next meeting, they discover discrepancies in student performance. Students at Simpson's school do much better than those in Garibaldi's school. Garibaldi asks Simpson to help her figure out why. They set a tentative goal for their own professional learning: To deepen their expertise in teaching calculus by building a common curriculum and pacing guide for the calculus course. They also want to ensure that all students improve on all assessments and that the discrepancy in performance between the schools decreases.

At their next meeting, both bring the district curriculum documents, the state's core curriculum content standards for math, and the texts each uses in advanced math classes. Making a matrix on chart paper, they identify where each math standard is referenced in the district curriculum and in their respective texts. Their 100 minutes is soon over, but

both agree they need more time to look at how the standards are addressed in each of the core classes and texts. They agree to integrate the Advanced Placement guidelines in their next conversation.

Both realize they need far more time and help from colleagues who teach other advanced math classes. They schedule their next meeting and agree to invite one or two math teachers from each high school to join them. They complete their mandatory team log and talk about what they want to accomplish at the next meeting.

In their next meeting, Garibaldi, Simpson, and colleagues complete the math course map that identifies where each standard is addressed and determine where students are expected to master each standard. They uncover some discrepancies in the content of courses between the schools. Simpson devotes more attention to integrating standards, while Garibaldi is more focused on completing the text. They also find glaring gaps in Garibaldi's textbook. Several standards are addressed briefly or not at all.

After eight meetings, they feel they have accomplished a great deal because they developed a curriculum map that reflects a logical sequence of their curriculum standards. Now they can turn specifically to calculus. They invite a math faculty member from one of the local universities to meet with them to review their work and discuss strategies for teaching more complex concepts. They agree to design common assessments for calculus that will assess students' mastery of the standards, not just the textbook content. For both Garibaldi and Simpson, the opportunity to collaborate holds great promise.

Will collaboration work?

This activity involves teachers in thinking about how professional learning teams might work in their schools and about barriers that might need to be addressed. It will also provide information on what faculty members see as important for making professional learning teams work in their school.

1. Duplicate and cut apart the cards.
2. Ask teachers to work in self-selected teams of four or five.
3. Provide each team with chart paper and markers.
4. Give each team one card. (Try to distribute the two different cards so there is an even number among teams.)
5. After each team finishes brainstorming, ask the teams to have one member report on the team's ideas. List the ideas from Design Inc. on one piece of chart paper and the ideas from Sabotage Inc. on a different sheet.
6. Ask teachers to refer to the charts and discuss how their current school culture and organization might facilitate and/or hinder the success of learning teams. If you have a large group, ask teachers to discuss this in their teams and have a spokesperson share with the whole group.
7. Suggest that teams make a list of the things needed at their school to successfully implement professional learning teams. Collect these lists.
8. Following the work session, compile and distribute a single list of teachers' ideas for making collaboration work. Work with appropriate school personnel to address as many of these concerns and suggestions as possible.

Source: Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGN TEAM

You are members of Design Inc., a professional think tank that specializes in creating opportunities for professionals to engage in on-the-job collaboration to increase their skills and productivity.

Your firm has been hired by Innovation High School to develop an organizational structure, working conditions, and a procedure that will enable teachers to work together in teams to increase their knowledge and skills so that they become cutting-edge teachers. What will you recommend? What information, opportunities, and working conditions will teachers need to be able to work together effectively?

Brainstorm ideas and jot your plans on the chart paper.

Your design team has 10 minutes.

PROFESSIONAL SABOTAGE TEAM

You are members of Sabotage Inc., a firm that specializes in undermining attempts that would allow professionals to collaborate on the job and increase their skills and productivity.

Your firm has been hired to undermine a plan by Innovation High School. This school plans to create conditions that allow teachers to meet and work together to continually increase their knowledge and skills so that they are cutting-edge teachers.

Your job is to sabotage this plan. Design an organizational structure, working conditions, and procedures that will result in teachers working in isolation and will make it difficult for them to collaborate.

Brainstorm ideas and jot down your plans on the chart paper.

Your sabotage team has 10 minutes.

Video resources for collaborative professional learning

These resources help educators see collaborative professional learning in action.

Learning Forward's definition of professional development.

www.learningforward.org/standfor/definition.cfm

Critical friends groups from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

www.annenberginstitute.org

Designing and evaluating professional development for increased student learning from the School Improvement Network.

www.schoolimprovement.com

Let's talk about PLCs: Getting started (three parts) from Solution Tree.

www.solution-tree.com

Looking at student work: A window into the classroom from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

www.annenberginstitute.org

Looking at teacher work: Standards in Practice.

www.collaborativecommunications.com

Schools that learn: High standards for teacher and principal performance.

www.collaborativecommunications.com

Whole-faculty study groups: Collaborative targeting student learning from the School Improvement Network.

www.schoolimprovement.com

Source: Killion, J. & Roy, P. (2009). *Becoming a learning school*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Assessment of current reality of professional development

This tool is a four-part process.

Part 1:

- Individuals complete the rating scale.

Part 2:

- They discuss their ratings and their rationale within small teams.

Part 3:

- The school's scores are compiled and the Current State Protocol is used to discuss the schoolwide results.

Part 4:

- Evaluation continues.

Part 1

After reading the descriptions of the various attributes of the new form of professional development, use the following rating scale to indicate where your school’s professional development program is in relationship to each attribute.

- Is your school’s current professional development more like the attributes on the left or right?
- In the Notes column, jot some notes about evidence that you have to support your rating.

Column A						Column B	Notes
Inservice education and staff/professional development	1	2	3	4	5	Professional learning	
Individual learning	1	2	3	4	5	Team-based and schoolwide learning	
Increasing the number of staff development days or periods	1	2	3	4	5	Restructuring the workday of all educators to ensure daily learning experiences	
Credit-based relicensure/recertification systems	1	2	3	4	5	Performance-based systems	
Separate individual teacher, school, or district professional development plans	1	2	3	4	5	Effective professional learning embedded into team, school, and district improvement plans	
Professional development as an expenditure	1	2	3	4	5	Professional learning as an investment	
Improving teacher practice	1	2	3	4	5	Improving teaching quality and student learning	
Relying on outside experts	1	2	3	4	5	Tapping and building internal expertise	
A single career path for teachers	1	2	3	4	5	Multiple options for teachers to become leaders in schools	
Standardization	1	2	3	4	5	High standards for teaching, professional learning, and student learning	

Hirsh, S. & Killion, J. (2007). *The Learning Educator: A New Era for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, p. 111.

Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
<p>Choose Column A or B.</p> <p>OPTION A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask individual staff members to meet with a team of three or four other staff members to share their ratings and the evidence to support it. Teams are sharing their ratings, NOT reaching consensus. • After the discussion, collect the individual rating sheets to use to compile the schoolwide results. <p>OPTION B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark individual responses on a large piece of chart paper. • Make general observations about the distribution of responses. • Identify attributes for which there is agreement (most responses within one point). • Identify discrepancies in responses. • Share evidence used by individuals to support the areas where more consistency exists. • Identify where you want your professional development to be along the continuum in three months, six months, one year, two years. • Identify three or four strategies to get to the three-month benchmark. 	<p>After each staff member rates the school's professional development program, compile the results into a frequency distribution or bar chart to get a comprehensive view of the staff's perspectives. Make copies of the schoolwide results and use the following protocol to guide discussion within the school's professional development committee or whole school staff to assess the current state of professional development within the school.</p> <p>ANALYZE CURRENT REALITY PROTOCOL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you notice about the results of the assessment? • What do we want professional learning to produce in our school? • How do we want professional learning to look in our school? • As we consider what we want, who else do we want to involve in this discussion? • What are some steps we might take to move in the direction we want to go? • Who will be responsible for these actions? 	<p>Repeat assessment in three months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress. • Repeat steps of analysis and planning. <p>Repeat assessment in six months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress. • Repeat steps of analysis and planning. <p>Repeat assessment in one year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress. • Repeat steps of analysis and planning. <p>Repeat assessment in two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress. • Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop

Most schools and districts have created an artificial distinction between working and learning. They operate in a way that suggests teachers work (teach) 180 or so days a year and learn (attend programs) on four or five days each year set aside for professional development. School leaders must end this distinction between working and learning and create conditions that enable staff to grow and learn as part of their daily or weekly work routines.

The traditional notion that regarded staff development as an occasional event that occurred off the school site has gradually given way to the idea that the best staff development happens in the workplace rather than in a workshop. When teachers work together to develop curriculum that delineates the essential knowledge and skills each student is to acquire, when they create frequent common assessments to monitor each student's learning on a timely basis, when they collectively analyze results from those assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses, and when they help each other develop and implement strategies to improve current levels of student learning, they are engaged in the kind of professional development that builds teacher capacity and sustains school improvement.

Job-embedded staff development, by definition, will move the focus of professional learning to the school site. It is critical, however, that leaders understand that simply shifting to site-based staff development does not ensure improved learning for either adults or students. Site-based staff development can be, and often is, ineffective.

Leaders can increase the likelihood that site-based staff development will enhance the school's capacity to improve student learning if they address four questions.

1. Does the professional development increase the staff's collective capacity to achieve the school's vision and goals?

Schools' tradition of individual teacher autonomy has

worsened the traditional approach to staff development. This approach is based on the premise that schools will improve if individual teachers are encouraged to pursue professional growth opportunities that reflect their personal interests. Thus, the goal becomes providing a potpourri of options to reflect the diverse interests of a staff.

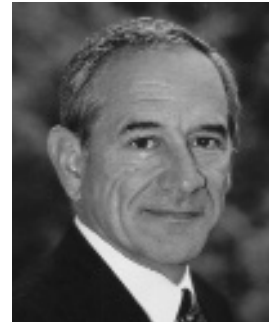
Developing individual teachers' knowledge and skills is important but not sufficient. The challenge facing schools is expanding the ability of a team of teachers to achieve goals for all their students and developing the ability of the entire faculty to move the school toward its vision. Leaders should insist that site-based professional development represent a focused, coherent effort to develop the collective capacity of school personnel to solve problems and sustain continuous improvement.

2. Does the school's approach to staff development challenge staff members to act in new ways?

Effective professional development will do more than help a staff acquire new knowledge and skills. It will push the staff to act in new ways. Teachers in professional learning communities are expected to go beyond reading the same article from a professional journal or attending the same workshop. They are expected to work together to apply new knowledge in the context of their school. They understand that improving the school means improving the practices of the people within the school. Therefore, they work together to implement and assess the impact of new strategies for achieving their goals. Building shared knowledge is a critical element in professional development, but shared knowledge will improve schools only when people apply that knowledge. Furthermore, it is only when a staff begins to apply new learning that teachers will come to the deeper level of understanding that enables them to adapt new practices to their own setting.

3. Does the school's approach to staff development focus on results rather than activities?

Many schools seem to approach staff development as if there is a prize for presenting the most new programs. When called on to provide evidence of the quality of their site-based staff development initiatives, they point to the number of topics covered, the number of faculty who attended workshops, or the level of satisfaction participants express. The real test of staff development, however, is



In each issue of *JSD*, Rick DuFour writes about effective leadership. His columns can be found at www.nsdc.org/library/authors/dufour.cfm

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whether “it alters instructional behavior and practices in ways that benefit students” (Sparks, 1994). Leaders must help schools shift their emphasis from amassing programs and projects to creating a collaborative culture in which teachers work together to improve student learning. Leaders who assess site-based staff development by asking how many teachers have been trained in “whole language” or “constructivist teaching” are asking the wrong question. The best way for leaders to help schools focus on what matters is by asking the question, “What evidence can you provide that staff are helping more students achieve at higher levels?”

4. Does the school's approach to staff development demonstrate a sustained commitment to achieving important goals?

One of the challenges of leadership is to bring coherence to the myriad pressures and initiatives bearing down on schools. Leaders bring coherence to organizations when they establish clear goals, coordinate efforts to achieve

those goals, and *sustain the effort over an extended period of time*. In her study of innovation in the business world, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983) found one of the most common causes of a failed initiative was that leaders had given up on it too

soon. Nearly 20 years later, Jim Collins (2001) arrived at a similar conclusion in his study of successful companies. He found that, inevitably, successful innovation was the result of patient, persistent, sustained effort over time rather than a short-term, groundbreaking program.

The shortness of most staff development programs is the opposite of the kind of sustained commitment needed to embed change within the school's culture. It takes time for a change initiative to take root within the culture of any organization, and until the initiative takes root, it is extremely fragile and subject to regression. Dennis Sparks advises that the key to school improvement is sustained effort over three to five years in which the entire staff seeks incremental annual improvements related to important school goals.

Leaders who hope to foster powerful site-based staff development in their schools may consider these tips:

- **Recognize that you will never build a collaborative culture simply by inviting or encouraging staff to work together.** Create structures that require teachers to work together, and build time for that work into the school day and annual calendar. The structures and culture of the school should resonate with the message that collaboration is nondiscretionary; it is the way we do things around here.

HE SAID

“Learning is always an on-the-job phenomenon.”

— Peter Senge

- **Ensure that teams focus on learning by calling on them to respond to the following questions for every unit of instruction:** What is it we want all students to know and be able to do as a result of this unit? How will we know when each student has demonstrated proficiency? What will we do to address the needs of students who initially have difficulty mastering the intended learning? If the team's work does not address these critical questions, there is little reason to anticipate the changes in practice that lead to improved results.

- **Insist that every team establish norms** or protocols to clarify their commitments for how they will work together.

- **Insist that every team develop** and pursue a student achievement goal that is measurable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bound, and aligned with school and/or district goals.

- **Provide every team** with timely, user-friendly, relevant data and information that will allow its members to assess the impact of their various improvement strategies.

- **Monitor the teams' work** by reviewing both the products they generate at each step of the process and the progress they make toward their student achievement goals.

- **Celebrate the teams' progress** and be prepared to confront teams or individuals who are not honoring this collaborative approach to continuous improvement.

- **Solicit feedback from teams** about the resources and training they need to become more proficient in this collaborative process.

It is clear that job-embedded, site-based professional development offers the best venue for educators' ongoing learning. It is equally clear, however, that leaders can and must play a pivotal role in ensuring that the staff development program of any school is designed to achieve the objective of higher levels of learning for both its adults and its students.

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MODULE 2

How do we plan for schoolwide and team-based collaborative learning?

Tool 2.1: The numbers game

Tool 2.2: Work smarter, not harder

Tool 2.3: Extreme makeover: Needs assessment edition

Tool 2.4: Professional development program review

Tool 2.5: Clarify your vision with an Innovation Configuration map

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INSIDE

- 3** Student data checklist
- 4** Crafting data summary statements
- 5** Data summaries
- 6** Moving from needs to goals
- 7** Resources
- 8** Ask Dr. Developer

The Numbers Game

Measure progress by analyzing data

By Joan Richardson

If a district or a single school has a vision of what it wants to be, the use of data can be a powerful tool to measure its progress along the way.

Sylvie Hale has seen the power of using data in that way. "Schools have to collect data to make sure they're on target. Data do not lie," she said.

Ask Hale, senior research associate at West Ed, for an example of how using data guided a school to fulfill its vision and she's ready with a handful of stories. This is one of her favorites:

A rural California school district had a goal of ensuring that all children would read at grade level by 3rd grade. Teachers in one school were quite discouraged because many 1st and 2nd graders were reading below grade level. How could they meet the district goal if children were falling behind so early?

Teachers quickly decided that the school needed a new reading program.

Hale and other consultants from a regional assistance center urged the school to look over its data very closely. Perhaps the school would dis-

cover that the curriculum wasn't the only reason students were struggling with reading.

After receiving some preliminary school data, teachers discovered that a majority of kindergartners had been absent for more than half the year. That must mean that parents don't care enough about education to get them to school, teachers concluded.

The consultants pushed them to look at other possible explanations for missing school.

The teachers talked with parents of students with high absenteeism and learned that these children rode a bus to school but that the district provided no bus transportation to take them home at the end of their half-day in school. The buses were needed to transport high school students and the district did not want to mix high schoolers with kindergartners. Working parents or parents who relied on others for after-school transportation frequently kept children home rather than deal with the transportation hassle.

Clearly, the reading curriculum was not at fault. When providing transportation for these kindergartners turned out to be financially unfeasible, the teachers explored other options.

By the next school year, the school created an

Continued on Page 2



Using Data

Tools For Schools

Measure progress by analyzing data

Continued from Page One

extended day kindergarten. Money for a remedial reading program was diverted to pay for extra teacher hours. At last report, the reading of these students was improving.

What's the lesson? "Check your assumptions at the door," said Hale.

"I don't think that's an uncommon story. We all make quick assumptions. Instead, we need to look at data, generate questions and find answers. Data keep you honest," she said.

A DATA PLAN

Let's assume that district's vision includes a statement that all children will read at grade level by 3rd grade and remain at grade level every year thereafter. How could you use data to measure your progress towards achieving that vision?

1 Collect basic information. Every school should maintain basic data on student demographics and achievement. See the Student Data Checklist on Page 3 for a guide to collecting information that will give you a snapshot of students in your school.

Break down this information by grade. Keep the original data available so you can cross-reference it with other data in later steps.

2 Identify additional data. To check on students' reading ability in your school, what data will you need to collect?

To measure academic performance, a school would probably collect, at a minimum, standardized test scores, grades, and classroom assessments. You should always collect at least three types of data for any study.

Identify who will be responsible for collecting this data and set a date for finishing this task.

3 Disaggregate the data. Assemble the academic performance data and disaggregate it according to the character-

istics collected under Step One. At a minimum, you should break down each type of data by gender, race, socio-economic factors, attendance, mobility, discipline issues, and English language ability.

Use the Data Summary Sheet on Page 5 for this process. Prepare one sheet for each type of data you collect.

4 Analyze the data. After you've filled out the Data Summary Sheets, begin to ask questions about that data.

What is the lowest performing group? What is the highest performing group? Are boys and girls performing equally well in reading? Are there dips in reading achievement between different grades? If so, which grades? What are the reading levels of various language groups? Do different socio-economic groups have different reading levels? Are reading levels similar between various racial and ethnic groups?

5 Summarize the data. Describe in a statement what the data tells you. These statements can be called either data summary statements or needs statements. See sample statements on Page 4.

In this step, the school team is trying to identify the problem, not solve it. This forces individuals to spell out what they see and not fall back on assumptions, Hale said. Write one statement or write a dozen summary statements, depending on your observations.

At this stage, avoid the urge to brainstorm solutions. That step will come later. For now, concentrate on simply describing your observations.

6 Brainstorm causes. Once a school team has objectively evaluated the data, the next step is to suggest possible explanations.

What's going on instructionally? What's going on with the curriculum? Where are the gaps? Why do these gaps exist?

"If you're not getting the results you want, there's dissonance someplace. Where is the dissonance?" Hale asks.

For example, a staff may suggest that

the curriculum is not aligned with the assessment or that teachers lack sufficient training to implement the curriculum appropriately.

7 Collect more data. After the team has suggested explanations for blips in the data, the next step is to collect more data to determine which explanations are most accurate.

For example, if the team hypothesizes that the curriculum has not been implemented completely, the team might survey teachers about their practices as well as observe relevant classes.

8 Analyze and summarize data. As it did with the student data, the team now analyzes the data it has collected regarding instruction and curriculum.

The team repeats the process of writing objective statements about the data it has collected.

9 Identify a goal. After the data has been analyzed and summarized, the team now needs to identify its goals. See Page 6 for a tool to help with this.

Write a specific, measurable and attainable goal. What would you consider success? How will you measure that? When will you measure that?

10 Repeat the process. Once the goal has been identified, the process has not ended. The team needs to establish a timetable for repeating the process of collecting and analyzing the data. This forces the team to stay focused on measuring its progress.

But Hale cautions teams against focusing too narrowly on certain areas because of the potential to ignore other areas. "You have to collect data to make sure you're on target but you also have to look at data to make sure other things aren't falling through the cracks," Hale said.

"Data collection and analysis is a continuing process. It never ends. Once you begin asking questions and looking for answers, you find that you have more answers and more questions," Hale said.

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Student data checklist

STUDENT DATA CHECKLIST	GRADE LEVEL				
ENROLLMENT					
Total number of registered students.					
Number of students in special programs (e.g., Title I, LEP, gifted and talented) broken down by category.					
Number of students broken down by ethnicity, language group or other meaningful categories.					
DAILY ATTENDANCE					
Average daily attendance of students by grade, grade span, whole school, or other enrollment category.					
Percent of students tardy for classes.					
Number of students who have been absent from school 21 days or more.					
MOBILITY/STABILITY					
Mobility rate: percent of children who move in and out of a school during a year.					
Stability rate: the percent of students who remain in the same building for the entire year.					
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES)					
Percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.					
Average level of parents' education and/or household income.					
Unemployment rates in the attendance area.					
STUDENT BEHAVIOR					
Number or percentage of discipline referrals or incidents.					
Number or percentage of student suspensions and expulsions.					
Frequency of gang-related, substance abuse, or other at-risk behavior.					
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY					
Percent of students with limited English proficiency.					
Percent of families who speak English as a second language.					

Source: *Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by Sylvie Hale (San Francisco: WestEd, 2000). See Page 7 for ordering information.

Tools For Schools

EXAMPLE**Data summary statement:**

Fourth-grade Vietnamese immigrant boys are underachieving in science.

Evidence:

Achievement scores, teacher observation, and chapter (textbook) tests.

Why questions:

Q: Why do 4th grade Vietnamese immigrant boys underachieve in science?

A: They have difficulty with English language. (Supporting data or facts: language assessment.)

Q: Why does the fact that Vietnamese boys have difficulty with English contribute to low performance in science?

A: They have difficulty understanding the concepts and applying them in practice. (Supporting data or facts: observation and student input.)

Q: Why do 4th grade Vietnamese immigrant boys underachieve in science?

A: Curriculum does not match assessment. (Supporting data or facts: Curriculum is based on 1985 framework, assessment is based on 1995 framework.)

Q: Why does the mismatch between curriculum and assessment contribute to the low performance in boys?

A: There is mis-alignment between what is taught and what is being assessed. (Supporting data or facts: comparison of 1985 and 1995 frameworks.) Upon further examination, all students are having some difficulty in science.

Crafting data summary statements

Comments to facilitator: This activity will assist the team in focusing on what it has learned from the data it has collected about the school. As the team compares this data to its vision for the school, it should be able to identify the steps the school needs to take to reach identified goals.

Materials: Several copies of the data summary sheet, various data sources, chart paper, markers, pens.

Directions

1. Complete the Data Summary Sheet (see Page 5) for each of your data sources. Be as complete as possible. Think about other possible summary tables that might also be created. For example, after completing the sample data summary sheet, you may notice that girls in 4th through 6th grades are underachieving in mathematics. You could create another data summary table in which you break out the girls by ethnicity to see if a pattern emerges.
2. Summarize the data by writing a statement based on the data. As you review the data, consider:
 - Which student sub-groups appear to need priority assistance, as determined by test scores, grades, or other assessments? Consider sub-groups by grade level, ethnicity, gender, language background (proficiency and/or home language), categorical programs (e.g., migrant, special education), economic status, classroom assignment, years at our school, attendance.
 - In which subject areas do students appear to need the most improvement? Also, consider English language development.
 - In which subject areas do the “below proficient” student sub-groups need the most assistance?
 - What evidence supports your findings?
3. For each data summary statement, brainstorm all the possible reasons why the data show what they do. For each reason, identify data or facts that support that assertion. If no data exist, determine how to locate data that would support the assertion. Continue asking “why” until the root cause of the problem or need has been identified.

Source: *Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by Sylvie Hale (San Francisco: WestEd, 2000). See Page 7 for ordering information.

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Data summaries

Data type: _____
 (e.g., enrollment, student achievement, total, attendance, student achievement reading)

Data source/measure: _____
 (e.g., SAT9, school records, staff survey)

What the numbers represent: _____
 (e.g., percentage of students below grade-level; number of students higher than 4 on district math assessment; percentage of students who say they like to read)

STUDENT CHARACTERISTIC	Grade Level												Total
ETHNICITY													
African-American													
Asian/Pacific Islander													
Caucasian													
Hispanic													
Native American													
Other													
GENDER													
Male													
Female													
INCOME													
Low-income													
Not low-income													
LANGUAGE ABILITY													
Fully proficient													
Limited proficient													
Non-proficient													
English only													
SPECIAL POPULATIONS													
Migrant													
Title I Target Assist													
Special education													
Preschool													
After-school													
Other													
Other													

Write a statement summarizing the data collected above. A data summary statement or need statement does not offer a solution nor does it describe a cause or lay blame.

Source: *Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by Sylvie Hale (San Francisco: WestEd, 2000). See Page 7 for ordering information.

Tools For Schools

Moving from needs to goals

Comments to the facilitator: This activity will aid you in developing goals based on your identified needs.

Materials: Poster paper, sentence strips, masking tape, markers. The list of data summary statements developed using the Crafting Data Summary Statements tool on Page 4 or other method.

Preparation: Prepare a sheet of poster paper with your vision and post that in the room where you are working. Write each data summary statement on a separate sentence strip and post on the wall. Write the model statements listed below on chart paper and be prepared to post those on the wall as you begin your work.

Directions

1. Depending on the size of the group and the number of data summary statements, the facilitator may want to break a larger group into several smaller groups of three or four persons.
2. Each group should transform one statement into a student/program goal. The group should include an objective, outcome indicator, baseline, timeframe, target standard or performance, and target instructional practice. Refer to your vision often as you write these goals.

STUDENT GOAL MODEL

Students in grades 2 through 5 will OBJECTIVE as measured by OUTCOME INDICATOR. Current results indicate that BASELINE. At the end of TIME FRAME, students in these grades will perform at TARGET STANDARD OR PERFORMANCE, and at the end of two years, they will perform at TARGET STANDARD OR PERFORMANCE.

EXAMPLE

Data summary statement: Most of our upper-elementary students are under-performing in language arts.

Student goal: Our upper-elementary students will improve their language arts skills (OBJECTIVE) as measured by the district assessment and standardized test (OUTCOME INDICATOR). Current results indicate that 67% of students in grades 4-6 are “below proficient” (BASELINE). By spring 2001 (TIMEFRAME), 25% of students currently under-achieving in language arts — particularly those in upper elementary — will improve their literacy skills by moving from “below proficient” to “proficient” (TARGET STANDARD OR PERFORMANCE).

PROGRAM GOAL MODEL

Current records show that BASELINE teachers participated in professional development activities offered by our school this year. By TIMEFRAME, our school will OBJECTIVE as measured by OUTCOME INDICATOR. As a result, teachers will offer TARGET INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE to these students. At the end of the second year, staff will OBJECTIVE as measured by OUTCOME INDICATOR. As a result, students will perform at TARGET STANDARD OR PERFORMANCE.

EXAMPLE

Data summary statement: Our lowest-performing students in language arts are African-American, particularly males.

Program goal: By the end of the 2000-2001 school year (TIMEFRAME), all staff will have learned about effective instructional practices that accelerate the academic achievement of African-American males (OBJECTIVE). Currently, only 5% of staff have these skills (BASELINE). The following year (TIMEFRAME), all staff will have implemented new strategies (TARGET INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE) as measured by peer coaching and classroom observations (OUTCOME INDICATOR).

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Source: *Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by Sylvie Hale (San Francisco: WestEd, 2000). See Page 7 for ordering information.

Learning about **using data**

■ *Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by WestEd. Offers a coherent framework for planning schoolwide improvements. Describes the context and key elements of comprehensive school reform and offers a process for conducting comprehensive data analysis, planning, and implementation. Includes numerous tools and activities to facilitate planning and implementation, profiles of successful schools, and lists of additional resources. The entire guidebook can be downloaded at no charge as a PDF file at www.wested.org/csrd/guidebook. A complete set of resources (the guidebook plus two videos) also is available for \$59.95. For information about ordering, visit the WestEd web site at www.wested.org/wested/news.shtml.

■ *Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement* by Victoria Bernhardt. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 1998. Targeted for non-statisticians. Shows schools how to gather and use data, clarifies what data are important for various purposes, and demonstrates how to communicate and report results. Available through NSDC's Online Bookstore, www.nsd.org/bookstore.htm. Item #B89. Price: \$37, non-members; \$29.60, members.

■ *How to Conduct Surveys* (2nd ed.) by A. Fink and J. Kosecoff. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1998. Covers the process of doing surveys from planning to designing to conducting, analyzing to presenting findings. Includes overview of how to do statistical analyses of survey data. To order, call (805) 499-9774, fax (805) 375-1700, e-mail: order@corwin.sagepub.com. Price: \$29.95.

■ *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 2000 (Vol. 21, No. 1). Entire issue devoted to data and its use in building a foundation for pursuing and evaluating initiatives. Several articles available online in the NSDC Online Library at www.nsd.org/library.htm.

on the web

www.nsd.org/library/data.html

Look in the NSDC Online Library for more resources on data-based decision making. This library is updated regularly with new materials. Comprehensive members of NSDC also have access to full text of every NSDC publication. To learn more about that membership option, contact the NSDC Main Business Office at (800) 727-7288.

■ *The School Portfolio: A Comprehensive Framework for School Improvement*, by Victoria Bernhardt. Princeton, N.J.: Eye on Education, 1994. Guidebook for creating and using a school profile for sharing information about progress towards goals. Available through NSDC's Online Bookstore, www.nsd.org/bookstore.htm. Item #B90. Price: \$37, non-members; \$29.60, members.

■ *Tracking your school's success: A guide to sensible evaluation* by J.L. Herman and L. Winters. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin, 1992. Focuses on providing educators with guidance and tools to help them answer questions such as How are we doing? How can we improve? How can we share our successes? To order, call (805) 499-9774, fax (805) 375-1700, e-mail: order@corwin.sagepub.com. Price: \$29.95.

■ "Translating school improvement into numbers," by Joan Richardson, *School Team Innovator*, February 1997. Describes a cycle for data-based decision making and can be used as a guide for implementing vision. Available in NSDC's Online Library, www.nsd.org/library. To order a back copy, calling the NSDC Main Business Office at (800) 727-7288.

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WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

*SMART goals keep key
objectives in focus*

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

The teacher was skeptical about SMART goals. She had been through planning and goal-setting before. She expected SMART goals to be another addition to her workload that would offer little or nothing to improve what she cared about most, her instruction and her students' learning.

Her middle school set a schoolwide SMART goal of reaching 85% proficiency on the statewide math assessment by 2008. Then, the 7th-grade math teachers set their own grade-level SMART goal. She respected her colleagues and she honestly evaluated her teaching to determine



what she could do to help the team achieve its goal.

To be faithful to the SMART goals process, the team had agreed to do several benchmark assessments before the statewide assessment. She knew that if too few of her students were proficient on those assessments, she would need to reteach.

And that's when it all began to make sense to her. She discovered that her focus on a few key objectives meant that her students understood concepts more quickly. So, instead of dwelling on some concepts for days or even weeks, she could move on. That meant her students were learning more efficiently and she was

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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

COVER STORY

“The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them.”

— Denis Watley

ATTEND CONFERENCE SESSION

Jan O’Neill is presenting a concurrent session on “A SMART Approach to Improving Student Learning Districtwide” at NSDC’s Annual Conference in Dallas. Look for Session J11.

Work smarter, not harder, with SMART goals

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able to move more quickly through the curriculum.

Although she had been worried that SMART goals would consume more of her time, she discovered that using the SMART goals actually created more time for her.

This teacher’s discovery should not be surprising. Businesses have long used SMART goals as a way to cut through the morass of conflicting priorities and focus their energies on goals that would make a difference to their work. Although SMART goals did not seep into the education lexicon until the 1990s, the power that they bring to school improvement work is the same. SMART goals can focus a school’s or district’s work and determine whether the work is making a difference.

Anne Conzemius, who has been working for more than 10 years with schools and districts to set SMART goals, said goals that schools set for themselves are more empowering for administrators and teachers than goals that are set for schools by external forces. “Mandates just don’t carry the same life with them. When teachers engage with their grade-level colleagues or other teachers in their buildings to create meaningful goals, that makes a difference,” said Conzemius, who with co-author Jan O’Neill wrote *The Power of SMART Goals* (Solution Tree, 2006). They are founders of Quality Leadership by Design, an educational consulting firm in Madison, Wis.

“One reason a lot of goals were never useful is because they didn’t saturate into the classroom. For goals to make a difference to teachers, teachers have to be engaged in the process of developing the goal so they own the goal. That means teachers have to look at the data and design a goal that makes sense to them. The goal becomes powerful when teachers use it to inform their practice,” she said.

CHALLENGES OF SETTING SMART GOALS

For a long time, Conzemius and O’Neill had to work to sell schools and districts on the idea that setting goals was an essential part of the improvement process. That’s no longer neces-

sary, they said. Schools and districts get that part of the message.

The problem now is not that districts lack goals. “It’s that they want a goal for everything,” Conzemius said.

O’Neill agrees. “We walked into one district where there were literally hundreds of goals. One school might have several dozen goals. When you have that many goals, nothing is guiding your improvement work,” she said.

“In a lot of places, the strategic part gets lost but the true power of SMART goals is in that first criteria. It’s the strategic nature of SMART goals that results in breakthrough improvement. When goals are strategic, they’re focused on one or two academic breakthrough areas,” O’Neill said.

“It’s almost impossible to make significant improvement if you’re trying to focus on multiple goals,” O’Neill said. “You will be doing a lot of data gathering on key measures, studying new instructional strategies, assessing student progress, and evaluating where to go next. It’s hard to do all that and focus on more than one goal at a time. Plus, you’ll actually make greater progress on closing gaps in all areas if you focus on deeply improving just one area.”

The pair also have learned that goal setting needs to start at the top of the organization. That means that superintendents and their cabinets should be involved in the process. “If there is little coherence in the system overall, it’s almost impossible for a school to be successful because they need the support of curriculum, technology, and professional development to achieve their goals. At the system level, the superintendent and others need to model and communicate the importance of strategic goals and priorities,” Conzemius said.

Once district goals are in place, schools can write goals to complement those district goals. Then grade-level or content-area teams can align their goals to support the school goals. The classroom teacher can write his or her SMART goals to blend with the grade-level or content-area goals. When that happens, Conzemius and O’Neill said systems start to make real progress. ■

What are SMART goals?

The acronym SMART comes from the five components of SMART goals.

- Strategic and Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Results-based
- Time-bound

Patricia Roy (2007) describes SMART goals this way:

Strategic goals focus on high-priority issues that are part of a comprehensive school or district plan. **Specific** goals focus on the precise needs of students for whom the goal is aimed.

For example, strategic goals are determined, in part, from analyzing student achievement and behavioral data. When this data is disaggregated, commonalities and differences among student groups become more apparent.

Measurable goals contain information about how a change will be calculated. The goal identifies the tool or instrument that will be used to measure whether the school or team has attained the desired results. Measurement is best accomplished by using a number of different tools and strategies. If a consistent pattern of change is seen through multiple measures, then the school will have greater confidence that its actions made the difference. For example, teams would use results from state assessment data, national standardized assessments, district or school performance measures, discipline referrals, or other instruments that measure performance, outcomes, or results.

Attainable goals include actions that the school can control or influence and that can be accomplished with existing resources. The team set-

ting the goal identifies a baseline or starting point when determining whether a goal is attainable. The team also needs to know how much time and what other resources are available to accomplish the goal. There is a delicate balance between setting a goal that is compelling and energizing to staff while not becoming so unrealistic that educators are discouraged from accepting the goal because they believe it's not possible to reach.

Results-based goals identify specific outcomes that are measurable or observable. Results could be expressed as attaining a certain level of student achievement in a content area, an increase in the number of students who improve in a certain area, or as improved performance as defined and measured by a performance rubric or clear criteria.

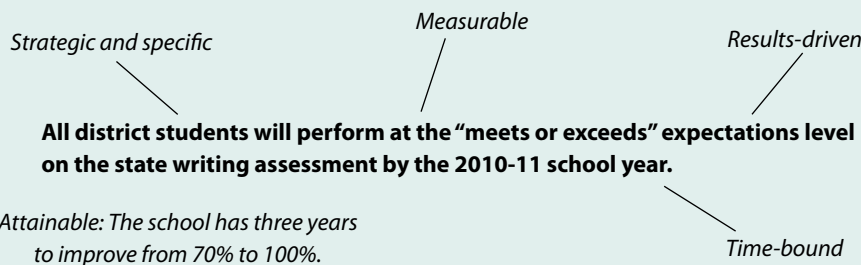
Many school people confuse "activity" with "results." They place into their school improvement goals the "means" they will use to accomplish the goal, such as implementing a new mathematics program or using cooperative learning strategies, rather than describing the outcome they expect for students. Results-based means a clear and specific description of the results of the school's activities.

Time-bound goals identify the amount of time required to accomplish it. Goals are sometimes more compelling when there is a sense of urgency attached to them. A pre-determined timeframe can create a sense of urgency and make the goal a priority to staff and students.

In short, SMART goals help us determine which of our efforts is making a difference, encourage us to set benchmarks to monitor progress, and identify specific evaluation measures.

"Set priorities for your goals. A major part of successful living lies in the ability to put first things first. Indeed, the reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first."

— Robert J. McKain



Source: Roy, P. (2007). *A toolkit for quality professional development in Arkansas*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

► Jan O'Neill and Anne Conzemius recommend a series of structured meetings to help schools and districts write SMART goals. See Page 7 for their plan.

Tree diagram

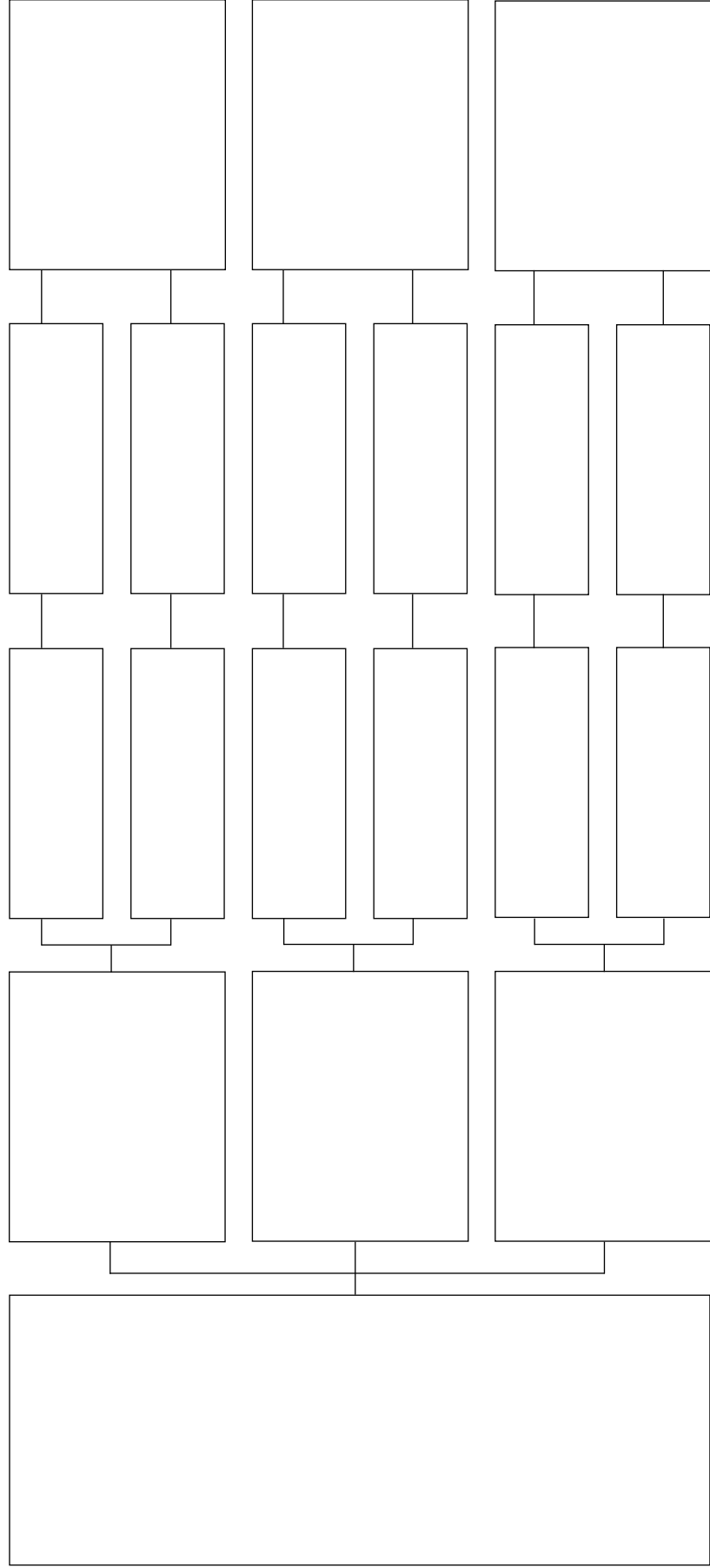
RESULTS GOAL
Ultimate improvement we want to see in student skills, competencies, performance.

INDICATORS
Standards and objectives (weak areas for students).

MEASURES
Tools we'll use to determine where students are now and whether they are improving.

TARGETS
The attainable level we'd like to see.

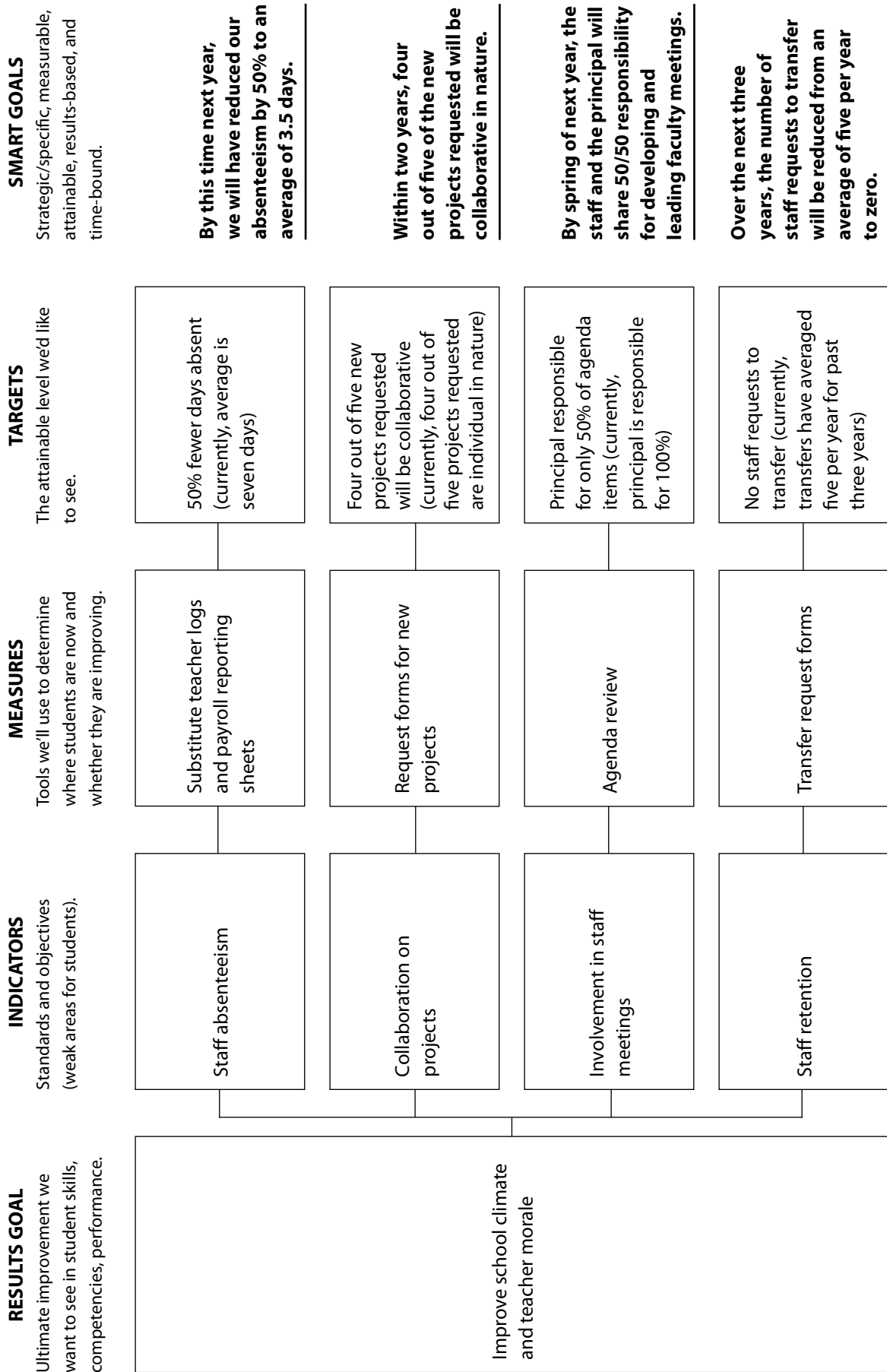
SMART GOALS
Strategic/specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound.



Source: Used with permission of Quality Leadership by Design, qldlearning.com.

Tree diagram for SMART climate goals

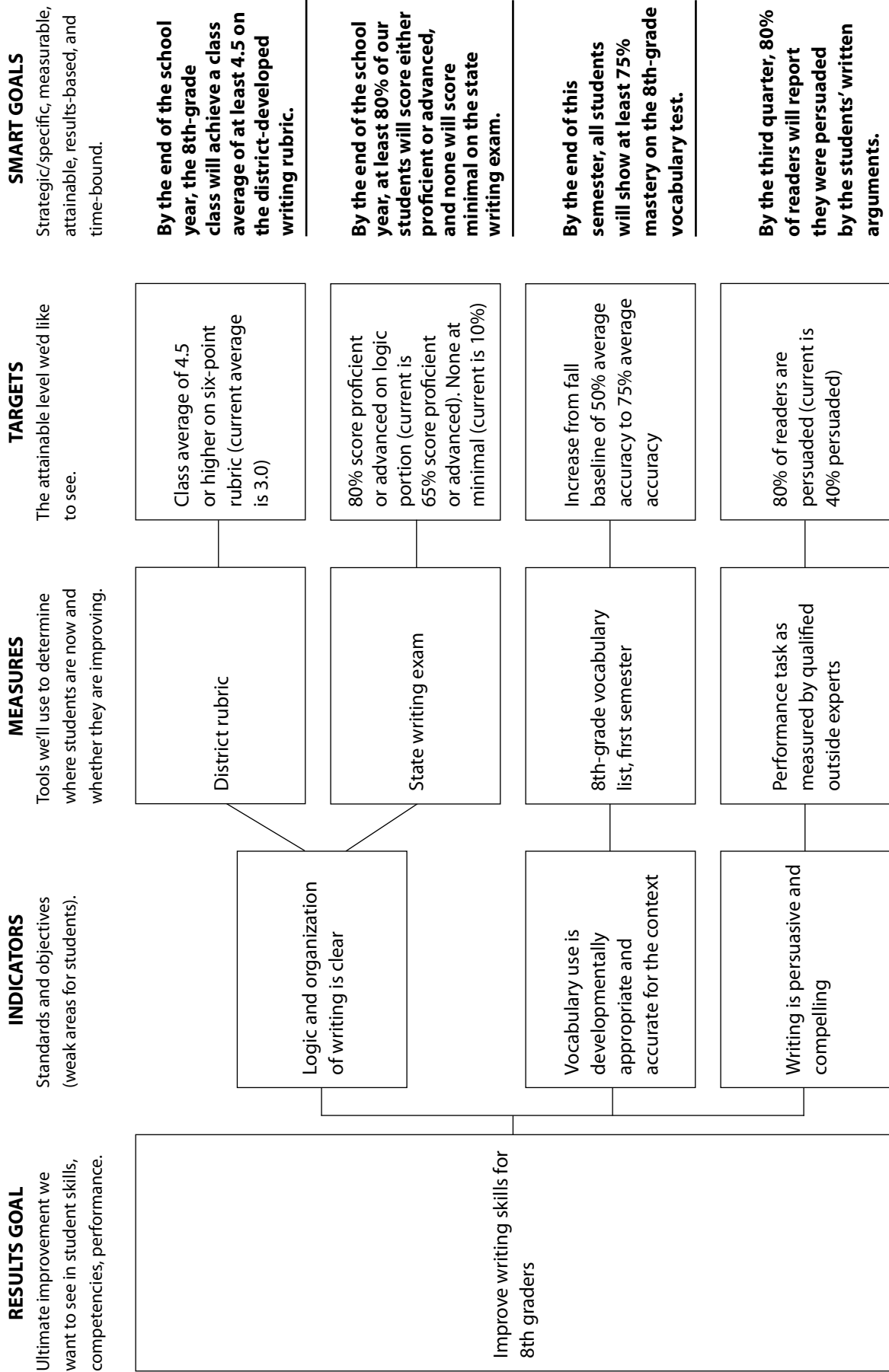
NSDC TOOL



Source: Used with permission of Quality Leadership by Design, qldlearning.com.

Tree diagram for SMART writing goals for middle school students

NSDC TOOL



Source: Used with permission of Quality Leadership by Design, qldlearning.com.

5 meetings for developing SMART goals

Meeting #1: Identify the need by isolating the opportunity or gap between the current situation and what is wanted.

- 5 min.** Ask the presenting question: What student learning issues are we struggling with the most?
- 10 min.** Brainstorm responses.
- 5 min.** Identify top three priorities by multi-voting.
- 10 min.** Ask: What more do we need to know? How can we find out?

Between meetings, gather student data and information on priority areas.

Meeting #2: Identify SMART goals for priority areas.

- 10 min.** Present graphs of student performance in area of concern. (Focus on skill areas or proficiency/performance level.)
- 10 min.** Brainstorm result-oriented goal(s) for priority area(s).
- 5 min.** Select one results-oriented goal for each priority area(s).
- 10 min.** Make the results-oriented goal SMART. Individuals write indicators, measures, and targets for one goal.

Consider indicators by skill/competence/performance expectations aligned to standards. Consider both standardized and classroom-based measures. Consider student data when writing targets.

- 5 min.** Share SMART goals round robin one at a time.
- 15 min.** Have group select “best of” indicators, measures, and targets to write group SMART goal.
- 10 min.** Ask: What do we need to know to affect student learning for this SMART goal?

Between meetings, do literature research or best practice review.

Meeting #3: Correlate best practices to current practices.

- 10 min.** Share information gathered between meetings.
- 10 min.** Develop matrix. What are we already doing that supports best practice in this area? What else would we like to learn about?
- 10 min.** Identify instructional strategies we want to do, do more often, or stop doing.

Between meetings, research ways to develop professional knowledge to learn best practices.

Meeting #4: Identify staff development methods we want to use.

- 10 min.** Share information about various staff development methods.
- 10 min.** Use matrix. Individuals select preferred strategy for learning about best practices, identifying areas in which they are willing to coach/teach others.
- 15 min.** Discuss implementation. How will we implement staff development for best practices? What support do we need? How will we measure progress on the SMART goal?

Between meetings, implement staff development and integration of best practices. Gather data to measure against the baseline.

Meeting #5: Analyze results and refocus efforts.

- 10 min.** Present graphs of new data.
- 15 min.** Discuss what worked, what did not work, and why.
- 15 min.** If the instructional strategy worked well, discuss how to hold the gains. If the strategy did not work well, decide next steps: Start doing the strategy differently, stop doing the strategy altogether, or start a new strategy.

Start the cycle over again.

Source: Used with permission of Quality Leadership by Design, qldlearning.com.



Pat Roy is co-author of *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (NSDC, 2003).

Extreme makeover: Needs assessment edition

The assessment of needs is one of the most valuable types of professional development data to collect. It can be used to help determine the initial focus and goals of professional development as well as to identify ongoing support and assistance required to sustain new classroom practices. The problem is that there seems to be a misunderstanding of the word “needs.” For many years that word has been synonymous with *wants, desires, or wishes* rather than **necessities** or **requirements**. The ubiquitous needs assessment survey, while not easy to design and administer, usually consists of lists of topics, programs, or strategies from which teachers are asked to indicate what they would LIKE to focus on during their professional development time. Not only are these surveys not clearly connected to student or teacher learning needs, most faculty members can complete them in less than a minute and rarely seem to remember them past the moment they hand them in. Yet, school and district staff development committees faithfully create catalogs and workshop sessions based on the survey results and educators, on the receiving end, wonder later, “Why are we doing this topic today — what were they thinking?”

Instead of this dartboard approach, the principal needs to **analyze relevant staff data to design teacher professional development** (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 75). Let’s remodel the needs assessment by collecting data focused on classroom practice. A number of tools are available to complete this task. Many principals are already familiar with the classroom **walk-through** (Richardson, 2006). But rather than thinking of

it as a monitoring tool, what if the results were used to determine teacher needs for support and assistance while implementing new curriculum or strategies?

Teacher concern surveys, based on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), help principals understand whether teachers need more information about new practices or programs, need to visit a demonstration classroom, or need to meet with grade-level colleagues to plan lessons or units (Hall & Hord, 2001). CBAM can help principals understand and support faculty as they journey through the process

of change. In addition, **informal conversations or interviews** with faculty members can also yield critical data to determine next steps for professional development. These conversations are sometimes called one-legged interviews — hallway conversations that begin with “How is the new mathematics (or reading, science, social studies, or ELL) program going?” and end with a clear understanding of some of the barriers that might be blocking successful implementation of new

classroom practices. Another useful tool from CBAM is the innovation configuration map that can be used as a self-assessment tool and pinpoint educator’s next steps as they move toward high-fidelity implementation of new practices.

A needs assessment is critical to powerful professional development but let’s make sure it actually assesses educator **needs** not their *wants*.

Data Driven:

Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

Learn more about NSDC’s standards:
www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm

REFERENCES

- Hall, G. & Hord, S. (2001).** *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Roy, P. & Hord, S. (2003).** *Moving NSDC’s staff development standards into practice: Innovation configurations, Volume I*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.
- Richardson, J. (August/September, 2006).** Snapshots of learning: Classroom walk-throughs offer picture of learning in schools. *Tools for Schools*, 10(1), 1-8.

Professional development program review

Program title: _____

Content area(s): _____

Grade(s): _____

PROGRAM GOALS:

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS	YES	NO	INSTRUMENT/ MEASURE	NOTES
Student achievement				
Sub-group student achievement				
Student behaviors				
Student attitudes				
Teacher content knowledge				
Teacher practices				
Teacher attitudes				

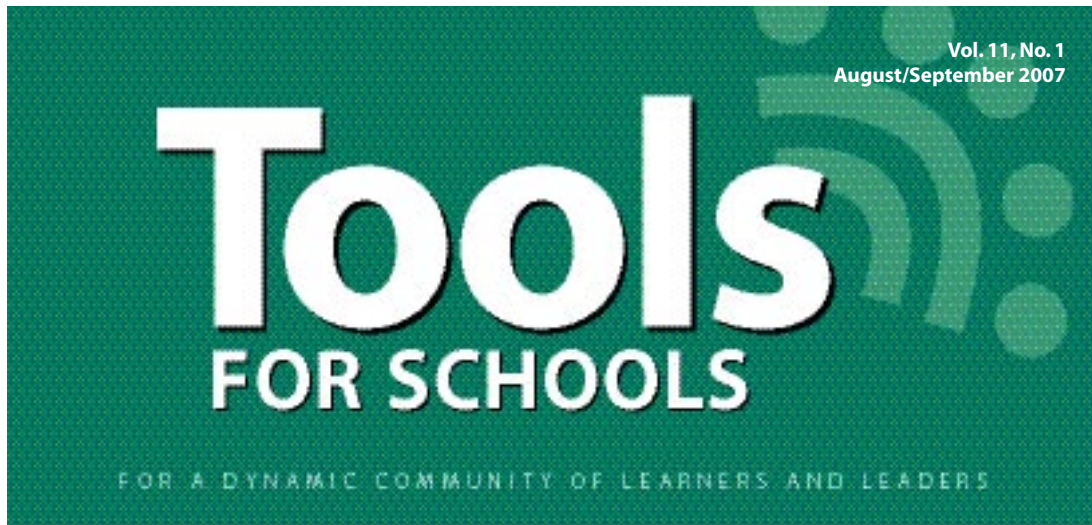
PROGRAM CONTENT	NOTES
Content	
Pedagogy	
Both	
Other (<i>student behaviors, classroom management</i>)	

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGNS	FACE-TO-FACE	DISTANCE/ ONLINE	BLENDED FORMAT	LENGTH	NOTES
Action Research					
Case Studies					
Critical Friends Groups					
Examining Student Work					
Lesson Study					
Mentoring/Coaching					
Peer Observation					
Protocols					
Study Group					
Training					
Tuning Protocol					

FOLLOW-UP	YES	NO	NOTES
Classroom-based			
Non-classroom-based			
PROGRAM CONTEXT			
DEMOGRAPHICS	YES	NO	NOTES
Rural			
Urban			
Suburban			
STUDENT/SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS	NOTES		
Ethnic/racial			
Socioeconomic status			
Size of school and district			
Teaching staff characteristics			
SUPPORT NEEDED	NOTES		
Community			
District			
School			
Team			
OTHER FEATURES			
INTENDED PARTICIPANTS	YES	NO	NOTES
Individual teachers			
Teams			
Grade level			
Department			
Vertical team			
School			
District			
Leadership			
COST	YES	NO	NOTES
Registration fee			
Consultant honorarium			
Travel costs (airfare, lodging, meals)			
Teacher materials			
Software			
Student materials			
Classroom materials			

Adapted from Killion, *What Works in Middle School: Results-Based Staff Development*, NSDC and NEA, 1999.



CLARIFY YOUR VISION

with an Innovation Configuration map

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

After three years of implementing a new writing program, teachers in Arizona's Gadsden Elementary School District #32 were still confused about how they were supposed to be teaching writing.

"We had inconsistent implementation. Often, teachers were calling the same practices and components by different names," said Olivia Zepeda, Gadsden's assistant superintendent.

As a result, students were not making the progress the district wanted.

Then the district began working with Shirley Hord, a consultant with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, who introduced the district to Innovation Configuration maps (ICs). Hord is one of the original developers of IC maps, a tool that educators can use to identify expectations about a new program or other innovation.

"When she mapped the components of the writing program, it was very evident that nobody

really knew what the focus of the writing program really was. It was amazing to us that after three years of professional development and implementation we were still confused," Zepeda said.

Now, "our results are incredible," she said.



Gadsden's 6th-grade writing results on the statewide assessment soared from 45% in 2005 to 82% in 2006. Fifth-grade results remained about the same, but 4th-grade results in writing moved from 28% proficient in 2005 to 69% proficient in 2006.

"With an IC, there is no misunderstanding; we have developed a common language. It's just very, very clear. It's clear for the people who are training. It's clear for the principals

who know what to look for when they do a walk through. It's clear for the teachers," Zepeda said.

An Innovation Configuration map clarifies what a program or practice — the innovation — is and is not. The IC creates a vision of what a new program or practice looks like in use by

Continued on p. 2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Example of an Innovation Configuration

Page 3

Six Steps to Create an IC Map

Page 4

Identify Components of an Innovation

Page 5

Map an Innovation Configuration

Page 6

Chinle School District Writing Innovation Configuration Map

Page 7



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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

COVER STORY

Clarify your vision with an Innovation Configuration map

Continued from p. 1

spelling out what is ideal and what is not acceptable. An IC map also shows the stages that a teacher might move through as he or she moves toward ideal practice.

NSDC developed a series of IC maps to describe the responsibilities of 11 different role groups for implementing NSDC's Standards for Staff Development. In the same way, educators can use IC maps to measure implementation of a new math or reading program, use of cooperative learning strategies, or differentiation strategies.

Patricia Roy, one of the co-authors of NSDC's standards IC maps, said developing and using an IC map helps everyone involved with a new implementation. "People who do training always think they are being crystal clear about explaining new practices. They can't even imagine some of the ways that new ideas might be implemented. But, when you're training, you don't always know what it is that people heard. ICs help with getting a clear picture," she said.

Hord and Roy both say that individuals who are involved with a new program or practice — teachers and principals — should be involved in writing the IC map for the implementation. Hord recommends seeking assistance from an expert during the initial writing of an IC.

"The most powerful part of the IC is that it brings the group together to discuss and debate it. As they do that, they are clarifying what this thing is," Hord said.

Another Arizona school district, Chinle Unified School District #24, also developed an IC map to guide its instruction in writing. Nearly all of Chinle's 4,000 students are Native Americans, most of whom live in poverty.

After attending a 6+1 Trait Writing workshop, a group of Chinle teachers wrote their own IC map for implementing that model of writing instruction. They used the components identified by 6+1 Trait Writing and then wrote five levels of implementation for each of the components. They identified the levels of implementation as highly effective, satisfactory, needs improvement, unsatisfactory, and wrong direction. (See sample of Chinle's IC map on Page 7.)

Steve Brown, Chinle's school improvement

coordinator, said five teachers spent about 15 hours developing the IC maps. "We were lucky because we had some teachers who were well trained in (6+1 Traits) before we tried to develop the ICs," Brown said.

These teachers used the IC maps as they instructed other teachers during a series of workshops. After each session, teachers returned to their classrooms with something specific to implement, Brown said.

Chinle asked teachers to use the IC maps to assess their writing instruction. After several months of implementation, the district asked teachers to use the maps for a second self-assessment. "We would have run up against a brick wall if we had anything that looked like an evaluative piece. We have learned to be very careful about making sure that teachers understand that this is a tool for coaching and for monitoring their own work," said Mike Reid, Chinle's director of federal programs.

Brown agreed. "Developing the maps went really smoothly. But during implementation, you have to go more slowly. Administrators have to be careful that this is used as a program evaluation, not teacher evaluation and to make sure teachers know that this is for their own use," he said.

Like Gadsden, Chinle also experienced significant results on Arizona's statewide writing assessment after using the IC maps. Sixth graders scored 95% proficient in 2006, up from 59% proficient in 2005. Fifth graders remained about the same after making steady gains from the low 30s to the mid- to high 70s over four years. Fourth graders moved from an already high 65% proficient in 2005 to 85% proficient in 2006.

Elizondo agrees that IC maps are best used as self-evaluation tools for teachers. But as teachers become more comfortable using IC maps and more accustomed to looking at student data, Elizondo said principals have been able to show that teachers who are moving closer to the ideal of implementation have students who are achieving more.

"Teachers can look at the IC maps and see what they are missing and what they need to do. They identify their own areas of weakness. That's very good," she said. ■

- See Page 3 for an excerpt from an Innovation Configuration map for one of NSDC's 12 Standards for Staff Development.
- See Pages 4 and 5 for instructions on how to create an Innovation Configuration map for a new practice or program in your school or district.

Example of an Innovation Configuration

for one of NSDC's Standards for Staff Development

Learning Communities Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.

The Teacher

Desired Outcome 1.1: Meets regularly with colleagues during the school day to plan instruction.					
LEVEL 1 Meets regularly with learning team during scheduled time within the school day to develop lesson plans, examine student work, monitor student progress, assess the effectiveness of instruction, and identify needs for professional learning.	LEVEL 2 Meets regularly with learning team during the school day to plan instruction, examine student work, and monitor student progress.	LEVEL 3 Works with learning team on special instructional projects during planning time.	LEVEL 4 Works with others on non-instructional issues. Addresses personal concerns, not group issues.	LEVEL 5 Uses planning time for individual planning.	LEVEL 6 Uses planning time for non-instructional tasks (e.g. management, personal tasks).

Desired Outcome 1.2: Aligns collaborative work with school improvement goals.					
LEVEL 1 Participates frequently with all professional staff members to discuss, document, and demonstrate how their work aligns with school and district goals. Engages in professional learning with colleagues to support this work.	LEVEL 2 Aligns the work of the learning team with school-wide goals. Works in a learning team (grade-level, subject matter, vertical) to address issues related to the grade or subject area.	LEVEL 3 Works in a learning team (grade-level, subject matter, interdisciplinary, vertical) to address issues related to specific grade or subject area.	LEVEL 4 Works alone; addresses individual issues rather than school or grade-level issues.		

Desired Outcome 1.3: Participates in learning teams, some of whose membership extends beyond the school.					
LEVEL 1 Participates in state, regional, districtwide, and/or national networks. Participates in interdisciplinary or subject matter/grade-level learning teams.	LEVEL 2 Participates in districtwide and regional networks and interdisciplinary or subject matter/grade-level learning teams.	LEVEL 3 Participates in both interdisciplinary and subject matter/grade-level learning teams within the district.	LEVEL 4 Participates in interdisciplinary learning teams and/or subject matter or grade-level teams only.	LEVEL 5 Participates in individual learning outside grade level, subject area, and/or school.	

Source: *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations, Volume I*, by Shirley Hord and Patricia Roy. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2003. Available through the NSDC Online Bookstore, <http://store.nsdcc.org>.

NSDC TOOL

SIX STEPS TO CREATE AN IC MAP

THINK ACTION!

Components and variations in Innovation Configuration maps should begin with a verb. Here are some possibilities.

- Analyzes
- Assesses
- Attends
- Collects
- Contributes
- Creates
- Describes
- Develops
- Differentiates
- Discusses
- Engages
- Ensures
- Establishes
- Exhibits
- Experiments
- Explains
- Identifies
- Implements
- Involves
- Manages
- Participates
- Plans
- Promotes
- Provides
- Recognizes
- Reviews
- Rewards
- Selects
- Structures
- Uses
- Works

Copy the following page for each member of the group creating the Innovation Configuration. Be prepared to write the components and variations on a large piece of chart paper or on a whiteboard that can be seen by all members of the group.

1 Visualize and brainstorm the components of the new program or practice.

Using the tool on Page 5, have teachers identify the key components of the new program or practice. This is the hardest part of developing an IC.

For example, if teachers were developing an IC for cooperative learning, the major components would be grouping patterns, tasks for students, individual accountability, group skills, interdependence, and group processing.

Sometimes, the creator of a program has already identified the key components and teachers are able to begin working with those. For example, when teachers in the Chinle Unified School District #24 in northeastern Arizona wrote an IC for the 6+1 Trait Writing Program, they were able to build on components that had already been clearly identified for them by program developers.

2 For each component identified in Step #1, visualize and brainstorm the ideal behavior for the key individuals involved in the implementation.

For example, if grouping patterns is one of the components, the ideal might be having teachers assign all students to four-member groups. Write that in the first set of spaces under Variation.

3 For each component identified in Step #1, visualize and brainstorm the behavior for the key individuals involved in the implementation.

For example, in cooperative learning, not grouping students together would be the nonuse level. Write that in the last set of spaces under Variation.

4 Continue to generate variations for each component, essentially filling in the gap between the ideal behavior and the nonuse level.

Under grouping patterns for cooperative learning, for example, variations would include assigning students to three-member groups or assigning students to work with a single partner. Every component can have a different number of variations. This is one of the differences between an IC and a rubric.

The number of variations will vary with each component. Write these variations in the remaining spaces, moving from most ideal use to nonuse.

5 Rewrite each variation, using an action verb to begin each sentence and describe the behavior of the key individual, such as the teacher or principal.

Assume that each sentence begins with the phrase, “The teacher...”

For example, “the teacher assigns students to four-member groups.”

See the list of action verbs at left.

6 Using the tool on Page 6, write the variations from left to right, with the most ideal variation on the far left and nonuse level on the far right.

Although every component will have a different number of variations, all of the components will have an ideal variation. Placing the ideal state in the far left column puts it in the most prominent place for the reader.

IDENTIFY COMPONENTS OF AN INNOVATION

NSDC TOOL

COMPONENT 1:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

COMPONENT 2:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

COMPONENT 3:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

COMPONENT 4:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

COMPONENT 5:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:	Variation:
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Map an Innovation Configuration

NSDC TOOL

Directions: Using action verbs, describe each component and each variation. Place the ideal variation in the #1 position and the nonuse level variation in the #5 position. Place the other variations in between.

Component 1:

	1	2	3	4	5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Component 2:

	1	2	3	4	5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Component 3:

	1	2	3	4	5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Component 4:

	1	2	3	4	5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Component 5:

	1	2	3	4	5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Chinle School District Writing Innovation Configuration map

Ideas & Content Component 3: Formally and informally assess for ideas and content.			
HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
<p>Consistently provides constructive feedback to students — <i>How can you clarify, support, focus, etc?</i> <i>Do you have the attention of the reader?</i></p> <p>Assists students in assessing using the Six- Traits rubric during several stages of the writing process.</p> <p>Rates students on the Six-Traits rubric and provides timely detailed feedback.</p>	<p>Consistently provides constructive feedback to students — How can you clarify, support, focus, etc? Do you have the attention of the reader?</p> <p>Rates students on the Six-Traits rubric and provides detailed feedback.</p>	<p>Seldom provides constructive feedback to students — How can you clarify, support, focus, etc? Do you have the attention of the reader?</p> <p>Rates students on the Six-Traits rubric.</p>	<p>WRONG DIRECTION</p> <p>Provides negative feedback, which causes students to be afraid to expand ideas.</p> <p>Grades organization too heavily, with words like “off topic, delete, you don’t need this, etc.)</p> <p>Teaches students it’s safer to say less.</p>
Organization Component 3: Formally and informally assess for organization.			
HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
<p>Provides a variety of assessments, rubrics, and workshops for scoring application of multiple literary forms.</p> <p>Provides time for self and peer assessment of personal writing.</p> <p>Provides prompt and detailed verbal and written feedback to students using established rubric on organization.</p> <p>Provides one on one conferences.</p>	<p>Occasionally provides a rubric or other assessment to student with explanation.</p> <p>Periodically provides time for self or peer assessment.</p> <p>Provides verbal and written feedback.</p>	<p>Seldom provides rubrics, time, or feedback to students.</p>	<p>WRONG DIRECTION</p> <p>Throws away papers without reading them.</p>

Source: Chinle Unified School District #24, Chinle, Ariz. Used with permission.



MODULE 3

How do we use data to plan collaborative professional development?

- Tool 3.1: Data use
- Tool 3.2: What *are* data?
- Tool 3.3: Data dialogue
- Tool 3.4: Mix it up
- Tool 3.5: Snapshots of learning
- Tool 3.6: Data analysis protocols — formal and informal
- Tool 3.7: Response sheet for discussing school data
- Tool 3.8: Crafting data summary statements
- Tool 3.9: Fishbone diagram
- Tool 3.10: Deciding on a team focus
- Tool 3.11: Striking a balance

Data use

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING TAKES A BIG-PICTURE VIEW OF THE NEEDS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

BY VICTORIA L. BERNHARDT

In July 2006, eight members of the Marylin Avenue Elementary School leadership team from Livermore, Calif., arrived at the annual Education for the Future Summer Data Institute in Chico, Calif., eager to learn how to employ data-driven decision making to change their school. Data-driven decision making is the process of using data to inform decisions to improve teaching and learning.

Schools typically engage in two kinds of data-driven decision making — at the school level and at the classroom level. The first leads to the second.

At the school level, staff members

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look at all the data to:

- Understand where the school is;
- Understand how they got to where they are;
- Know if the school is meeting its goals and achieving its vision;
- Understand the real reasons gaps and undesirable results exist;
- Evaluate what is working and what is not working;
- Predict and prevent failures; and
- Predict and ensure successes.

The Marylin team included six teachers, the district data analyst, and Principal Jeff Keller, who had just finished his first year as an administrator. The team was ready to get to work on the challenges they faced:

- The school had not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) since it was first required in 2002-03 (four years in a row).
- The English as a Second Language population was on the rise.
- The free/reduced lunch population was increasing.
- It was perceived that the school

culture was not ready to change.

- The school lacked focus and instructional coherence.
- Staff members were not using data to improve.

After a week of intensive work, the team left with a plan for data-driven activities to improve instruction and student learning. One year later, three members of the leadership team returned to Chico to share their successes at the 2007 Education for the Future Summer Data Institute.

Just days before the team arrived in Chico, Marylin Avenue Elementary School received its spring 2007 student achievement results. Student achievement improved at every grade level, in every subject area but one at one grade level, and with all student groups. These increases came even as the Hispanic and free/reduced lunch populations increased. Here is what the school did to get results.

MARYLIN AVENUE DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2002-03, 49% of Marylin

MARYLIN AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Student enrollment	2002-03		2006-07	
Total	465		507	
Hispanic	229	49.2%	335	66.1%
Caucasian	145	31.2%	91	17.9%
Other	91	19.6%	81	16.0%
Free/reduced lunch	211	45.4%	385	75.8%
Mobility	30%		34%	

We realized we had very little school processes data that measured our instructional strategies and programs. Looking at all the data gave us a reality check about where our school was, not just where we thought it was.

• **We used the Education for the Future Continuous Improvement Continuums.** The Continuous Improvement Continuums are self-assessment tools that measure where the school is with respect to its approach, implementation, and outcomes for seven continuous improvement categories. The tools helped members of the staff communicate about specific aspects of improvement as we moved forward together. (The Continuous Improvement

Avenue's students were of Hispanic descent. This percentage increased to 66% five years later as the percentage of Caucasian students decreased from 31% to 18%. At the same time, the percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch increased from more than 45% to almost 76% of the population. By 2006-07, Marylin Avenue School had a student enrollment of 507 in kindergarten through 5th grade, up from 465 in 2002-03. Of the 507 students enrolled, 335 (66%) spoke Spanish as their first language. Almost half of the parents had only a high school diploma or less. The teaching staff, mostly Caucasian females, had an average of 14.4 years of teaching experience (Marylin Avenue School, 2006). (See chart above.)

DATA USE

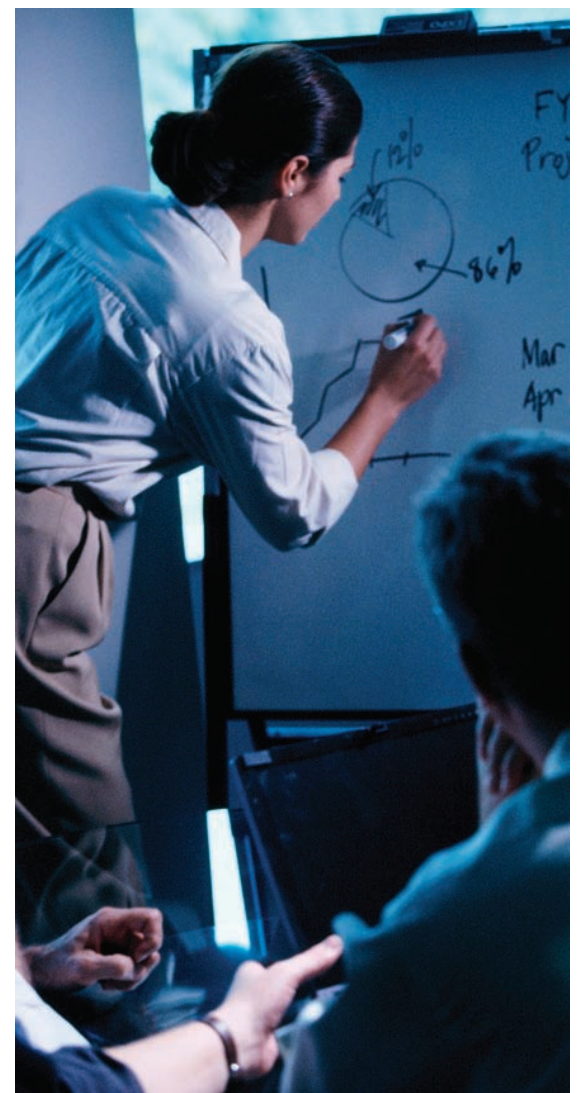
school's growth is measured by how well it is moving toward or past that goal.

The biggest challenge facing the leadership team was to get experienced teachers to realize that changes in the student population required changes in their teaching.

WHAT DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING LOOKS LIKE: MARYLIN AVENUE, JULY 2007

Fast-forward to the 2007 Summer Data Institute. Participants heard Marylin Avenue's success story: The school increased 54 API points, and student achievement increased in every grade level, every subject area, and with every student group. Here is what the leadership team told the group assembled in Chico:

• **We looked at all the school's data.** Comprehensive demographic data told us that our current student population was changing while we stayed the same. This told us that we had to change our strategies and services to improve student achievement. Perceptions data allowed us to hear from students and parents about how better to meet their needs. Perceptions data from staff revealed what it would take to change teaching strategies and get all staff working on the same page. Student learning results, disaggregated in all ways, told us where we did not have instructional coherence and which students we were not reaching.



Continuums are available at http://eff.csuchico.edu/download_center/.)

- **We developed a vision.** All the data and the results of the self-assessments showed us that we needed a clear vision for the school — one that everyone could commit to, not just agree with, and one that we would monitor to make sure everyone was implementing. Having a vision that was shared by everyone made a huge difference.

- **Staff participated in identifying contributing causes of our undesirable results.** Using the Education for the Future problem-solving cycle activity helped staff engage in deep discussions and honestly think about an issue before we solved it. In the past, we would identify a gap and then solve it in the same half-hour. The problem-solving cycle made us think through an issue and gather data to understand it in greater depth before solving it. Staff used this activity for evaluating

programs, strategies, and processes (Bernhardt, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006).

- **We engaged in schoolwide professional learning in assessment and instructional strategies.** We wanted teachers to work differently, so we had to support their continual learning of new assessment and instructional strategies.

- **We began using common assessments to clarify where students were at any time during the year.**

- **We established collaborative teams, and meeting times were enforced.** Teams used the time to discuss student assessment results and student work and how to change instructional strategies to get improved results. We kept these times sacred and modeled how to use the time and data effectively.

Having a vision that was shared by everyone made a huge difference.

DATA USE

MARYLIN AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
API growth and targets met, 2002-03 to 2007-08

Year	Number tested	Base	Target	Actual	Met target
2002-03	276	681	6	1	No
2003-04	270	665	6	-17	No
2004-05	313	662	7	-5	No
2005-06	303	651	7	-7	No
2006-07	295	705	7	54	Yes
2007-08	286	742	7	37	Yes

- **We created a school portfolio to house our data, vision, and plan.** The school portfolio helps us assess where we are with respect to our vision and provides the focus and sense of urgency to improve.

MARYLIN AVENUE, 2007-08

In 2007-08, Marylin Avenue staff members continued to implement the strategies they began using in 2006-07. In addition, staff mapped many school processes using flowcharting tools. Teachers and other staff members gathered data related to the

processes to make sure they were teaching what they intended to teach and that they were getting the results they wanted and expected for all students. All staff members understand what they are doing collectively to ensure that all students become proficient and what they need to do when students are not learning.

Marylin Avenue's 2007-08 accountability results were also impressive. The school is achieving instructional coherence and moving all students forward. The results again showed increases at every grade level, in every subject area, and with every student group. Marylin Avenue's API results for 2007-08 are 742, a 37-point increase. The school's target was 7.

As the table above shows, Marylin Avenue has come a long way in improving student learning for all students.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

In addition to the work detailed above, Marylin Avenue staff members say they continue to get student achievement increases because they:

- **Shifted their culture** through the use of data, committing to and implementing the vision, consistent leadership, and professional learning that helped them get results;
- **Adopted common formative assessments**, which helped every teacher know what students know and do not know, and therefore how to target ongoing instruction;
- **Examined student data** that allowed teachers to alter their instructional processes throughout the year to ensure that students continued to learn;
- **Collaborated** by grade level to review formative data, with a focus on teaching to the standards; and
- **Benefited from strong leadership** that never let go of the vision — modeling and supporting its implementation at every step along the way.

MOVING FORWARD WITH DATA

In spite of Marylin Avenue's chal-

lenging population changes, student achievement improved at every grade level, in every subject area, and with every student group two years in a row. With data and process tools, staff could see where the school stood. They used that information to get all staff on the same page to implement a vision and engage in powerful professional learning and collaboration strategies. Marylin Avenue staff will continue to use data to monitor and measure processes to ensure that all students are learning. The data framework that this school used for continuous improvement can be used by any school or learning organization. It is the use of all the data that makes the difference.

DATA USE

For schools to see student achievement increases in every subject, at every grade level, and with every student group, educators must look at big-picture data. They must understand what is being implemented to know what needs to change. It is not enough for educators to focus on just one thing they think can change; they must look at all the data. To move forward, review all the data, understand the data, and look for commonalities. Look for leverage points. Listen to students, staff, and parents. Look beyond summative student achievement scores. With a big-picture view, schools have the ability to improve all of their processes — and students will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

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What *are* data?

Directions: Teams thinking about improving teaching and learning can find a lot more information than just grades and test results. Data-driven schools in Alabama used these data sources in their school improvement process. Review the list, then brainstorm what other data may be available. Determine as a team which sources you want to use.

STATE & NATIONAL TEST RESULTS

- State-mandated subject-area assessments
- Writing assessments
- Graduation exams
- College entrance exams
- Advanced placement exams
- Yearly progress reports
- National Assessment of Educational Progress scores

COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENTS

- Packaged program assessments
- Individual reading assessments

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS

- Daily and unit tests
- Student portfolios
- Checklists
- Running records
- Evaluations of student projects
- Evaluations of student performances
- Examples of student work

SURVEYS

- Student
- Parent
- Community
- Uncertified staff
- Targeted teacher surveys by grade level and content area (program effectiveness, staff development needs, technology, library, paperwork, duties, etc.)

SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Attendance records
- Counseling referrals
- Discipline reports (with trend analysis)
- Student comments to counselors, teachers

SCHOOLWIDE ASSESSMENTS

- School report cards
- School Improvement Plan yearly assessments
- Collective analyses of student work
- Schoolwide writing assessments
- Products of accreditation processes
- Reports from school walk-throughs

OTHER STUDENT DATA

- Course assignments
- College admission data
- Quarterly, interim, and final grades
- Dropout data
- Minutes/records of student support teams
- Special education referrals

OTHER DATA

- Student honors and awards
- Student and parent demographic information
- Results of teacher action research
- Reports from teachers
- Academic lab and library usage
- Faculty turnover rate
- Registration data

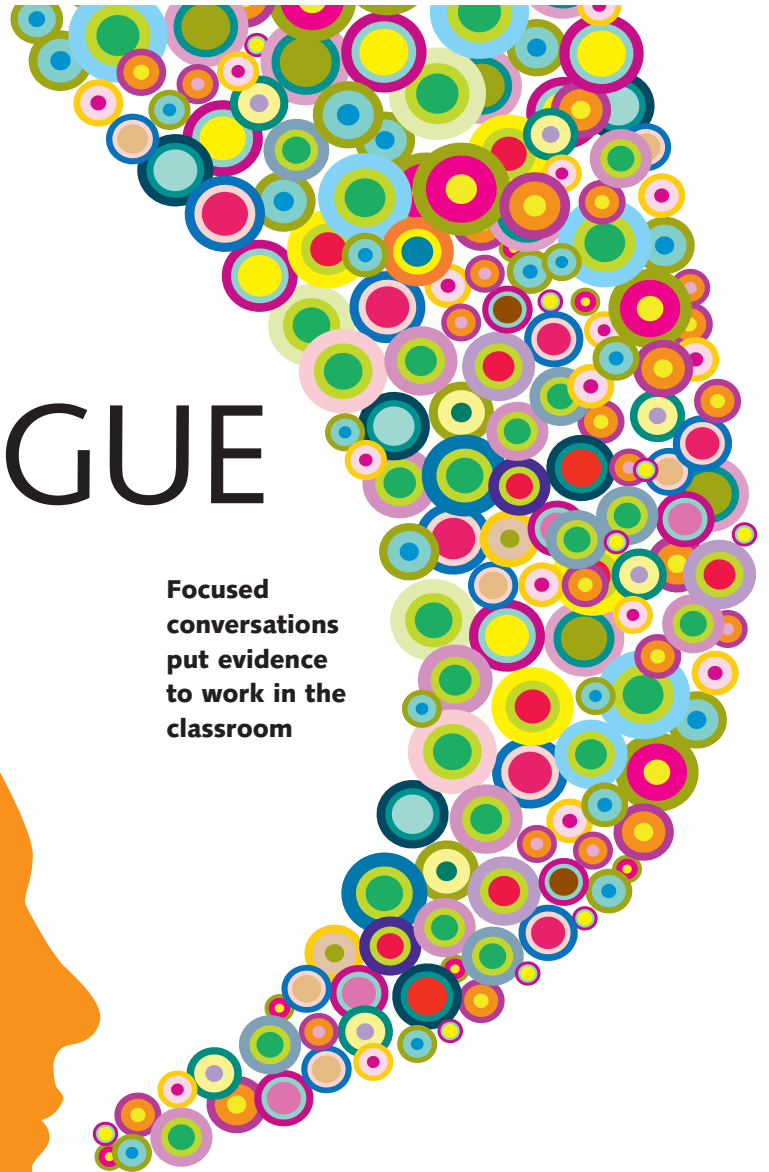
Compiled by John Norton for the Alabama Best Practices Center.

Source: Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

theme / EXAMINING EVIDENCE

DATA DIALOGUE

**Focused
conversations
put evidence
to work in the
classroom**



BY CINDY HARRISON AND CHRIS BRYAN

As teachers and leaders are well aware, schools and districts across the country have invested enormous amounts of money and energy in creating data management systems so that teachers

can access information about their students' performance. With these systems in place, the focus now needs to move to the structures and allocation of time that will allow teachers to engage in data conversations about student achievement and its implica-

tions for classroom planning and instruction. Such time and structures will ensure that the necessary conditions are in place for data to be used to impact student achievement.

Following and in the table on p. 16, we summarize a framework that

Types of data conversations

Type of data dialogue	Data used	Who is involved	Conversation topics	Frequency
Whole-school conversations	State assessments, district benchmarks	School improvement team, entire staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patterns of student achievement. Needs for schoolwide programs (instructional, curricular, professional learning). Needs for additional knowledge and skills for staff. 	2 times a year
One-on-one conversations with focus on multi-year growth of students	State assessments, benchmark exams, end-of-course assessments, classroom assessments, common assessments	Teacher and administrator and/or coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth of students. Overall proficiency of students. Instructional strategies to meet student learning needs. 	2 to 3 times a year
Department and/or grade-level teams with focus on individual student interventions	Student performance on classroom and common assessments, discipline records, student work	Core teams, grade-level teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnosis of individual knowledge and skills. Next steps for students. Grouping of students for instruction and intervention. Pyramid of interventions. 	Once a month or more often
Department and/or grade-level teams with focus on instructional strategies	State assessments, benchmark assessments, common assessments, unit assessments	Grade-level or content-area groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth of students. Patterns in proficiency. Instructional strategies. Assessment strategies. 	Once a week to once every 6 to 8 weeks
Student goal-setting conversations	Student work, grades, state assessments, common assessments, benchmark assessments	Teacher and individual students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal setting. Strategies for success. Celebrations of learning. 	Once a week to once a month

outlines a variety of types of data conversations. For each type of data conversation, we define the purpose, identify possible data sources, recommend frequency, suggest possible topics for the conversation, and identify who should be involved.

Effective data conversations share several common characteristics, whether at the school, grade, department, or team level. Characteristics include:

- Teams need to do an analysis of the current state of student achievement and create SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) for student learning.

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- Practitioners who can take action and monitor student learning should be the core participants in

team conversations.

- Members of the data conversation should agree that the data they are examining is a good measure of student learning.
- Data used in these conversations can be from national or state tests or common assessments.
- Teams need a facilitator who keeps the conversation focused on teaching and learning, asks the hard questions, and ensures that the group moves to action.
- Teams need a recorder who assists in making sure all members of the group leave with the same understanding of the discussion and next steps.

DATA CONVERSATIONS**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM CONVERSATIONS**

Purpose: To create and monitor a schoolwide implementation plan for continuous improvement by analyzing student/school data trends.

Possible data sources: Student achievement (formative and summative) assessments, including disaggregation by subgroups, demographic trends, and perception/survey.

Frequency: Quarterly or trimester data reviews.

Possible topics: The school improvement team analyzes and interprets data so that the whole school understands how the school is functioning. These conversations include setting goals in areas identified for improvement, examining best practices to be used schoolwide, and identifying benchmarks to measure

School improvement team conversations include setting goals in areas identified for improvement, examining best practices to be used schoolwide, and identifying benchmarks to measure growth in student achievement.

growth in student achievement as well as levels of implementation of the identified practice. Moving beyond using the practices to assessment of the impact of the practices assists the team in identifying where they need to make adjustments.

Who should be involved: A representative team of parents, teachers, students and administrators.

School example: Cooper

Elementary School found that they were in the bottom quartile in math for the past three years. Although the school had been implementing the *Investigations* math curriculum during that time, levels of implementation of the curriculum varied in individual classrooms. To assess whether the new curriculum was making a difference in math achievement, the team needed to collect data and assess the level of implementation first. The team asked each staff member to complete an Innovation Configurations map at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. In addition, a set of “look-fors” guided the principal during her walk-throughs and was also used by instructional coaches when they worked with individuals or teams of teachers to co-plan. In order to assess gaps in implementation and teacher knowledge and skills, data were exam-

ined by the school improvement team to decide on necessary allocations of resources to move the school forward.

TEACHER-SUPERVISOR CONVERSATION AND TEACHER-COACH/MENTOR CONVERSATION

There are two types of conversations that might occur here. Conversations between teachers and supervisors tend to be evaluative, while those between teachers and coaches/mentors are usually conducted in a non-evaluative manner.

Purpose: To identify trends in the achievement of students over time in an individual teacher’s classroom.

Possible data

sources: State tests, common assessments, district benchmarks.

Frequency: One or two times a year for administrator-teacher and as often as weekly with teacher-coach/mentor.

Possible topics:

Reflect on the growth in student learning (individual, subgroups, and whole group), identify strategies to implement and growth areas for the teacher.

These conversations often focus on the performances of a teacher’s past and current students and help to identify areas of success and weakness.

Participants may discuss programs and classroom practices to identify and solve problems rather than to assign blame for results. These conversations can focus on data over time and can also include conversation around the teacher’s current students and their needs. The growth of students is the focus rather than current proficiency of students so that teachers consider end points and also look at the growth of individual students.

Who should be involved:

Individual teacher and building-level administrator or coach.

School example: Felicia, a middle school social studies teacher, has been teaching for more than 20 years. In the last two years, the social studies department has been focused on literacy in the content area. In her data conversation with the principal at the beginning of the year, she noted that the English language learners were not making much progress in writing or reading in her classroom. Felicia identified this as an area for growth on her improvement plan. She and her principal then looked at her current students and identified some strategies to implement with the ELL students. They agreed to meet again in three months and look at growth in writing by examining writing samples from the beginning of the year and three months later.

DEPARTMENT/GRADE-LEVEL CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

Purpose: To identify next steps, interventions, and necessary focus areas for additional student learning.

Possible data sources: Achievement and readiness data such as state, district, or common assessments.

Frequency: Once a week to every six weeks.

Possible topics: Teams agree on and administer assessments to gain information about their students in relation to the school improvement plan. They create class profiles that identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students in a variety of areas which can then be used to differentiate instruction, provide interventions, and focus classroom instruction. Monitoring progress frequently ensures that the makeup of the student groups remains flexible. The team identifies strategies and allows enough time to determine the student’s responsiveness to the strategy.

The grade-level/department team

follows a problem-solving model that includes:

- Analyze data and reach agreement on areas of need;
- Group students by strengths and areas of need, identifying similarities and differences between classrooms;
- Research/examine best practices;
- Develop grade-level/department action plans;
- Implement the plan; and
- Evaluate and revise the plan based on student growth data.

Who should be involved: Grade-level or department teams.

School example: In September, an 8th-grade core team at Villa Nova Middle School administered its pre-assessment and noticed that it had a large group of students who scored low in vocabulary. The team decided to address this need by grouping students for scaffolded instruction across classrooms, preteaching unit vocabulary, assigning students to after-school intervention groups, and monitoring progress through common unit assessments. After each structure was implemented, the 8th-grade team discussed student growth and identified next steps for individuals and groups of students.

DEPARTMENT/GRADE-LEVEL CONVERSATIONS AROUND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Purpose: To engage in deep conversations around teaching and student learning, identifying student successes and challenges and then moving to teaching strategies and approaches that are successful and those that need to be changed.

Possible data sources: Common assessments, district benchmarks, individual teacher-created assessments, pacing charts, or examples of actual student work.

Frequency: One or more times a month.

Possible topics: Teachers discuss

In the departmental or grade-level conversation focused on the individual student, the purpose is to identify next steps, interventions, and focus areas for additional student learning.

what happened for students in the learning process and what instructional practices made a difference. Sometimes the conversation may focus on success with certain types of students (special education or advanced students) or with levels of student thinking exemplified in the work. Co-planning units including assessments, teaching the units, and then discussing student learning results is a valuable way to structure these discussions. Develop team goals to support school improvement goals and identify teacher learning needs. Some schools have incorporated the lesson study approach into these data conversations.

Who should be involved: The teachers involved and instructional coaches, when available. Some schools include administrators in these discussions; however, teachers can be brutally honest about their own strengths and weaknesses when there is no threat of information being used in evaluation. In this case, the administrator's role is to allocate time and ensure that these sessions focus on the importance of reflecting on student learning and teacher practices.

School example: Jorge, a high school physics teacher, is meeting with four of his peers who also teach physics. They look at student results for a unit they co-planned and taught. As they compare results, they notice patterns of high achievement and a high level of growth for students from the pretest to the final assessment for the classrooms where Jorge was the primary instructor. He shares strategies he used, and the team agrees to incorporate the strategies into their next unit.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT GOAL-SETTING CONVERSATIONS

Purpose: To provide students with an understanding of their current level of achievement in order to set goals with action strategies so that students are actively engaged in learning.

Possible data sources: Student work, grades, state assessments, common assessments, district benchmarks.

Frequency: Beginning of year and after individual units.

Possible topics: Students look at their own performance and may compare results to the defined proficiency

level and/or other students' performance. This is usually a conversation between teacher and student but could be small-group or whole-class conversation. Teaching students strategies for success is an integral part of this conversation. Often data walls are used to inform and motivate students to reach higher levels of performance. Celebrating success needs to be a part of this practice.

Who should be involved: Classroom teacher and individual student.

School example: In Aisha's high school algebra class, students set learning goals based on data. Students take an exam or quiz and then analyze their results on an analysis spreadsheet that includes an action plan. The teacher asks students to write a summary of the learning at the end of each unit. Students identify key math concepts, their areas of strength for the unit, a problem they still struggle with, what they have done to monitor their progress towards proficiency, and what they will do to move themselves further towards proficiency. The teacher reads each summary and conducts a brief student conference. ■

MIX IT UP



**Variety is key
to a
well-rounded
data-analysis
plan**

BY LOIS BROWN EASTON

Variety may be the spice of life, but in terms of data sources, variety is more than a spice — it's one of the basic food groups. Alternative data sources, such as student interviews and walk-throughs, are essential for a well-balanced diet. Data from test scores alone, whether from norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests, state, dis-

trict, or school tests, may provide protein, for example, but other data sources help keep educators, schools, districts, and states healthy. Many data-analysis experts advo-

cate for gathering evidence that complements student achievement data. Victoria Bernhardt (2008) recommends that achievement data be coordinated with demographic, perception

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(survey), and school process data (what the school does to help students learn — after-school tutoring and small classes, for example). In terms of student achievement data, Bernhardt and others (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008) advise educators to collect a variety of data, including student work itself. Several strategies for powerful professional learning can help schools, districts, and states access achievement data from sources other than test scores. Other strategies can help educators collect process data.

SOURCES FOR EVIDENCE OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ACCESSING STUDENT VOICES

Harvetta Robertson and Shirley Hord make the point that educators often access last the voices they should access first (2008). Facilitators of task forces focused on school improvement seek systemwide representation, but don't often ask students — those in the system who will be most affected by the results of school improvement efforts — to participate in the work. One way to access student voices is through focus groups. Another is through interviews.

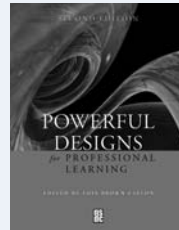
FOCUS GROUPS

Robertson and Hord describe a focus group consisting of 9th-grade students whose actions frustrated their teachers. “Nothing seemed to help,” said one teacher. “I found myself questioning whether my choice to teach was a good one” (2008). These teachers

learned during a focus group that the transition from middle to high school had challenged these students: “While

For more strategies

The expanded second edition of *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* introduces new chapters on classroom walk-throughs, differentiated coaching, dialogue, and video. The book includes a CD with more than 270 pages of handouts, including the tool in this issue of *JSD* on p. 64. Order the book from the NSDC Online Bookstore, <http://store.nsd.org>. Item #B380, \$64 for members, \$80 for nonmembers.



they [the teachers] had been lamenting the freshmen's failure to plan, missing deadlines, and lack of ability to balance school with work and extracurricular activities, the students were trying to assimilate the conditions of expectations of high school with their limited experiences in middle school” (2008). The 9th-grade teachers emerged from that focus group with new ideas on how to help students with transition from middle school and beyond.

Egg Harbor City School District in New Jersey hosted a focus group for three schools engaged in middle school mathematics reform. About 20 middle school students joined the educators in their workshop. Students were briefed to be honest and sincere about their experiences in mathematics, and they were. They sat in a circle outside of which sat the educators. The facilitator asked students questions the educators had generated:

- What skills would have helped you be better prepared for Algebra I?
- Why is it OK to say “I can't do math” when it's not OK to say that about reading?

- Why is math such an important subject?
- Was there a lesson that stood out for you?
- What outside influences might affect your ability to do math?
- What do you do if you don't know how to solve a problem?
- Do you see any math application in your future?
- What do teachers do that embarrass you?

Their answers were surprising, validating, disconcerting, and sometimes even funny, such as this response from a young man: “Actually,” he said, “my gerbil influences me to do my math homework — it's the only time I'm sitting in front of its cage.”

At the end of the focus group, students turned their chairs around and chatted in small groups with two or three educators. The ice had been broken, and students were completely candid as educators asked important follow-up questions. The facilitator wrote up the results for everybody.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews differ from focus groups in that they occur between one interviewer and one student at a time. Robertson and Hord describe the use of an interview protocol called “Me, Myself, and I” from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Laboratory Network Program, 2000). Outside interviewers conducted the interviews, collecting data from a representative sample of students from across the student body. The interviewers collated their notes and compiled “some insights for staff to consider about their students' perceptions.”

In a variation on the interview process, educators in Lawrence, N.J., worked with middle school students on how they think about mathematics. These students in pairs did “think-alouds” as they worked

Facilitators of task forces focused on school improvement seek systemwide representation, but don't often ask students — those in the system who will be most affected by the results of school improvement efforts — to participate in the work.

through increasingly more difficult mathematics problems while the teachers listened in. The teachers summarized their notes in answer to these questions:

- What surprised you about students' thinking?
- What errors did you encounter that may have been based on erroneous expectations or assumptions?
- What novel/unique ways of thinking did you encounter?
- What does this experience tell us about what students know and do not know and what they can and cannot do?

TUNING PROTOCOLS

Looking directly at student work gained credibility in the 1970s and 1980s when the National Writers Project (NWP) and others developed processes for assessing writing. These processes were considered valid — they measured real writing, not a proxy, as in multiple-choice items — and reliable — scorers set and used anchors, established rubrics, and scored each paper at least twice to get interscorer reliability. Tuning protocols in part arose from NWP work on formal, large-scale writing assessment. Tuning protocols are as valid as a formal, large-scale assessment process, though less reliable because they rely on consensus rather than calibration.

Tuning protocols engage a group of peer educators in a process to fine-tune what happens in classrooms based on student work. Dave, a high school science teacher, worked with his peers to tune student science portfolios. He wanted to be sure students thought deeply about science. His tuning group pointed out that students mostly wrote about what they did, not what they learned. The consensus of the tuning group was that Dave needed to modify what he asked students to talk about when they debriefed science activities so that

they could, in turn, write more about what they learned. Dave used their advice and found that students grew so accustomed to talking about their learning orally that they naturally wrote about their learning in their portfolios. He was delighted to discover that their learning sometimes consisted of more questions than answers.

The result of tuning protocols becomes more meaningful if there is a goal, such as looking at how students demonstrate higher-level thinking skills. Over time and after tuning several pieces of student work, educators will have data that can be used to capture students' levels of thinking. Looking directly at student work through a tuning protocol allows educators to know what students actually know and can do rather than how they select answers on a multiple-choice test.

SOURCES FOR SCHOOL PROCESS DATA

CLASSROOM WALK-THROUGHS

Classroom walk-throughs can yield data about student achievement but are also useful for collecting process data. Process data are essential because they establish what schools are doing to help students learn. In a data-driven dialogue, educators look first at achievement data and then ask: “What are we doing at our school to help students succeed on this skill?”

During the typical classroom walk-through, educators focus on the following: student orientation to work, curriculum moves (content, objectives, context, cognitive type, and calibration to district/state curriculum), and instructional moves. According to Carolyn Downey, educators can also use walk-throughs to gather information on safety and health as well as school or district goals (Downey, 2008).

Many educators “walk the walls” during classroom walk-throughs. As part of their walk-through process, they look at what is posted on classroom walls. They can look at posted student work and gauge what students know and can do from what's on the walls. Sometimes, those doing walk-throughs can — as unobtrusively as possible — look at what students are working on at their desks, again gaining information about what students know and can do.

Margery Ginsberg suggests that those who do walk-throughs consolidate their notes over a period of time to share with an entire faculty (Ginsberg, 2004). For example, they might report that during their visits to classrooms, they observed student work showing a deep understanding of a schoolwide focus, such as five-step problem solving. They might observe students engaged in peer-editing groups and making substantive remarks about organization. Or, they might see students working at their desks using longitude and latitude to determine world locations. These data are as important as test score data about mathematics, writing, and geography.

In terms of school process data, walk-throughs can yield information about student grouping, older students tutoring younger students, class sizes, celebrations of student work, consistent classroom management strategies, whether teachers share rubrics in advance of student work, and how teacher aides work with special needs students in the classroom.

SHADOWING STUDENTS

Shadowing students is an important way to gain process data about a

Classroom walk-throughs can yield data about student achievement but are also useful for collecting process data. Process data are essential because they establish what schools are doing to help students learn.

school. Educators who shadow in their own schools are often amazed at what students endure. For the first time, perhaps, they notice the disconnect among the classes or the variety of classroom expectations that challenge students as they move from class to class. Educators who shadow in other schools can do so for particular purposes, such as to see how a school achieves an interdisciplinary curriculum, but their experience will also help them think about the processes of their own school in comparison to the host school's processes.

The school hosting educators who shadow students needs those adults to report what they see and hear. By doing so, the school benefits from a mirror held up to its own processes. The questions and comments that the adults make to students and staff in a host school are an important source of information about how the school is engaging its learners.

CRITICAL ASPECTS

These professional learning strategies yield little in terms of data collection unless those engaged in them use what they have learned. Participating educators need to note the results of these activities and look for themes, trends, and anomalies to report to the entire school faculty. Mary Dietz suggests that groups keep a portfolio of artifacts related to professional learning — notes from meetings, agendas, student work, summaries of learning, and how educators are applying and implementing what they have learned (Dietz, 2008).

In addition, educators should seek ways to make data they are gathering accessible to others, perhaps through a

web site or blog. Principals might want to set aside part of each faculty meeting for groups to report to each other what they have learned. In fact, student achievement or process data from these professional learning experiences can lead a faculty to the process of inquiry that Carolyn Downey and others suggest. An inquiry question based on data from a classroom walk-through, for example, might sound like this: “When planning units through which we want students to help each other learn, how do we decide on strategies for group work that engage all students?” (Downey, 2008). Faculty engaged in an inquiry question can extend learning beyond the professional learning activity that stimulated it.

Ongoing professional learning activities can naturally generate data that complement data from tests and process data. Educators who engage purposefully in these types of professional learning activities diversify their sources of data and develop a more precise understanding of where students struggle. For example, educators distressed about reading scores in an elementary school can design and engage in an action research project to determine if a particular intervention helps students read better. Teachers can also interview students about reading. The data collected as part of the action research project coupled with interview results can be used with scores on reading tests to make sense of and remedy the situation.

Test scores can launch this key question: “What other data — beyond test scores — do we need? How can we obtain these data without more testing?” The answer leads to professional learning activities that aren't as intrusive as testing. The answer leads to professional learning activities that engage educators in examining real work and understanding real students rather than depending solely on the proxy results that

tests provide. The answer leads to professional learning that improves learning for all students.

CONCLUSION

Nutritionists and dieticians argue for well-balanced diets — a little of each food group. Educators need to argue for the same — a little from each type of data source rather than reliance on one data source. Just as fruits and vegetables are considered necessities in the diet, data from real students and real student work accessed through professional learning strategies should become a staple in the data diet.

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Educators who engage purposefully in these types of professional learning activities diversify their sources of data and develop a more precise understanding of where students struggle.



Snapshots of learning

*Classroom walk-throughs offer
picture of learning in schools*

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

Nadia Carlson* steps into an elementary classroom and pauses at the back of the room. Her focus today is to observe exactly what students are doing. She scans each cluster of desks, making notes about the children who are engaged in the lesson and those who are not. She quickly dips down and quietly asks one student what she is learning. Just as smoothly as she has moved into the room, Carlson slips out the door five minutes later.

Classroom walk-throughs are not traditional classroom observations. They are shorter, more focused snapshots of learning in a single classroom in order to assist one teacher or across a variety of classrooms in order to create a bigger picture of learning in a school. Walk-throughs are

* *Fictitious person*

known by many names — walkabouts, instructional walks, learning walks, data in a day. Regardless of the name, the process is roughly the same: one or more observers spend three to five minutes in a classroom looking at one specific component of instruction. If there are two or more visitors, they debrief with each other for a short time after the walk-through. Finally,

whether there is one visitor or several, observations are shared, preferably verbally and soon after the visit, with the teachers whose classrooms have been visited.

Classroom walk-throughs were inspired by “management by walking around,” a concept that took hold in

corporate offices in the early 1980s as a way of putting managers in touch with employees. By the mid-’90s, the idea has surfaced in school

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Our goal: All teachers in all schools will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work.

COVER STORY

“A good baseline for any administrator is to do 20 minutes of walk-throughs at least three times a week.”

—Margery Ginsberg, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004), p. 92.

“Speak quietly and quickly to at least two students, either at their desks or in the hallway. You might ask them what they are working on and whether it is interesting or important to them.”

—Margery Ginsberg, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004), p. 89.

“Walk-throughs are useful for raising questions rather than drawing conclusions.”

—George Perry

Snapshots of learning: Classroom walk-throughs offer picture of learning in schools

Continued from p. 1

districts as a way for principals to gain a better understanding of what was happening with classroom instruction.

In the last five years, however, the use of walk-throughs has blossomed as teachers have become more comfortable opening the doors of their practice and principals more confident and skilled about offering feedback about teaching and learning. As the practice has become more widespread, the educators who are involved in walk-throughs has also become more diverse. Initially the domain of principals, instructional coaches and classroom teachers now frequently engage in walk-throughs.

“When teachers are involved in doing the walk-throughs, that’s when it really takes off in a school,” said George Perry, an educational consultant who estimates he does about 150 walk-throughs a year in various schools.

Perry calls the walk-through “one of the most powerful tools that educators can use to stimulate conversations around improving teaching and learning.”

Because it’s based on a school’s own daily routine, it’s the most valuable data schools can collect and it’s very valuable professional development,” Perry said.

READINESS FOR WALK-THROUGHS

Principals should introduce walk-throughs only when there is a high level of trust between teachers and administrators.

Teachers tend to be most concerned about whether the information gleaned during a walk-through will remain confidential, especially whether it will be used as part of their annual evaluation.

Information obtained in a walk-through is intended to be used with the teacher who was observed and no one else. That information should not be discussed with other teachers and notes from the observation should not go into a teacher’s file nor be used in an evaluation.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE

Principals can avoid much of the confusion about how information is used if they ensure in

advance that teachers have a good understanding of the process, Perry said.

He recommends engaging the school leadership team in the discussion. “It’s most helpful when the leadership team takes this to other teachers,” he said.

Initially, principals should announce in advance when they will do walk-throughs and what they will be observing. The focus could be the same for the entire school or it could vary for each grade level or department. The focus could remain the same for a week or for an entire month, depending on how frequently the visits will occur.

As walk-throughs have become more popular, more varieties of walk-throughs have emerged.

If a small group of observers is visiting a variety of classrooms, for example, the principal or school coach would assemble the visitors in advance. During that meeting, she would instruct visitors about the focus of the visit and each visitor would be assigned a task. One visitor might be asked to watch for student engagement in the lesson, another to note what is on the wall or the chalkboard, another to observe the materials students are using.

If a principal is visiting a variety of rooms alone, she still should identify the focus of her observations in advance. For example, she might walk through seven 3rd-grade classrooms and look at materials that students are using for the lessons at that moment or she might record whether cooperative learning is occurring.

“I used to tell teachers just to go on as if we’re not there, just ignore us. Now I recommend that visitors introduce themselves to the teacher. This is just a 30-second conversation with the teacher so the teacher can acknowledge that you’re in the classroom,” Perry said.

When a group of observers moves through a variety of classrooms, they should gather at the conclusion to speak about what they have seen. This is presented as factual observations, not just opinions. “Students were working individually,” *not* “I don’t know why students weren’t working with partners for this assignment.”

The principal or his designee should provide

Continued on p. 3

Snapshots of learning: Classroom walk-throughs offer picture of learning in schools

Continued from p. 2

feedback to the teachers who were observed. Perry recommends that feedback include strengths (“I was impressed by ...”), questions (“I wonder about ...”), and, when appropriate, next steps. (“May I bring some teachers to see how you ...” or “I would like to talk with you about ...”).

ADMINISTRATIVE WALK-THROUGHS

Using walk-throughs has changed the atmosphere at Lomax Junior High School in LaPorte, Texas, said principal Leigh Wall. “They put the focus on learning. It’s not about what kids are doing, it’s about what they’re learning,” Wall said.

Wall has been doing walk-throughs at Lomax for two years and typically visits about 20 classrooms a week. So far, the building’s three administrators and the department heads have done all of the walkthroughs. Each administrator focuses on one grade and certain content areas and tries to get into about two dozen rooms each week. Department heads are expected to do one walk-through each week. Each uses a handheld device to keep track of the observations in individual classrooms. Data from the handhelds can later be downloaded into Wall’s computer, where she can quickly assemble information from a variety of classrooms to view a picture of learning in her school.

The LaPorte district provided a three-day training in the process for all principals; Wall paid to have her assistant principals included as well. She later trained teachers at her school in the process, even though only administrators were initially doing the walk-throughs. “I wanted teachers to really understand the process,” she said. During this school year, Wall plans to add teachers to the walk-throughs.

Teachers asked administrators to use the walk-throughs to determine if they were implementing Marzano’s nine instructional strategies. One of their discoveries was that teachers were not implementing the summarizing and notetaking strategy appropriately. Many of them were just having students copy notes from the board, Wall said. As a result of that, teachers

requested more staff development in how to appropriately implement that strategy, she said.

WALK-THROUGHS BY COACHES

Principals are not the only ones who can do effective classroom walk-throughs. The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) has trained more than 1,000 K-3 reading coaches in its process of student targeted classroom walk-throughs. New coaches learn the technique during a summer institute. Novice coaches observe a principal and coach prepare for the walk-through, do an actual walk-through in a demonstration classroom, and finally debrief their observations.

“This gives them a chance to see a walk-through in action,” said Georgina Pipes, who coordinates the reading coaches statewide.

“We always want a principal and a coach to do these together, although sometimes it might be a school’s whole literacy leadership team. Part of the message is that this is a schoolwide movement,” Pipes said.

ARI suggests that coaches do a walk-through in every teacher’s classroom once a month. That may mean that the coach is doing several walk-throughs on some days.

In the ideal situation, the classroom walk-through grows out of the regular data meetings that occur at each ARI school. In those meetings, the reading coach and grade-level teachers look at data for students in that grade. Together, they identify a struggling reader and the teacher describes her efforts to improve the child’s reading. “Often, she says she’s tried everything she can think of to help Johnny. That’s a signal that this is a good prospect for a walk-through,” Pipes said.

In that situation, Johnny and his learning are the focus of the walk-through. “It shouldn’t be like we’re hovering over Johnny. We talk about touching all four walls when we’re in a room. We don’t want the child to be aware that we’re looking at him. The kids become very accustomed to having adults in the room so often they’re not really paying that much attention to us,” she said.

The walk-through tells the coach a great deal about how she can support the teacher. “It’s a safe conversation if you’re talking about a student and his learning,” Pipes said. ■

COVER STORY

“More than four or five visitors in a classroom at one time can be overwhelming to teachers and students.”

— George Perry

“Vary the times that you visit. Some weeks, go in at the beginning of a class, the next week, the middle of a class, then the end of a class. You want to ensure that you’re seeing a variety of times.”

— Leigh Wall

“Walk the entire room. Don’t get trapped at the door. Literally walk through. A good mnemonic rule is to touch each wall of each classroom.”

— Margery Ginsberg,
Powerful Designs for Professional Learning
(NSDC, 2004), p. 89.

NSDC TOOL

Walk-throughs provide an opportunity to:

Reinforce attention to a focus on instruction and learning in the school's improvement plan.

Gather data about instructional practice and student learning to supplement other data about school and student performance.

Stimulate collegial conversation about teaching and learning through asking questions about what evidence is and isn't observed.

Learn from other participants through observations, questions, experiences, and perspectives.

Deepen understandings and practices by continuous feedback.

Source: Perry and Associates.

Walk-Through Plan

Preparation meeting

Time: 30 minutes.

- Assemble members of the walk-through team.
- The principal identifies the focus for the walk-through, the classrooms that will be visited, and why those have been chosen for visits.
- The principal invites team members to identify evidence that would support the focus. One team member records responses on a display board.
- Determine which team member will look for each type of evidence.
- Distribute feedback forms to each member.

Walk-through

Time: 3-5 minutes per classroom.

- All team members enter the classroom at the same time. Team members do not speak to each other during their time in the classroom.
- Team members sit at the back of the classroom unless they have a specific assignment to speak to students or examine student work.
- Team members make notes about their assigned area. If appropriate, team members may want to sketch out a map of the classroom that indicates the location of a piece of evidence they observed.
- At the end of the agreed-upon time, all team members leave the classroom together.

Debriefing

Time: 45 minutes.

- Walk-through team members assemble in the principal's office or other agreed-upon meeting place.
- Each visitor speaks about his or her observations. They provide specific evidence as well as attempt to present an overview of what they saw.
- Together, the team members identify trends, areas of strength, and areas that need improvement.
- Drawing on their own experience and knowledge, the visitors make suggestions about how to strengthen areas that need improvement.
- The principal makes notes on the discussion and collects the feedback forms. The principal will decide the best way to provide information back to the teachers whose classrooms were visited.

Walk-Through Individual Feedback Form

NSDC TOOL

Date _____

Focus Question:

Classroom #	_____	Teacher	_____
Grade level	_____	Subject	_____

Make enough copies of this page so each visitor has one copy for every classroom he or she will visit.

All of the individual forms should be returned to the principal at the end of the walk-through.

Evidence that supports the focus. *We saw ...*

Evidence that was missing. *We expected to see but did not see ...*

Evidence that was working against the focus. *We saw evidence that contradicts the focus ...*

Adapted from the work of Perry and Associates. For more information about their work, contact George Perry, 781-934-6294 (telephone or fax) or e-mail info@perryandassociatesinc.com.

NSDC TOOL

Walk-Through Group Feedback Form

As the group of observers debriefs, one individual records the group's observations.

The principal keeps the individual feedback forms and the group feedback form. Only the group feedback form will be shared with all teachers whose rooms were observed.

"Often, the physical setup of the room will cause you to be a distraction. If the door places you at the front of the room, quickly walk to the back of the room."

—Carolyn Downey, *The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through* (Corwin Press, 2004), p. 22.

Date _____

Focus Question:

Evidence that supports the focus. We saw ...

SPECIFIC EVIDENCE THAT WAS OBSERVED

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Continued on next page

Adapted from the work of Perry and Associates. For more information about their work, contact George Perry, 781-934-6294 (telephone or fax) or e-mail info@perryandassociatesinc.com.

Walk-Through Group Feedback Form

Continued from previous page

NSDC TOOL

Evidence that was missing. We expected to see but did not see ...

Four horizontal lines for writing evidence that was missing.

SPECIFIC EVIDENCE THAT WAS OBSERVED

Five numbered horizontal lines for listing specific evidence that was observed.

Evidence that was working against the focus. We saw evidence that contradicts the focus ...

Four horizontal lines for writing evidence that was working against the focus.

SPECIFIC EVIDENCE THAT WAS OBSERVED

Five numbered horizontal lines for listing specific evidence that was observed.

Sketching a rough map of each classroom may help visitors recall where they saw certain evidence and make it easier for the observed teachers to understand some of the feedback.

“You must clarify for teachers that they are to ignore you and carry on with their work whenever you walk into the room, unless you specifically ask for their attention. ... You cannot observe teachers who are engaged with the observers.”

— Carolyn Downey, The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through (Corwin Press, 2004), p. 22.

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r e s o u r c e s / w a l k - t h r o u g h s

“By the numbers”

Margery Ginsberg, *Journal of Staff Development*, Spring 2001

This article describes the Data in a Day process as the author has used it to collect information about classroom practices that support student motivation. Available to NSDC members in the members-only area of the NSDC web site, <http://members.nsd.org>.

Classroom Walk-Throughs

Margery Ginsberg, in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, Chapter 8, edited by Lois Brown Easton

This chapter presents a rationale for doing walk-throughs as well as describing the steps for a successful walk-through. NSDC, 2004. Available through the NSDC Online Bookstore, <http://store.nsd.org>. Item #B248.

“Seeing through new eyes”

Joan Richardson, *Tools for Schools*, October/November 2001

This issue of the newsletter is devoted to a description of walk-throughs. Available to NSDC members in the members-only area of the NSDC web site, <http://members.nsd.org>.

Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through

Carolyn Downey, Betty Steffy, Fenwick English, Larry Frase, and William Poston

This book provides a detailed plan for doing a three-minute classroom walkthrough that is well-supported with a study of the relevant research. Corwin Press, 2004.

“Walk-throughs provide stepped-up support”

Corrie Ziegler, *JSD*, Fall 2006

This article describes how teachers in Edmonton, Alberta, moved from a culture of isolation to one of collaboration using instructional walk-throughs. Available to NSDC members in the members-only area of the NSDC web site, <http://members.nsd.org>.

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PERIODICALS
POSTAGE
PAID

Data analysis protocol (*formal*)

What are we looking at here?

What is being measured in each assessment?

Which students are assessed?

What areas of student performance are meeting or exceeding expectations?

What areas of student performance are below expectations?

Do patterns exist in the data?

How did various populations of students perform? (Consider factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status.)

What are other data telling us about student performance?

How are the data similar or different in various grade levels, content areas, and individual classes?

What surprises us?

What confirms what we already know?

Data analysis protocol *(informal)*

What is being measured in these data?

Who is represented in the data pool?

What jumps out in the data on first glance?

Surprises

Expected

What conclusions can we draw at this point?

What other data have we looked at recently that have suggested similar findings?

What other data might we consider to confirm or disprove these conclusions?

Response sheet for discussing school data

Purpose: To provide a structured way to facilitate a discussion about data. This information will support goal-setting and other decisions about professional development.

Time: 1 hour.

Materials: A copy of the chart for each participant.

DIRECTIONS

1. The leadership team discusses the data and records the team's responses to the questions regarding the data.
2. When the data are organized and ready to share, the leadership team and principal share the data and facilitate a discussion with the full faculty.

School name:

Data analyzed by:

Data collection period:

Data of analysis:

Type of data analyzed: *Check the data source you are analyzing.*

Student performance data

ITBS/ITED

Grades or progress indicators

Diagnostic: _____

Other: _____

1. What do you notice when you look at these data? What are you comfortable saying about student or staff performance based on these results?

2. What additional questions do these data generate?

3. What do these data indicate students need to work on?

4. Based on these data, what can we infer teachers/administrators need to work on?

5. What do the results and their implications mean for your instructional practices and building-level professional development plan?

Source: Iowa Professional Development Model Steps and Tools, 2009, p. 27.

Tools For Schools

EXAMPLE**Data summary statement:**

Fourth-grade Vietnamese immigrant boys are underachieving in science.

Evidence:

Achievement scores, teacher observation, and chapter (textbook) tests.

Why questions:

Q: Why do 4th grade Vietnamese immigrant boys underachieve in science?

A: They have difficulty with English language. (Supporting data or facts: language assessment.)

Q: Why does the fact that Vietnamese boys have difficulty with English contribute to low performance in science?

A: They have difficulty understanding the concepts and applying them in practice. (Supporting data or facts: observation and student input.)

Q: Why do 4th grade Vietnamese immigrant boys underachieve in science?

A: Curriculum does not match assessment. (Supporting data or facts: Curriculum is based on 1985 framework, assessment is based on 1995 framework.)

Q: Why does the mismatch between curriculum and assessment contribute to the low performance in boys?

A: There is mis-alignment between what is taught and what is being assessed. (Supporting data or facts: comparison of 1985 and 1995 frameworks.) Upon further examination, all students are having some difficulty in science.

Crafting data summary statements

Comments to facilitator: This activity will assist the team in focusing on what it has learned from the data it has collected about the school. As the team compares this data to its vision for the school, it should be able to identify the steps the school needs to take to reach identified goals.

Materials: Several copies of the data summary sheet, various data sources, chart paper, markers, pens.

Directions

1. Complete the Data Summary Sheet (see Page 5) for each of your data sources. Be as complete as possible. Think about other possible summary tables that might also be created. For example, after completing the sample data summary sheet, you may notice that girls in 4th through 6th grades are underachieving in mathematics. You could create another data summary table in which you break out the girls by ethnicity to see if a pattern emerges.
2. Summarize the data by writing a statement based on the data. As you review the data, consider:
 - Which student sub-groups appear to need priority assistance, as determined by test scores, grades, or other assessments? Consider sub-groups by grade level, ethnicity, gender, language background (proficiency and/or home language), categorical programs (e.g., migrant, special education), economic status, classroom assignment, years at our school, attendance.
 - In which subject areas do students appear to need the most improvement? Also, consider English language development.
 - In which subject areas do the “below proficient” student sub-groups need the most assistance?
 - What evidence supports your findings?
3. For each data summary statement, brainstorm all the possible reasons why the data show what they do. For each reason, identify data or facts that support that assertion. If no data exist, determine how to locate data that would support the assertion. Continue asking “why” until the root cause of the problem or need has been identified.

Source: *Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by Sylvie Hale (San Francisco: WestEd, 2000). See Page 7 for ordering information.

October/November 2000

Fishbone diagram

This quality management tool was developed by Kaoru Ishikawa and is sometimes called the Ishikawa Diagram or the Cause-Effect Diagram. It is designed to help take results from data analysis and to identify possible root causes for identified problems. Data identify the problems. They do not identify the cause of the findings until further analysis is conducted. It is through analyzing the probable root causes that teams will find their leverage point.

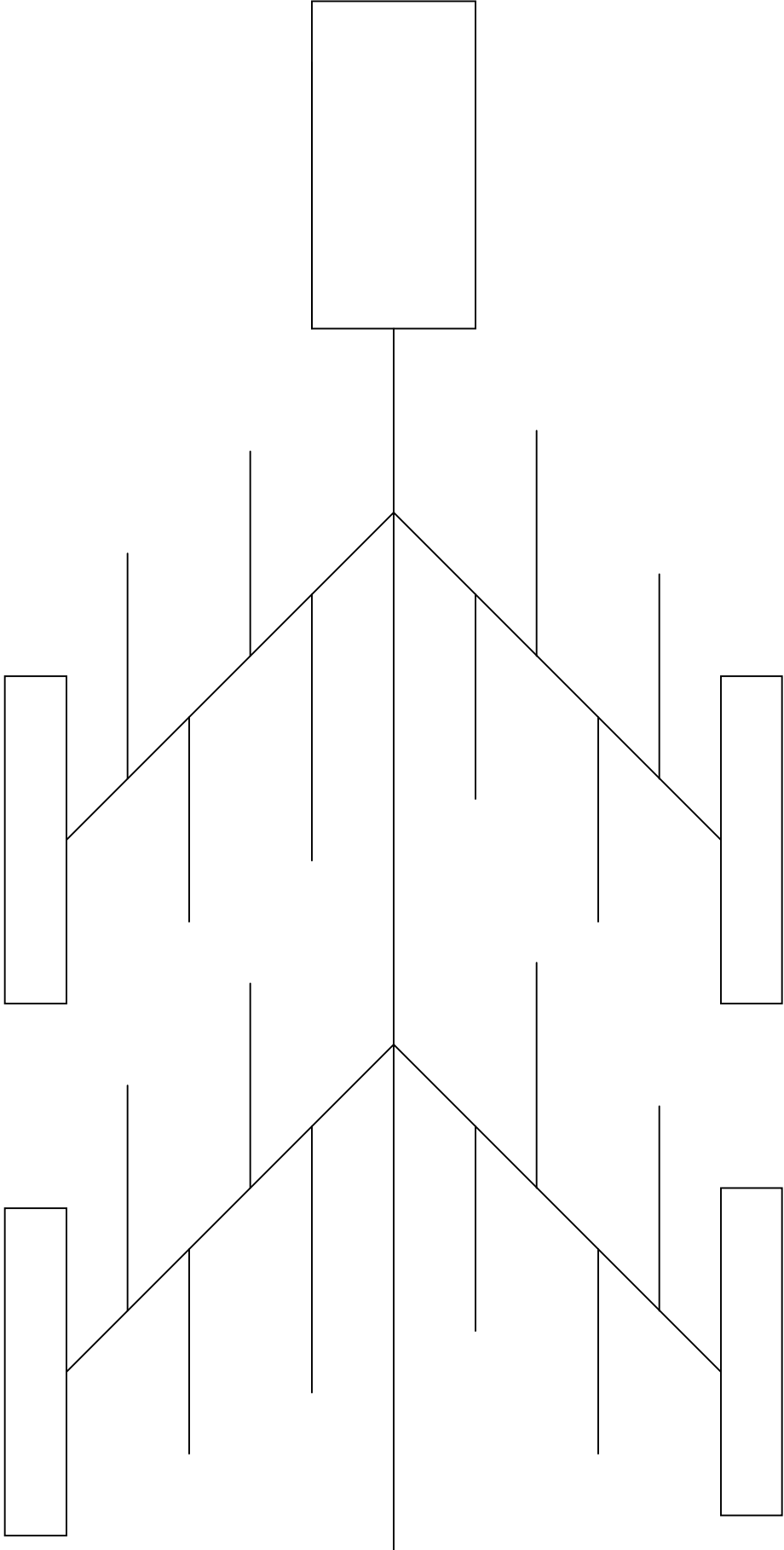
To use the Fishbone Diagram to identify possible causes of an identified problem, write the problem or current state, in specific terms, in the head of the fish. On the big bones of the fish list major factors that might contribute to the current situation. For example, 65% of the male students are reading two or more grades below level. Some of the major factors related to this problem might be instruction, availability of reading materials, learning styles, and curriculum. It is possible to consider other areas such as demographics, parent involvement, etc.; however, spending time working in these areas may not yield actions that school staff can take to address the identified problem. It is important to note that there are external areas of concern, such as the number of male students who live in households headed by females. Yet, this area is not one teachers can change. While it is possible to influence it in some way, identifying this as the root cause leaves teachers little room to act. It is

helpful, therefore, to focus the bulk of the root cause analysis on areas of influence, those areas school staff can directly impact through their actions and interactions with students each day at school.

On the small bones of the fish, the team identifies specific areas related to the major factors. For example, for availability of reading materials, teachers might write “classroom and library reading materials of interest to male students.” After identifying as many specific factors as possible, team members circle or mark those factors they believe have the greatest impact on the current state. In essence, they are formulating hypotheses about what might be causing the current state. For example, a hypothesis might sound like this: In classrooms where there are reading materials on topics of interest to males and where students have easy access to these materials, male students’ reading scores are higher than in classrooms where this type of resource is not readily available.

Teams then examine additional data to confirm or disprove their hypotheses until they find one or two that hold up. It is from these hypotheses that they begin their action planning. If in fact the above hypothesis was confirmed, their actions would center on how to make more high-interest reading materials easily accessible to male students.

The next page has a blank fishbone diagram template for teams to use with their own problems.



Deciding on a team focus

Directions: What is your team's instructional focus for the year? Discuss and record this decision after analyzing and reflecting on student and disaggregated data. This information will be used to help you craft your team's professional development focus, short-term goal, and yearly goal.

What student strengths do these data highlight?

What student needs do these data highlight?

On what areas could we focus our collective efforts? What are the pros and cons of each?

Which area will we select as an intensive focus for our team's work?

What results do we want for our students by the end of the school year?

What results do we want for our team members by the end of the school year?

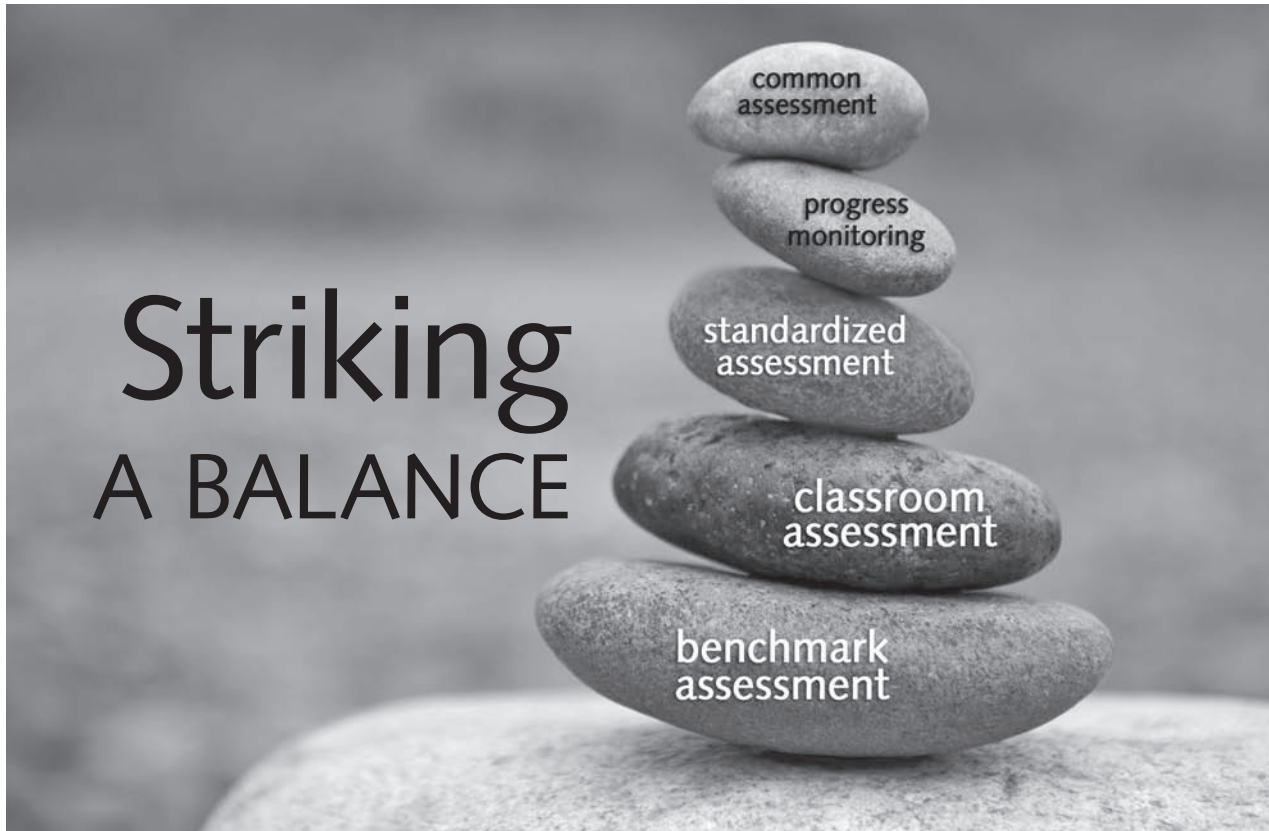
What are the implications of the data we examined for our professional learning?

Adapted from Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

TEAM FOCUS: What goal will we set for students? (Write in a SMART goal format. See Tool 1.7 in Module 1.)

What learning and implementation goal will we set for ourselves? (Write in a SMART goal format. See Tool 1.7 in Module 1.)

Adapted from Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.



GEORGIA DISTRICT ADDS ASSESSMENTS AND TRANSFORMS CLASSROOM PRACTICE

BY LISSA PIJANOWSKI

Forsyth County Schools has recently finished a very successful year. In 2008, all 16 elementary schools and eight middle schools made Adequate Yearly Progress. In spite of the fact that Georgia administered new, more rigorous math assessments for grades 3-5 and grade 8, the district had an average of 22% more students passing the assessments than the state average. To what does this district attribute its success? Leaders and teachers believe that a new, intense focus on benchmark assessments combined with focused, collegial conversations contributed to this impressive growth.

Forsyth County Schools, located 35 miles north of Atlanta, has designed a balanced assessment program that emphasizes classroom assessment and organizes data and resources to foster collegial conversations focused on standards and learning. The district's focus on assessment began five years ago through a professional learning program called Focused Choice offering all staff in the 32,000-student district six early release days and two full staff develop-

ment days for learning content that supports standards-based classrooms. One of the learning opportunities, Assessment FOR Learning (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2006), was designed to emphasize formative over summative assessment to provide timely and effective feedback to students (Marzano, 2003) and inform classroom practice. The professional learning not only transformed classroom practice, but also drove the district to make significant changes in how school leaders and teachers used assessment data.

For this district, balanced assessment does not mean that summative and formative measures are weighted equally. Forsyth County Schools creates a system that gives formative,

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Five assessment measures

Standardized assessment	Benchmark assessment	Common assessment	Classroom assessment	Progress monitoring
PURPOSE: A standardized test is designed to measure the amount of knowledge and skill a student has acquired and produces a statistical profile used as a measurement to evaluate student performance in comparison with a standard or norm.	PURPOSE: A benchmark assessment is designed as a measurement of group performance against an established set of standards at defined points along the path toward standard attainment, typically administered every nine weeks.	PURPOSE: A common assessment is collaboratively developed by grade-level teams or departments as a measurement of group or individual performance against an established set of standards.	PURPOSE: Classroom assessment refers to all assessment activities undertaken by teachers, and by the students themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.	PURPOSE: Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to monitor academic growth of an individual student or an entire class based on predetermined learning goals. The effectiveness of instruction and intervention is also evaluated.
DESIGNED BY: Georgia Department of Education and national assessment vendors.	DESIGNED BY: Forsyth County Schools and state and national item banks.	DESIGNED BY: Collaborative teacher teams/departments.	DESIGNED BY: Classroom teachers.	DESIGNED BY: Classroom teachers and national assessment vendors.
INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Standardized tests can provide information on individual or group performance to help educators identify instructional needs, measure growth over time, evaluate effectiveness of programs, and monitor schools for educational accountability. Standardized tests are used at the national, state, system, school, and classroom level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Benchmark assessment results can be used to determine student growth and student performance relative to grade-level and/or course achievement expectations. Results can guide classroom instruction and identify individual student needs for reteaching, intervention, and/or acceleration. In addition, benchmark assessments provide periodic evaluation of program effectiveness and guide professional development efforts. Benchmark assessments are used at the system, school, and classroom level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Common assessments can provide teacher teams with data to determine student performance relative to learning goals identified in a unit of study. Results can be analyzed to guide classroom instruction and identify individual student needs for reteaching, intervention, and/or acceleration. Shared results foster collaboration to improve instruction and embedded professional learning. Common assessments are used at the school and classroom level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Formative assessment evidence is diagnostic and used to adapt the teaching to meet the needs of students. Results can be used to guide instruction and identify individual student needs for reteaching, intervention and/or acceleration. Students and teachers can use self-assessment to determine levels of achievement, set goals, and identify strategies to meet those goals. Classroom assessments are used at the classroom and student level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Progress monitoring data demonstrates a student's progression of achievement and informs how instructional techniques need to be adjusted to meet the individual student's learning needs. Results can guide decisions on reteaching, intervention, and/or acceleration. Progress monitoring tools are used at the school, classroom, and student level.

classroom assessment much more weight than standardized assessments. The chart above reflects five different assessment components in the district's balanced assessment program.

Standardized tests are just one component; the other four are classroom assessment measures designed to give formative data on student progress against standards.

THE POWER OF BENCHMARKING

Benchmark assessments are one of the most recent additions to the assessment program. The district recognized that teacher leaders should

develop benchmark assessments for reading/English language arts and mathematics using consistent standards-based pacing guides. The district provided teachers guidance and instruction on how to choose items aligned to standards. Teachers became quality assessors through this process by considering item attributes such as Lexile range for reading passages and Bloom’s Taxonomy level when critically choosing items to include on each assessment. With all classrooms in grades 3-8 using the assessments three times a year, the data have fostered rich dialogue not only within buildings among teams, but across the district. However, collegial conversations around using assessment evidence do not come naturally. School leaders need well-designed professional learning and relevant, timely data to frame the dialogue to transform classroom practice.

The district created school teams that included an administrator, teacher leaders, and the instructional technology specialist to engage in ongoing learning on using data reports and leading meaningful conversations. The professional learning design included training on how to access different types of reports providing student, classroom, and test item detail through Edusoft, Riverside’s assessment management system. The district also published districtwide and school-level reports to highlight the standards across the district that posed the greatest challenge to students. The use of Edusoft to support formative assessment has provided classroom teachers the ability to create performance-based assessments, align assessments to standards, scan answer documents, and review results in a matter of minutes. The district leverages Edusoft for benchmark assessments as well to provide teachers with timely, meaningful reports.

Once teams were adept at access-

Forsyth County Schools
Cumming, Ga.

Number of schools: 30 (16 elementary, 8 middle, 4 high, 1 nontraditional charter, 1 alternative)
Enrollment: 32,000
Staff: 3,500

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	83%
Black:	2%
Hispanic:	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	4%
Native American:	0%
Other:	2%

Limited English proficient: 5%
Languages spoken: 29
Free/reduced lunch: 14%
Special education: 16%

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ing the data, the learning moved toward facilitating the conversations. The district modeled facilitation of collegial conversations for school team members at each session and provided sample questions, organizers, and reflection tools so that each team could design conversations that worked for their staff. School and district leaders engaged the staff in three levels of reflection and dialogue to develop a rich understanding of what the data were telling them about instructional practice and student performance.

LEVEL 1

The first level was *individual teacher reflection*. Teachers used their class reports and item analysis to reflect on the following standards-based questions:

- Which items did students miss most frequently?
- What standard was each item aligned to?
- What was the school performance compared to your class performance on that item?
- Why do you think most of your students chose the responses they chose?

- What will you do now to reteach the standard?
- Which individual students require additional remediation and intervention based on these results?

These questions lead teachers to delve deeply into the standards they teach and to reflect on their instructional practice in a low-risk environment. Teacher understanding of their own performance data must precede conversations within a professional learning community. School leaders and teacher leaders provided support for teachers by asking coaching questions to ensure they had reached a deep level of individual understanding before engaging in team conversations.

LEVEL 2

The second level of reflection and dialogue was *grade-level/content-team conversation*. With individual reflections in hand, teachers participated in a grade-level/content-team meeting to determine overall strengths and challenges, discussing the following questions:

- What are our grade-level/content-team strengths based on the results?
- What are our team challenges based on the results?
- What factors in our curriculum and instruction do we feel influenced these results?
- How can we collaborate to reteach standards that are hardest to learn?
- How will we know if our students have mastered the standard?
- What remediation and intervention will be most effective for individual students with low performance?
- Is there additional professional

With all classrooms in grades 3-8 using the assessments three times a year, the data have fostered rich dialogue not only within buildings among teams, but across the district.

learning support that we need as a team to help us achieve our goals for student learning?

The purpose of the grade-level/content-team sessions is to identify standards that were most problematic and determine how the team can collaborate to reteach and reassess. The conversations in these sessions lead teachers to better understand the standards, brainstorm ideas for modifying instruction, and collaborate on a plan of action for remediation and intervention before the next assessment (Schmoker, 1999). The team sessions continued the learning of the individual teacher reflections. Teachers analyzed their results even more intensely and took actions they may not have otherwise considered in isolation.

LEVEL 3

The third level of reflection and dialogue was *schoolwide dialogue about the results*. Building leaders facilitated conversations about the benchmark assessments and how the results of these assessments, along with other assessment data, could influence the school improvement process.

The benchmark assessments were incorporated into all school improvement plans as evidence of student learning to be monitored throughout the year. The data from the benchmarks allowed leaders to ask the following questions of their teaching and support staff:

- Do the results show we are making progress toward meeting our school improvement goals?
- Of the reading/English language arts and math target areas we identified for improvement this year, how did we perform?
- How did our subgroups and at-risk students perform?
- Are there strategies and actions in

our school improvement plan that need to be modified based on these results?

- Are the remediation and interventions offered to our students adequate for closing the achievement gap?
- Do we need to modify our professional learning plan to provide additional support?
- What resources do you need to accomplish the curriculum and instructional changes you have identified?

This schoolwide dialogue enables school leadership to monitor the curriculum and instruction in the building as well as progress toward school improvement goals (Reeves, 2006).

The benchmark assessments have been a critical element of how Forsyth County Schools uses formative assessment data to impact classroom practice. The district's belief in the power of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998) has guided the work of teachers as they review student work on a monthly, weekly, and daily basis through observations, portfolios, and conversations to make real-time decisions about instruction. Additionally, the benchmark assessments have enabled school and district leadership to monitor student progress toward standards using a guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano, 2003), and lead conversations that help triangulate all assessment components to provide timely feedback, remediation, and intervention.

Through implementation of the benchmark assessments as part of the balanced assessment program, the district has learned the following lessons:

- Teacher leaders must be involved in every facet of the project from developing pacing guides, to aligning assessment items, to organizing results.
- Purposeful professional learning opportunities must be designed to

scaffold staff learning at all levels of the organization.

- District and school leaders must acknowledge that changes in curriculum and assessment to influence instruction can be uncomfortable for staff and must make modifications along the way to accommodate readiness levels.

Based on the results for students, the district plans to expand the use of the Edusoft assessment management system in 2008-09 to the high school level to support classroom assessment and benchmark assessments in high-stakes courses. Leaders and teachers in Forsyth County Schools believe benchmark assessments played a big role in the growth the district experienced after only one year. They have learned this lesson well: Never underestimate the power of timely, standards-based data and focused, collegial conversations led by knowledgeable leadership to impact changes in professional practice and, ultimately, improvements in student achievement.

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Team sessions continued the learning of the individual teacher reflections.



MODULE 4

What will we do in our collaborative professional learning teams?

- Tool 4.1: Tap the power of peers
- Tool 4.2: Expanding your vision of professional development
- Tool 4.3: Transform your group into a team
- Tool 4.4: Protocols: A facilitator's best friend
- Tool 4.5: Say something protocol
- Tool 4.6: Author assumptions
- Tool 4.7: Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together
- Tool 4.8: Success analysis protocol
- Tool 4.9: Peeling a standard
- Tool 4.10: From isolation to partnership
- Tool 4.11: Dear colleague, please come for a visit
- Tool 4.12: Classroom visits
- Tool 4.13: Peer learning labs put teacher practice under the microscope
- Tool 4.14: Lesson study
- Tool 4.15: Teacher research leads to learning, action
- Tool 4.16: Build a bridge between workshop and classroom
- Tool 4.17: A fresh look at follow-up



Tap the power of peers

By Lois Brown Easton

First-year teacher Francine Gillespie waited in the 3rd-grade office for her colleagues. She had brought student work to share — a science report she'd chosen randomly from her students' reports on the galaxy. She couldn't wait for her colleagues'

feedback and suggestions on the quality of the work and their ideas for her to improve her teaching of this unit.

Two miles away, four teachers stood in Bud Collier's room, jotting notes on clipboards as Bud taught a mathematics lesson they had created together. One watched a particular student; another scanned the room every 60 seconds; a third noted the work of a pair of

students in the back of the room. Later, they would meet for a colloquium. Bud would describe how he had felt teaching the group-created lesson; the others would chime in with the data they had collected.

In the high school across from Bud Collier's middle school, Enrique Chama summarized his research for the social studies staff. He described why he chose to research the effect of higher-level questioning. He had documented that students resist venturing outside their comfort zone with analysis and synthesis questions and shared what he had done to make higher-

Peer-to-peer professional learning takes a variety of powerful forms



What's inside

Lessons from a coach

Work on language, assume positive intentions when coaching, says Amber Jones.

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Voice of a teacher leader

Bill Ferriter believes that compassionate colleagues can solve the retention problem.

Page 6

Focus on NSDC's standards

To be useful, data need a strenuous workout.

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Research brief

Direct instruction in writing helps students learn.

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NSDC tool

Assess how your group is implementing NSDC's Context standards.

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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Powerful professional learning:

- Begins with what will really help young people learn. It results in application in the classroom.
- Requires collecting, analyzing, and presenting real data. Because it is about what happens in the classroom, it is content-rich. It may never formally end; as classroom situations change, new questions arise leading to new answers and more new questions.
- Honors the staff's professionalism, expertise, experiences, and skills. Although they may work alone on some aspects of professional learning, such as Chama's action research project, powerful professional learning is collaborative or has collaborative aspects to it. Faculty are more likely to buy in to professional learning because they understand the need and respond to it by learning and helping each other implement changes.
- Establishes a culture of quality. The conversation in the hallways, faculty lounge, and meetings changes.
- Slows the pace of schooling. Each professional learning activity requires reflection, as well as sharing thoughts and ideas. Many educators organize themselves into professional learning communities to ensure that they have regularly scheduled time to continue their own learning, help others learn, and make sense of what's going on in school.

order questions a regular feature of class discussions. His data, collected over four months, were impressive, and his colleagues agreed to try variations of his processes in their own classes if he would coach them.

These teachers (their names have been changed) were engaged in peer-to-peer professional learning. Gillespie had brought student work to be examined using a tuning protocol at a grade-level meeting. Her colleagues had taken care of other business online beforehand so they could devote this meeting to professional learning. Anyone from Collier's vertical learning community could have taught the lesson he taught; the team had worked on it as part of lesson study which brought together district mathematics teachers from 6th through 10th grades. Chama was sharing the results of an action research project with his professional learning community.

Professional learning is the learning that teachers do themselves and with each other. Professional development, although valuable, usually involves outsiders who develop and train people. Professional development is sometimes the best way a faculty can learn something new, and most of us would prefer to be trained in something like lifesaving. The problem is that professional development often is a one-shot situation, and after the speaker or trainer departs or the university course ends, although teachers have the best intentions, they are unable to implement what they learned. They may have no support so that when there are problems, they have no one to turn to. They may find it easier to keep doing what is familiar, despite initial excitement about change.

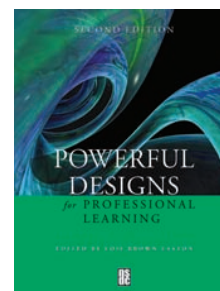
Other professional learning activities

In addition to the professional learning activities Gillespie, Collier, and Chama engaged in, consider these:

- Building assessments or rubrics together;
- Analyzing and revising curriculum;
- Conducting focus groups with students to get student voices;
- Analyzing videotapes of teaching;
- Participating in a book or article study;
- Using any of the protocols described by the National School Reform Faculty;

A simple three-part definition of professional learning communities is:

- A group of educators who meet regularly to engage in professional learning ...
- To enhance their own practice as educators ...
- In order to help all students succeed as learners.



GET THE POWER

Read about 23 successful professional learning strategies in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*. The expanded second edition introduces new chapters on classroom walk-throughs, differentiated coaching, dialogue, and video. Available through store.nsd.org.



TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

PAGE 3

TAP THE POWER
OF PEERS

- Developing and analyzing case studies, or using those available online;
- Analyzing assignments (Standards in Practice);
- Developing portfolios to share;
- Keeping journals and discussing key experiences with each other; or
- Shadowing students (or adults) in one's own or another school.

These and other strategies are fully described in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2008).

How to get started

Professional learning starts in many schools by forming professional learning communities. However, unless teachers engage in professional learning, professional learning communities risk becoming just business as usual, rather than a time for professional learning. Beware the statement, “Oh, we do professional learning communities” in a school that may merely have renamed faculty, grade-level, or department meetings. A simple three-part definition of professional learning communities is:

- A group of educators who meet regularly to engage in professional learning ...
- To enhance their own practice as educators ...
- In order to help all students succeed as learners.

To be a true professional learning community, all three parts must be in place. Professional learning is not a business-as-usual agenda full of items to be decided or announcements to be made. Some characteristics of professional learning communities are variable, however, such as:

WHAT THE GROUP CALLS ITSELF

The earliest form of a professional learning community was probably a Critical Friends Group. A group can call itself a professional learning community if it is really engaged in all three parts of the definition.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE GROUP

Sometimes two or three close colleagues form a professional learning community. Sometimes a whole faculty participates in a sin-

gle professional learning community. There's no perfect number, except as participants consider “air time.” In a group of 10 or more, meeting for an hour or so, participants may become frustrated because they do not have time to talk. At the other end of the range, a group of three to four may lack diversity. Go for eight to 10 members and adjust as necessary by adding more groups.

HOW LONG THE GROUP MEETS

Some professional learning strategies can be accomplished in 30 minutes; some take a few hours or more. Some require weekly meetings; some require monthly meetings. Some are better done when school is in session; others are better done after school or during breaks (with the teachers receiving compensation). The meeting time can vary according to what members want; however, professional learning communities should be scheduled ahead of time so that they have a regular place on the calendar.

The best way to get started is to start. Find someone who would also like to engage in professional learning. Decide when and where to meet. Informally share what you're learning. (“Joe and I looked at student portfolios the other day.”) Be sure to share information with the school administrator and ask for time to share formally during a faculty meeting. Gradually invite other teachers to join you or start their own groups.

The impetus to start professional learning communities and engage in professional learning can come from teachers themselves or be launched by administrators, preferably with the help of a design team composed of those teachers most interested in participating. Professional learning communities, like most collaborative efforts, are unlikely to survive an executive mandate: “You, you, and you — be a professional learning community.” It's OK to start small with two or three people sharing their professional practice, their students' work, and the questions, dilemmas, and problems that inevitably arise.

Professional learning can be contagious. When teachers talk about what they are learning, they infect others around them, who (because learning is natural) may then spread learning to their colleagues.

START WITH YOURSELF

- ✓ Ask colleagues to help you examine a piece of student work or an aspect of your professional practice; have a peer serve as facilitator and timer for the process.
- ✓ Take an article to a faculty meeting and ask if other faculty members want to form an ad hoc discussion group.
- ✓ Ask colleagues for help writing an assignment.
- ✓ Develop a case study about a student who is bewildering you and ask others to study it with you.

3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

PAGE 4

TAP THE POWER
OF PEERS

Don't let excuses delay professional learning. If you wait until the school culture is perfect and collegial trust is rampant, you will never begin. Professional learning activities themselves often foster trust, and team-building exercises don't mean much unless they happen when people work on real problems using a professional learning strategy such as a tuning protocol.

Start with yourself. Ask colleagues to help you examine a piece of student work or an aspect of your professional practice; have a peer serve as facilitator and timer for the process. Or bring an article to a faculty meeting and ask if other faculty members want to form an ad hoc discussion group. Ask colleagues for help writing an assignment. Develop a case study about a student who is bewildering you and ask others to study it with you.

Conclusion

What Gillespie, Collier, and Chama do in the classroom is better because they have peer support — their students reap the benefits of their

teachers' professional learning. Gillespie, Collier, and Chama also affect the work of colleagues who hear about what they are doing and want to know more. As their colleagues begin their own journeys into professional learning, they begin to affect the learning of their students. Soon the school as a whole is improving. As more schools sponsor professional learning and the mechanism by which teachers learn (the professional learning community or whatever the learning group may call itself), they turn to the districts for support. Districts become professional learning communities, too. Peer-to-peer professional learning, then, is a powerful way to make change in a system that otherwise seems to resist change.

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Ginsberg, M. (2004). Context, in Easton, L.B., (Ed.), *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: NSDC. ◆

Don't let excuses delay professional learning. If you wait until the school culture is perfect and collegial trust is rampant, you will never begin.

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WHAT A SCHOOL LEADER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ...

E-x-p-a-n-d-i-n-g your vision of

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

If the school board in your district suddenly announced that it would no longer fund half-day “inservices” in which teachers sat and listened to “motivational speakers,” what would you do?

Leaping for joy might be one response. Suddenly, you could turn your back on staff development that produces no changes in student learning and focus on strategies that would benefit both teachers and students.

As you try to move your staff out of its inservice rut and into a mode of powerful professional learning, ask teachers to consider these eight ideas for not-a-workshop professional development:

1. Form action research teams. Madison,

Wisc. staff developer Cathy Caro-Bruce begins her action research work with teachers by asking them, “What keeps you awake at night? What are you curious about? What question would you like to have answered about your students?” In action research, teachers select questions whose answers matter to them and then collect data to uncover an answer.

2. Enlist teachers to shadow students in their school in order to gain perspective on how school looks from the student’s vantage point. Lois Brown Easton editor of *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004), calls shadowing an eye-opening experience that enables adults to better understand what it is like to be a student in a particular school. “Shadowing students often can result in changed plans ... because the experience injects reality into the proceedings of a committee or a task force,” she says.

3. Do regular classroom walk-throughs.

These four- to five-minute regular visits to classrooms provide principals with snapshots of “classroom environments, learning experiences, and student perspectives,” says consultant and author Margery Ginsberg. When several observers do walk-throughs, the principal can quickly gain an overview of what is occurring on a given day. That, in turn, can suggest areas worth celebrating and those that need more attention.

4. Buy journals for each teacher and invite them to begin keeping a journal about their daily work. As Joellen Killion puts it, “journaling is the process of thinking in writing. It is a way to construct meaning visibly and to reflect on experiences.” If you have requirements for the length and frequency of journaling, make sure teachers know about them in advance.

5. Construct a curriculum map. Ask a team of teachers to create a chart showing how the lessons they teach address each of the curriculum standards and benchmarks for one of their subject areas. Is their instruction logically organized? Are they teaching to the standards identified by your state and your district? Are they teaching lessons that have little to no relationship to the intended goals for that class or course? “Curriculum design helps teachers see the connections, find resources, and make multidisciplinary curricula happen in their own classroom,” says Linda Fitzharris who has worked extensively with curriculum design teams in the Carolinas.

6. Ask teachers to assemble professional portfolios of examples of work they and their students have produced. Portfolio consultant Mary Dietz says a portfolio can be a notebook with structured journal responses or any container that includes artifacts, work samples, videotapes of a class and any other items that



Learn more about effective staff development designs. Order NSDC’s book, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, edited by Lois Brown Easton. Available at <http://store.nsd.org>

professional development

illustrate and demonstrate the teacher’s learning. She believes discussions that teachers have with their peers about their portfolios help focus and create powerful collegial discussions.

7. Examine student work using a tuning protocol. Teachers voluntarily present products that students have created as the result of assignments and ask their colleagues to follow a structured plan for critiquing the student work as a way of understanding how to improve instruction.

8. Explore the Japanese concept of lesson study in which teachers design, observe, and revise “research lessons.” In lesson study, teachers work together to form goals for student

learning, collaboratively plan a lesson, teach and observe the lesson, discuss evidence collected during the observation and then revise the lesson as needed to make it more effective. Lesson study advocate Catherine Lewis believes lesson study is a way to “slow down the act of teaching in order to learn more about students, subject matter and their own teaching.”

Every one of these strategies could be introduced into any school. Each of them has the power to shift a school’s culture so teachers are more involved in their own learning and so their professional learning will benefit student achievement.

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IF NOT A WORKSHOP, THEN WHAT?

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Conducting action research projects | 12. Participating in a study or support group | 22. Using a tuning protocol to examine student work | 31. Analyzing the expectations of your statewide assessments | 39. Visiting model schools/programs |
| 2. Analyzing teaching cases | 13. Doing a classroom walk-through | 23. Attending an in-depth institute in a content area | 32. Enrolling in a university course | 40. Developing curriculum |
| 3. Attending awareness-level seminars | 14. Giving presentations at conferences | 24. Writing an article about your work | 33. Viewing educational videos | 41. Doing school improvement planning |
| 4. Joining a cadre of in-house trainers | 15. Researching on the Internet | 25. Observing model lessons | 34. Maintaining a professional portfolio | 42. Examining new technological resources to supplement lessons |
| 5. Planning lessons with a teaching colleague | 16. Leading a schoolwide committee or project | 26. Reading journals, educational magazines, books | 35. Studying content standards for your state | 43. Being observed and receiving feedback from another teacher or principal |
| 6. Consulting an expert | 17. Developing displays, bulletin boards | 27. Participating in a critical friends group | 36. Observing other teachers teach | 44. Engaging in lesson study |
| 7. Examining student data | 18. Shadowing students | 28. Doing a self-assessment | 37. Listening to video/audio recordings | 45. Working on a strategic planning team |
| 8. Being coached by a peer or an expert | 19. Coaching a colleague | 29. Shadowing another teacher or professional in the field | 38. Participating in a videoconference or conference calls with experts | |
| 9. Leading a book study | 20. Being a mentor — being mentored | 30. Keeping a reflective log or journal | | |
| 10. Making a field trip to another school or district | 21. Joining a professional network | | | |
| 11. Writing assessments with a colleague | | | | |



Transform your group into a **TEAM**

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

A professional learning community craze is sweeping the country. School after school is setting aside time for teachers to meet in grade-level groups or subject area teams. PLC time is noted on calendars that parents hang on refrigerator doors. Students start school later or leave school earlier so teachers have time to meet with colleagues.



But, as many schools are learning, professional learning communities don't just happen because a principal sets aside time for teachers to meet and slaps a new label on that meeting. That's especially the case when teachers have been accustomed to working in isolation.

Principals and teacher leaders must be very intentional about helping groups of teachers become communities of learners. And, somewhere between the naming and becoming highly productive teams, many schools get lost. How do you move from being a group of people with a common characteristic — such as teaching the same subject or grade level — to being a team or a community with a common vision and focus?

Ann Delehant, who consults with many school districts on team development issues, said many teachers don't immediately recognize that professional learning communities is “the new name for a team.”

“A professional learning community is not a new thing. It's not a new fad. A PLC is what we call a team with an intentional focus on learn-

Continued on p. 2

WHAT'S INSIDE

NSDC TOOLS

Developing norms

This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules.
Page 4



Which stage is your team in?

Use this tool to identify the present stage of the teamwork model that your team is presently operating in.
Pages 5-7

**Resources for
team
development**
Page 8



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COVER STORY



DEFINITION OF TEAM

“A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, “The discipline of teams,” *Harvard Business Review*, March/April 1993.

Transform your group into a team

Continued from p. 1
ing,” she said.

Although many educators understand the need to devote time to group or team development, they often neglect to spend time on the basics when working on PLCs because they don’t perceive PLCs to be teams that require the same kind of support, she said.

Understanding the four stages of group development is a good place to begin learning how a PLC might evolve from being a group to being a team. In 1965, psychologist Bruce Tuckman reviewed the literature on group functioning and described the four stages of group development as forming, norming, storming, and performing. *(See illustration on Page 3.)*

In the initial stage — “forming” — group members have high expectations and anxiety about how they fit in. They are testing themselves and each other. At this early stage, they depend on some authority or facilitator to create a structure for them. During this period, group members are likely to be polite but impersonal, watchful, and guarded in their behaviors.

Conflict characterizes the second stage of development — “storming.” Group members rebel against each other and against authority. Storming behaviors, he said, are each

individual’s response to being influenced by the group and by the work that is required to achieve the assigned tasks. Group members may describe themselves as feeling stuck. They may opt out of the process or they may compete with other group members for power and attention.

If groups successfully resolve their storming issues, they arrive at the third stage — “norming.” At this point, group members have overcome their feelings of resistance and begin to feel that they are a cohesive group. Harmony, trust, and support develop. Participants develop a sense of cohesiveness and “intimate, personal opinions are expressed,” Tuckman wrote. At this stage, the group is developing skills and agreeing on procedures for doing the work. They are confronting issues represented by their work, not other individuals.

If group members persist, they reach the fourth stage — “performing” — in which they become a team rather than a group of disparate individuals. They work collaboratively and interdependently, share leadership, and perform at high levels. They are flexible and resourceful, close and supportive.

Groups may spend different amounts of time at each stage and they may move through them in a different sequence but each group will experi-

Continued on p. 3

NOT ALL GROUPS ARE TEAMS: HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

WORKING GROUPS	TEAMS
Strong, clearly focused leader	Shared leadership roles
Individual accountability	Individual and mutual accountability
The group’s purpose is the same as the broader organizational mission	Specific team purpose that the team itself delivers
Individual work products	Collective work products
Runs efficient meetings	Encourages open-ended discussion and active problem-solving meetings
Measures its effectiveness indirectly by its influence on others (e.g. student learning goals)	Measures performance directly by assessing collective work products
Discusses, decides, delegates	Discusses, decides, does real work together

Source: “The discipline of teams,” by Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, *Harvard Business Review*, March/April 1993.

Transform your group into a team

Continued from p. 2

ence each stage. You can use the survey on Pages 5-7 to help your groups determine which stage of development they are currently in.

Instead of relying on Tuckman, Delehant introduces school teams to M. Scott Peck’s model of community development — pseudo-community, chaos, trust building and listening, and community. For some schools, this language may be more successful than the traditional language of Tuckman, she said.

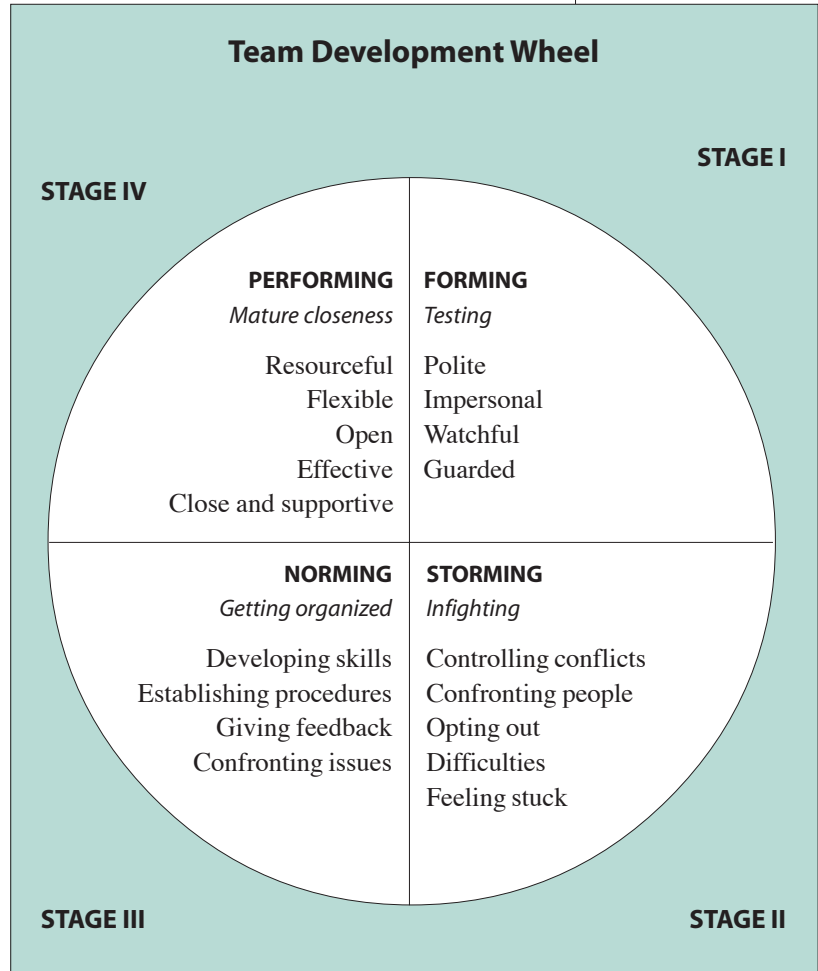
In Peck’s “pseudo-community,” members are afraid of differences and afraid of conflict. They are trying to get along, often pretending that they don’t have major differences.

“Pseudo-community is like early dating. This is the stage where all women love football,” Delehant said. Any time there is a new member of the group, the group goes back to pseudo-community and works its way back through the stages, typically in a smoother fashion than their initial foray, but not necessarily.

Peck’s second stage is the “chaos” stage. In this stage, there is struggle and often considerable conflict. Some members may feel that the situation is out of control because everyone is expressing different opinions. Some will try to “heal” the situation and convert others. Many want to return to the stage where everyone was nice to each other, Delehant said.

In Peck’s third stage, which he calls “emptiness,” group members are consciously removing their personal barriers to creating a community. Members will confront their expectations, prejudices, and ideologies and agree to suspend these points of view in favor of considering ideas presented by others. In a school situation, this might mean teachers agree that they will listen to ideas regarding the examination of data or they may agree to try to design a common lesson or assessment with other teachers.

The process of shedding these barriers is essential before members can move into Peck’s fourth stage which he labels “community.” At this stage, the group has become a team in which members trust and feel comfortable working with each other. They feel safe about exposing their vulnerabilities and resolve to work together on



common problems and issues.

Whichever approach to thinking about team development is most appealing, Delehant urges facilitators and principals to spend time on the basics, including understanding the team development process.

“Teams need to have conversations about ‘how to do the work’ instead of just plunging in to do the work. They need to spend time building trust and relationships with each other. If they don’t do this in the beginning, teams will have to stop and do this eventually,” she warns.

“Every group has the delusion of uniqueness. They think they’re special. They tend to feel better when they know that there are predictable stages that they will go through. It makes them feel better to know that conflict is natural,” she said.

“Teams need to have conversations about ‘how to do the work’ instead of just plunging in to do the work. They need to spend time building trust and relationships with each other.”

NSDC TOOL

EXAMPLES OF NORMS

We will work together as a community that values consensus rather than majority rule.

We will be fully “present” at the meeting by becoming familiar with materials before we arrive and by being attentive to behaviors which affect physical and mental engagement.

We will invite and welcome the contributions of every member and listen to each other.

We will be involved to our individual level of comfort. Each of us is responsible for airing disagreements during the meeting rather than carrying those disagreements outside the meeting.

Developing norms

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules. In existing groups, anonymity will help ensure that everyone is able to express their ideas freely. That is the reason for suggesting that the facilitator provide pens or pencils and ask that everyone use the same type of writing implement.

SUPPLIES: Index cards, pens/pencils, poster paper, display board, tape, tacks.

TIME: Two hours.

Directions

1. Indicate to the group that effective groups generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the group, and enables the group to accomplish its task.
2. Recommend to the group that it establish a set of norms:
 - To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
 - To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
 - To facilitate the achievement of its goals.
3. Give five index cards and the same kind of writing tool to each person in the group.
4. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each of their cards. Time: 10 minutes.
5. The facilitator should shuffle all the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals, especially if the group has worked together before.
6. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. Tape or tack each card to a display board so that all group members can see it. As each subsequent card is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Cards with similar ideas should be grouped together.
7. When all of the cards have been sorted into groups, ask the group to write the norm suggested by that group of cards. Have one group member record these new norms onto a large sheet of paper.
8. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

Source: Adapted from *Tools for change workshops* by Robby Champion. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, 1993.



Which stage is your team in?

OBJECTIVES

To identify the present stage of the teamwork model that your team is presently operating in.

DIRECTIONS

This questionnaire contains statements about teamwork. Next to each question, indicate how often your team displays each behavior by using the following scoring system:

1 = Almost never 2 = Seldom 3 = Occasionally 4 = Frequently 5 = Almost always

POWERFUL WORDS

“No one of us can be effective as all of us.”

— Unknown

“Build with your team a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another, and of strength derived from unity in the pursuit of your objective.”

— Vince Lombardi

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; and working together is success.”

— Henry Ford

Questionnaire

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. _____ We try to have set procedures or protocols to ensure that things are orderly and run smoothly (e.g. minimize interruptions, everyone gets the opportunity to have their say).</p> <p>2. _____ We are quick to get on with the task at hand and do not spend too much time in the planning stage.</p> <p>3. _____ Our team feels that we are all in it together and shares responsibilities for the team’s success or failure.</p> | <p>4. _____ We have thorough procedures for agreeing on our objectives and planning the way we will perform our tasks.</p> <p>5. _____ Team members are afraid or do not like to ask others for help.</p> <p>6. _____ We take our team’s goals and objectives literally, and assume a shared understanding.</p> <p>7. _____ The team leader tries to keep order and contributes to the task at hand.</p> |
|---|--|

Continued on p. 6

NSDC TOOL

SCORING
SYSTEM:

- 1 = Almost never
2 = Seldom
3 = Occasionally
4 = Frequently
5 = Almost
always

Which stage is your team in?

8. _____ We do not have fixed procedures, we make them up as the task or project progresses.
9. _____ We generate lots of ideas, but we do not use many because we fail to listen to them and reject them without fully understanding them.
10. _____ Team members do not fully trust the others members and closely monitor others who are working on a specific task.
11. _____ The team leader ensures that we follow the procedures, do not argue, do not interrupt, and keep to the point.
12. _____ We enjoy working together; we have a fun and productive time.
13. _____ We have accepted each other as members of the team.
14. _____ The team leader is democratic and collaborative.
15. _____ We are trying to define the goal and what tasks need to be accomplished.
16. _____ Many of the team members have their own ideas about the process and personal agendas are rampant.
17. _____ We fully accept each other's strengths and weakness.
18. _____ We assign specific roles to team members (team leader, facilitator, time keeper, note taker, etc.).
19. _____ We try to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict.
20. _____ The tasks are very different from what we imagined and seem very difficult to accomplish.
21. _____ There are many abstract discussions of the concepts and issues, which make some members impatient with these discussions.
22. _____ We are able to work through group problems.
23. _____ We argue a lot even though we agree on the real issues.
24. _____ The team is often tempted to go above the original scope of the project.
25. _____ We express criticism of others constructively
26. _____ There is a close attachment to the team.
27. _____ It seems as if little is being accomplished with the project's goals.
28. _____ The goals we have established seem unrealistic.
29. _____ Although we are not fully sure of the project's goals and issues, we are excited and proud to be on the team.
30. _____ We often share personal problems with each other.
31. _____ There is a lot of resisting of the tasks on hand and quality improvement approaches.
32. _____ We get a lot of work done.

Which stage is your team in?

PART 2: SCORING

Next to each survey item number below, transfer the score that you give that item on the questionnaire. For example, if you scored item one with a 3 (Occasionally), then enter a 3 next to item one below. When you have entered all the scores for each question, total each of the four columns.

Item	Score	Item	Score	Item	Score	Item	Score
1.	_____	2.	_____	4.	_____	3.	_____
5.	_____	7.	_____	6.	_____	8.	_____
10.	_____	9.	_____	11.	_____	12.	_____
15.	_____	16.	_____	13.	_____	14.	_____
18.	_____	20.	_____	19.	_____	17.	_____
21.	_____	23.	_____	24.	_____	22.	_____
27.	_____	28.	_____	25.	_____	26.	_____
29.	_____	31.	_____	30.	_____	32.	_____
TOTAL	_____	TOTAL	_____	TOTAL	_____	TOTAL	_____
FORMING STAGE		STORMING STAGE		NORMING STAGE		PERFORMING STAGE	

This questionnaire is to help you assess what stage your team normally operates in. It is based on Tuckman’s model of Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. The lowest score possible for a stage is 8 (Almost never) while the highest score possible for a stage is 40 (Almost always).

The highest of the four scores indicates which stage your team normally operates in. If your highest score is 32 or more, it is a strong indicator of the stage your team is in.

The lowest of the three scores is an indicator of the stage your team is least like. If your lowest score is 16 or less, it is a strong indicator that your team does not operate this way.

If two of the scores are close to the same, you are probably going through a transition phase, except:

- If you score high in Forming and Storming, you are in the Storming stage.
- If you score high in Norming and Performing, you are in the Performing stage.

If there is only a small difference between three or four scores, then this indicates that you have no clear perception of the way your team operates, the team’s performance is highly variable, or that you are in the Storming stage (this stage can be extremely volatile with high and low points).

Source: “What stage is your team in?,” a tool created by Don Clark. Used with permission. This tool is available for free download at www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leader.html

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resources / team development**The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace**

M. Scott Peck. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987.

Details Peck's beliefs about community development which involve pseudo-community, chaos, emptiness, and community.

"Developmental sequence in small groups"

Bruce Tuckman, *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 1965, pp. 384-99.

Foundational research for the forming, norming, storming, performing model.

How to Make Meetings Work

Michael Doyle and David Straus. New York: Jove Books, 1976.

Provides basic instruction about how to manage meetings to make them more productive.

How to Make Collaboration Work

David Straus. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002.

Introduces five principles of collaboration that have proven successful in a variety of settings.

"Norms of collegiality and experimentation: Workplace conditions of school success"

Judith Warren Little, *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 19, 1982.

Foundational research and support for building a collaborative work environment.

"The discipline of teams"

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith. *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1993.

One of the seminal articles about team development. Available for purchase through www.harvardbusinessonline.org. Enter title of the article in the search function. Reprint # 93210

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Tools FOR SCHOOLS

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS AND LEADERS

PROTOCOLS: A facilitator's best friend

BY LOIS BROWN EASTON

Protocol. Hearing the word makes some people think of formal dinners or White House etiquette. Others might think of the Kyoto Protocol and treaties among countries. For scientists, the term describes an exact procedure, for physicians, a practice they follow. In the field of education, protocols are simply an agreed upon set of guidelines for conversation. They are a code of behavior, a *modus operandi*, for groups to use when exploring ideas.

Educating students for a complex world requires powerful professional learning, such as action research, lesson study, and tuning protocols (Easton, 2008), that helps educators reach the next level of excellence in their practice. Used within collaborative groups, protocols can help educators change the culture of school so that all adults and students improve their learning.

CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

The National School Reform Faculty (NSRF), whose members developed, refined, and share many of the protocols in use today, says that the structure of a protocol permits “a certain



kind of conversation ... which people are not in the habit of having” (www.nsrffharmony.org).

By following accepted parameters for conversation, group members can have very focused conversations. Protocols help educators look at student work, artifacts of educator practice, texts relating to education, or problems and issues that surface during educators’ day-to-day lives. The result of using protocols to structure the dialogue within these parameters is an increased and shared understanding among group members that can lead to deeper understanding and action.

Protocols also may push people into places they

Continued on p. 2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Wagon Wheel

Examine a text with different partners to generate ideas for your next steps.

Page 4

Three Levels of Text

Go deeper into your understanding by homing in on key sentences, phrases, and words.

Page 5

Success Analysis Protocol

Develop and share your ideas for highly effective professional learning that is based on research.

Pages 6-7



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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

COVER STORY

Protocols: A facilitator's best friend

Continued from p. 1

have avoided: real issues that, resolved, can make the difference between a school that succeeds and a school that fails the students it serves.

The newly released “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Professional Development in the U.S. and Abroad,” by Linda Darling-Hammond and a team of researchers at Stanford University’s Educational Leadership Institute, says that teachers need in-depth, sustained, coherent, high-quality professional development to be able to address the daily challenges of teaching and improve student learning. The study points out that teachers in nations whose students consistently outperform the U.S. on international standardized exams routinely engage in professional learning that requires them to collaborate to create and review lessons together, observe one another teaching, offer each other feedback, and assist in selecting and developing curriculum and assessments.

The study from the Stanford team is the first phase of NSDC’s “Multiyear Study of the State of Professional Learning in the U.S.,” supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the MetLife Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation. The study’s purpose is to challenge educators to find ways to improve their professional learning. Protocols can be tools that allow educators to do just that.

OUT OF THE CAVE

Protocols can help bring teachers out of isolation. Accustomed to their side-by-side caves, many fear exposing to peers their classroom practices by sharing strategies and student work. Protocols help such educators feel enlightened by providing the structures and support for difficult conversations.

Most protocols are facilitated in some way, either by an outsider or a group member. Group members also may share facilitator responsibilities. The facilitator often structures the conversation so that discussion deepens as participants take turns listening and speaking.

Effective protocols call upon participants

to agree to a set of common assumptions. For example, some groups might agree that:

- We all want to get better in the work we do as educators.
- We all want to be kind and courteous, *and* to accomplish this, we also need to be thoughtful, insightful, and provocative.
- We need to remember that we are “in this together.” Although we may be focusing on one teacher’s work, what we are doing will reach far beyond that one classroom and the work that teacher is sharing. We are exploring *our* work as educators, and the outcome will be improved learning for all of us and our students.

These assumptions lead to specific behaviors participants agree on so that members do not feel attacked and the conversation is substantive and provocative without

being hurtful to any individual.

Protocols allow groups to have a professional conversation, one that might go awry if allowed to proceed either through inconsequential meanderings (Aunt Felicity used to do that very thing when she was a teacher — was that in Ohio or Iowa? What a character she was!) or unfocused battles where one person’s comment is met by another’s objection. What ensues is a verbal pro and con, attack and counterattack, argument and counterargument. No one else can get a word in — nor, after awhile, do they want to. The conversation literally derails, with wreckage everywhere, particularly the ideas of those who never got to speak. Deep understanding seldom occurs when a conversation turns into a wreck.

Some educators may prefer professional development in the form of “show ’n’ tell” sharing, “make ’n’ takes” for their next class activity, or speakers with thrilling ideas that may not ever make it to practice. Protocols are effective tools for deepening the conversation so more meaningful professional learning can occur, resulting in changes in practice so that all students learn.

As the study by the Stanford team tells us, meaningful collaboration among teachers is the key to higher student achievement. Protocols give form to educator collaboration. ■

NSDC’S BELIEF

Sustainable learning cultures require skillful leadership.

For a complete copy of the report “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the U.S. and Abroad,” see www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm.



SOME BASICS OF PROTOCOLS

WHO: Job-alike groups (grade levels, for example) or mixed-job groups (cross-disciplinary groups) can engage in protocols, as can administrators when on equal footing with other participants. Groups can meet regularly, such as in professional learning communities, or form just for a protocol. Groups need a facilitator in early stages; mature groups can facilitate themselves.

WHAT: The protocols in this issue help groups look at a text, such as “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the U.S. and Abroad.” They also may be used to examine student work and educators’ practices or to understand problems or issues.

WHEN AND WHERE: Most protocols require about an hour. Protocols, like other forms of powerful professional learning, are best when school-based, but can also bring together teachers from throughout a district or across districts.

WHY: Protocols can help *individuals* calibrate notions of quality, learn new strategies for teaching, become better learners themselves,

and plan and revise the work they do. Protocols can help *schools* focus on excellence, address issues and problems, and improve both the daily work of learning and long-term work related to vision and mission.

HOW: Consider time already set aside for professional learning or meetings, such as faculty, grade-level, or department meetings. Use other means to convey information about traditional business items. Use protocols for learning during district-allotted professional development days, or shorten or extend the school day for professional development time. The study revealed that teachers in high-performing countries have regular time each day for such collaboration.

TO BEGIN: As with most innovations, start small. Start with people who are “early adopters,” the ones who are like scouts for a wagon train, forging new trails. Invite them to read the study, for example, and to react to it using one of the protocols in this newsletter. Provide or ask someone to provide refreshments. Let others know what you are doing, and ask for time to share what your group is learning.

Learn more about NSDC’s purpose at www.nsd.org/connect/NSDCpurpose.cfm and NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development at www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm. Use NSDC tools to help you advance the quality of professional development in your school.

NSDC’s web site (www.nsd.org) provides additional information and resources for high-quality professional development.

Wagon Wheel

Purpose: To stimulate thinking about a text, connect participants, and generate ideas for further action.

Materials: Chart paper, markers, a copy of “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the U.S. and Abroad,” available at www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm (select either the longer technical report or shorter overview depending on the time frame and group).

Time: 45 minutes or longer, depending on length of selected text.

Preparation

1. Read the study and select four key ideas for participants to explore. Copy or provide summaries of each of the ideas in a packet placed on participants’ chairs.
2. Place four chairs back-to-back facing outward. Place four additional chairs in an outer circle, each facing a chair on the inside hub. Place paper and a pen on each seat with the study packet.

Directions

1. Have each participant take a seat. Explain that each person will work with four different partners to explore key ideas in the study and brainstorm future actions. Ask group members to take notes on both their own and their partners’ ideas.
2. Allow time for each pair to read a section of the study or the prepared summary. The pair then should reach a common understanding of key ideas and brainstorm what those ideas might look like in their own system or school context.
3. Rotate pairs by having those in the outer circle move one seat to the right. Each pair then addresses the second topic.
4. Continue the discussion and brainstorm for each of the four topics.
5. Have the group summarize responses to each topic and key ideas for action.
6. Create focus groups to further explore a specific topic and to plan how to put the powerful ideas into action.

Source: Adapted from the National School Reform Faculty protocol. See www.nsrffharmony.org for additional protocols and information.

Three Levels of Text

Purpose: To construct meaning collaboratively, clarify, and expand thinking about a text, from written document to videotape to podcast, using increasingly specific descriptions.

Time: As little as 20 minutes depending on the size of the group or extended for as long as there is time. (It should be extended if the text is long and complex or if there are more than 10 people in a group.)

Materials: Text, such as “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the U.S. and Abroad,” available at www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm; chart paper; markers.

Preparation

The ideal group is six to 10 people. Divide larger groups and select a facilitator for each table group, along with a room facilitator to keep time and move the group along. Designate a recorder to chart ideas. Have participants read, view, or listen to the text, taking notes.

Directions

1. **Sentences** (*about 10 minutes*)
 - Each member of the group shares a sentence from the text or from his/her notes about something that struck that person as particularly significant. Others listen and perhaps take notes. There is no discussion.
2. **Phrases** (*about 10 minutes*)
 - Each person shares a phrase from the text or from notes written about the text on something that struck that person as significant. Others listen and perhaps take notes. There is no discussion.
3. **Words** (*about 10 minutes*)
 - Each person shares a word from the text or from notes written about the text on something that struck that person as significant. Others listen and perhaps take notes. There is no discussion.
4. **Discussion** (*about 10 minutes*)
 - Group members discuss what they heard and what they’ve learned about the text being studied. The group discusses which words emerged and new insights about the document.
5. **Debriefing** (*about 5 minutes*)
 - The group debriefs the process.

Source: Stevi Quate and Lois Easton, based on National School Reform Faculty text-based protocols.

Say something protocol

Purpose: This protocol engages readers with text as they read. This tool is useful when team members will be reading at a meeting and using text to inform.

Time: Varies according to selected reading material.

Materials: Copy of the text for each participant.

STEPS

1. Partners each read silently up to a designated point.
2. Once the stopping point is reached, each partner speaks in order to build connections, offer examples, ask questions, etc. Suggestions for partners' talking points are:
 - a. Something I agree with.
 - b. Something that puzzles me.
 - c. Something I am reminded of when I read . . .
 - d. A new idea.
 - e. Something I disagree with.
 - f. Something I want the author to explain more.
 - g. Something I want to talk more about with others.
3. Partners continue reading sections and pausing to speak until they complete the selection.
4. The whole group discusses the text.

Source: Adapted from the National School Reform Network, www.nsfharmony.org.

Author assumptions

Purpose: When authors write, they frequently reveal their assumptions about the topic. Uncovering an author's assumptions deepens a reader's understanding of the text and allows the reader a more informed interpretation of the text.

Time: Varies according to reading material selected.

Materials: Text from an education magazine or journal in which the author expresses an opinion rather than one that provides information.

STEPS

Team members:

1. Select a text related to the team's professional learning goal.
2. Read the text independently before coming to the meeting.
3. Share, in turn, one key idea from the text and the personal significance of that idea.
4. Identify author assumptions. Take turns stating an author assumption and the supporting text. Readers are encouraged to identify multiple points in the text that support their belief. Team members may share multiple assumptions and supporting text for each. List assumptions on chart paper or record them for later reference.
5. Review the assumptions together.
6. Choose one assumption that was not your own that you are interested in exploring further.
7. Identify other texts, research, experts, and/or personal experiences that support the assumption you selected.
8. Share the assumption you selected and the additional support you identified.
9. Share a key idea you now have about the text.
10. Discuss how examining the author's assumptions and the supporting sections of text influenced your understanding of the text and the topic.

Tools For Schools™

A bi-monthly
publication
supporting student
and staff learning
through school
improvement

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2001



NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
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Group Wise

Strategies for examining student work together

By Joan Richardson

Examining student work has always been part of a teacher's job. But, in recent years, that practice has moved from being a solitary activity to being a more collaborative effort in which teachers learn about their practice by sharing with and listening to colleagues.

In the hierarchy of professional development practices, examining student work would rank near the top because of the way that teachers work together to sharpen their practice to improve student learning.

Select a strategy for examining student work.

As various organizations have become interested in the strategy of examining student work, different protocols have been developed to guide that work. A protocol is simply a structure and guide for a group's conversation regarding a piece of student work. The protocols are designed to provide a safe place for teachers to share their students' work while also encouraging an honest exchange among participants.

Every protocol has been designed to emphasize a different aspect of evaluation. Some, like the Collaborative Assessment Conference, emphasize describing the student work. Others, like the Coalition of Essential Schools' Tuning Protocol, em-

phasize evaluative feedback from participants. Selecting a design that fits the culture of a school is a crucial factor in successfully using that design.

The tools on Pages 3, 4, 5, and 6 provide various options for examining student work. School teams may want to practice several options before identifying one that best fits their school. Schools may also discover that one strategy works best for one team while another team prefers a different strategy.

To learn more about practical options, visit the Learning About Student Work web site maintained by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (www.lasw.org). That web site includes a synopsis of about a dozen strategies for examining stu-

Continued on Page 2

Tools For Schools

Strategies for examining student work together

Continued from Page One

dent work and links to learn more about each of them.

Opt for anonymity.

To introduce the process and to help teachers become comfortable with the concept, consider doing one or two practice sessions.

Bring in student work that does not belong to any of the participants. Visit the Learning about Student Work web site (www.lasw.org) and look for samples of student work that could be used for this practice session. Or, tap colleagues at another school for samples of student work.

“Teachers are often quite shy about bringing their own student work to the table. They feel very apologetic. They feel that others might castigate them for the errors, for work that’s not perfectly done,” said Lois Easton, director of professional development at the Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center in Estes Park, Colo. Easton does extensive work with tuning protocols developed by the Coalition of Essential schools.

Practicing on student work in which they have no investment can help teachers feel more comfortable about the conversations they might hear regarding the work of their students.

Select a project, task, or assessment that addresses one of the schoolwide goals for student performance.

The task should require that students produce something that demonstrates what they have learned. This could be a long-term project or a short-term task. Whatever the final result, the student product or performance should be something significant, not a worksheet, quiz, or test.

Geneva City Schools in Geneva, N.Y., wanted students to do more writing in math as a way to improve their ability to explain how they solved math problems. So teachers assembled by grade

level to study students’ math journals, said Jody Hoch, now director of mathematics for the Rush-Henrietta Central School District in upstate New York.

Collect documents that will help the study group participants understand the project or task.

These might include the initial assignment, scoring/grading criteria (or rubrics), objectives of the assignments, exemplars, models, timelines, checklists, etc. Think about other key information participants will need to understand the project or task and that can be shared succinctly.

The presenting teacher should be prepared to briefly describe the context of the student work. The documents listed above would be used to illustrate his or her points during that presentation.

Select samples of student work that demonstrate authentic student responses to the project or task.

Choose two or three samples to provide contrast. Teachers often find that a sample of work that shows promise but is not a stellar response to the assignment provides the best basis for feedback. Work selected may include final products, drafts, reflections, etc.

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform suggests a variety of ways to select student work samples:

- Written work (or artwork) from several students in response to the same assignment.
- Several pieces of work from one student in response to different assignments.
- One piece of work from a student who completed the assignment successfully and one piece from a student who was not able to complete the assignment successfully (same assignment for both).
- Work done by students working in groups (include work of at least two groups that were given the same assignment).
- Videotape, audio tape, and/or photographs of students working, performing, or presenting their work. This might be

particularly useful for very young children who haven’t yet acquired adequate written communication skills.

Watch the details.

If possible, remove student names from the samples.

Make enough copies of the student work so that each participant has his or her own copy. Ensure that the facilitator knows in advance about any unique types of student work, such as sculpture or an entire portfolio of work, that are not easily duplicated. That will enable the facilitator to adapt the format accordingly.

If the student work is a video, a five-minute clip is usually sufficient to demonstrate the work.

Prepare a focusing question.

The presenting teacher should prepare a “focusing question” about the work that addresses a real interest or concern. Questions typically focus on either inputs (the assignment, teacher’s support of student performance) or outputs (quality of student work, teacher’s assessment of the work).

A broader question may elicit a wide range of feedback — and this may be desirable. For example: *How can I support higher quality presentations?* (input) *What are the strengths and weaknesses you see in the student presentations?* (output)

A narrower question might provide the kinds of feedback the teacher finds most useful. For example: *How can my prompt bring out more creativity in the students’ work?* (input) *What evidence is there in the student work of mathematical problem solving?* (output)

Remember, even with a narrower focus question, participants will offer a range of feedback — on and off the question.

See the February 2001 issue of *Results* to read about the use of “tuning protocols,” one strategy for examining student work.

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Tuning Protocol

BACKGROUND: The Tuning Protocol was developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools to provide teachers with feedback on authentic assessments (exhibitions, portfolios, etc.). A teacher or a team of teachers presents samples of student work and the context for the work. The presenter then offers a focusing question. After reviewing the work, participants offer feedback.

FACILITATION: Can be facilitated by someone inside or outside the group.

TIME: One hour.

Directions

PRESENTATION.

Time: 15 minutes

- Presenter shares the student work and sets the context by describing the teaching/learning situation. Presenter poses one or two key questions to be answered.
- As the presenter speaks, participants are quiet, taking notes.

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS.

Time: 5 minutes.

- Participants ask non-evaluative questions about the presentation, such as “What happened before X? What did you do next?”

INDIVIDUAL WRITING.

Time: 5 minutes.

- Participants write individually about the presentation.

PARTICIPANT DISCUSSION.

Time: 15 minutes.

- Presenter turns to one side and listens silently during this time.
- Participants discuss among themselves, exploring issues raised during the presentation, striving to understand the situation, and raising possible answers to the questions.

PRESENTER REFLECTION.

Time: 15 minutes

- Presenter talks about the participants’ discussion.
- Participants are silent, taking notes as the presenter speaks.

DEBRIEFING.

Time: 10 minutes

- Presenter and participants discuss both the process and the content of the protocol.

Source: Lois Easton, professional development director, Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo., (970) 586-7109, e-mail: leaston@psd.k12.co.us.

Tools For Schools



tips
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When looking for evidence of students’ thinking:

- Stay focused on the evidence that is present in the work.
- Look openly and broadly; don’t let your expectations cloud your vision.
- Look for patterns in the evidence that provide clues to how and what the student was thinking.

Source: “Some Guidelines for Learning From Student Work,” *Horace* 13 (2), November 1996. *Horace* is a publication of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Available online at www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/13/v13n02.html.

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When listening to colleagues' thinking:

- Listen without judging.
- Tune in to differences in perspective.
- Use controversy as an opportunity to explore and hear the perspectives of others.
- Focus on understanding where different interpretations come from.
- Make your own thinking clear to others.
- Be patient and persistent.

Source: "Some Guidelines for Learning From Student Work," *Horace* 13 (2), November 1996. *Horace* is a publication of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Available online at www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/13/v13n02.html.

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Collaborative Assessment Conference

BACKGROUND: Developed by Harvard's Project Zero, the Collaborative Assessment Conference provides a structure for groups of teachers to look closely at student work, describe it, ask questions about it, and explore implications for instruction. In this practice, describing the assignment and other context factors for the student work is not discussed until participants have described the work and asked questions about it.

FACILITATION: An experienced facilitator should lead this process.

TIME: 45 to 60 minutes.

Directions

GETTING STARTED. The group chooses a facilitator to guide participants. The presenting teacher shares copies of the selected work, without commenting about the work or the assignment.

DESCRIBING THE WORK. The group describes any aspect of the work they notice. They do not make judgments about the quality of the work or their personal preferences.

RAISING QUESTIONS. The group asks questions about the child, the assignment, the curriculum, or any other area. The presenting teacher takes notes but does not respond.

SPECULATING ABOUT WHAT THE STUDENT IS WORKING ON. The group "guesses" about what the child was working on when he/she created the piece. This could include ways the student was trying to fulfill the assignment, skills the child was trying to master, questions the child was trying to answer, or ideas he/she was trying to express.

THE "PRESENTING TEACHER" SPEAKS. The presenting teacher now adds perspective on each of the previous phases of the conference. The teacher provides his or her own perspective on the student's work and responds to questions or issues raised by the group.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING. Everyone is invited to share any thoughts about the student work. These could include thoughts about their own teaching, student learning, or ways to support a particular child in reaching his/her goals.

FINAL REFLECTION. At this time, participants have an opportunity to reflect on the process of their own thinking during the conference.

Source: *Harvard Project Zero, a 30-year-old research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, works with individuals, schools, and other institutions to help create communities of reflective, independent learners; to enhance deep understanding within disciplines; and to promote critical and creative thinking. For more information, contact Harvard Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 321 Longfellow Hall, 13 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 495-4342, fax (617) 495-9709, e-mail: info@pz.harvard.edu, web site: <http://pzweb.harvard.edu>.*

Standards in Practice

BACKGROUND: Standards in Practice was developed by The Education Trust as a “quality control” tool for analyzing and improving the quality of instruction. SIP is typically used in bi-monthly meetings of small teams of teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. The process calls for a close examination of teachers’ assignments, student work, and the relevant standard or set of standards.

FACILITATION: Usually done by a coach from outside the school.

TIME: 90 to 120 minutes.

Directions

1. A volunteer teacher brings to the meeting a set of student work, along with the assignment. It must be ordinary, right-off-the-desk work.
2. Group members do the assignment themselves in order to experience the task presented to students.
3. Team members identify the state or local standards (or national standards, if both state and local standards are lacking) that align with the assignment. *Note:* This step has a secondary benefit: In many cases, teachers, parents, and counselors are less familiar with the standards and/or the assessments aligned to them than they should be. Looking through the standards to find those that match gives team members experience with the language and organization of the standards.
4. Without looking at the student work, the team constructs a scoring guide (rubric) for this specific assignment. The scores go from 4, which is an ideal portrait of work that would satisfy this assignment, down to 1, which describes minimal effort. The rubric must include descriptions of exactly what the teacher wants to see in successful work. Descriptions of work worthy of a 4 must include words denoting quality, expressions such as “convincingly persuades,” “vividly portrays,” “proves without question.” It cannot just list features alone.
5. The team uses this scoring guide to score the student work. Team members confine their comments to the work and do not make references to the student who created the work.
6. The team summarizes what happened during the session and makes a plan of action.

Source: “Examining student work,” by Ruth Mitchell, *Journal of Staff Development*, Summer 1999 (Vol. 20, No. 3). For more information, contact the Education Trust at 1725 K Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 293-1217, fax (202) 293-2605, e-mail: rmitchell@edtrust.org. Education Trust’s web site is www.edtrust.org.

Tools For Schools



When reflecting on your own thinking:

- Ask yourself, “Why do I see this student work in this way? What does this tell me about what is important to me?”
- Look for patterns in your own thinking.
- Tune in to the questions that the student work and your colleagues’ comments raise for you.
- Compare what you see and what you think about the student work with what you do in the classroom.

Source: “Some Guidelines for Learning From Student Work,” *Horace* 13 (2), November 1996. *Horace* is a publication of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Available online at www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/13/v13n02.html.

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When you reflect on the process of looking at student work:

- What did you see in this student's work that was interesting or surprising?
- What did you learn about how this student thinks and learns?
- What about the process helped you see and learn these things?
- What did you learn from listening to your colleagues that was interesting or surprising?
- What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?
- How can you use your colleagues' perspectives?
- What questions about teaching and assessment did looking at this student's work raise for you?
- How can you pursue these questions further?
- Are there ideas you would like to try in your classroom as a result of looking at the student's work?

Source: "Some Guidelines for Learning From Student Work," *Horace* 13 (2), November 1996. *Horace* is a publication of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Available online at www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/13/v13n02.html.

Descriptive Review

BACKGROUND: Several variations exist for the Descriptive Review. All of them feature close, collaborative description of a student's work as well as the child who created that work. A teacher typically requests a review because he or she has questions about the child. Any artifact of student work can be the subject of a descriptive review as long as participants can view it during their discussion.

FACILITATION: Should be provided by an experienced facilitator.

TIME: At least 45 minutes.

Directions

1. The facilitator introduces the student work and describes what participants should try to "see" in the work — the underlying values and principles, the habits of mind, the assumptions, etc. *Time: 2 minutes.*
2. Presenters describe their work in detail. Reviewers take notes. *Time: 10 minutes for each presenter.*
3. Reviewers may ask clarifying questions. *Time: 3 minutes.*
4. The facilitator begins the first round of discussion by asking, "What do you see? Describe this work physically. Describe this work as literally as you can." Reviewers respond in turn around the circle. *Time: 3-5 minutes.*
5. The facilitator summarizes what is heard, restates important themes and ideas that emerged from the description before going on to the next round. *Time: 2 minutes.*
6. The facilitator moves into the next round of questioning, framing each round with a guiding question. As the rounds of questions proceeds, the facilitator guides the discussion into becoming less literal. Reviewers should move into discussion of assumptions, values, compromises, patterns, images, etc. *Time: 3-5 minutes each round.*
7. The facilitator summarizes at the end of each round.
8. The facilitator makes a final summation of the reviewers' descriptions. *Time: 2 minutes.*
9. The facilitator invites the reviewers to offer suggestions or make recommendations to the presenters. The facilitator invites the presenters to share with participants any new insights as a result of listening to the descriptions. *Time: 10 minutes.*

Source: Lois Easton, professional development director, Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo., (970) 586-7109, e-mail: leaston@psd.k12.co.us.

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Success Analysis Protocol

Purpose: To examine professional practice to gain an understanding of the reasons behind successes related to professional learning and then to examine these successes with the research report, “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the U.S. and Abroad” to improve and apply strategies to future work.

Time: 2 hours to 4 hours, depending on number of participants.

Materials: Chart paper; markers; tape; notepads; pens or pencils; the study, available at www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm.

Preparation (15 minutes)

Share with participants a definition of success: a process that was highly effective in achieving its intended outcome. Ask each participant to prepare a “case” by reflecting on something he or she has done right. The case should specify the facts of what the participant did as well as reflection about what might have contributed to the success.

Directions

- 1. Divide into groups (about 5 minutes)**
 - Divide into equal groups of three to four (or more in each group if there is time, as each person will present in the group). Groups can be self-selected, randomly assigned through numbering, job-alike, or purposefully diverse.
- 2. Sharing (about 5 minutes)**
 - One participant in each group agrees to go first, sharing his or her case orally as well as in writing (if available). Other participants are silent and take notes.
- 3. Clarifying questions (about 5 minutes)**
 - Others in the small group ask clarifying questions to understand the case being presented. Clarifying questions are those that can be answered by facts.
- 4. Analysis and discussion (about 10 minutes)**
 - The presenter of the case listens and takes notes as the others discuss the case, surfacing their insights about why the practice was successful. Participants discuss what the presenter did to make the situation successful, as well as other contributing factors. They may want to describe how what was done is different from typical practice.
- 5. Reflection (about 10 minutes)**
 - The presenter reflects aloud on what colleagues said to pinpoint reasons the practice was successful. Other group members silently take notes. Before going on to the next case, participants should take a moment to appreciate the success of the presenter.

Continued on p. 7



Success Analysis Protocol, continued from p. 6

6. Continued rounds (each round is about 30 minutes)

- In each group, the next participant shares a case. The group follows the above sequence of steps and continues until each group member has presented a case.

7. Compilation (about 5 minutes)

- Each group writes the factors that contributed to success on a piece of chart paper. Small groups do a “gallery tour” of the pieces of chart paper, noticing what’s similar and what’s distinctive about each small group’s list of factors in success.

8. Discussion (about 10 minutes)

- The large group discusses common factors and unusual factors in the success cases. They also may discuss aspects of the cases that surprised them. They might discuss elements that undergird the factors of success, such as the school culture, an administrator’s philosophy, or a teacher’s leadership.

9. Review (30 minutes)

- Read the shorter version of the report and consider which successful traits are supported by the research.

10. Response (15 minutes)

- Consider:
 - ▷ How were our successes like the findings in the study?
 - ▷ How were they different?
 - ▷ What did we learn from the study about the kind of professional learning we experience in relationship to what others experience in the U.S and beyond?

11. Debriefing (about 5 minutes)

- The facilitator invites participants to reflect on the utility of the process and continue their discussion of the content.

Source: Adapted from Daniel Baron of the National School Reform Faculty, with credit to Vivian Johnson.

Peeling a standard

Peeling a Standard helps teachers better understand how the core curriculum content standards and the cumulative progress indicators are used to make instructional and assessment decisions. Teachers can identify essential learnings (content and skills) for their own level by examining the strands within the core curriculum content standards and the cumulative progress indicators for each strand for the grade levels below and above their current grade level. When teachers know what students are expected to know and be able to do in order to demonstrate cumulative progress indicators, they can focus instruction and assessment on essential learnings. For example, in this example, a team of 3rd-grade teachers addressing Standard 6.6 studies the 2nd- and the 4th-grade cumulative progress indicators for that standard to identify prior and future student learning. With this knowledge, they can identify key learnings to include in their 3rd-grade curriculum to ensure that students are able to demonstrate the 4th-grade cumulative progress indicators by the end of 4th grade.

Grade Level: 3rd **Content:** GEOGRAPHY

STANDARD 6.6 (Geography)

All students will apply knowledge of spatial relationships and other geographic skills to understand human behavior in relation to the physical and cultural environment.

Descriptive statement: The study of geography is based on the principle that thinking in and understanding spatial terms will enable students to understand the many relationships of place, people, and environments. By taking an active, questioning approach to the world around them, students learn to devise their own mental world-view. As students engage in critical thinking to interpret patterns in the evolution of significant historic events and the movement of human populations on the Earth's surface, their understanding of geography, history, economics, and civics deepens. Furthermore, the use of geographic tools and technology assists students in understanding the reasons for, and the economic, political, and social consequences of, human impact on the environment in different areas of the world.

Source: *Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond: A tool kit for New Jersey educators*, by Joellen Killion. Oxford, OH: New Jersey Department of Education and NSDC, 2006.

Strands	2nd grade cumulative progress indicators	4th grade cumulative progress indicators	3rd grade essential learnings <i>(content and skills)</i>
<p>A World in spatial terms</p>	<p>1. Explain the spatial concepts of location, distance, and direction, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of school, home, neighborhood, community, state, and country; • The relative location of the community and places within it; • The location of continents and oceans; <p>2. Explain that the globe is a model of the earth and maps are representations of local and distant places;</p> <p>3. Demonstrate basic globe and map skills.</p>	<p>1. Use physical and political maps to identify locations and spatial relationships of places within local and nearby communities.</p> <p>2. Describe and demonstrate different ways to measure distance (e.g. miles, kilometers, time).</p> <p>3. Estimate distances between two places on a map using a scale of miles.</p> <p>4. Identify the major cities of the state, the United States, and the world.</p> <p>5. Identify the major countries, continents, bodies of water, and mountain ranges of the world.</p> <p>6. Locate time zones, latitude, longitude, and the global grid.</p>	
<p>B Places and regions</p>	<p>1. Describe the physical features of places and regions on a simple scale.</p> <p>2. Describe the physical and human characteristics of places.</p>	<p>1. Identify the physical and human characteristics of places and regions in the state and the United States (e.g. landforms, climate, vegetation, housing).</p> <p>2. Explain changes in places and regions over time and the consequences of those changes.</p> <p>3. Describe the geography of the state.</p> <p>4. Discuss factors involved in the development of cities (e.g. transportation, food, marketplace, religion, military protection).</p>	
<p>C Physical systems</p>	<p>1. Recognize that the relationship of the Earth to the sun affects weather conditions, climate, and seasons.</p>	<p>1. Describe the basic components of the Earth's physical systems, including landforms, water, erosion, weather, and climate and discuss their impact on human development.</p>	
<p>D Human systems</p>	<p>1. Identify the types of transportation used to move goods and people.</p> <p>2. Identify the modes of communication used to transmit ideas.</p>	<p>1. Describe the development of transportation and communication networks in the state and the United States.</p> <p>2. Identify the distribution and characteristics of populations for different regions of the state and the United States.</p>	
<p>E Environment and society</p>	<p>1. Describe the role of resources such as air, land, water, and plants in everyday life.</p> <p>2. Describe the impact of weather on everyday life.</p> <p>3. Act on small-scale, personalized environmental issues such as littering and recycling, and explain why such actions are important.</p>	<p>1. Differentiate between living and non-living natural resources.</p> <p>2. Explain the nature, characteristics, and distribution of renewable and non-renewable resources.</p>	

Source: *Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond: A tool kit for New Jersey educators*, by Joellen Killion. Oxford, OH: New Jersey Department of Education and NSDC, 2006.



FROM
ISOLATION TO
PARTNERSHIP

ESL CO-TEACHING LEADS TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

**Andrea Honigsfeld
and Maria Dove**

With classrooms tucked away in the basement or makeshift spaces in auditoriums or lunchrooms, many English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers experience a sense of isolation that mirrors the stand-alone nature of the work they do with students. Often, English Language Learners (ELLs) are pulled from their classrooms at the elementary level to receive English language instruction in 40-

to 80-minute periods. In secondary schools, ELLs are scheduled for up to three periods of ESL classes per day, and the curriculum taught in these classes is rarely aligned to content courses. ESL teachers are also isolated from their colleagues: they rarely join grade-level or team meetings and are often not invited to child study or instructional support meetings. In addition, what ESL teachers accomplish in their sessions with ELLs is often a mystery to many mainstream teachers.

In our work with ESL teachers, we have discovered something exciting. When schools and districts forge teacher partnerships and implement co-teaching practices to improve learning for ELLs, the outcomes are remarkable: teacher isolation and a disconnected or fragmented ESL curriculum are replaced with joint planning, collaborative instructional and extracurricular activities,



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inside**

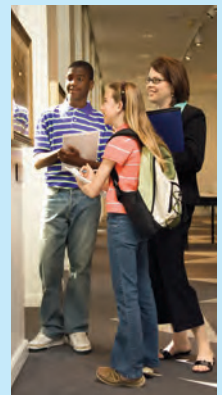
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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

and the emergence of teacher leadership.

The concept of co-teaching and collaboration has been accepted for many years within the special education community (Cook & Friend, 1995; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008; Conderman, Bresnahan, & Pedersen, 2009). Traditionally, co-teaching is a collaboration between general and special education teachers for all of the teaching responsibilities of all of the students assigned to a classroom (Gately & Gately, 2001). Together, general education classroom teachers and specialists, such as remedial reading teachers, math specialists, teachers of the gifted and talented, and more recently, ESL teachers, have also developed collaborative partnerships. The leadership opportunities these partnerships encourage are another significant benefit for the teachers involved as well as the schools and students they serve.

Caryn Bachar: SIDE-BY-SIDE COACHING

We invite you to visit the south shore of Long Island, N.Y., a suburban area as diverse and often as segregated as any big city's distinct neighborhoods. First, meet Caryn Bachar, who teaches ESL in grades 2-5 in Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools. Bachar co-teaches with two mainstream teachers during their literacy block, thus assisting ELLs, former ELLs who tested out of her program, and other general education students.



Bachar

While she is working inside the regular classroom, Bachar is also helping all her mainstream colleagues to apply Reading and Writing Workshop (Calkins, 2000) techniques to enhance ELLs' oral language and literacy skills. She provides short, meaningful mini-lessons for individual or small groups of students on different reading and writing concepts and strategies. As an instructional partner in the class, Bachar participates in assessing the reading and writing progress of ELLs alongside their peers and also teaches students how to self-assess their own reading and writing skills. She has taken the lead on issues that involve the academic progress of ELLs, and has become a strong child advocate for the education of English learners in

her district.

Bachar, the 2007 New York State ESL Teacher of the Year, is frequently sought after as a workshop presenter in her own district and beyond. Through her willingness to share her many years of experience through case studies and vignettes, and her stacks of professionally created, teacher-made instructional materials, her impact reaches beyond the two classrooms in which she regularly co-teaches.

Nancy Berg: WORKING IN HARMONY

Next, visit Nancy Berg in Freeport Public Schools, a high-needs school district with 17% English Language Learners. She is dually certified in ESL and special education and co-teaches with her middle school English teacher colleague for four of five periods every day. She modifies and adapts reading materials, scaffolds assignments, develops alternate assessments, and more. Additionally, she creates lessons that support and remediate the specific needs of ELL and special education students. Berg is responsible for the creation and implementation of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) for all of the students who are classified as special education, several of whom are also ELLs. She attends team meetings every other day and coplans with her colleague, Matt Fliegel, on a regular basis. To deliver instruction for their ELLs, both Berg and Fliegel execute their lessons seamlessly through the use of various co-teaching models in one 42-minute period.



Berg

Berg and Fliegel, a first-year English teacher, co-teach for several periods a day, every day. In two of their inclusion classes, both classified and regular education ELLs work alongside English speaking special education and nonclassified 7th graders, giving the teachers for different subgroups to manage. Fliegel is pleased to have an in-class coach and mentor available almost the entire day as they share planning, delivering, and assessing instruction.

Michelle Angiulo: TAPPING INTO EXPERTISE

Travel further east on Long Island with us and you will find yourself in Farmingdale High School

Together, general education classroom teachers and specialists, such as remedial reading teachers, math specialists, teachers of the gifted and talented, and more recently, ESL teachers, have also developed collaborative partnerships.

NSDC'S BELIEF

Schools' most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.

Co-teaching models

Based on our combined experiences with ESL co-teaching and training others in teacher collaboration and co-teaching practices, we adapted Vaughn, Schumm and Arguelles's (1997) co-teaching models to the ESL context (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008). The teachers we work with use and adapt the following models.

MODEL TYPE	MODEL DESCRIPTION
ONE STUDENT GROUP: One lead teacher and one teacher teaching on purpose	The mainstream and ESL teachers take turns assuming the lead role. One leads while the other provides mini-lessons to individuals or small groups to pre-teach or clarify a concept or skill.
ONE STUDENT GROUP: Two teachers teach the same content	Both teachers direct a whole-class lesson and work cooperatively to teach the same lesson at the same time.
TWO STUDENT GROUPS: Two teachers teach the same content	Students are divided into two learning groups; teachers engage in parallel teaching, presenting the same content using differentiated learning strategies.
TWO STUDENT GROUPS: One re-teaches; one teaches alternative information	Flexible grouping provides students at various proficiency levels with the support they need for specific content; student group composition changes as needed.
MULTIPLE STUDENT GROUPS: Two teachers monitor/teach	Multiple groupings allow both teachers to monitor and facilitate student work while targeting selected students with assistance for their unique learning needs.

(Farmingdale Public Schools) where Michelle Angiulo, one of four ESL teachers, has invited some of the most willing content area teachers in her building to partner with her. Her ability to identify the teachers with the most sensitivity to students' linguistic needs and to develop a shared commitment to working with ELLs led to opportunities to engage in collaborative planning and co-teaching with a teacher certified in Biology and one in



Angiulo

English. When Angiulo and her co-teachers share instruction, she helps clarify difficult concepts, writes notes on the board, and circulates and offers a different perspective. She sometimes asks questions that she knows her ELLs might like to ask if they were comfortable enough to do so. Thus, she

models appropriate classroom behavior and helps redirect her content area specialist colleagues to focus on challenging concepts.

Angiulo invites her two colleagues to ESL meetings, regional ESL conferences, and offsite workshops so they may explore critical issues together. As they examine the topics of adapting instruction for students with interrupted formal education, they each rely on their own background knowledge and experience in the content areas as well as on their emerging, shared knowledge of ESL pedagogy. Angiulo acts not only as a guide on the side and the knowledgeable other, but also as the momentum that keeps the spotlight shining on the special concerns of English learners.

Bachar, Berg, and Angiulo are all highly experienced, extraordinary educators. They perceive their role not only to offer the best possible instruction to their ELLs but also to make sure



their colleagues are able to provide that, too. They accomplish all that as authentic, naturally emerging teacher leaders. Through their partnerships with mainstream colleagues, they regularly engage in joint teaching and learning opportunities and also take on informal yet powerful leadership roles and responsibilities.

Teacher leadership roles and opportunities vary, but all three educators we portrayed here found co-teaching to be one strong avenue to turn teacher collaboration to partnerships while also developing qualities of teacher leadership. According to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2007), teachers commonly seek each other's advice, support, and assistance more often than those of administrator. Therefore, it is only natural that the development of teacher leaders, in formal as well as informal positions, would be an important means to provide instructional support to teachers to enhance learning for ELLs.

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Julia Aguilar Zongker is an academic coach at Pueblo Del Sol Middle School in Isaac School District, Phoenix, Ariz. You can contact her at jzongker@isaacschools.org.

First, make sure teachers are heard

Q How do you help create a positive climate in a school striving for a turnaround?

I spend a lot of time talking to kids, to teachers. If a teacher has a bad day, I try to talk to the teacher about what went well. There are always good things that happen during the day. I make sure as a coach that teachers do not go home without someone listening to them. I ask how I can help. Part of coaching is knowing how to read the teacher and meeting the needs of each individual. Some of them just need somebody to talk to.

We use a district Teach for Success form when we do classroom observations that looks for specific things. And we use two coaches for observations, so one can take over the classroom after an observation and the other can take the teacher out and give feedback. We figure out the teacher's strengths and one thing we'd like to target. We provide immediate feedback, so it's fresh in everybody's

mind, and we might model right then that one thing.

When I first came, it was important that the other coach and I made sure we had the same objectives. We have to think alike. So we did a lot of observations together practicing and made sure we were in sync and were seeing the same things, and we would discuss that before we went in to the classroom and gave feedback. We have to all be moving in the same direction.

We are very data-driven here. The school has a data board in the conference room, and each teacher has an individual data board in the classroom so they can see where each child is in his or her learning. All the kids are color coded by where they fall on the state assessment categories, and when a student is assessed, the teacher reclassifies the student. Then, during grade-level meetings, we discuss with the teachers each individual child. And we celebrate each success. ♦

Assessing the Impact of Professional Development

APRIL 5-
MAY 7
Joellen Killion
NSDC Deputy Executive Director

Join Joellen Killion for a five-week program that will guide educators through a step-by-step process for planning and conducting effective evaluations of staff development programs. Killion, author of *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*, guides discussion on strategies for documenting the impact of professional learning on student learning, as well as designing professional learning opportunities that produce intended outcomes.

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Create a supportive environment for all

Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago, a recent book by Anthony Bryk, Penny Bender Sebring, Elaine Allensworth, Stuart Luppescu, and John Easton (University of Chicago Press 2009), summarized five ingredients that, when implemented in tandem, produced substantial improvement in math and reading test scores for students in Chicago schools. These ingredients include:

- Strategic school leadership that focuses on instruction and includes others beyond principals;
 - Deeper connection with parents and community that make schools open and welcoming;
 - Purposeful development of professional capacity including professional development and collaborative work;
 - Safe environment that creates support for learning; and
 - Strong instructional guidance and materials.
- Some of these ingredients are system ingredients, some school-level, and some classroom level. Creating a safe learning environment that supports student academic success is a matter of equity. Some describe the learning environment that respects and acknowledges students as a culturally responsive environment.

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems (NCCRESt) advocates for culturally responsive pedagogy and learning environments. They describe culturally responsive classrooms as having curricular, environmental, and instructional elements. In extensive web-based resources available for use in professional development, NCCRESt identifies the following five environmental features. Each of those features on pp. 7 and 8 is followed with some discussion prompts that might be useful in engaging teachers whose

NSDC STANDARD



Equity: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.

personal background may be different from their students. Through self-reflection and examination of assumptions and beliefs, educators can increase their awareness of how their background and beliefs influence their pedagogy.

Creating culturally responsive classroom learning environments requires thoughtful planning and cross-classroom sharing. When working collaboratively across classrooms, teachers exchange strategies, resources, points of view, and ideas to support building a network of culturally responsive classrooms that contribute to a schoolwide system of supporting the success of all learners.



Joellen Killion is deputy executive director of National Staff Development Council.

FOR MORE RESOURCES

- NCCRESt provides resources to download to support professional learning in areas of equity. <http://nccrest.org/professional.html>
- NCCRESt publishes a newsletter called *Equity Matters*. To subscribe, visit <http://nccrest.org/press.html>

For more information about NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, see www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm



CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT AND RAPPORT

Respect and rapport begin with the teacher demonstrating respect for and rapport with students and teaching students how to show respect and build rapport with other students. Teachers can begin to establish this environment by learning to appreciate and understand their students' lives and cultural backgrounds and develop skills for cross-cultural communication. Interactions between students and teachers are warm and based on genuine caring, openness, and honesty.



To consider:

- How do teachers demonstrate respect and build rapport?
- What specific actions do teachers use in their classrooms to communicate their respect of their students?
- What strategies do teachers use to build rapport?
- What indicators help teachers assess the level of respect and rapport between them and their students and among students?



ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Teachers shape the culture of learning when they convey its importance and the role of teachers and students as actors in the learning process, with both at times serving in the role of teacher and student. Teachers help students understand the importance of what they are learning, how it will impact their education and lives, and how to apply what they are learning in authentic situations. This requires teachers to reach beyond their own life experiences to connect with students' backgrounds. It also means that teachers hold the same high standards for all students and support students in achieving excellence.

To consider:

- How do teachers engage students in learning?
- What strategies do teachers use to personalize assignments and classroom activities to connect with all students to promote higher interest and engagement?
- How do teachers show enthusiasm for what they are teaching and convey its value to students?

CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Families are a significant factor for the academic success of all students. Culturally responsive classroom environments actively acknowledge and appreciate family and community interests, encourage students to access and engage with community resources, and encourage students to include their families in the learning process. When teachers take time to meet families, visit them, and reach out and tap community resources, they increase their connections to students exponentially and increase their impact on students' learning.



To consider:

- What resources are available in our community that can enhance students' classroom learning?
- What communication systems work best for connecting with and engaging families in students' learning?
- What are some preferred ways families have indicated they want to contribute to their students' learning?
- How might we bring more community resources into our classrooms?

ALSO FROM NSDC

Read the Cultural Proficiency column from *JSD* for more information on this topic. Columnists Sarah Nelson and Patricia Guerra explore a specific aspect of developing cultural proficiency in each issue. They recently completed a three-issue series investigating how to involve parents in the work of schools. See www.nsd.org/news/authors/guerra_nelson.cfm.

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The National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems (NCCRESt). <http://nccrest.org/>.


ORGANIZING SAFE CLASSROOM SPACE

Culturally responsive classroom environments use space to support learning. To use space effectively, teachers create different types of work environments for students; arrange the space for easy movement throughout the classroom; provide students with personal space; organize resources for easy access; prominently display student work products; ensure that print and non-print resources representing diverse background, values, points of view, lifestyles, and abilities are visible and easily accessible; and celebrate the contribution of all members of the classroom community.


To consider:

- How do we honor diverse backgrounds, points of view, values, lifestyles, and abilities within our school and our classrooms?
- What conveys to students that they are recognized and honored as members of the classroom and school community?
- What types of classroom physical arrangements work best for creating different types of learning spaces for students and still provide personal space for students?
- What are the most essential resources to have available for students in the classroom to support learning?
- What priorities do we have for adding to our classroom resources to ensure that we are honoring all students?

ESTABLISHING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Culturally responsive classroom management builds on respect, personal and social responsibility, and a strong sense of community. Teachers' own beliefs and values influence their expectations of students and their behaviors toward students. Teachers in culturally responsive classrooms strive to create a strong sense of community in which each student understands and accepts his or her contribution to the success of the community. Teachers focus their efforts more on creating procedures and systems to support learning than on discipline and punishment, while maintaining their role as accountable adults.

To consider:

- 
- What procedures work to keep the focus on building students' sense of responsibility within classrooms?
 - What personal beliefs and values do we hold as adults that interfere with expectations of students and their success?
 - What does it mean to be personally and socially responsible within a community?
 - How do we convey that to students at different ages?
 - What is the relationship between classroom management and discipline?



BY KELLY LOCK

School coaches can help alleviate the isolation teachers often feel, differentiate professional development for teachers, and bring about changes that enhance student learning by engaging teachers in collegial visits.

A collegial visit that becomes an

Dear colleague, please come for a visit

THE COLLEGIAL VISIT PROVIDES A STRUCTURED OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

opportunity for professional learning is much more than walking across the hall to watch another teacher's classroom. Though such visits can be beneficial, and I encourage them, quality collegial visits that transfer to meaningful and long-lasting job-embedded professional development are carefully planned classroom visits that have a clear focus, administrative participation, and an opportunity for reflection and application of newfound learning.

Why visit?

There are many reasons that a teacher may want or need to visit another classroom: garner teaching strategies, learn a new teaching model, understand expecta-

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Diana Lee pioneered the



school-based coach position at her school.

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Our goal: All teachers in all schools will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work.



TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

PAGE 2

**COLLEGIAL
VISIT**

tions across curricular areas and/or across grade levels, or analyze classroom procedures. The reason for the visit is established based on the observing teacher's needs. Because these visits cost money and time, it is critical for the visit facilitator — principal, coordinator, or instructional coach — to analyze the motivation for these requests. There may be reasons for discouraging such visits — because of a teacher's inability to understand the importance of confidentiality, an unwillingness to try new things, and/or because it will make the observing teacher feel inadequate. But if we hold to the belief that teachers, like our students, have the capacity for growth, then as long as the collegial visit is well organized, professional learning will occur.

Inviting teachers to observe

If collegial visits are new in your district, the first step will be inviting teachers to consider the opportunity. This can be broached in a number of ways. First, during a coaching situation, when a teacher seems at a loss or unsure of strategies, ask if she would like to see another teacher using strategies that might be helpful. Second, a teacher might comment that she knows she should be using a particular strategy as another colleague does, but doesn't know how to begin. In this situation, ask the teacher if she wants to see this or another colleague in action and volunteer to set up the visit. The third way the invitation might be presented is through the principal. However, this must not be a way for the principal to remediate teachers. It must come about from an authentic discussion that shows the principal wants to support the teacher by differentiating her staff's professional development, and it should be an opportunity offered to all teachers who want to take advantage of it.

Planning the purpose of the visit

Once a teacher expresses an interest in observing, the next step is identifying the purpose of the visit.

The observation must focus on one or two specific things. For example, if a teacher is struggling with how to teach reading strategies in her class, then as she observes, she should focus solely on what strategies the other teacher is

using, how the strategies are taught and how students apply the strategies. Everything else should be filtered out, which is difficult, but discussion during the pre-visit planning can ensure this happens.

To determine the focus, the visit facilitator should ask a teacher:

- What is your specific need?
- What do you need to see happening?
- How will you know when something is working?
- How will you know that students are learning and applying what they learn?
- Why is observing another teacher more helpful than reading about it in a journal or book?
- How will you use the information garnered?
- What do you do that already works?
- What is your timeline for implementing any new information gathered?

Once the focus is determined, it needs to be written on the observation sheet as a constant reminder of the visit's purpose. This will prove helpful later during the actual visit should other factors begin to interfere. This focus should be shared with the teacher to be observed so that she knows exactly what the focus is as well. It can be unsettling to a teacher to have visitors furiously taking notes and not know what is being analyzed.

In addition, several other considerations should be made. First, since time constraints are an issue and money for substitutes may be at a premium, the length of the observation is important to establish. In some cases, it may be important for a teacher to spend a half or full day observing other classrooms and schools, which gives a teacher a chance to see multiple teachers and students and/or grade levels. A substitute may not be an option, and in some situations, it may prove necessary that a teacher visit during her planning period over several days or only visit once while another teacher or administrator covers her class.

Second, though the focus may center on content strategies, observing teachers outside one's own content area is helpful. A math teacher who wants to do more group activities can find great benefit in watching a science teacher's class-

THREE WAYS TO GET STARTED

1. During a coaching situation, ask if the teacher would like to see another teacher using strategies that might be helpful.



2. If a teacher comments that she knows she should be using a particular strategy, ask the teacher if she wants to see a colleague in action and volunteer to set up the visit.

3. The principal can offer collegial visit opportunities to all teachers who want to take advantage of them.



room. The same is true for grade levels. In one of the most successful observations I conducted, a middle school teacher who was struggling with the implementation of a writer's workshop in a classroom where the students were functioning at 2nd and 3rd grade levels found that visiting students in several kindergarten through 3rd-grade classrooms was critical to revamping what she was doing so she could meet her students where they were. Similarly, another middle school teacher realized that she needed to make adjustments to her classroom to better prepare her student after observing honors and non-honors classes at a local high school.

If a teacher is taken out of her subject matter and/or grade level, the visit facilitator should discuss what differences might be seen and how that might affect the visit. Good teaching is universal, but discussions about how to adapt something learned from a 6th- to 9th-grade classroom or science to math classroom may be necessary.

Selecting the teacher to observe

Although it is helpful to visit teachers in one's own building, I believe it is more conducive to professional development to visit a classroom in another school. Teachers have relationships with teachers they work with daily. These relationships can interfere with authentic evaluation of instruction and can make the observed teacher especially unnerved by the process.

In addition, teachers often know the students in their own building. During collegial visits, the focus should not be based on pre-existing relationships and/or conceptions about students but, rather, instructional practices and how they affect students.

I also believe that removing a teacher from her environmental comfort zone makes it easier to concentrate on the predetermined focus, which is established in advance by the observing teacher and the visit facilitator.

In our school district, secondary instructional coaches teach at least one course in their content area. As a result, teachers can observe coaches in their teaching roles. However time constraints sometimes interfere. Because of relationships the coaches have built with teachers in their build-

ings, we use one another to connect throughout the district, and in some cases, the coach from the host building also participates in the observation.

Most importantly, teachers must agree to be observed. Though most are open to sharing ideas, it is critical to ask a teacher's permission to visit her room, the purpose must be clearly explained, and the teacher must have the option to say no, especially when this is a new process in your building. Despite the desire to share ideas, there is often fear and anxiety involved in opening one's classroom for scrutiny. If teachers say no to a visit, value their decision, but don't remove them from the list of potential classrooms to visit. Ultimately, the teachers you choose to approach for such visits are those who exhibit strengths in teaching strategies and building relationships with students, and they have valuable information about the profession to share with others. After they realize you aren't spying on them and/or the other teacher isn't there to criticize but learn, teachers may change their minds. This, in itself, can be valuable professional development.

The visit

By the time the visit takes place, the focus and length of stay should have been shared with all parties involved and e-mails sent as reminders. The visit facilitator should have an idea of what is happening in the class before the visit and he or she should know the expectations of the teacher to be observed. For instance, a teacher may be conducting writing conferences, which allows for more freedom in the class, and, as a result, will have prepped her class before the visit, telling students that visitors will be asking them questions. Another teacher may want visitors to sit quietly at a space she has for visitors while she conducts an experiment that demands the class's full attention.

The issue of confidentiality may be a concern for some teachers. It must be discussed thoroughly with all involved. Obviously, teachers know that the confidentiality of our students should never be compromised. As professionals, we must also honor the confidentiality of our colleagues. When an observing teacher returns to



Teachers to approach for collegial visits

- Have strengths in teaching strategies.
- Are skilled in relationships with students.
- Have valuable information about the profession to share.

3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

her own building, it must be clear that she cannot complain about or criticize the observed teacher. The observing teacher should focus on her learning experiences and what she can use in her own classroom — not her colleague’s teaching. After all, the observed teacher deserves respect for opening her classroom. Criticism could cause other teachers to keep their doors closed.

The administrator needs to understand this is not time for an evaluation. Though an administrator might be present, she must take the role of supporter, showing all teachers involved appreciation for their willingness to share ideas to further student learning.

Arriving early at the school to stop by the office, sign in, receive visitor passes and conduct any other security process is critical so that all visitors are in the classroom before the start of class. Arriving after class has begun should not be an option unless the observed teacher has specifically asked that you arrive at that time so that they could tend to her students before visitors arrive.

The observing teacher should record her observations on the note-taking guide that’s been provided. (See tool on p. 6.) I also encourage the coach or visit facilitator to do the same.

First, teachers are asked to watch what students are doing. If possible, the observing teacher should sit or talk with students about the focus of the observation. This can be just as valuable as watching the teacher. For instance, when the middle school teacher mentioned earlier, observed a high school classroom, she had this experience, “The conversation with former students and even students from other middle schools has proven to be one of the most valuable PD experiences I have ever had. This experience gave me insight from the students’ point of view.”

The second column on the observation form focuses on what the observed teacher is doing. How is she interacting with the students? What questions is she asking?

Finally, the observing teacher is asked to note questions that emerge from the observation, and, again, all of these things are tracked in accordance with the predetermined focus. The rest, as difficult as it may be, must be ignored.

When an unfocused observation takes place,

it is easy to get hung up on details that can detract from instructional practices. For example, on one visit that didn’t include pre-visit planning, the observing teacher was bothered by the fact that students were chewing gum, which she did not allow in her classroom. At first, she couldn’t get beyond this, and as a result, the purpose of the visit was in jeopardy. Thankfully, the observing teacher was able to refocus with the help of the visit facilitator and glean instructional practices that were being used to help boost student achievement rather than obsessing over students chewing gum.

Such things may seem trivial, but without a clear focus it is easy to become distracted, causing the collegial visit to become a waste of resources. This brings about another important point — one that cannot always be addressed in large group situations.

Role of the visit facilitator

The visit facilitator should also attend the observation and take notes alongside the observing teacher, so that a comparison of the notes can be used to guide the reflection. In large groups, unfortunately, like our students, teachers can appear focused and engaged, but behind the glazed-over look, they are creating their shopping lists, processing an argument with a student, or simply dreaming of when the clock will show the magic time when everyone gets to go home.

A collegial visit allows for more one-on-one attention. Besides helping the observing teacher remain focused, the visit facilitator can also provide another view on what was observed in the classroom, which proves helpful when the observing teacher later reflects on and implements what was observed.

The visit facilitator probably cannot participate in all collegial visits. If the principal, for example, is the sole facilitator of such visits, she clearly cannot leave the building each time a teacher participates in a collegial visit. Even so, clear expectations should be established for the process of reflecting on the collegial visit. When the teacher visits alone, pre-visit planning to establish the focus is critical. A meaningful conversation about what could and should happen must take place. Stressing that notes should be

ADMINISTRATOR POINTS:

- It’s not an evaluation.
- Your presence is optional.
- Be supportive.
- Show appreciation for teachers’ willingness to share ideas to further student learning.



3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

taken is not enough. The visit facilitator must make it clear that each notation must be related to the observation focus.

After the visit

After returning to her building, the observing teacher should visit with the administrator to debrief and reflect on the experience of watching another teacher and what she has learned. In larger schools, debriefing with an administrator may not be possible.

But, in all cases, the observing and the observed teacher should write a reflection paper that they submit to the administrator and share with one another. With a reflection, the professional development is two-fold. One, the observing teacher discusses what teaching and learning she saw that could be implemented in her classroom. Two, the observing teacher reflects on what it was like to see another person teaching. If the observed teacher is brought into the reflection process, then she also is able to benefit, which allows another layer of learning to take place.

Again, because of time constraints, the reflection will have to be individually planned. If possible, it is most beneficial to have everyone involved discuss the observation immediately following the closing. In other situations, it may take place after school, or if a teacher observes several teachers within a building, during the department's planning time. Because some school districts are quite large, these reflections might need to be shared via e-mail, allowing for ongoing communication about the observation to take place.

Create next steps

Watching another teacher practice the craft of teaching is tremendous. It can reaffirm what we are already doing, and it can help us continue to learn and grow. Guiding the observing teacher through the reflection of her experience and asking her to create the next steps is critical whether she attends with someone or alone.

But, as one principal told me, "Changes in practice should be evident following a visit; otherwise, a collegial visit is no more than an experience."

Teachers cannot change everything in one

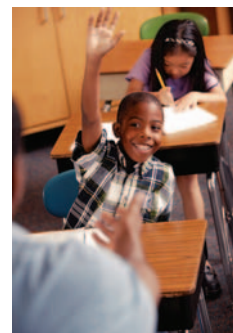
fell swoop, and expecting a teacher to change more than one thing at a time is unreasonable. However, if the observation focus was based on reading strategies, then what one strategy could the observing teacher apply in her room? Once that one thing is chosen, the visit facilitator needs to help the teacher create a timeline for implementation which should take place no later than seven days after the initial observation because the likelihood of implementation decreases with each passing day.

Reflection after the next step

The final step of the collegial visit is to reflect on the implementation of the new idea or strategy. If it failed, that's okay. Analyze why it failed. Analyze what could be done differently. Examine the student work. It could be that the teacher feels it was a failure because of her level of comfort with the strategy. It could be that the students really did poorly, but they did so because it was a new strategy for them, too. They need time to practice just as the teacher needs time to practice. If it worked, examine why and prepare to try it again. If possible, include the observed teacher in this process. Then the two teachers can compare notes and discuss the teaching of the strategy together.

About the author

Kelly Lock is an 8th-grade communication arts teacher and instructional coach for the St. Joseph School District in St. Joseph, Mo. You can continue this conversation with her via e-mail at Kelly.lock@sjsd.k12.mo.us. ♦



The final step of the collegial visit is to reflect on the implementation of the new idea or strategy.



The collegial visit

Teacher's name _____

Date of visit _____

What is the focus of your visit?

What are students doing?	What is the teacher doing?

What questions do you have as a result of this visit?

What are your next steps?

The observing teacher should record her observations on the note-taking guide. The coach or visit facilitator is encouraged to do the same.

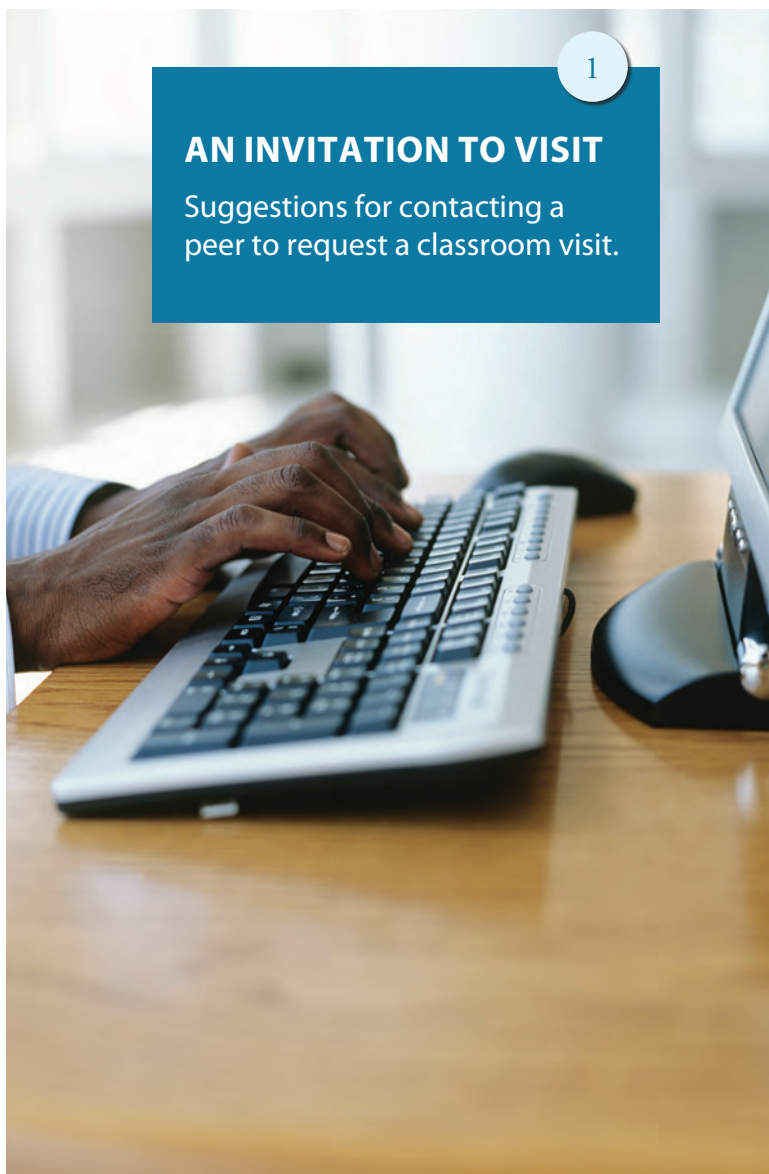
All aspects of the observation tool are tracked in accordance with the predetermined focus. The rest must be ignored.

When an unfocused observation takes place, it is easy to get hung up on details that can detract from instructional practices.

CLASSROOM VISITS

By Joellen Killion

Educators who have opportunities to collaborate with their peers through classroom visits or lesson observations will benefit from intentional planning. The four tools below and on pp. 55-57 offer suggestions and prompts for classroom visits at the planning and debriefing stages. Use or adapt the tools to fit your context and specific needs.



Date:

Dear _____,

Part of my professional learning goal is to understand more about _____ (*name the aspect of instructional practice, student learning environment, etc.*).

I would like to visit your classroom sometime in the next two weeks to learn from your practice so that I can enrich my own. (*If comfortable, explain your reason for selecting this colleague to visit, or explain how you decided to use peer visits as one way to meet your goal.*) If you agree to my visit, I would like to meet with you in advance to discuss my visit, plan when it will be appropriate for me to visit, set ground rules that we will both be comfortable with, and determine when we will meet to debrief my visit.

Please let me know a convenient time and day for us to meet. My best times to meet are _____.

Sincerely,

PEER VISIT PRELIMINARY PLAN

The visiting teacher and the visited teacher consider together the following questions before the visit.

PURPOSE

- What is the exact purpose of the visit?

LOGISTICS

- When will it be best for the visited teacher to welcome his or her peer?
- How long will the visit be?
- Where will the visitor sit during the visit? May he or she interact with students when they are working individually or in teams?
- May the visitor interact with the teacher during the visit?
- What are the shared agreements about confidentiality regarding this visit?

LESSON SPECIFICS

- What is the learning objective for the lesson?
- Where in the developmental process is this group of students with the lesson objective, i.e. introduction, developing, practice, extension, etc.?
- What information about specific students should the visitor know in advance?
- In what ways can the visitor lend a hand if appropriate?

DATA

- What types of information will the visiting teacher be looking for? What kinds of information will he or she collect?
- How will the visiting teacher take notes or record information?
- How will the information collected be used by the visitor?
- What will happen with the information after the visit and debriefing?

OTHER

- What else should the visitor know before coming?

DEBRIEF

- When will we meet to debrief the visit?



3

SAMPLE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR PEER VISITS

The visiting teacher may focus on multiple aspects of instruction during a classroom visit. Below are several possibilities.



TEACHER PRACTICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear statement of lesson focus. • Activating background knowledge. • Use of specific instructional methodologies, i.e. direct instruction, minilesson, inquiry, modeling, discussion, Socratic seminar, guided practice, independent practice, etc. • How teacher engages students. • Emphasis of higher-order thinking. • Use of instructional resources, i.e. technology, print, and nonprint resources. • Differentiating instruction. • Accommodating learning needs. • Formative assessment. • Student management.
STUDENT PRACTICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of engagement. • Type of student work, i.e. hands-on, individual, collaborative, etc. • Learning processes. • Seeking assistance. • Asking questions. • Independent work. • Self-monitoring of learning. • Assessment of learning.
CLASSROOM STRUCTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of physical space. • Location of resources. • Types of resources. • Flow of teacher and students. • Routines.



DEBRIEFING A VISIT

Following a classroom visit, the visiting and visited teachers take time to talk about the lesson. The focus of the conversation begins with the purpose of the visit and may include other topics if both agree they are appropriate to discuss. These sentence frames might help get the conversation going.

VISITING TEACHER

- The purpose of my visit was to _____ (*repeat the purpose*). As a result of my visit to your classroom, I saw several examples in your classroom that will help me. They included _____ (*be as specific as possible*).
- I noticed that when you _____ (*identify specific behaviors*), students were _____ (*identify specific behaviors*). I'd like to know if my observations are similar to yours.
- During the lesson, it was evident that you were making a number of decisions based on how students were responding. I want to know what you were considering as you _____ (*identify some point in the lesson related to the area of learning*). Tell more about how you decided to _____.
- Teaching is never as easy as it looks. I wonder if there were times in this lesson when you reassessed your intention. Where did that occur, if it did, and what prompted it? What decision did you make? Share your reasoning.
- What I learned about _____ (*state focus of the visit*) from visiting your classroom was _____. How that will help me in my own classroom is _____ (*be specific*).

VISITED TEACHER

- Sometimes it takes extra eyes to see everything going on in my classroom. I want to know more about what you saw students doing when I _____ (*identify specific actions*).
- Considering my classroom from your perspective gives me an opportunity to reflect on my practice. As we talked about the visit, what I thought about was _____. What I have learned from your visit that will help me in the future is _____ (*be specific*).



PEER LEARNING LABS PUT TEACHER PRACTICE UNDER *the* MICROSCOPE

By Valerie von Frank

Instructional coaches in Thompson School District (Loveland and Berthoud, Colo.) have an unusual tool in their tool kits. Not quite Japanese lesson study, not quite classroom walk-through, peer learning labs are a professional learning opportunity that has evolved from coaches' and leaders' experiences.

The district began to hire instructional coaches in 2006, putting in place a part-time coach for the early childhood center and each of the 18 elementary schools and a full-time coach for each of the 10 secondary schools. District leaders went to the community for the funding, raising a special millage to support the program.

At the same time, in a partnership with the Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC), a nonprofit group of business and education leaders committed to strengthening Colorado's public schools, professional learning took a new form. PEBC's staff developer began working with the instructional coach at a targeted school, and PEBC invited four teachers from the school to participate in a lab setting to observe and learn from master teachers using targeted instructional strategies. The labs required time for teachers to travel to Denver, and the district soon recognized that funding for teachers to visit off-site lab classrooms was finite. The instructional coach at that school launched an internal lab project one day a month, modeling the PEBC lab.

Learning for instructional coaches was also ramping up. The district provided Cognitive Coaching training and weekly coaches' meetings for book studies, among other support.

What's inside

NSDC tool

Prepare for lesson observations with a focused discussion.

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Lessons from a coach

Jason Heiser says listen to teachers and rely on a network.

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Focus on NSDC's standards

Professional learning keeps evolving through the decades.

Page 6



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TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

PAGE 2

PEER
LEARNING LABS

Melding all of these methods, peer learning labs were born. While Japanese lesson study focuses on teachers honing a common lesson and classroom observations involve an observer or team looking for predetermined evidence of specific practices, peer lesson labs involve coaches helping teachers to focus on their own question of practice and then invite colleagues to their classrooms to assist in collecting data to allow the teacher to examine that question.

Examining questions of practice

Colleagues volunteer to attend the lab, the school leader provides substitute teacher time, and the group often debriefs during districtwide early-release Wednesdays, created to provide teachers with professional learning time. Peer learning labs allow teachers the opportunity to directly address a question of practice for their own learning, with support from the instructional coach.

From a seasoned teacher wondering why what he or she has done in the past is not working to improve student reading, to a young teacher figuring out what works with a hard-to-reach youngster, the peer learning lab helps teachers gather data that they can reflect on with peers to seek their own answers.

“It’s very different from bringing a group of teachers in to watch a ‘master teacher,’” said Diane Lauer, Thompson’s director of curriculum and instruction. “We didn’t want these to look, feel, or sound anything like that. These teachers have expertise, but you’re not going in to specifically learn from them because they’re masters at what they do. Participants go in knowing it’s an inquiry lab, and we’re engaging in a question that’s going to enhance the learning for that teacher. Participants observe and collect data.”

Trish Malik, who works part time as an instructional coach and also serves as the district’s coordinator of instructional coaches, said she used the lab as a teacher herself. “It helps bring clarity and helps each of us ramp up our instruction,” Malik said. She said the labs also are essential in her role as coach and coordinator: “Our job as coach is to help mediate teachers’ thinking to help them grow.”

Formulating good questions

Lauer said the labs are an iteration of Cognitive Coaching, which typically includes the planning conversation, the event, and the reflecting conversation. The instructional coaches’ training in Cognitive Coaching was essential for this work, she said. “Cognitive Coach training provides the language and the vision for how to have that coaching cycle and conversation,” Lauer said. “Coaches have the tool kit for how to help frame the questions, to paraphrase. It has been the foundation.”

During a planning conversation with the instructional coach, the teacher formulates an inquiry question — something specific about the teacher’s own instruction that he or she wants to study using data.

The instructional coach helps the teacher formulate the question and determine what data to collect. The coach also may go into the classroom to observe and get background.

“The level of questioning is deepening teachers’ understanding of content,” Lauer said. Questions have ranged from inquiry around instructional strategies to curricular investigations.

Some examples:

- As I’m conferring with students for reader’s workshop, are other students able to stay on task?
- What does rigor look like in the classroom?
- How can I make more seamless the students’ articulation to the next grade level?

In the last case, improving grade articulation, teams of 6th-grade teachers observed 5th-grade teachers and vice versa. But generally, Lauer said, the observers cut across all content and grade levels, one of the boons of the lab experience.

“We want a cross-fertilization of ideas, people who might not be able to do the lesson but can engage in the question — what is rigor or how does that reading comprehension strategy support the content area,” said Lauer.

“It’s really about the teacher who has the question,” Malik said. “The lab is held to facilitate the teacher’s thinking around that question, not about everyone using the same lesson” as in Japanese lesson study.

NSDC’S BELIEF

Schools’ most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.



From a seasoned teacher wondering why what he or she has done in the past is not working to improve student reading, to a young teacher figuring out what works with a hard-to-reach youngster, the peer learning lab helps teachers gather data that they can reflect on with peers to seek their own answers.

Engaging peers for assistance

Before the observation, the coach ensures that participating teachers share an understanding of the “ground rules” for the observation, such as whether teachers will help struggling students during their time in the room. If needed, the coach also might work with the group on Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman’s norms for collaboration (2009). The coach shares with the group the inquiry question and the tool for data collection, setting up, for example, a three-column notes tool. The teacher sets the time for the visit, and the group observes.

During the debriefing after the observation, the instructional coach facilitates, helping the teacher analyze the data and helping participants make connections to their own practices.

“When the coach notices a teacher wrestling with a question that could benefit from data collection, the coach could collect the data, but also could invite other teachers to do so,” said Lauer. “This creates more collegial interactions and different results than one-on-one observations by the coach. We have found this is powerful professional development for the teacher to invite other teachers

into the classroom to wrestle with a question around instruction.”

The learning labs are not a district or school requirement in any way. They begin when a teacher is willing to open her classroom and her practice in a deeper way to promote her own learning. Some schools have labs throughout the year; some may have had only a few. Others in the district may not have used the process.

Malik said labs help increase the culture of collaboration within the school, with the idea of deprivatizing practice.

“We’ve really tried to build coaches’ capacity so they have several tools to use,” Malik said. “We try to help coaches envision possible different ways to work with teachers. Peer learning labs are just another strategy.”

Reference

Garmston, R. & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups.* (2nd ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon. ◆

“We want a cross-fertilization of ideas, people who might not be able to do the lesson but can engage in the question — what is rigor or how does that reading comprehension strategy support the content area.”

— Diane Lauer,
Thompson School
District director of
curriculum and
instruction

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Preobservation MAP



This tool is designed to assist a coach in discussing an upcoming lesson observation with a teacher. Together, coach and teacher outline the focus areas for observation, and the notes from the observation become a critical component of debriefing conversations and reflections that follow the observation.

Teacher: _____ Coach: _____

Date of lesson: _____ Time of lesson: _____

Lesson objective: _____

Standard: _____

Number of students in class: _____

Accommodations needed: _____

Assessment method: _____

Instructional strategy planned: _____

Resources needed: _____

Observation focus area: _____

Data to be collected and reported: _____

Data collected method: _____

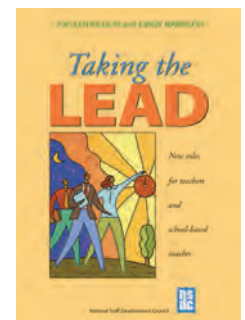
Post-conference date and time: _____

Source: *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teacher Leaders and School-based Coaches*, by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2006.

Support for coaches

Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teacher Leaders and School-based Coaches (NSDC, 2006) by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison is an essential guide to support coaches. Included are descriptions of 10 school-based leader roles and dozens of facilitator tools organized by role.

Available at www.nsdctestore.org, item #B352, \$36 (member price), \$45 (nonmember price).



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LESSON STUDY

Teachers learn how to improve instruction

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

When Becky LaChapelle and Nancy Sundberg joined a lesson study team in Rochester, N.Y., two years ago, they were expecting to learn how to improve their ability to teach mathematics. What they didn't expect was how much they would learn about improving student learning.

"It has totally changed my practice. I don't look at a lesson the same way. Every lesson I do, whether it's a study lesson or a day-to-day lesson, I always think 'What is the student response going to be?', 'What do I want students to show so I will know they have learned this?'," said LaChapelle, math specialist at Kodak Park School in Rochester.

The process of lesson study — a practice imported to the U.S. from Japan — stands apart from many professional development practices because it focuses on "our children in our classrooms," said Sundberg, a 4th-grade teacher at the Children's School of Rochester.

In the words of Catherine Lewis, one of the leading U.S. researchers on lesson study, "tests and student work may offer information about *what* to improve, (but) lesson study also sheds light on *how* to improve."

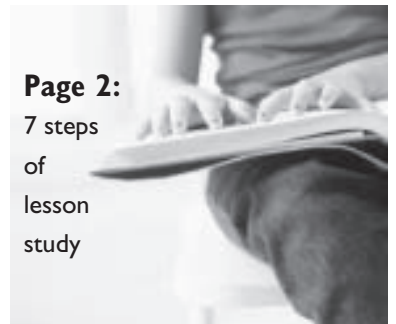
"Lesson study" is different from "lesson planning" because it focuses on what teachers want students to learn rather than on what teachers plan to teach. In lesson study, a group of teachers develops a lesson together and ultimately one of them teaches the lesson while the others observe the student learning. The entire group comes together to debrief the lesson and often revises and re-teaches the lesson to incorporate what has been learned.

Lesson study is as much a culture as a professional development activity, said Tad Watanabe, a professor of mathematics education at Pennsylvania State University who worked with the Rochester lesson study group. Being successful at lesson study requires teachers to feel comfortable sharing with each other and observing each other teaching. Having a collaborative culture in the first place benefits a group's ability to engage in lesson study, he said. But lesson study may also show teachers the value of working together more closely.

Developing the lesson as a team signals that the lesson is owned by all participants. It is the lesson and the learning that it generates that is being evaluated during the observation, not the teacher. Observers are told to watch for evidence of student thinking, student learning, and student confusion. They make notes on what students say, whether they are collaborating, whether they are engaged during the lesson, and the work they produce as a result of the lesson.

Lesson study is one of those professional development strategies that is deceptively simple on the surface and remarkable complex as you begin to probe beneath the surface. What follows is an overview of the steps involved in lesson study, each of which can be expanded greatly.

Page 2:
7 steps
of
lesson
study



I. Form a lesson study team.

Begin by recruiting teachers interested in the concept of lesson study and who work with a similar group of students or a similar topic. For example, lesson study teams might be composed of 4th-grade teachers who work in three different schools, teachers of 8th-grade American history in one middle school, or specialists who help other teachers integrate technology into their instruction.

In Rochester, 15 teachers from several schools worked on two different lesson studies for two years. All of the participants were elementary school teachers who had been part of a summer Thinking Math institute offered by the American Federation of Teachers. Facilitator Alice Gill, associate director in AFT's educational issues department, suggested lesson study as a way to follow-up and transfer what teachers had learned in the institute. Because Gill works in Washington, D.C., much of the team discussion about the lessons occurred online, but the team did re-assemble in order to observe and debrief the completed lesson.

One of the teachers can facilitate the team or, as in Rochester's case, an outside person may be facilitator.

Each lesson study team also needs a "knowledgeable other" to provide perspective and a broader view of the issues. These individuals may also be known as outside commentator, evaluator, or outside advisor. Typically, knowledgeable others are university professors who bring a depth of expertise in the given content area but they could be districtwide curriculum specialists or specialists from a regional education agency.

Watanabe was Rochester's knowledgeable other. He cautions that anyone who is selected for that role should come in with the mindset of being a learner. "You have something to share but you have to have this notion that you are also there so you can learn from it," he said. When knowledgeable others have that learning mindset, he said, it sends a message that lesson study is a process for professional learning.

7 steps of lesson study



2. Focus the lesson study.

The lesson study team selects a research theme that captures schoolwide goals as well as the academic content goals for students. If the teachers in the group are from a single grade level, they will choose a subject area in which to focus their work.

Then, the team identifies a unit or lesson on which to focus. They thoroughly discuss the unit and agree about what they are trying to achieve with the lesson. The crucial question is: *What do we want students to know and be able to do when this lesson is concluded?* In order to answer this question, teachers also must understand how this lesson links to others in the subject, both in this grade and future grades.

One of Rochester's study lessons was "What happens to area when you double the sides of a square?" The second was "What is the value of 25 in 2,500?"

This part of the work could take from one to four meetings.

3. Plan the study lesson.

The bulk of the lesson study team's work occurs in the planning of the lesson. This may require between three and six face-to-face meetings or several months of online discussion.

As they begin, teachers share and discuss their existing lessons related to the topic, explaining what they believe has been successful and where they believe the lessons could be improved.

The facilitator keeps the conversation moving by focusing the discussion on the lesson that these teachers will develop together.

Developing the lesson as a group signals that the lesson is owned by all participants. This is key because it sets the stage for the observation in which the lesson — the product of the entire team — and the learning that it generates is being evaluated and not the teacher who is presenting the lesson as a representative of the team.

continued on next page

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A crucial piece of planning the lesson includes anticipating student responses to various aspects of the lesson and preparing appropriate teacher responses: If the student does or asks X, then the teacher does Y. The group also identifies what students will say and do that will signal that they have learned what the teacher intends to have them learn.

In assisting the planning, the facilitator and the knowledgeable other walk a fine line when guiding teachers, Gill said. In her Rochester experience, for example, she realized teachers were making an inaccurate assumption. Gill refrained from pointing out their error, believing that they would learn by discovering the error on their own.

“These are adults. You have to respect what wonderful experiences they have and all of that. You can’t leave it all so wide open that they wander off and over a cliff. But you do have to allow them to make the decisions,” Gill said.

4. Prepare for the observation.

The lesson study team may want to invite additional observers — such as the superintendent, union president, and lead teachers — to the study lesson. The team ensures that each person at the observation knows the expectations of the lesson study and the ground rules for observing the lesson. (See Page 5.) All observers will collect data that will be shared in the debriefing. The “data” are the comments of students and the work students produce during the lesson.

In some situations, the team assigns certain observers to closely watch the work and comments of particular students. (See Page 4.)

The lesson study team prepares copies of the lesson plan, seating chart, and any worksheets that students will be using.

The lesson study team prepares the classroom so observers can circulate freely among students or stand comfortably around the periphery during whole-class instruction.

5. Teaching and observing the lesson.

On the day of the study lesson, all of the observers gather in one area in advance and everyone goes to the room together. The teacher probably will introduce the observers as a group before beginning the lesson.

Having observers in the room is what enables the team to learn so much about the lesson being taught. As Rochester facilitator Alice Gill said, “it’s 14 pairs of eyes observing in the classroom and seeing what one teacher simply cannot pick up if she’s the only one person in front of that classroom.”

“A teacher could not possibly have walked around and written down the comments of all 25 students. But the other adults who were observing were writing down the conversations they overheard,” said LaChapelle.

“Even though it’s a study lesson, we’re still managing the classroom. Someone has to go to the bathroom or somebody doesn’t have a glue stick and the teacher has to handle that. But everyone else was free to just observe. They could really hone in on the conversation and what students were thinking and doing,” Sundberg said.

6. Debriefing the lesson.

Rochester teacher Nancy Sundberg calls the debriefing “the meat of lesson study” because this is the time when the lesson study teams share their learning from the observation.

The entire lesson study team plus any additional observers gather following the lesson to begin the debriefing. Some groups may choose to continue the debriefing in later meetings as well. See Page 6 for a more detailed structure for the debriefing.

7. Reflect and plan the next steps.

Depending on what teachers learn in the debriefing, the team may decide to revise and re-teach the lesson. Calendar issues and other circumstances may make that difficult in some schools.

Lesson Study Cycle

1. Goal-setting and planning

- Select planning team.
- Identify goals for student learning and long-term development.
- Collaboratively plan instruction designed to bring these goals to life, including a “research” or “study” lesson that will be observed.



2. Research or study lesson

- One planning team member teaches classroom lesson while other team members collect data on student thinking, learning, engagement, behavior, etc.



3. Lesson debriefing

- Share and analyze data collected at research or study lesson.
- What is the evidence that goals for student learning and development were fostered?
- What improvements to the lesson and to instruction more generally should be considered?



4. Consolidation of learning

- If desired, refine and re-teach the lesson and study it again.
- Write report that includes the lesson plan, student data, and reflections about what was learned.
- Share the lesson with all members of the team and other interested persons.

Preparing for observation of the study lesson

Assign observers key tasks.

- Are there particular students who should be observed?
- Do you want someone to keep time? Collect student work at the end of the lesson? Make notes on anything written on the blackboard? Record any disruptions that occur during the lesson?

If you are going to videotape the lesson:

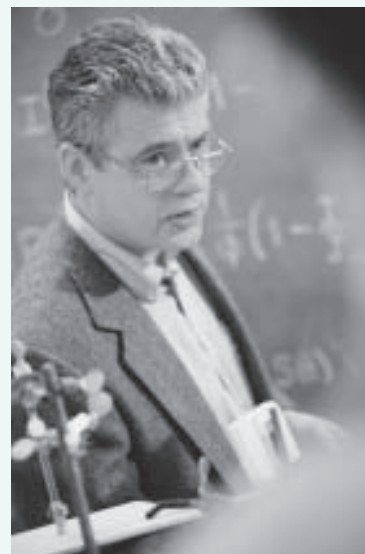
- Determine who will be the videographer.
- Determine where you will station the camera(s) to record both the teacher and students.
- Ensure that you secure permission slips from students in advance. (Familiarize yourself with your district's policy regarding videotaping of students.)

Prepare materials for observers.

- The lesson plan. Include the goal of the lesson, where the lesson fits in a unit, where the lesson fits across grades in the entire curriculum, how it relates to school goals, anticipated student responses, and progression of the lesson. Leave plenty of space so observers can record their notes.
- Copies of student work sheets.
- Seating chart including names of students and space to write notes.

Determine where observers will be stationed in the room as the teacher presents the lesson.

Arrange the classroom so observers can circulate around students as they work without disrupting their learning.



Observing the study lesson

Observers should take these actions while observing:

- ▶ Make notes on individual student comments and conversations, noting the names of students.
- ▶ Note situations in which students are collaborating or choosing not to collaborate.
- ▶ Look for examples of how students construct their understanding through their discussions and activities.
- ▶ Document the variety of methods that individual students use to solve problems, including errors.

Observers should consider these questions while observing:

1. Was the goal clear? Did the supporting activities contribute effectively to achieving the goal?
 Yes No
2. Was the flow of the lesson coherent, and did it support students' learning of the concept?
 Yes No
3. Were the problems and the materials helpful in achieving the goal of the lesson?
 Yes No
4. Did the classroom discussions help promote student understanding?
 Yes No
5. Was the content of the lesson appropriate for students' level of understanding?
 Yes No
6. Did students apply their prior knowledge to understand the content of the lesson?
 Yes No
7. Did the teacher's questions engage and facilitate student thinking?
 Yes No
8. Were student ideas valued and incorporated into the lesson? Did the lesson summary refer to student theories or ideas?
 Yes No
9. Was the lesson summary consistent with the lesson goal?
 Yes No
10. How could the teacher reinforce what the students learned during the lesson?

Respect the natural atmosphere of the classroom

- Minimize side conversations during the lesson.
- Remain in the classroom during the entire lesson to capture how the lesson is set up, its flow, and its conclusion.
- Do not block the students' view of the blackboard or any area where the teacher is writing and posting materials or demonstrating an activity.
- Do not block the video camera.
- Circulate freely when students are working individually or in groups but move to the side or back of the room during whole class discussions.
- Minimize interactions with students. Refrain from teaching or assisting the students. Occasional interaction is permissible if done discreetly and with the purpose of understanding student thinking.

Source

“Guidelines for Lesson Study Observations and Debriefings,” *RBS Currents*, Spring/Summer 2002 (Vol. 5, No. 2). Available online at www.rbs.org/currents/0502/guidelines.shtml

Debriefing the study lesson

Preparation

Even if you are doing some of the lesson study preparation in an online format, the initial debriefing should be done face-to-face on the same day as the observed lesson.

In advance of the debriefing, members of the group that designed the lesson should assign themselves the following roles: facilitator who keeps the conversation moving, a recorder who take notes and will provide a written summary of the debriefing, a time keeper, and a commentator.

Determine in advance how much time you will devote to the debriefing.

Members of the group that designed the lesson should arrange themselves at the front of the room in panel-style. This set-up emphasizes that it is the entire group and not just the teacher who taught the lesson who will be receiving the feedback from the observers.

Directions

1. Facilitator introduces everyone in the room and reminds participants of each person's role during the observation.
2. Facilitator reviews the agenda for the debriefing. *2 minutes.*
3. Facilitator briefly introduces the goals of the lesson study. *5 minutes.*
4. Facilitator describes the norms or expectations for how the group will provide feedback. There are three key norms for the debriefing:
 - 1) During this discussion, only one person speaks at a time.
 - 2) Everyone will be allowed an opportunity to speak.
 - 3) Observers should provide specific evidence for their observations and not merely offer opinions about the lesson.
5. The teacher who presented the lesson speaks first, commenting on his or her reactions to the lesson. The teacher should address what actually occurred during the lesson — what worked, what did not work, what could be changed. *15 to 20 minutes.*
6. Each planning group member speaks.
7. In a round-robin fashion, the facilitator calls upon observers to offer his or her feedback, ensuring that each person has an equal opportunity to share their observations.
8. The knowledgeable other summarizes the discussion.
9. The facilitator thanks the participants and ends the meeting with an announcement of the next step.

Maintain a respectful atmosphere

- Observers should begin their comments by identifying the positive aspects of the lesson.
- Ensure that the teacher who taught the lesson is not made to feel like he or she is being personally criticized.
- Do not focus on the success or failure of the lesson or on the teaching style.
- Select key, relevant observations. Avoid producing a “laundry list.”
- Be an active participant. Try to contribute to the debriefing without repeating what has already been stated.

Sources

“Lesson Study Protocol” developed by the Lesson Study Research Group at Teachers College, Columbia University. The protocol is regularly updated. To see the latest version, please go to www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/tools.html.

“Guidelines for Lesson Study Observations and Debriefings,” *RBS Currents*, Spring/Summer 2002 (Vol. 5, No. 2). Available online at www.rbs.org/currents/0502/guidelines.shtml

Resources for lesson study

“Everywhere I Looked — Levers and Pendulums”

Catherine Lewis, *Journal of Staff Development*, Summer 2002 (Vol. 23, No. 3).

Describes the process of lesson study in Japan and explores differences between U.S. and Japanese supports for such activity. Available online at www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/lewis233.cfm



Lesson Study: A Handbook for Teacher-Led Instructional Change

Catherine Lewis. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, 2002.

This handbook illuminates both the key ideas underlying lesson study and the practical support needed to make it succeed in any subject area. Provides practical resources including schedules, data collection examples, protocols for lesson discussion and observation, and instructional plans for mathematics, science, and language arts. Includes contributions by U.S. lesson study pioneers Lynn Liptak, Tad Watanabe, and Makoto Yoshida. Order from Publications Department, Research for Better Schools, 112 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19102-1510, (215) 568-6150 or online at www.rbs.org.

Lesson Study group at Mills College Lessonresearch.net

Catherine Lewis, one of the pioneers of using lesson study in the United States, is a professor at Mills College and uses this web site as a repository for information on the topic. The web site includes documents and lesson plans and access to videotapes and handouts for lesson study workshops. Science is the primary interest of this group.

“Lesson Study: Japanese Method Has Benefit for All Students”

Joan Richardson, *Results*, December/January 2001.

Describes Paterson (N.J.) School No. 2’s experiences with lesson study and the potential for lesson study to work in U.S. schools. Available online at www.nsd.org/library/publications/results/res12-00rich.cfm

Lesson Study Research Group web site www.tc.edu/centers/lessonstudy

Clea Fernandez, a researcher at Teachers College, maintains this web site for sharing her work regarding lesson study. This site provides access to a listserv and discussion forum to connect educators who are using lesson study. Maintains a database of schools and districts across the United States that have worked with lesson study.

Research for Better Schools web site www.rbs.org/lesson_study/

Contains extensive background information on developing lesson studies and links to numerous citations for lesson study. Includes a page on Frequently Asked Questions about Lesson Study and the Spring/Summer 2002 issue of *RBS Currents* newsletter on lesson study which is available at www.rbs.org/currents/0502/index.shtml.

Tools For Schools

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Tools For SchoolsTM

A bi-monthly
publication
supporting student
and staff learning
through school
improvement

Teacher research leads to learning, action

By Joan Richardson

As a teacher in a Madison, Wis., middle school with a changing enrollment, Ginny Kester wondered how a sense of belonging affected the achievement of African-American students.

Instead of having idle conversations with friends and colleagues about this question, Kester embarked on a systematic review of the relationships between teachers, parents, and students in her school. She interviewed teachers, parents, and students individually and in groups. In her year-long project, Kester discovered that “the stronger the bond between a teacher and an African-American student, the greater the impact a teacher would have on a student’s achievement.”

In the busyness of a school day, teachers typically have little time to pause and examine the work they do. Increasingly, as Kester did, teachers are turning to action research as a way to create time and space to reflect on their work.

Action research is “a process where participants—who might be teachers, principals, support staff—examine their own practice, systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research,” according to Cathy Caro-Bruce who leads the extensive action research efforts in the Madison (Wis.)



Metropolitan School District. Caro-Bruce is author of a forthcoming NSDC book, *The Action Research Facilitator’s Handbook*. (See Page 7 for details.)

In her experience, action research is an effective way for teachers to learn because teachers explore topics related to their work and in which they already have an interest. But Caro-Bruce also says action research has hidden benefits for teachers. “What teachers learn from the process is as critical as what they learn from the results,” she said.

Using the techniques of research, teachers* draft questions, collect data, analyze data, and act on what they learn. Acting on what’s been learned is an essential part of action research, says Caro-Bruce. Merely answering a question is only going part of the way.

Unlike traditional forms of research, action research is more responsive to the discoveries that researchers make along the way. That means action researchers must be flexible and willing to follow their questions wherever the information takes them. “Action research is not a linear process. It’s not something that’s nice and neat and tidy. It’s messy, but our

Continued on Page 2

* *Teachers is used throughout this article as a shorthand for any adult working in a school. Action researchers can include paraprofessionals, principals, custodial staff, librarians, and, when appropriate, students.*

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Teacher research leads to learning, action

Continued from Page One

worlds are messy too,” said Caro-Bruce.

Action research can be done alone or in a group. The group can be a few individuals, an entire school, or even an entire district. Caro-Bruce believes action research is best done in a group of 8 to 10 persons, each studying a different question. “When you work with a group, you get exponential effects. Groups provide a way to learn about your own question as well as the questions from everyone else in that group. So it becomes a much broader learning experience,” she said.

Caro-Bruce outlines five steps for action research projects:

PREPARE TO BEGIN.

Before teachers write their research questions, they must become familiar with the action research process. Several resources recommended on Page 7 could be used for jigsaw readings to acquaint participants with what to expect from the process.

If others in your district have done action research, ask them to describe for the group what they did and learned.

“Help them understand that this is a flexible, fluid process that they will impact and that will impact them,” Caro-Bruce said.

WRITE THE QUESTION.

Caro-Bruce recommends that a district—or a school—identify broad priority areas for action research and allow teachers to volunteer to explore topics that most interest them. For example, a district might decide to support action research on experiential education, brain-compatible teaching and learning, special education, and issues of diversity and learning.

Each group assembles and teachers identify areas of greatest concern for them. For example, a teacher who enters the diversity group might want to explore the question posed by Ginny Kester. Another might want to explore relationships with parents who do not speak English. (The

tool on Page 3 offers a series of open-ended questions to help participants narrow their concerns.)

As participants write their initial questions, other group members should provide feedback to help refine the questions. (The tool on Page 4 is one strategy for doing this.)

In addition, teachers should ask others outside the group questions such as these:

- What do you think about this question?
- Is this a worthwhile question to pursue?
- What suggestions can you offer to improve it?

As teachers reflect on the responses, they should refine their questions accordingly.

COLLECT DATA.

Data to answer the question can come from many sources. The sources will vary according to the question. In some situations, for example, the teacher will need “hard” data such as test results, parent-teacher conference participation, attendance, demographics, and financial records. Other teachers will need “soft” data from interviews with students, parents, and teachers; classroom observations; examining student work and lesson plans.

Caro-Bruce offers three general tips about data collection:

- Collect data from at least three sources. That will bolster the credibility of your final conclusion.
- Keep a data log, recording when all information was collected, time and place, and the data itself.
- Raw data is not very useful to anyone except the original researcher. In order to share your work, data must be organized and made presentable and understandable for persons unfamiliar with the project.

ANALYZE DATA.

Be systematic and objective as you examine your data. Here’s a rough outline to follow:

- Jot down the themes, patterns, and big ideas in the data you’ve collected.
- Reduce your large list to a smaller one with three to five themes.
- Label information according to relevant themes. Create sub-groups where appropriate.
- Make notes as you go along.
- Review your information. Identify points which occur more frequently and are the most powerful.
- Write up your major points. Match collected data with each major point. (The tool on Page 6 presents a format for this.)

PLAN YOUR NEXT STEP.

What sets action research apart from traditional research is the expectation that researchers will do something with what they have learned. Caro-Bruce suggests several questions to help determine the next step:

- How do your conclusions differ from what you thought you would learn?
- What actions might you take based on your conclusions?
- What new questions emerge for you from the data?

Caro-Bruce warns school leaders not to be discouraged if teachers initially show little interest in action research. When action research was introduced in Madison in the mid-1980s, only two teachers signed up for a course to learn more about it. But teachers became more familiar with the process and the results and now 75 to 80 teachers a year do action research projects in Madison.

Another indicator of its growing acceptance in Madison is the financial support for action research. Initially, it was supported solely by staff development money; this year, the eight action research groups are funded out of seven different budgets.

“It’s taken a long time to get to this point. Now, it’s part of our culture. When we wonder about something, action research surfaces very naturally, very easily, as one way to explore the topic,” she said.

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Starting points

DIRECTIONS: This exercise will aid participants in thinking about the question that will guide their research. Prepare enough copies of this page to distribute to each participant. Participants should privately respond to each open-ended question. The facilitator then leads a discussion about ideas generated through this exercise.

TIME: 15 minutes for initial writing, up to an hour for sharing the responses.

I would like to improve: _____

I am perplexed by: _____

Some people are unhappy about: _____

I'm really curious about: _____

I want to learn more about: _____

An idea I would like to try in my class is: _____

Something I think would really make a difference is: _____

Something I would like to do to change _____ **is:** _____

Right now, some areas I'm particularly interested in are: _____

Source: Action Research Facilitator's Handbook by Cathy Caro-Bruce. Oxford, Ohio: NSDC, 2000. See Page 7 for ordering information.

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GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A QUESTION

Action researchers in Madison, Wis., generated this list of suggestions. A good action research question:

1. Hasn't already been answered.
2. Gets at explanations, reasons, relationships. "How does...?" "What happens when...?"
3. Is not a yes-no question.
4. Uses everyday language. Avoids jargon.
5. Is concise. Doesn't include everything you're thinking.
6. Is manageable and can be completed.
7. Is do-able (in the context of your work).
8. Is a question about which you feel commitment and passion.
9. Is close to your own practice.
10. Has tension. Provides you with an opportunity to stretch.
11. Provides a deeper understanding of the topic and is meaningful to you.
12. Leads to other questions.

Source: Madison (Wis.) Metropolitan School District Action Research Group as it appears in *Action Research Facilitator's Handbook* by Cathy Caro-Bruce. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2000.

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analysis

FIVE WHY'S ANALYSIS

When an action researcher states the problem to the group, have the group respond with this question:

Why does this problem happen?

When the researcher responds, ask the same question again. Continue this pattern until the question has been asked and answered five times.

Brainwriting

COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR: This activity will aid action researchers by providing them with new ideas and new ways of thinking about their questions. It will also give everyone practice asking questions.

MATERIALS: Felt tip markers, flip chart paper, masking tape.

TIME: One hour.

Directions

Have participants write their questions on separate pieces of flip chart paper, one question per sheet. Hang these sheets of paper around the room. *Time: 5 minutes.*

Divide the large group into smaller groups of two to three persons. Each group should review each sheet and write down at least one question aimed at helping the action researcher think more deeply or in different ways about the question. *Time: Allow 3-5 minutes per question.*

Individuals should look at their sheets and privately reflect on the questions posed by others. What new directions are they contemplating? What new ideas have been generated? *Time: 5 minutes.*

Invite each action researcher to share those new ideas/new directions with the entire group. If they haven't already done so, ask each action researcher to spend a few minutes writing down his or her observations. *Time: 20 minutes.*

ANOTHER STRATEGY FOR THE SAME GOAL:

- Write a question on a piece of flip chart paper, hang it up in the teachers' lounge, and invite colleagues to jot down their questions.
- In schools with active e-mail systems, teachers also could post such questions in messages to colleagues.

CHANGING OVER TIME

Over time, action research questions will be modified. Encourage participants to keep a log of changes they make to their questions. This format could be copied and distributed periodically as a reminder or participants could be encouraged to follow this format in an action research journal.

Date:
My question at this time is:
My biggest concern is:
One thing I am learning is:
My biggest struggle is:

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Data collection

COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR: These questions can help a group of action researchers understand the points they must consider during data collection.

MATERIALS: Flip chart or overhead projector with transparencies.

PREPARATION: Write the Five W's and H on a flip chart or transparency to guide the discussion.

Time: One hour.

Directions

Have the group practice by choosing one person's question answering the Five W's and H about his or her question. Then, break the larger group into smaller groups of two to three persons and brainstorm.

FIVE W'S AND H

Why are you collecting the data?

- What are you hoping to learn from the data?
- What are you hoping to learn from using this particular data collection strategy?
- Is there a match between what you hope to learn and the method you chose?

What exactly are you collecting?

- What different sources of data will allow you to learn best about this topic?
- What previously existing data can you use?
- How much data do you need to collect in order to learn about this topic?

Where are you going to collect it?

- Are there limitations to collecting the data?
- What support systems need to be in place to allow the data collection to occur?
- Are there ways to build data collection into normal classroom activities?

When are you going to collect it?

- Does the plan include opportunities to collect data at different times?
- What strategies can you use to easily observe and record data during class?
- Can you afford the time to gather and record data using the strategies you've selected?

Who is going to collect the data?

- Are there data which can be generated by students?
- Do you have a colleague who can observe you as you teach or a student teacher who can assist with data collection?
- What can you do yourself without being overwhelmed?

How will the data be collected and displayed?

- How will you collect and display the quantitative data? The qualitative data?
- What plan do you have for analyzing the data?
- To whom will you present what you have learned?

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ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can I help students feel comfortable working with diverse groupings of classmates and overcome, at least part of the time, their desire to always be with their friends?

How can I more effectively facilitate independent writing in my kindergarten classroom?

How can I, a school nurse, better help classroom teachers address the complex issues of educating students with ADHD?

How can 5th grade student be encouraged to write thoughtful inquiry questions for a science fair?

How can the science department and the special education department heterogeneously group a wide variety of students in the same classroom and make it a successful experience for students and staff?

How does the Writing Workshop approach affect my students' writing and their feelings toward writing?

What kinds of assessments best help me understand and teach a particular learner with autism?

How does chronic staff absenteeism impact the education of students with cognitive disabilities at my school and how does it impact teachers and other staff?

What changes in our teaching styles, curriculum design, materials, and professional support are needed to implement a new math program in an inclusive classroom?

What classroom strategies are effective in developing student self-evaluation of their learning?

Source: *Action Research Facilitator's Handbook* by Cathy Caro-Bruce. Oxford, Ohio: NSDC, 2000. To order, see Page 7.

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Data summary

Create this template and distribute to action researchers. Have them include this template in their action research journal. This will remind them of the importance of having three sources of data before drawing any conclusions about what they have learned.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED	
DATA SOURCE #1	
DATA SOURCE #2	
DATA SOURCE #3	

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Build a bridge between workshop and classroom

Follow-up activities put training into practice

By Joan Richardson

A little more than 20 years ago, Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers put the concept of “follow-up” into the tool box of staff developers after they said their research had shown that much of the initial learning was lost unless a structured follow-up program followed it.

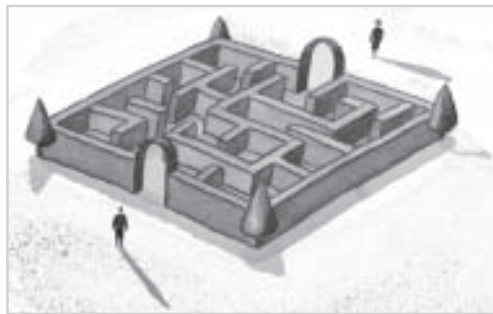
Yet, two decades later, follow-up is still not routinely included as part of staff development activities or planning. So serious is the oversight that one observer has even suggested that “staff development without follow-up is malpractice.”

The federal No Child Left Behind legislation may change this. Merely spending money on staff development will not be sufficient when NCLB requires educators to point to the results of their work. Researchers widely agree that there will be no such benefit without structured follow-up as part of staff development.

Both the adult learners and staff development leaders bear responsibility for ensuring that what is learned is later used in practice. “All teaching is for transfer and all learning is for transfer. The

mission of sound professional development experiences is to extend learning, to bridge the old and the new, and to lead teachers toward relevant transfer and use across academic content,” said Robin Fogarty, a consultant who specializes in transfer of training.

Fogarty, who has written a new book on transfer, believes staff development leaders and providers can incorporate concepts into professional learning that will aid with follow-up. If staff developers keep these issues in mind during every workshop or training session, they can prepare participants to walk back into their schools better prepared to use what they have learned.



I. Learn about transfer of training.

Broadly, Fogarty said there are two kinds of transfer: simple transfer and complex transfer.

Simple transfer occurs when what teachers are learning is very close to what they will be expected to teach in their classrooms, she said. For example, science teachers might attend a science workshop in which they are learning a variety of experiments

Continued on Page 2

Follow-up activities put training into practice

Continued from Page One

that they could use with students. They might practice those experiments themselves in preparation for guiding students to do the same work.

Examples of more complex transfers of training, however, occur when what teachers are learning in the training situation seems far removed or remote from the work they do in the classroom, she said. For example, when teachers are learning about infusing sophisticated thinking skills, such as inference, into lessons, the transfer is more remote. It is harder to build a “bridge” (Perkins and Salomon, 1988) between that skill and the content that teachers will be teaching to students. Fogarty described this example: “At a workshop, the skill of inference might be demonstrated and practiced in a language arts example. But the chemistry teacher, the physical education teacher, and the American history teacher are all expected to transfer the inference skill into their specific content. What that looks like for each of them can be quite different.” See the chart on Page 3 for some examples of strategies for “hugging” and “bridging.”

2. Set expectations for the transfer.

Setting expectations for transfer has the same power as setting goals for any task, Fogarty said. “When an administrative assistant attends a day of software training, the expectation is that she will come back to the office and use the software immediately in her work setting. Traditionally, teachers have had no such mandate regarding formal professional development experiences. They often attended a workshop and returned to their school with no obligation or expectation that they would use or even share the information,” she said.

One easy way for trainers to set expectations during any workshop is through verbal prompts, Fogarty said.

- “*You will leave here today with a number of practical ideas that you will be able to use immediately. Keep your eyes*

open for ideas that will work for you.”

- “*Keep asking the question, ‘How might I use this in my classroom?’ Share your ideas with others to see what they think.*”

- “*You have my word. I guarantee that you will leave with ideas that you can use. If you are having a challenge seeing the connection to your students or your content, please give me a signal and we’ll work through some ideas together.*”

3. Model with authentic artifacts.

Staff developers can assist with transfer by modeling examples of how the skill or strategy has been used in practice. Fogarty said trainers can prepare for this by collecting artifacts in advance from teachers who are using the ideas across various content areas.

During a workshop, Fogarty also suggested that staff developers do “show and tell” to spark ideas for relevant transfer. “Seeing that others have applied the ideas helps teachers see ways they can use it in their classrooms too,” she said.

“Push teachers to start an application by targeting a topic they will encounter soon in their curriculum. The more specific the transfer conversations, the more likely that transfer will actually occur,” she said.

4. Reflect metacognitively.

Fogarty said there are six levels of transfer — overlooking, duplicating, replicating, integrating, strategizing, and inventing. Having participants reflect individually about their own level of transfer will aid in their understanding of the process. It will also encourage them to push themselves to find other ways to transfer what they are learning, she said. (See Page 4.)

5. Plot an application.

Throughout the workshop, teachers can record their ideas for applying what they are learning. Fogarty uses a small journal created by folding an 8½-by-11

sheet of paper into a booklet small enough to fit into a pocket. Rather than filling up random sheets of paper, teachers leave with a document that they can return to again and again. The booklet becomes their takeaway ideas prompt.

Expand this by having teachers collaborate to brainstorm ideas for application. Direct them to record those ideas as well, perhaps with a note about who suggested the idea in case the teacher wants to reconnect with that person after the workshop.

6. Try something immediately.

When teachers return from a workshop, they should try what they have learned as soon as possible. Although staff developers can provide guidance during a workshop, individual teachers bear the responsibility of actually using what they have learned.

“The sooner teachers use a new ideas, the better the chances are that it will become part of their teaching repertoire. That’s why it’s helpful to have teachers discuss possible transfer ideas in the training setting before they leave,” Fogarty said.

To encourage this, Fogarty said trainers can get participants to commit to a colleague or a peer partner that they will try something the day after they return from the workshop. “Having them focus on an application idea as part of the workshop may be all they need to seal their commitment to try what they’ve learned,” Fogarty said.

7. Discuss with lead-ins.

Finally, Fogarty suggested that staff developers provide prompts for discussion. These prompts “create mindful connections because they lead teachers to think ahead to some possible applications and to think back to applications they might have used if they had known about these ideas earlier,” she said. (See Page 5.)

“The most important thing we can do is to send teachers off with an expectation that they will take what they learn and use it. If we just pay attention to it, that’s one way to make sure it happens,” Fogarty said.

Hugging and bridging strategies for transfer

HUGGING	BRIDGING
The workshop provides a learning experience that resembles the expected application of the learning. Teachers are involved in an application similar to the application they would be expected to use in practice.	Teachers are expected to make conceptual links between what they are learning in workshops and how they will apply that learning to their classrooms. They will generalize from what they have learned and reflect on its potential application.
<p>1. Setting expectations. Alert learners to situations where they can apply what they are learning directly to their work.</p>	<p>6. Anticipate applications. Ask teachers to predict possible applications for what they have learned.</p>
<p>2. Matching. Adjust the learning so it is almost the same experience as the intended application of the learning.</p>	<p>7. Generalize the concepts. Ask teachers to generalize from their experiences to produce widely applicable principles, rules, and ideas.</p>
<p>3. Simulation. Use simulation, role playing, acting out to approximate the intended application of the learning.</p>	<p>8. Using analogies. Engage teachers in finding and elaborating an analogy between a topic they are studying and something that is different from that topic.</p>
<p>4. Modeling. Demonstrate rather than just describe or discuss.</p>	<p>9. Parallel problem. Engage teachers in solving problems that have parallel structure in two different areas to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences.</p>
<p>5. Problem-based learning. Have teachers learn content they are supposed to use in solving problems by solving similar problems.</p>	<p>10. Metacognitive reflection. Prompt and support teachers as they plan, monitor, and evaluate their own thinking about what they learned.</p>

Adapted from *How to Teach for Transfer* by Robin Fogarty, David Perkins, and John Barell (Palatine, Ill.: Skylight Publishing, 1992) and "Ten Tools for Teaching for Transfer," a document posted at learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/thinking/docs/10tips.htm.

Reflect Metacognitively

Comments to facilitators: This activity will assist participants in understanding their current level of transfer. It is recommended that this activity be paired with the “Discussion With Lead-Ins” activity on Page 5.

Time: 20 to 30 minutes.

Directions

Invite participants to reflect privately on their past practice with transferring what they have learned in staff development experiences. Ask them to record those reflections in a transfer notebook they have created during the workshop or in another journal.

Do I ?

Overlook? Miss appropriate opportunities, overlook, persist in former ways?

Duplicate? Perform the drill exactly as practiced, use it with no changes, copy?

Replicate? Tailor to my content, customize, apply in similar situations?

Integrate? Combine with other ideas and situations, use with a raised consciousness?

Strategize? Carry the strategy or idea to other content, bridge, associate, map?

Invent? Innovate, take ideas beyond the initial concept, risk, diverge, invent?

Source: *A look at transfer: Seven strategies that work*, by Robin Fogarty. Chicago: Robin Fogarty & Associates, in press.

Discussion With Lead-Ins

Preparation: Write the lead-ins on chart paper and post in the front of the room so that all participants can see.

Time: 20 to 30 minutes.

Directions

Invite each participant to select a partner for a discussion about transfer. Instruct each pair to discuss and complete each sentence. Encourage them to discuss as well as to write their responses in their transfer notebooks or another journal.

Overlook Think of an instance when the skill or strategy would be inappropriate.

*“I would not use _____
when _____.”*

Duplicate Think of a recent opportunity when you could have used the skill or strategy.

*“I wish I’d known about _____ when
_____ because I could have _____.”*

Replicate Think of an adjustment to your application of _____ to make it more relevant to your content or students.

“Next time, I’m going to _____.”

Integrate Think of an analogy for the skill or strategy that clarifies the idea.

*“_____ is like _____
because both _____.”*

Strategize Think of an opportunity for upcoming classes to use the new idea.

*“In _____, I’m going to use _____
to help _____.”*

Innovate Think of an application for a real-life setting, beyond the workshop.

*“Outside of school, I could use _____
when _____.”*

Source: *A look at transfer: Seven strategies that work*, by Robin Fogarty. Chicago: Robin Fogarty & Associates, in press.

Help Group

Comments to facilitators: This activity will help participants think more deeply about what they are learning and how they might transfer that learning to classroom use.

Time: 45 to 60 minutes.

Directions

1. Designate a time keeper.
2. Divide into groups of three or four.
3. One group member takes three to five minutes to present a problem or ask a question about implementation.
4. Going clockwise around the circle, the other group members offer potential solutions to the problem or answers to the question. The presenter listens and may take notes. The presenter may ask clarifying questions about the suggestions but otherwise does not interact or evaluate the recommendations.
5. After group members have offered their comments or made their recommendations, the presenter describes to the group what he or she will do upon returning to his or her school.
6. Repeat each step with another group member until all members have had an opportunity to present and respond.



Source: “Follow-up: The key to training for transfer,” by Joellen Killion and Brenda Kaylor, *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 1991 (Vol. 12, No. 1).

“ The development of a skill by itself does not ensure transfer; relatively few teachers, having obtained skill in a new approach, will then transfer that skill into their active repertoire and use the new approach regularly and sensibly unless they receive additional information. ... The conditions of the (work setting) are different from training situations: One cannot simply walk from the training session into the (work setting) with the skill completely ready for use — it has to be changed to fit the (work setting) conditions. ”

— Joyce and Showers, 1982, p. 5.

FOCUS ON THE STANDARDS

A fresh look at follow-up

Follow-up has been a tenet of professional development for over 20 years since Joyce and Showers (1983) found that purposeful follow-up was a necessary component of professional development design. Most articles about follow-up accurately decry the lack of follow-up in school or district-based staff development planning.

One dictionary defines follow-up as “the act of repeating or adding to previous action so as to increase effectiveness.” Many activities designated as *follow-up* are just events that provide additional information. The purpose of follow-up is to *reinforce* learning about the critical attributes of the new practice. So, designers of staff development must first clearly delineate the expected changes in practice as well as specify the conceptual understandings that need to be acquired through professional development. For example, in cooperative learning, understanding the concept of positive interdependence is more important than learning 12 ways to group students. The focus, therefore, of the follow-up would target understanding the critical concept of positive interdependence along with implementation strategies.

A second consideration when designing follow-up activities is the idea of *conceptual redundancy*. According to Cohen (1991), conceptual redundancy means offering individuals multiple opportunities to grapple with essential concepts through a variety of learning strategies. In other words, we need to do more than just repeat information; we need to approach the concept in a new manner. If initial training was conducted with a PowerPoint presentation, then subsequent follow-up sessions would use a different delivery mode.

For example, once initial knowledge about a new instructional practice has been provided, follow-up might include:

- Classroom visitation of a master teacher using the new practices along with debriefing;
- Classroom demonstration lessons with a debriefing session;

- Reading an article on the new strategy and discussing it with colleagues;
- Reviewing sample lesson plans and adapting them for the classroom;
- Co-planning and co-teaching lessons with a coach or knowledgeable peer;
- Planning with a study group that focuses on implementing new practices;
- Developing an Innovation Configuration with colleagues;
- Videotaping a lesson and requesting collegial review and feedback;
- Problem-solving implementation issues; and
- Self-assessing new practices using a rubric or Innovation Configuration.

Each activity addresses the same concepts but from different points of view and using different methods. This variety of activities allows educators, with different learning styles, to examine the same critical concepts about new classroom practices in different ways. We know that not all adults learn in the same way. Some require reading about a new practice while others learn best when they can see the new practices in action. Follow-up should provide a variety of approaches in order to maximize the number of people who understand and use new strategies.

A third consideration for follow-up planning is engaging colleagues in the work of understanding and implementing new practices. The kind of follow-up needed to support the use of new practices can be handled by school staff. Such professional work is a building block of a learning community.

Mere repetition does not increase conceptual understanding or use of new classroom practices. A variety of strategies and approaches must be used if follow-up is going to increase teachers' conceptual understanding, the use of new strategies in the classroom, and increased achievement of all students.

Note: Thanks to Parker McMullen for his insight into this issue and his assistance in writing this column.



*Pat Roy is co-author of **Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations** (NSDC, 2003).*

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MODULE 5

Does our culture support collaborative professional learning?

- Tool 5.1: 'Collaboration lite' puts student achievement on a starvation diet
- Tool 5.2: A leadership conundrum
- Tool 5.3: Trust matters — for educators, parents, and students
- Tool 5.4: An audit of the culture starts with two handy tools
- Tool 5.5: Culture is...
- Tool 5.6: Learning about your school's culture
- Tool 5.7: Strategies for strengthening culture
- Tool 5.8: Positive or negative
- Tool 5.9: The evolution of a professional learning team
- Tool 5.10: One step at a time
- Tool 5.11: Norms put the 'Golden Rule' into practice for groups
- Tool 5.12: Trust factors
- Tool 5.13: Zones of comfort, risk, and danger
- Tool 5.14: Quick check
- Tool 5.15: Common goals override individual interests
- Tool 5.16: How to turn conflict into an effective learning process
- Tool 5.17: 4 key strategies help educators overcome resistance to change
- Tool 5.18: Shhhh, the dragon is asleep and its name is Resistance

'Collaboration lite' puts student achievement on a starvation diet

In my previous column, I argued that 1) a professional is obligated to seek and apply best practice when serving clients; 2) it is evident that the best practice for meeting the needs of students and improving professional practice in schools is to build a collaborative culture; and 3) educational leaders should, therefore, focus their improvement efforts on building a collaborative culture in their districts and schools.

Calls for a collaborative culture come from leading educational researchers who use unusually emphatic language. Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert (2001) found that effective high schools and effective departments within high schools were characterized by powerful professional collaboration. Kenneth Eastwood and Karen Seashore Louis (1992) concluded that creating a collaborative environment featuring cooperative problem solving was the single most important factor in successful school restructuring. Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage (1995) found that nurturing a professional collaborative culture was one of the most significant factors in successful school improvement efforts. Judith Warren Little (1990) advised that effective collaboration between teachers was linked to gains in student achievement, higher quality solutions to problems, increased self-efficacy among all staff, more systematic assistance to beginning teachers, and an expanded pool of ideas, methods, and materials that benefited all teachers.

But what is collaboration? Although school and district leaders acknowledge the benefits of a collaborative culture, they often have different ideas about what constitutes collaboration. Many equate collaboration with congeniality. They point to the camaraderie of the group — the secret Santa exchanges, recognition of birthdays, Friday afternoon social gatherings — as evidence of a collaborative culture.

Other leaders believe they are building a collaborative culture when they engage staff in developing consistent operational guidelines and procedures. They attempt to build consensus on how teachers respond to routine issues

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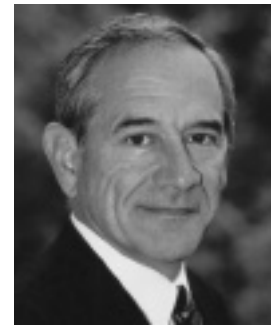
such as tardiness, students failing to complete homework, the supervision rotation for recess, whether the school permits classroom parties, and so on.

Some leaders cite teachers' willingness to work together to create schoolwide programs and events as evidence of a collaborative culture. They contend, correctly, that staff must demonstrate high levels of cooperation to plan and execute the annual school picnic, science fair, or career day. Elementary principals may point to how well their teachers work together to build a schedule that allows students to move from one classroom to another for instruction in specific content. Many leaders organize the staff into committees to oversee school operations — discipline, technology, social, community involvement, etc.

All the initiatives and projects described have, at one time or another, been offered as examples of a school's commitment to collaboration. All of the activities can be worthwhile. Although there is little evidence that teacher congeniality and social interactions impact student achievement (Marzano, 2003), life is certainly more pleasant if we enjoy the company of those with whom we work. Including the staff in decisions about school procedures is generally preferable to unilateral decrees from the principal. Special schoolwide events can enrich students' experience. Coordinated teacher schedules can allow teachers to capitalize on individual strengths in meeting students' needs. Schoolwide committees can encourage all staff to take an interest in the school beyond their classrooms and expand leadership opportunities. I am not criticizing any of these practices. However, none of these can transform a school.

Leaders determined to impact student achievement must not settle for congeniality, coordination, delegating responsibilities, or any form of "collaboration lite." They must promote a collaborative culture by defining collaboration in narrow terms: the systematic process in which we work together to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results.

The first key term in this definition is systematic. Teachers are not invited or encouraged to collaborate. Collaboration is embedded in the routine practices of the school. Teachers are organized into teams and provided time to meet during the school day. They are provided specific guidelines and asked to engage in specific activities that help them focus on student achievement. Teams



In each issue of *JSD*, Rick DuFour writes about effective leadership. His columns can be found at www.nsd.org/library/dufour.html.

center dialogue around three critical questions:

- What is it we want our students to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How can we improve on current levels of student achievement?

None of this happens by chance. School leaders develop procedures to ensure all staff work together to focus constantly on those key questions.

Second, the process is designed to impact professional practice. Staff members do more than analyze, reflect, discuss, or debate. They use collaboration as a catalyst to change their practices. They continuously look for more effective ways to help all students learn.

Third, the effectiveness of the collaborative process is assessed on results rather than perceptions, projects, or positive intentions. Teams identify and pursue specific, measurable, results-oriented goals and look for evidence of student achievement as the barometer of their success. They shift the focus from teacher inputs (for example, whether teachers accomplished their goal of creating a new unit or implementing a new strategy) to student outcomes — evidence that students are learning at higher levels.

Leaders foster powerful professional collaboration when they engage teams of teachers in 1) clarifying the essential knowledge and skills of a particular grade level, course, or unit of instruction; 2) developing common assessments of student learning; 3) analyzing results to identify areas of strength and weakness for both individual teachers and the team; and 4) establishing specific goals and action plans to improve student achievement.

Schools cannot achieve the systematic, results-oriented collaboration that impacts teacher practice unless teachers have both comparative student achievement data and collegial support.

Teachers may work together to identify common outcomes and develop common assessments. If, however, each teacher has access only to the results of his or her students, without any comparison to other students in the school, team members will not be able to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of their

individual instruction.

There is a big push for schools to be more data-driven these days, but simply providing data to schools and teachers does not translate into improved practice. Even teachers who work in isolation can bury themselves in data. For every assessment a teacher administers, he or she can establish the mean, median, mode, range, percentage of As, percentage of Fs, standard deviations, and a host of other statistical facts for the test in general and for specific skills within the test. But unless teachers have a valid basis for comparison, they are denied insight into what they have done well and what areas are most in need of improvement.

Teachers who have the benefit of this useful information on a frequent, timely basis, along with support from a collaborative team, describe the process as energizing. But true collaboration does not happen by chance or by invitation. It happens only when leaders commit to creating the systems that embed collaboration in the routine practices of the school and when they provide teachers and teams with the information and support essential to improve practice.

Effective school leaders will not settle for what is now passing for collaboration in many schools. They will, instead, work with staff to create a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and impact professional practice to improve their individual and collective results.

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True collaboration does not happen by chance or by invitation. It happens only when leaders commit to creating the systems that embed collaboration in the routine practices of the school and when they provide teachers and teams with the information and support essential to improve practice.

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A leadership conundrum

The principal is crucial in developing a climate that encourages continuous growth for teachers and students. But the principal can't do it alone.

The Innovation Configuration maps for the NSDC Standards for Staff Development clarify that principals “promote a school culture that supports ongoing team learning and improvement” (NSDC, 2003). Reculturing schools is critical to maximizing the instructional expertise of staff. But the principal cannot be the school's cultural architect without the conscious and deliberate involvement of teachers. In a review of teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke (2004) found that teachers are “central to the process of ‘reculturing’ schools.”

Others argue that principals are not the only instructional leaders. Instructional leadership “must come from teachers if schools are to improve and teaching is to achieve professional status” (Pellicer & Anderson).

Indeed, this work suggests principals are critical to developing teacher leadership. Principals had to encourage it; better — they had to actively support the development of teacher leaders who joined in creating a shared vision and new cultural norms. Principals cannot be threatened by growing other leaders within the school. The principal becomes a leader of leaders.

In the past, teacher leadership was viewed as serving in formal roles such as mentor, grade-level leader, or instructional coaches. Current work suggests teachers can serve as leaders by:

- Asking thoughtful questions at staff meetings;
- Expressing a different perspective during faculty discussions;
- Sharing classroom practices and challenges with peers;
- Initiating new methods and procedures for accomplishing learning tasks;

- Solving problems rather than assigning blame;
- Volunteering to address issues;
- Admitting mistakes and asking for assistance;
- Identifying unsolved instructional issues and asking for assistance;
- Discussing students in ways that demonstrate a belief that all children can learn; and
- Modeling skills of listening, paraphrasing, and inquiry (Lambert, 2003).

Leadership:

Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.

There are many challenges to the development of teacher leadership. One is a norm of egalitarianism — a belief of equal treatment and rights without regard for social status or role — or more vividly, the “crab bucket culture” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Crabs in a bucket will hold back any that rise to the top. This is parallel to teachers who discourage col-

leagues from functioning as leaders rather than supporting and inspiring them. The growth of professional learning communities and collegiality should inhibit this “crab bucket” effect. Teacher leaders must develop trusting and collaborative relationships with colleagues before they can influence their peers (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

This research presents numerous challenges to teachers and principals. First, teachers need to believe that everyone can be a leader. They demonstrate this belief through interactions with peers to reduce isolation, reinforce new practices (such as examining student work), and develop a new vision of conducting school to benefit all students. Second, principals need to honestly examine their leadership style and beliefs. Do they believe there can be only “one leader” in the school or do they believe they can lead a community of leaders?

We cannot accomplish the lofty goals of educating all children well until we accept that leadership is a set of actions taken by many to influence the organization's vision and norms of operation.



Pat Roy is co-author of *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (NSDC, 2003).

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Tools

FOR SCHOOLS

EVERY EDUCATOR ENGAGES IN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVERY DAY SO EVERY STUDENT ACHIEVES

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Fall 2010

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Trust matters — for educators, parents, and students

By Valerie von Frank

“We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted.”

— Annette Baier, in *Moral prejudices: Essays on ethics*, p. 98.

An elementary school teacher spent most of her career focused on making science exciting and alive for students. Her peers recognized her expertise, teaming up so she taught all the science for that grade level. The teacher was asked to teach colleagues her strategies at the district and state levels. And then one day her new principal announced without discussion that students at that grade level would no longer share teachers but remain in one classroom throughout the day. This veteran teacher’s feelings can be summed up in one word: Betrayal.

Tools for trust

The strategies on pp. 4-7 will help schools assess and build one-on-one and team relationships over time.

Researcher Megan Tschannen-Moran, recounting the story, said the teacher never returned to her old zest for instruction, fulfilling her teaching duties but never

going above and beyond again. The effects of broken trust can last for years, she said, sapping people’s energy and sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, building trust can have the opposite effect.

“Nontrust is debilitating,” said Tschannen-Moran, the Wakefield distinguished associate professor in the College of William and Mary School of Education. “People are less willing to share ideas and their energy is devoted to hypervigilance. Communication shuts down. ... Trust supercedes even transformational leadership (practices) for making change in schools.”

Trust between principal and teachers, administrators and school staffs, parents and staff, teachers and students, and among students is essential for schools to improve, researchers agree. Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2004) say that school staffs with relational trust are more likely to take risks and make changes that help raise student achievement.

Where there’s trust, researchers say, people are more likely to innovate because they feel less vulnerable and alone, they give leaders more latitude because they believe

Continued on p. 2



School staffs with relational trust are more likely to take risks and make changes that help raise student achievement.

COVER STORY Trust matters

Continued from p. 1

in the leader's intentions, and people are able to coalesce around action plans, leading to more progress in reform. They are more likely to collaborate.

Learning Forward BELIEF

Schools' most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.

"Feelings of friendship evolve and alter subsequent exchanges," Bryk and Schneider stated (2004, p. 15). "Individuals begin to take on the perspectives and interests of others in their social network. A personal sense of social status and esteem — being a valued member of a social group — accrues to participants. Thus, social participation

entails not only material benefits to individuals, but also important social-psychological rewards."

Bryk and Schneider, in a study of Chicago schools, found that schools with strong levels of trust as they began change efforts had a one in two chance of successfully improving reading and math achievement, as opposed to a one in seven chance of making gains where trust was weak.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF TRUST

Tschannen-Moran reviewed research and literature in numerous fields searching for a common definition of trust. She said many took for granted that everyone knows what trust is, but without a definition, it is hard to have difficult conversations to begin to build greater trust. She defines the idea this way: *Trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open.* She says that faculty trust is collective and grows — a trusting faculty becomes jointly willing to be vulnerable and take risks, and trust between some groups is likely to spread.

Tschannen-Moran and Wayne Hoy defined the five

elements on which people base their trust judgments this way (2003):

BENEVOLENCE: *Confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected by the trusted party... the assurance that others will not exploit one's vulnerability or take advantage even when the opportunity is available.*

The cost of the absence of benevolence is productivity, they say, because people spend their energy thinking about and planning for alternatives.

HONESTY: *The trusted person's character, integrity, and authenticity ... acceptance of responsibility for one's actions and not distorting the truth in order to shift blame to another.*

Any dishonesty breaches trust and breeds further distrust.

OPENNESS: *The extent to which relevant information is shared ... openness signals reciprocal trust.*

When leaders are not open, staff become suspicious and wonder what is being hidden and why. Rumors drive people's actions in a negative way.

RELIABILITY: *Consistency of behavior and knowing what to expect from others ... a sense of confidence that one's needs will be met in positive ways.*

Without a sense of a leader's reliability, people spend their energy worrying about whether they will be supported and making mental provisions for not being so. Reliability often involves the skill of time management for leaders, Tschannen-Moran said.

COMPETENCY: *The ability to perform as expected and according to standards appropriate to the task at hand.*

Trust can be limited no matter how someone perceives the other's benevolence, reliability, openness, and honesty if the other person does not have the requisite skill and knowledge, for example, as a teacher.

CULTIVATING TRUST

How much teachers trust their principal depends

Continued on p. 3

To read more about trust, see:

- "Developing relational trust in schools through a consensus process," by Michael K. Redburn, in *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*. Available at <http://cnx.org/content/m19511/latest>.
- *Solutions for promoting principal-teacher trust*, by Phyllis A. Gimbel, ScarecrowEducation, 2003.
- *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*, by Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara L. Schneider, Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2004.
- *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools*, by Megan Tschannen-Moran, Jossey-Bass, 2004.



Continued from p. 2

on the principal's behavior, according to Phyllis Gimbel (2003).

Leaders build trust, Tschannen-Moran said, by:

- Being reflective. Recognize that staff are watching and paying attention to the five facets of trust. Exemplify those facets. "The factors rise and fall together," she said. "You have to hit all five."
- Building relationships before buckling down to the tasks at hand. "Go slow to go fast," she said. "New leaders should be aware of the courtship period. When hypervigilance subsides, you can say, 'Let's talk about how to go forward.'"
- Being willing to trust teachers to make decisions, allowing them a voice in issues of consequence, not only in simple matters, such as what field trip to take. "To earn trust, you have to be willing to extend trust," she said.
- Providing opportunities for multiple interpersonal interactions to allow teachers to build relationships around meaningful work.
- Developing a vision of what trust looks like in practice. She said themes often involve respect, communication, and appreciation. "These are things people value deeply," she said.
- Listening. "Teachers who feel they are being listened to begin to shift the culture," she said. Listening must be authentic rather than cursory, and individuals must feel they have been heard.

Stephen Uebbing and Mike Ford (in press) say the school leader builds trust by promoting "a school culture that emphasizes cooperation and caring, rather than competition and favoritism."

Tschannen-Moran suggests that to examine trust, begin with a survey of how strong trust is in the school or organization, but only if leaders are ready for the answers — and to have a conversation about them. Leaders should be clear with those taking the survey how they plan to use the data and share the results. Then leaders can build on the positive, she emphasizes, rather than trying to close the gap between the ideal and reality, through a process of appreciative inquiry. "It helps to have a coach, a thinking partner to process the results and provide emotional support," she said. See principal survey on p. 5.

Tschannen-Moran has even more succinct advice for leaders to build trust: "Develop a thoughtful leadership style. Act with humility. Treat teachers like professionals."

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Gimbel, P.A. (2003). *Solutions for promoting principal-*




"Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for organizations to work. Trust is the glue that maintains organizational integrity."

— Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus, in *Strategies for Taking Charge*, p. 41

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Uebbing, S. & Ford, M. (in press). *The life cycle of leadership.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

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TOOL

Appreciative interviews

Adapted by Joellen Killion

Appreciative interviews will help you avoid trying to close the “trust gap” and instead focus on building on the positives. Use this tool to help you and your partners discover what has worked well in the past, affirm those successes, create positive self-images, and imagine future successes.



1. Conduct appreciative interviews as detailed here.
 - Form pairs.
 - One partner interviews the other and vice versa, using the following questions.
 - Describe a time when you felt you were at your prime as a _____ (*add role you want to focus on*). Share as many details as possible. When did it occur? Who was involved? What were you doing? What were others doing?
 - What did you value most about that situation, the work involved, the community, and yourself? What were the contributing factors that made it successful for you?
 - Project yourself into the future; it is five years from now, the start of 20__-20__ school year. Describe what is happening for you related to _____ (*add area of concern*). What do you want to be like as a _____ (*add role title*) then? What do you see yourself doing? What do you envision you will accomplish? Who will be your colleagues/confidantes?
2. After the interviews, meet with another team and introduce your partner to that team.
3. Discuss patterns that occur across all four interview responses (your partner's and yours and the other pair's responses). Be ready to share the patterns with the larger group.
4. Share patterns that exist across the larger group.

Adapted from:

Lord, J.G. (2005). *Appreciative inquiry and the quest: A new theory and methodology of human development*. Available at www.appreciative-inquiry.org.

Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J.M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Principal survey

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the quality of relationships in schools. Your answers are confidential. Please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with each of the statements about your school, marking in the columns on the right, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1. Teachers in this school are candid with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I can count on parents to support the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Students here really care about the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I have faith in the integrity of my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Students in this school can be counted on to do their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I believe in my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Most students in this school are honest.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I question the competence of some of my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I am often suspicious of teachers' motives in this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Most students are able to do the required work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I trust the students in this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. When teachers in this school tell you something, you can believe it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Even in difficult situations, I can depend on my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Parents in this school have integrity.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Most parents openly share information with the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. My teachers typically look out for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I trust the teachers in this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Students in this school are reliable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Most parents here have good parenting skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6

© 1999 Tschannen-Moran. Used with permission. This instrument may be used for scholarly purposes without fee.

Directions for administering this and other trust surveys for faculty and students are provided on Megan Tschannen-Moran's website (<http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch/researchtools>). Detailed instructions for calculating a standardized score are also included so that schools can compare their results with other schools.

TOOL

Considerations for team norms

Directions: As you begin working together, think about ground rules that might guide the way your team does business. Several categories are suggested here. Read each question and make suggestions in the column on the right, then discuss your ideas with your team members.

CONSIDERATIONS	IDEAS FOR NORMS
<p>What procedures will govern meeting attendance? <i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will team members be dependable and committed for the entire year? • Will team members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting? • Will they stay on task, avoid side conversations and interruptions, and focus on the task at hand? 	
<p>What procedures will govern teacher dialogue? <i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will team members react to others’ work and ideas? • Are out-of-the-box and off-the-wall ideas welcome? • Are differing opinions welcome? • Will what members say be held in confidence? • How will the team encourage listening and discourage interrupting? 	
<p>What rules will govern decision making? <i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the team reach decisions by consensus? • How will members deal with conflicts and differences of opinion? 	
<p>What attitudes and behaviors do you expect from team members? <i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all team members expected to be prepared and to participate? • Should they be “fully present,” both mentally and physically? • Will they put away other work (grading papers, filling out reports, etc.)? • Should team members try to convey positive attitudes? • Will team members try to maintain a sense of humor? 	
<p>How often will your team evaluate its functioning, and what indicators will you evaluate? <i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are team members abiding by the team’s agreed-upon norms? • What ground rules did you use well? • What norms do you need to re-emphasize, add, or adjust? 	

Source: Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator’s guide to professional learning teams*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

Partner interviews

Conducting an interview with potential teacher partners, in addition to gathering information and educating teachers on the coaching philosophy, helps coaches build “one-to-one individual relationships with teachers” (Knight, 2007). According to Knight, fifteen-minute one-on-one interviews are more effective than two-hour group meetings, so always try to schedule individual meetings, preferably during teacher planning time.

Four starter questions that generate meaningful conversations

1. What are the rewards you experience as a teacher?
2. What are your professional goals and what obstacles interfere with your ability to achieve your professional goals?
3. What are your students’ strengths and weaknesses?
4. What kinds of professional learning are most/least effective for you?

Questions about teachers’ current realities

- Describe a typical day on the job.
- What do you really like about your job?
- What kinds of pressures are you facing?
- What challenges are you facing?
- What kinds of changes are you experiencing?

Questions about students’ current realities

- Tell me about your students.
- What are the major needs of your students?
- What would most help your students?
- What outcomes are you striving for with your students?
- How many students are you



- teaching each day?
- How many students with various disabilities do you teach?
- What could have a significant influence on the happiness and success of your students?

Questions about the school’s current reality

- Describe the relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers in your school.
- Describe the relationship between senior high school teachers and junior high school teachers in this district?

Questions about changes being experienced

- How has your job changed over the past five years?
- How has your philosophy changed over the past five years?

Questions about instructional practices

- Are you teaching (name of intervention) at this point?
- If yes, which (intervention) are you teaching?
- What modifications, if any, have you made in your teaching of (intervention)?

Questions about a desired future

- What changes in your school would have the greatest influence on your students’ success?
- Describe the ideal school.
- What would you like to change about your job?

Questions about professional development

- Talk about the kinds of professional development you’ve experienced in the past few years.
- What have you liked about your professional development?
- What have you not liked about your professional development?

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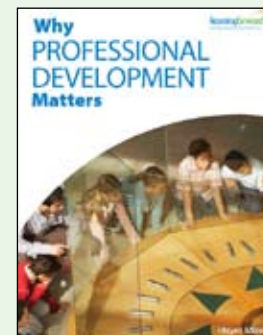
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An audit of the culture starts with two handy tools

By CHRISTOPHER WAGNER
and PENELOPE MASDEN-COPAS

As a pair of facilitators entered a North Carolina middle school, three 7th graders met them at the door. “What are you doing here?” one student asked. “We’re looking for the best middle school in North Carolina,” a facilitator answered. “You found it!” the student exclaimed, and the others heartily agreed. This chance encounter provided the facilitators just one of many clues in assessing the school’s culture.

Schools have tried various improvements to create more effective schools, but many educators and researchers are discovering a “missing link” (Wagner & Hall-O’Phalen, 1998). That missing link has more to do with the school’s culture than with elaborate curriculum alignment projects, scrimmage tests, and the latest buzzword reform efforts. Researchers agree that school culture is an important, but often overlooked, component of school improvement (Levine & Lezotte,

1995; Sizer, 1988; Phillips, 1996; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Frieberg, 1998).

Culture is the bracing for the bridge from previous to future achievement. If the braces are firm and strong, the chances of improving are high. Getting the culture right should always precede “programs” in efforts to raise student achievement. Schools with top-down, “do it or else” staff development plans rarely improve, while schools sensitive to their cultures are successful in improving

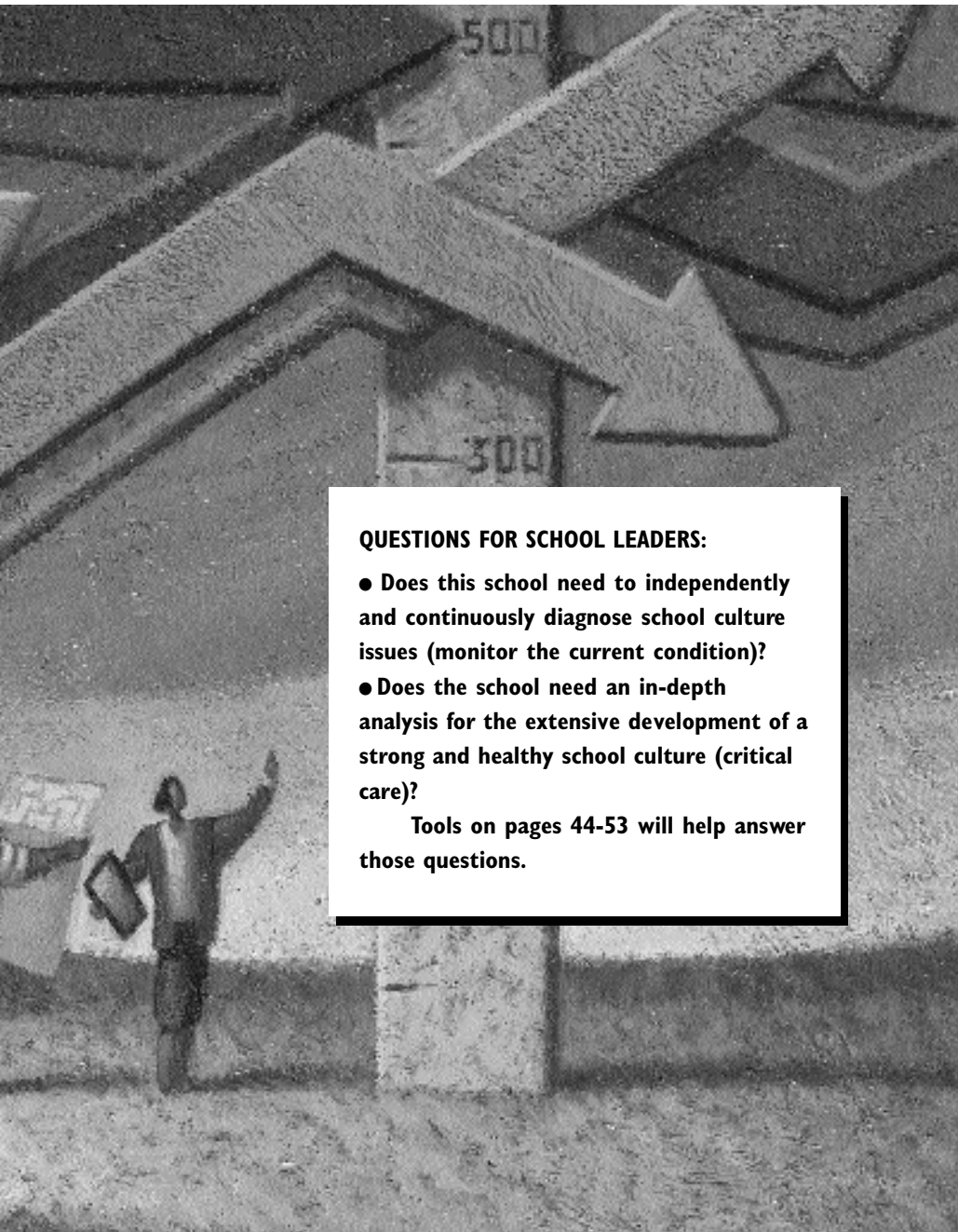
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student learning. As Sheila Patterson, a teacher at South Stokes High School in Walnut Cove, N.C., recently said (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2001), “It’s an attitude, not a program.”

Without a healthy school culture, staff may not be open or receptive to professional learning opportunities. Traditionally, school improvement efforts emphasized an individual teacher learning new skills. The theory was, “If people don’t improve, programs never will.” This belief also promoted the notion of individual professional development as the primary means to school improvement. However, in reality, negative cultures,



QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Does this school need to independently and continuously diagnose school culture issues (monitor the current condition)?
- Does the school need an in-depth analysis for the extensive development of a strong and healthy school culture (critical care)?

Tools on pages 44-53 will help answer those questions.

What is school culture?

Wagner (2000) describes school culture as shared experiences both in and out of school (traditions and celebrations), a sense of community, of family and team.

- Staff stability and common goals permeate the school.
- Curricular and instructional components, as well as order and discipline, are established through consensus.
- Open and honest communication is encouraged and staff demonstrate humor and trust.
- Stakeholders are recognized in schoolwide celebrations.
- The school's leaders and district leaders provide tangible support.

SOURCE: Wagner, C. (2000, October 20). *School culture analysis*. Address conducted at the meeting of the Manitoba Association of Resource Teachers (MART), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

MORE INFORMATION about school culture and school culture audits can be obtained from:

- The Center for Improving School Culture
www.schoolculture.net
- The National School Improvement Project
www.garyphillips.com

colleagues, and environments often overwhelm the best teachers.

The theory of individual professional growth has given way to a culture-centered approach toward professional learning aimed at collegial teams — learning and practicing together. Acknowledging that “unless teams of teachers improve together, schools never will” stresses the culture approach toward improvement and change. The goal of professional development is the inculturation of a continuous improvement philosophy among teams of professionals rather than individual teachers. This can only occur in a healthy school culture

designed to promote higher levels of professional collaboration, collegiality, and self-determination.

Determining the quality and health of the school culture is essential for all schools as they strive to improve. Yet most have not assessed their culture. Educators are more likely to dwell on raising scores and meeting state requirements than to examine a holistic view of the school and the relationships among the people who work, learn, and relate there.

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SELF-ASSESSMENT: SCHOOL CULTURE TRIAGE

School culture requires consistent care. Determine the current condition of your culture. Do you need simply to monitor and maintain, or are you headed for intensive care?

Instructions: Copy and distribute this survey to teachers and instructional staff in the same school. Have them fill out the form completely, then tally individual scores. Add up individual scores and divide by the number in the group for an average. Compare that number with the Scoring Guide on the next page to determine the health of your culture.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always or almost always
PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION					
1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
AFFILIATIVE COLLEGIALITY					
1. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each others' company.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Our school reflects a true "sense" of community.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations, including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment.	1	2	3	4	5
SELF-DETERMINATION/EFFICACY					
1. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.	1	2	3	4	5
2. School members are interdependent and value each other.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issue rather than blame others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
6. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Penelope Masden-Copas

SCORING GUIDE: SCHOOL CULTURE TRIAGE

The lowest triage score is 17 and the highest score is 85. After using the triage questions in several program evaluations, our data suggest the following:

- 17 - 40 =** Critical and immediate attention necessary. Conduct a full-scale assessment of your school's culture and invest all available resources in repairing and healing your school's culture.
- 41 - 60 =** Modifications and improvements are necessary. Begin with a more intense assessment of your school's culture to determine which area is most in need of improvement.
- 60 - 75 =** Monitor and continue to make positive adjustments.
- 76 - 85 =** Amazing! We have never had a score higher than 75! Continue monitoring, though, with each school improvement planning cycle, or at least every two years, to be sure you stay in top shape.

Source: *Penelope Masden-Copas*

SCHOOL CULTURE AUDIT

This school culture assessment has been used successfully in public schools of North Carolina, Florida, and Kentucky over the last decade. It can be used with one school or an entire district. It provides immediate feedback, is cost-effective, and recognizes both strengths and challenges.

What is a School Culture Audit?

What are we looking for in a School Culture Audit? An audit is not a “find a problem and fix it” process. Rather than asking, “What is wrong with this place?” cultural auditors ask, “What, in your opinion, would make this school the best it can be?” School culture is assessed by examining three types of behavior (Phillips, 1993):

- **Professional collaboration**
Do teachers and staff meet and work together to solve instructional, organizational, or curricular issues?
- **Collegial relationships**
Do people enjoy working together, support one another, and feel valued and included?
- **Efficacy/self-determination**
Are people in this school because they want to be? Do they work to improve their skills as professionals, or do they see themselves as victims of a large and uncaring bureaucracy?

Each audit has five steps:

1. Interviews
2. Observations
3. Survey
4. Evaluation
5. Presentation

When combined, information obtained from these different vantage points produce a clear picture of the school’s culture. The facilitators should not be from the school being audited.

Directions

Step One: Interviews — Designate days when the facilitators will interview staff, parents, students, classified staff, and administrators. See Page 47 for more detailed instructions for the interviews.

Step Two: Observations — Designate days when facilitators will make informal observations of the school. These observations include discussions with students, faculty, and other stakeholders. See Pages 48-49 for more detailed instructions for the interviews.

Step Three: Survey — Designate days when representatives of all school community groups will take the school culture survey. See Pages 50-51 for the survey and more detailed instructions about administering the survey.

Step Four: Evaluation — Evaluate what has been learned during the School Culture Audit. See Page 52 for more detailed instructions about evaluating the results.

Step Five: Presentation — Present the findings of the School Culture Audit to the community. See Page 53 for more detailed instructions about the presentation.

Source: *Christopher Wagner*

STEP ONE: INTERVIEWS

Directions to the facilitators

1. Ask the school principal for a designated space for the interviews – a conference room, designated classroom, corner of the media center, or faculty lounge to conduct interviews. Make sure there are beverages and snacks available since most professional staff will be giving up their preparation period.
2. Randomly select groups of five to eight each of faculty members, parents, students, classified staff, and administrators to be interviewed. Interview the various groups separately.
3. Assign at least two facilitators to each group. Explain the process you will be using and how the information that you collect will be used. Tell interviewees that they are not required to answer any question. Do not use a tape recorder – nothing shuts down an interview quite as fast, and you want open, candid responses.
4. Ask each group a series of questions relating to the school’s culture. Decide in advance which questions each facilitator will ask. Both facilitators ask questions, take notes, and record direct quotes.
5. Ask vision questions to encourage a positive picture of the future. Instead of asking “what is?,” ask “what ought to be?” Keep the group’s focus positive and avoid falling into a “woe is me” whining syndrome. Pay attention to the dominant emotions elicited from these “vision” questions:
 - When you awoke this morning and thought about another day in this school (as a teacher, student, custodian, etc.), what was the dominant feeling or emotion you experienced?
 - What factors caused you to feel that way?
 - Think of the previous week in terms of emotional peaks and valleys. Identify some peaks of bliss. Identify some valleys of despair.
 - Imagine a peak of emotional bliss next week as a teacher (student, administrator, etc.). How would you set it up for yourself? Who could you get to help?
6. Identify what is important to the group and how people improve. Look for whether their responses reflect the formal curriculum and stated professional development goals. Do improvement areas reflect the silent curriculum and unstated or spin-off outcomes? Note responses in which people say they are learning from each other or in more formal settings such as planned staff development sessions.
 - As a teacher (student, administrator, etc.), recall one way you have improved in the past year. What is something you are doing differently or better?
 - What were the major forces or who contributed to your improvement?
 - What is one way you would like to improve in the next 12 months? How could you make this happen?
7. Get to the heart of attitudes about differentiated instruction/ student achievement with a question and a follow-up. Typical responses to the first question detail the lack of study habits and poor parenting.
 - How have students changed over the past few years?
 - Since we all agree that students are not the same as they were a few years ago, how have you modified your teaching to reach every child?

Other questions might include:

- If you had the power to make today the best day of teaching you ever had, what would you do?
 - How could we make this staff come together in a unified, collective, and supportive manner?
 - What are some instructional highlights of your day and what can you do to experience them more often?
 - How can teachers make the classified staff feel more valued and respected?
8. Take a few minutes to debrief and compare notes after each interview.
 9. Analyze notes for evidence of the presence or absence of professional collaboration, collegiality, and self-determination. This information will be included in the School Culture Audit report, which will be shared with school stakeholders.

The responses to these questions will begin to yield the emotional status of each group. Facilitators identify sources of dominant emotions and hints for improvement from the “imagined bliss” question.

Source: Christopher Wagner

STEP TWO: OBSERVATIONS

Facilitators make informal observations of the school. These observations include discussions with students, faculty, and other stakeholders.

Directions to the facilitators

1. Speak with a good cross-section of students and staff.
2. Separate and circulate throughout the school for best results.
3. Look for specific examples of 13 characteristics related to the three types of behavior being evaluated by the audit: **professional collaboration** (teachers planning together, sharing teaching modalities, teaming in their delivery, etc.), **collegiality** (friendly environment, emotional support, continuation of cherished rituals and traditions), and **efficacy/self-determination**. Make a note of each example and determine the degree to which each characteristic is present in the school. Share the notations in the profile presentation. Note both positive and negative examples.

Each of the 13 characteristics listed here is related to those three types of behavior. For example, 3, 4, 6, and 10 support professional collaboration; 1, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 align with collegiality; and 2 and 9 represent efficacy.

Determine to what degree each of these characteristics is present in the school.

Examples:

- Facilitator observes shared and good-natured (as opposed to mean-spirited) humor in the faculty lounge as an example of characteristic #8.
 - Facilitator observes mutual respect exhibited between teachers and secretarial staff prior to the beginning of the school day. A notation is made on characteristic #1: collegiality.
 - Facilitator observes cooperative effort to secure reading grant and makes a notation regarding #4: experimentation and entrepreneurship, and #9: shared decision making.
4. After the observations, facilitators review notes in a debriefing session. Their notes are shaped and interpreted to more clearly specify the characteristics identified. The data are included in the School Culture Audit report to the staff and school community with all other collected data.

C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S

1. **Collegiality.** The way adults treat each other, i.e., respect and harmony vs. disrespect and discord.
2. **Efficacy.** Feeling of ownership or capacity to influence decisions; i.e., do people tend to live with or solve problems?
3. **High expectations of self and others.** Excellence is acknowledged; improvement is celebrated, supported, and shared.
4. **Experimentation and entrepreneurship.** New ideas abound and invention occurs.
5. **Trust and confidence.** Participants believe in the leaders and each other based on the match between creeds and deeds.
6. **Tangible support.** Improvement efforts are substantive with abundant resources made available by all.
7. **Appreciation and recognition of improvement.** People feel special and act special.
8. **Humor.** Caring is expressed through “kidding” or joking in tasteful ways.
9. **Shared decision making by all participants.** Those affected by a decision are involved in making and implementing the decision.
10. **Shared vision.** Participants understand what’s important and avoid trivial tasks.
11. **Traditions.** The school has identifiable celebrations and rituals that are important to the school community.
12. **Open and honest communication.** Information flows throughout the organization in formal and informal channels. Everyone receives information on a “need-to-know” basis.
13. **Metaphors and stories.** There is evidence of behavior being communicated and influenced by internal imagery.

Source: Christopher Wagner

OBSERVATIONS

1. Collegiality. The way adults treat each other, i.e., respect and harmony vs. disrespect and discord.

2. Efficacy. Feeling of ownership or capacity to influence decisions; i.e., do people tend to live with or solve problems?

3. High expectations of self and others. Excellence is acknowledged; improvement is celebrated, supported, and shared.

4. Experimentation and entrepreneurship. New ideas abound and invention occurs.

5. Trust and confidence. Participants believe in the leaders and each other based on the match between creeds and deeds.

6. Tangible support. Improvement efforts are substantive with abundant resources made available by all.

7. Appreciation and recognition of improvement. People feel special and act special.

8. Humor. Caring is expressed through “kidding” or joking in tasteful ways.

9. Shared decision making by all participants. Those affected by a decision are involved in making and implementing the decision.

10. Shared vision. Participants understand what’s important and avoid trivial tasks.

11. Traditions. The school has identifiable celebrations and rituals that are important to the school community.

12. Open and honest communication. Information flows throughout the organization in formal and informal channels. Everyone receives information on a “need-to-know” basis.

13. Metaphors and stories. There is evidence of behavior being communicated and influenced by internal imagery.

Source: Christopher Wagner

STEP THREE: SURVEY

Directions to the facilitators

- Ask representatives of all school community groups to take the School Culture Survey (*see next page*).
- Assure participants survey responses are anonymous.
- Surveys should be presented and collected in person – mailing is a waste of time and postage.
- Professional staff may complete the survey in 10 to 15 minutes in a faculty meeting. A faculty member collects the surveys at that time.
- The school secretary usually circulates and collects surveys from teaching assistants, other clerical staff, custodians, and bus drivers.
- Administer parent and student surveys immediately after their participation in the interview. Parent surveys also can be distributed during open house, parent/teacher conferences, or at a PTA/PTO meeting.
- A committee (formed for this purpose of an administrator, teacher, clerical staff member, etc., or the school improvement committee) tabulates the responses, creating separate scores for each subgroup to compare.

Tabulating survey results

A standing school committee (such as the school improvement committee) should tabulate the survey results, providing an average for what is perceived to be present and what is perceived to be important for each of the 13 questions.

The committee should then review the averages for gaps in the two numbers on each question. A general rule is that gaps of 3.0 or more need to be addressed.

Example

In the **presence** line for #1: Democratic decision making. Four people circle 2, eight people circle 3, two people circle 4, eight people circle 5, and two people circle 6. The sum of all rankings is 92. The mean, 92 divided by 24 (people) equals 3.8.

Then, in the **importance** line, two people circle 5, three people circle 6, 10 people circle 8, seven people circle 9, and two circle 10. The sum of all rankings is 191. The mean, 191 divided by 24 (people) equals 7.9.

The gap (difference) between importance and present equals 4.1. Conclusion: This school should address the issue of democratic decision making.

Source: Christopher Wagner. Survey adapted from Phillips, G. (1993). *The school-classroom culture audit*. Vancouver, B.C.: Eduserv, British Columbia School Trustees Publishing.

SCHOOL CULTURE SURVEY

Background: The 13 items in this survey have been identified as key indicators of a school’s culture. Your opinion and ranking of these factors is important and will be valuable in assessing your school’s culture. What is culture? For this survey, culture is defined as the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that characterize the school in terms of:

- How people treat and feel about each other;
- The extent to which people feel included and appreciated; and
- Rituals and traditions reflecting collaboration and collegiality.

Directions: Please rate each item twice. First, rate the item by circling an appropriate number reflecting its PRESENCE in your school. Second, rate the item by circling the appropriate number relative to its IMPORTANCE to you.

I am a: (Please circle one)

Student Teacher aide Custodian Parent
 Secretary Administrator Teacher Bus driver Other

- 1. Democratic and participatory decision making.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 2. Strong leadership from administrators, teachers, or teams of both.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 3. Staff stability-low turnover from year to year.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 4. A planned, coordinated curriculum supported by research and faculty.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 5. Schoolwide selected and agreed-upon staff development.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 6. Parental involvement, engagement, and support.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important

- 7. Schoolwide recognition of success for students and staff.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 8. An effort to maximize active learning in academic areas.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 9. District support for school improvement efforts.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 10. Collaborative instructional planning and collegial relationships.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 11. Sense of community, family, and team.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 12. Clear goals and high expectations for students and staff.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important
- 13. Order and discipline established through consensus and consistent application.**
 Not present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always present
 Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely important

Please use the space below to make any additional comments about the items on this survey.

Source: Christopher Wagner. Survey adapted from Phillips, G. (1993). *The school-classroom culture audit*. Vancouver, B.C.: Eduserv, British Columbia School Trustees Publishing.

STEP FOUR: EVALUATION

Directions to the facilitators

1. Analyze the data and identify strengths (presence of culture-rich examples) and weaknesses.
2. Organize the analyzed data into a written School Culture Profile answering questions such as:
 - What specific comments (quotes) were expressed about building professional collaboration in this school?
 - What did we observe that would lead us to believe there is a strong sense of collegiality here?
 - Which responses indicate the presence or lack of efficacy?
 - What gaps exist between what is present and what is important as revealed in the survey?
 - How do the survey results compare with information gathered in the interviews and observations?
 - What trends or common themes are revealed in the collected data?
3. If there are no specific examples of professional collaboration, collegiality, and efficacy/self-determination, then point to what is unhealthy about the culture and what is inhibiting improvement. Some examples:
 - When teachers say they feel isolated and want to spend more time with colleagues, there is an obvious lack of opportunity for collegial involvement.
 - If teachers cannot identify a source of help for an instructional dilemma, there is a problem with professional collaboration.
 - Constant complaints about red tape, central office policy and the ever-increasing demands made by the state department reveal the lack of self-determination and efficacy.
4. Present the written profile to the school improvement team and administration before making an oral presentation to the school community.
5. Many schools elect to do a School Culture Audit in the fall and again in the spring as a pre/post instrument.

Source: *Christopher Wagner*

STEP FIVE: PRESENTATION

Directions to the facilitators

1. Use an extended faculty meeting held immediately after school for the presentation, or better, report it at an evening PTA/PTO/School Council meeting. Since the meetings are always positive and extremely informative, schools typically make great efforts to invite the community.
2. Keep the presentation to an hour or less.
3. With two or more facilitators, one facilitator opens the meeting by sharing statements and direct quotes from the interviews. These statements are tied to the big three behaviors: professional collaboration, collegial relationships, efficacy/self-determination.
4. Another facilitator shares notes from the observation, including comments overheard or summaries of discussions. These comments answer the questions: How are people treating each other? What types of behaviors are staff members modeling for the children? How inviting does the school feel? What evidence is there of collaboration, collegiality, and efficacy?
5. Share information from the survey, noting any significant gaps between presence and importance.
6. Conclude with four or five recommendations for improvement. Facilitators also may agree to work with the school improvement team, site-based council, etc., to assist in planning and implementing improvements.
7. Facilitate a discussion among stakeholders about the findings. Addressing the following key questions provides a basis for sustained improvement that has the potential to involve and secure ownership from the entire school community:
 - What areas of our school’s culture (professional collaboration, collegiality, efficacy/self-determination) appear to be strongest and why?
 - What can we do as a school community to maintain and/or improve these strengths?
 - What areas of our school’s culture (professional collaboration, collegiality, efficacy/self-determination) present the greatest challenge for improvement?
 - What can we as a school community do to improve in these areas?

PRESENTATION TIPS

When presenting to the school community, take care to highlight school culture strengths. There is always something good to say.

A typical statement might be:

“During the interview, several people indicated a desire to develop thematic units with teachers in other disciplines. One teacher said, ‘I respect my colleagues and would like the opportunity to just sit down and talk about what they teach. A few years ago, we worked together on a thematic unit. The kids liked it, we got a lot accomplished, and it gave us a chance to teach together. Many of us would like to do that again.’ Another teacher reported an interest in learning more teaching strategies from her colleagues.

“Based on the data collected, one of the facilitator’s recommendations for strengthening professional collaboration would involve planning time for several volunteers to develop a pilot thematic unit. Once the unit has been taught, the teachers involved could report their experiences to the entire faculty.”

Source: Christopher Wagner

Culture is ...

Purpose: To identify the elements of culture that currently exist within the school

Group size: 4 to 5 people

Time: 10 to 15 minutes per item

Materials: *Culture is...* cut into slips and placed in a box

DIRECTIONS:

1. Form small groups that cross grade levels or content areas within the school. Include those who are new to the school along with those who are veteran to the school.
2. Draw one of the elements of culture from the box; that item becomes the focus of the group conversation.
3. Have each person reflect and write his or her own experience with this aspect of school culture. For example: *The kind of humor I experience in this school would be described as...*
4. Ask each person to read his or her reflections to the other subgroup members. The group then discusses patterns or trends they find among these reflections. Subgroup members write a summary statement for their subgroup and share the summary with the whole group.
5. When a number of items have been discussed and examined, school faculty and the principal discuss this question: “Is this what we want our school culture to be?”
6. The principal or school improvement committee could decide to have these conversations at the beginning of each faculty meeting over the course of a year.

Culture is...

How we meet	Metaphors we use about the school
Our symbols	Our humor
Our stories	Our rituals
Our use of space	Our rewards
How we greet strangers	How we communicate
Our sacred cows	Time issues
How mistakes are dealt with	Our celebrations
Our heroes and heroines	How we learn
How we view hurdles and challenges	Our tribal rules
How we deal with deviance from common practice	How we approach new problems
How we deal with angry parents	How leaders lead
How we get better at what we do	How we induct new people
Our status symbols	Our taboos

Source: Champion, R. (1993). *Tools for change workshops*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

NSDC TOOL

WHAT A SCHOOL LEADER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ...

Learning about your school's culture

12 NORMS OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL CULTURE

- Collegiality
- Experimentation
- High expectations
- Trust and confidence
- Tangible support
- Reaching out to knowledge base
- Appreciation and recognition
- Caring, celebration, and humor
- Involvement in decision making
- Protection of what's important
- Traditions
- Honest, open communication

Source: "Good seeds grow in strong cultures," by Jon Saphier and Matthew King, *Educational Leadership*, March 1985.

Obtain a copy of "Good seeds grow in strong cultures," by Jon Saphier and Matthew King, *Educational Leadership*, March 1985. This article identifies the 12 norms of a healthy school culture. Ask the staff to read and reflect upon the article before your next meeting. To locate the article on the ASCD web site, go to the Archived Issues link under Educational Leadership.

Here are two options for presenting this information to the staff and eliciting their suggestions for moving forward.

OPTION I

1. Divide the staff into 12 groups and assign one norm per group. Ask them to share their ideas about this norm. *Time: 5 minutes.*
2. While still in this group, have participants list as many suggestions as possible for strengthening that norm in your school. *Time: 10 minutes.*
3. Ask each group to introduce its assigned norm to the entire staff and to provide an example of how that norm operates in the school today. Ask each group to limit its presentation to two minutes.
4. Ask each group to post its suggestions for strengthening the norm in the school. Invite other participants to add to the list.
5. When all norms have been explained and suggestions posted, distribute five stickers to each staff member. Using the stickers, ask staff members to vote for the norms they believe need the most attention during the upcoming school year.
6. Tally the number of votes for each norm. Post the results for everyone to see.
7. Set aside time at your next staff meeting to identify one or two norms on which you will focus attention during the next school year.

OPTION II

1. Make copies of the School Culture Survey on Page 5 and distribute to the staff during a schoolwide staff meeting.
2. Provide 15 to 20 minutes for staff members to identify their position on each of the statements.
3. The facilitator should collect the responses and tabulate privately. Share the results at the next staff meeting.
4. The facilitator should lead a discussion about the implications of the schoolwide response. *In what areas are we already performing well? In what areas do we need to improve? What are some strategies for improving?*

School culture survey

NSDC TOOL

The professional staff in this school use their talents and knowledge to help each other with challenges and needs.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

This school encourages and supports experimentation with new ideas and techniques.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

This school has high expectations for teachers and administrators.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Staff and students in this school trust and have confidence in each other.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Time and resources are available to support teachers to do their best work.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Teachers and leaders in this school reach out to a knowledge base to inform their work with students and with each other.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Good teaching is recognized and appreciated by the school and community.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

This school culture values caring, celebration, and humor.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

School leaders consistently involve staff in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

School administrators keep meetings and paperwork to a minimum in order to protect teachers' instructional and planning time.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

The school has traditions in both curriculum and recurrent events that are significant and known by all.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Honest, open communications exist among staff members.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

“What is culture?

An informal understanding of the way we do things around here, i.e. what keeps the herd moving in roughly the right direction.”

— Terrence Deal

“Culture ...

represents the accumulated learning of a group — the ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world that have made the group successful.”

— Edwin Schein

Tools For Schools

Strategies for strengthening culture

W *What is culture?*
An informal

understanding of the way

we do things around

here, i.e. what keeps the

herd moving in roughly

the right direction.

— Terrence Deal

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This process can be done as a follow-up to the activity on Page 3 or it can be done separately. This activity will help your staff determine its priorities and sharpen its focus on school culture this year.

TIME: 90 minutes.

SUPPLIES: Chart paper, markers, masking tape.

PREPARATION: Provide each staff member with a copy of the article, “Good Seeds Grow in Strong Cultures” by Jon Saphier and Matthew King (*Educational Leadership*, March 1985). The article identifies the 12 norms of a healthy school culture. Ask them to read it and reflect upon it before your scheduled meeting.

On the day of the meeting, post 12 sheets of chart paper around the room. Label each sheet of paper with one of the 12 norms.

Directions

1. Divide the faculty into 12 groups and assign one norm per group. (See Page 2 for the list of norms.) Ask them to share their ideas about this norm. Time: 5 minutes.
2. While still in the subgroup, have the members list as many suggestions as possible for strengthening that norm in the school. Time: 10 minutes.
3. Ask each group to explain the assigned norm to the entire faculty and provide an example of how it operates in the school today. Ask each group to limit its presentation to two minutes.
4. Then, ask the same group to post its suggestions for strengthening the norm in the school. Solicit suggestions from other group members. Post those as well. Time: 30 minutes.
5. When all norms have been explained and suggestions posted, distribute five stickers to each staff member. Using the stickers, ask staff members to vote for the norms they believe need the greatest attention during the upcoming school year.
6. Tally the number of “votes” given to each norm. Post the votes for staff members to see.
7. Type up the staff suggestions and share them with the school improvement team or other appropriate committee.
8. Set aside time at a school improvement team meeting to discuss each norm and select one or two suggestions for focused attention during the school year.

August/September 1998

Developing cultural action plans

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity should be done by the staff group at your school that would consider cultural issues, such as a school improvement team, leadership team, or climate committee. At the conclusion of this activity, the group should have an action plan for every norm that your school has agreed to address this year.

TIME: 90 minutes.

SUPPLIES: Chart paper, markers, masking tape.

Directions

1. Before the meeting, use a sheet of chart paper to create one form for each norm your school has agreed to address this year. Post those sheets on the walls of the meeting room. Example:

NORM: _____

What steps will we take to improve?	
When?	
Who will do this?	
What results do we want?	

2. Provide the group with the suggestions resulting from the activity on Page 4. Time: 10 minutes.

3. Ask each group to discuss the suggestions and select the ideas that they believe will do the most to improve that norm in the school. Time: 30 minutes.

4. Fill out each action plan. Time: 30 minutes.

5. Share the completed action plans with the staff and with the school’s parents’ organization.

6. Implement and monitor progress on the plan throughout the year.

*The only thing
of real importance*

that leaders do is

create and manage

culture.

—Edgar Schein,

“Organizational Culture

and Leadership”

Tools For Schools

Evaluating your school's culture

Culture building requires that school

leaders give attention to

the informal, subtle, and

symbolic aspects of

school life which shape

the beliefs and actions

of each employee within

the system.

— William Cunningham

and Don Gresso

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity will help a staff assess its impact on the school's culture. Although this tool is presented here as an end-of-the-year evaluation tool, it could be easily modified and used as a beginning-of-the-year evaluation.

TIME: Two hours.

SUPPLIES: Chart paper, markers, masking tape.

Directions

- Using a sheet of chart paper, create one panel like the following for each of the 12 norms on Page 2.

<i>This is a strong and healthy norm at our school.</i>				
<u>COLLEGIALITY</u>				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

- Post the 12 panels around the meeting room.
- Give each staff member 12 stickers and ask them to identify their beliefs about each norm by placing the stickers in the appropriate location on the chart paper. Direct them to use only one sticker per norm.
- When all the stickers have been placed, divide the group into 12 smaller groups (one for each norm) to discuss the results and present them to the entire staff.

If this activity is being done at the beginning of the year, ask the group to focus on answering this question: *What actions do we need to take to improve this norm in our school?*

If this activity is being done at the end of the year, ask the group to answer this question: *What evidence do we have to demonstrate the results we've achieved?*

- Reassemble the larger group. Ask one representative from each of the 12 smaller groups to present their ideas. After the presentation, allow time for additional comments from others who were not in that group. Time: 60 minutes.
- Suggestions from this activity should be shared with the school improvement team as they develop their action plans for the year.

August/September 1998

Tools For Schools

Learning about school culture

*Stimulate your thinking about your school's culture
by reading some of these books and articles*

- *Assessing School and Classroom Climate* by Judith Arter. A consumer guide that offers educators help in choosing the best instruments for assessing school culture. Order document # ED 295 301 from ERIC Document Reproduction Services, (800) 443-3742 or (703) 440-1400, fax (703) 440-1408. Price: \$16.84.
- “Building Professional Community in Schools,” Sharon Kruse, Karen Seashore Louis, and Anthony Bryk, *Issues in Restructuring Schools*, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Issue No. 6, Spring 1994. Reviews critical elements of a healthy school culture.

A copy of the report is available online at www.wcer.wisc.edu/completed/cors/issues_in_restructuring_schools/ISSUES_NO_6_SPRING_1994.pdf
- *Educational Leadership and School Culture*, edited by Marshall Sashkin and Herbert Walberg. Berkley, Calif.: McCutchan Publishing, 1993. Examines the research on the nature of educational leadership and school culture and how they are related. Order by calling (800) 227-1540. Price: \$33.75.
- “Good Seeds Grow in Strong Cultures,” Jon Saphier and Matthew King, *Educational Leadership*, March 1985. Identifies the 12 norms of a healthy school culture. Check your local library for a copy.
- *The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture*, by Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson. Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1990. Examines the crucial role that principals play in developing and maintaining healthy school cultures. Order document #ED 325914. from ERIC Document Reproduction Services, (800) 443-3742 or (703) 440-1400, fax (703) 440-1408. Price: \$25.95.
- *Shaping School Culture: The School Leader's Role* by Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998. Provides an in-depth look at the ways that real schools shape their culture. Includes many examples. Available November 1998. Order by calling (800) 274-4434 or fax (800) 569-0443. Price \$33.95.
- *Transforming School Culture: Stories, Symbols, Values & The Leader's Role* by Stephen Stolp and Stuart Smith, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1995. Synopsizes research while offering numerous examples of schools' experiences with culture changes. Order by calling (800) 438-8841 or fax (541) 346-2334. Price: \$16.50.

Visit the Library at the NSDC web site at www.nsd.org for more articles and references on this and other subjects of interest to staff developers.

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POSITIVE

A school's culture is always at work, either helping or hindering adult learning. Here's how to see it, assess it, and change it for the better

By KENT D. PETERSON

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Every organization has a culture, that history and underlying set of unwritten expectations that shape everything about the school. A school culture influences the ways people think, feel, and act. Being able to understand and shape the culture is key to a school's success in promoting staff and student learning. As Fullan (2001) recently noted, "Reculturing is the name of the game."

When a school has a positive, professional culture, one finds meaningful staff development, successful curricular reform, and the effective use of student performance data. In these cultures, staff and student learning thrive. In contrast, a school with a negative or toxic culture that does not value professional learning, resists change, or devalues staff development hinders success. School culture will have either a positive or a detrimental impact on the quality and success of staff development.

WHAT IS SCHOOL CULTURE?

School culture is the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the "persona" of the school. These unwritten expectations build up over time as teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges and, at times, cope with failures. For example, every school has a set of expectations about what can be discussed at staff meetings, what

Collaborative and collegial relationships are part of the culture of a professional learning community.

■
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or NEGATIVE

constitutes good teaching techniques, how willing the staff is to change, and the importance of staff development (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Schools also have rituals and ceremonies — communal events to celebrate success, to provide closure during collective transitions, and to recognize people's contributions to the school. School cultures also include symbols and stories that communicate core values, reinforce the mission, and build a shared sense of commitment. Symbols are an outward sign of inward values. Stories are group representations of history and meaning. In positive cultures, these features reinforce learning, commitment, and motivation, and they are consistent with the school's vision.

POSITIVE VS. TOXIC CULTURES

While there is no one best culture, recent research and knowledge of successful schools identify common features in professional learning communities. In these cultures, staff, students, and administrators value learning, work to enhance curriculum and instruction, and focus on students. In schools with professional learning communities, the culture possesses:

- A widely shared sense of purpose and values;
- Norms of continuous learning and improvement;
- A commitment to and sense of responsi-

bility for the learning of all students;

- Collaborative, collegial relationships; and
- Opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing personal practice.

(Stein, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Fullan 2001; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1998).

In addition, these schools often have a common professional language, communal stories of success, extensive opportunities for quality professional development, and ceremonies that celebrate improvement, collaboration, and learning (Peterson & Deal, 2002). All of these elements build commitment, forge motivation, and foster learning for staff and students.

Some schools have the opposite — negative subcultures with “toxic” norms and values that hinder growth and learning. Schools with toxic cultures lack a clear sense of purpose, have norms that reinforce inertia, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration, and often have actively hostile relations among staff. These schools are not healthy for staff or students.

By actively addressing the negativity and working to shape more positive cultures, staff and principals can turn around many of these schools. Principals are key in addressing negativity and hostile relations.



A negative culture can include hostile relationships among staff.

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GANADO PRIMARY SCHOOL
Ganado Unified School District #20
Ganado, Ariz.

Grades: K-2
Enrollment: 405
Staff: 29 teachers
Racial/ethnic mix:
White: 1%
Black: 0%
Hispanic: 0%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 0%
Native American: 99%
Other: 0%
Limited English proficient: 75%
Languages spoken: Navajo and English
Free/reduced lunch: 92%
Special education: 6.9%
Contact: Sigmund A. Boloz, principal
Ganado Primary School
P.O. Box 1757
Ganado, AZ 86505
Phone: (928) 755-1020
Fax: (928) 755-1085
E-mail: sigmund.boloz@ganado.k12.az.us

WISCONSIN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL
School District of Elmbrook
Brookfield, Wisc.

Grades: 6-8
Enrollment: 930
Staff: 80 teachers
Racial/ethnic mix:
White: 88%
Black: 4%
Hispanic: 1%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 7%
Native American: 0%
Other: 0%
Limited English proficient: 1%
Languages spoken: English
Free/reduced lunch: 6%
Special education: 12%
Contact: Shelby Cosner, (former principal), coordinator for K-12 Continuous Improvement for Student Learning
School District of Elmbrook Central Administration Office
13780 Hope St.
P.O. Box 1830
Brookfield, WI 53008-1830
Phone: (262) 781-3030 ext. 1114
Fax: (262) 783-0983
E-mail: cosners@elmbrook.k12.wi.us

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

School culture enhances or hinders professional learning. Culture enhances professional learning when teachers believe professional development is important, valued, and “the way we do things around here.” Professional development is nurtured when the school’s history and stories include examples of meaningful professional learning and a group commitment to improvement.

Staff learning is reinforced when sharing ideas, working collaboratively to learn, and using newly learned skills are recognized symbolically and orally in faculty meetings and other school ceremonies. For example, in one school, staff meetings begin with the story of a positive action a teacher took to help a student — a ceremonial school coffee cup is presented to the teacher and a round of applause follows.

The most positive cultures value staff members who help lead their own development, create well-defined improvement plans, organize study groups, and learn in a variety of ways. Cultures that celebrate, recognize, and support staff learning bolster professional community.

Negative cultures can seriously impair staff development. Negative attitudes and values, hostile relations, and pessimistic stories deplete the culture of a school, for example, the only staff development depicts boring, ill-defined failures. Positive experiences are attacked — they don’t fit the cultural norms. In another school, teachers are socially ostracized for sharing their positive experiences at workshops or training programs. At this school’s faculty meetings, no one is allowed to share interesting or useful ideas learned in a workshop. Positive news about staff development opportunities goes underground for those who still value personal learning (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

In some schools, professional development is not valued, teachers do not

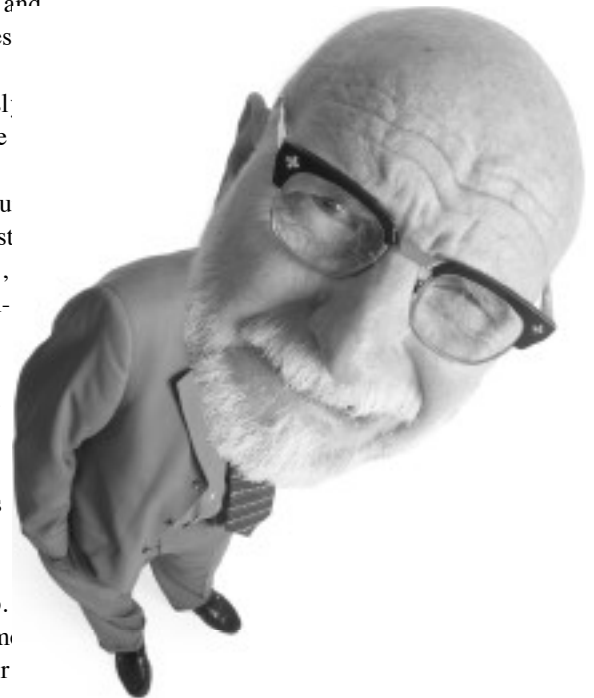
believe they have anything new to learn, or they believe the only source for new ideas is trial-and-error in one’s own classroom. Anyone who shares a new idea from a book, workshop, or article is laughed at.

In these schools, positive views of professional learning are countercultural. Those who value learning are criticized. The positive individuals may either leave the school (reinforcing the culture) or become outcasts, seeking support with like-minded staff.

POSITIVE PORTRAIT

Ganado Primary School

One of the best examples of a school culture that supports professional development is Ganado Primary School in Ganado, Ariz. Located in one of the poorest counties in America in the Four Corners area of the Southwest, Ganado did not always have a strong professional community. Over time, Sigmund Boloz, the principal, and his staff developed a strong, professional culture that supports staff and student learning.



teachers do not believe they have anything new to learn.

Everyone in the school is viewed as a learner: staff, students, principal, community members. Opportunities for learning abound. For example, all teachers have support to be trained in a reading intervention program called CLIP (Collaborative Literacy Intervention Project). Teachers are invited to regular “curriculum conversations” to discuss new ideas and share experiences.

The presence of a staff professional library symbolically communicates the importance of learning. The school has amassed 4,000 professional books and 400 videotapes on effective teaching and other professional issues. The community has an academy for parents every year to help improve parenting skills. New learning is encouraged and supported. Staff members feel responsible for improving their own skills and knowledge to help students learn. They regularly recount stories of successfully using new ideas. The staff expects and encourages collaboration and sharing. In short, professional learning is valued in the culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Wisconsin Hills Middle School

Shelby Cosner, the first principal of Wisconsin Hills Middle School in Brookfield, Wis., hoped to build a school culture that valued and sustained professional learning. It did not occur immediately. Initial hiring brought in a strong staff, but from many different schools.

Over time, she and the staff developed a culture that nurtured and valued professional learning. She and her staff envisioned a culture where staff members were interested in job-embedded learning, passionate about professional development, and committed to collaborative dialogue about teaching. She sought teachers who were likely to share these values, but the culture was actively nurtured through symbols, stories, and traditions as well as quality professional learning.

For example, the staff discussed and developed a set of core themes and values that guided learning. They scheduled



Principals can learn the history of the school by talking to the school's storytellers — they are the staff who enjoy recounting history.

regular “D” Days (staff development days) every other Thursday. They always shared food during meetings, a communal symbol of collegiality and a bond for the group as it studied new approaches to differentiating instruction and integrating technology. Sharing food became a school ritual. A new department provided the food each meeting. One team brought different ice cream treats to symbolize their learning to differentiate their teaching to address varied students’ needs and interests.

Each “D” Day meeting began with professional or personal stories of celebration. Staff shared stories about what a student had accomplished or a personal story about themselves or their families. Humor and joking became measures of connectedness. Eventually, teachers made storytelling into a contest, with the staff voting for the best funny classroom or school story and the winner receiving a “Fabulous Prize.” Stories were then shared in the regular school newsletter,

the “Grapevine.” These rituals brought them together around humor and stories.

Study groups also helped extend the culture as teams investigated new approaches to their craft. The deep discussions that transpired drew people together around shared ideas.

Beginning- and end-of-school traditions reinforced the culture. Staff planted seeds one spring to symbolize the “planting and growing” that was occurring through their investment in professional development. In June, a documentary video that showcased the year’s accomplishments and milestones was shared. In all these activities, staff shaped, nurtured, and reinforced the culture. Eventually, a deep commitment to collaborative, job-embedded staff development became “the way we do things around here.”

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Principals and other school leaders can and should shape school culture. They do this through three key processes. First,

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they read the culture, understanding the culture’s historical source as well as analyzing current norms and values. Second, they assess the culture, determining which elements of the culture support the school’s core purposes and the mission, and which hinder achieving valued ends. Finally, they actively shape the culture by reinforcing positive aspects and working to transform negative aspects of the culture (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

READ THE CULTURE

Principals can learn the history of the school by talking to the school’s storytellers (they are the staff who enjoy recounting history), looking through prior school improvement plans for signals about what is really important, not just what is required, or using a faculty meeting to discuss what the school has experienced, especially in staff development, over the past two decades. It is important to examine contemporary aspects of the culture — a series of exercises can determine the core norms and values, rituals, and ceremonies of the school, and their meanings. For example, asking each staff member to list six adjectives to describe the school, asking staff to tell a story that characterizes what the school is about, or having staff write metaphors describing the school can reveal aspects of the school culture.

One approach asks staff to complete the following metaphor: “If my school were an animal it would be a _____, because _____.” The principal then looks for themes and patterns. Are the animals strong, nurturing, hostile, loners, or herd animals? Are the animals stable or changeable? These metaphors can suggest deeper perceptions of the culture.

Finally, developing a timeline of rituals and ceremonies for the year — asking when they occur, what symbols and values are important in each, and what the ceremonies communicate about the school and its commitment to professional learning — can fill in the culture picture. For example, what does the end-of-the-year staff gathering communicate?



Fill in the culture picture by developing a timeline of rituals and ceremonies for the year — asking when they occur, what symbols and values are important in each, and what the ceremonies communicate about the school and its commitment to professional learning.

Is it joyful, sorrowful, congenial, or stand-offish? What are the rites and rituals of the gathering? What traditions keep going year-to-year, and what do they represent? Is the last gathering of the year a time for closure, goodbyes, and a sharing of hopes for the future?

ASSESS THE CULTURE

Staff and administrators should then look at what they have learned about the culture and ask two central questions:

- What aspects of the culture are positive and should be reinforced?
- What aspects of the culture are negative and harmful and should be changed?

The staff can also ask: What norms and values support learning? Which depress or hinder the growth of energy, motivation, and commitment? What symbols or ceremonies are dead and dying and need to be buried — or need to be resuscitated?

There are other approaches as well. One way to assess the culture is to use the School Culture Survey (*Tools for Schools*, 2001) to examine core norms and values. Collect the survey results to see how strongly held different norms or values are, then determine whether they fit the culture the school wants.

SHAPE THE CULTURE

There are many ways to reinforce the positive aspects of the culture.

- Staff leaders and principals can:
- Celebrate successes in staff meetings and ceremonies;
 - Tell stories of accomplishment and collaboration whenever they have the opportunity; and
 - Use clear, shared language created during professional development to foster a commitment to staff and student learning.

Leaders also can reinforce norms and values in their daily work, their words, and their interactions. They can establish rituals and traditions that make staff development an opportunity for culture building as well as learning. As we saw at Wisconsin Hills Middle School, all workshops began with sharing food and stories of success with students. At other times, leaders can reinforce quality professional learning by providing additional resources to implement new ideas, by recognizing those committed to learning their craft, and by continuously supporting quality opportunities for informal staff learning and collaboration.

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Staff and administrators may also need to change negative and harmful aspects of the culture. This is not easy. It is done by addressing the negative directly, finding examples of success to counteract stories of failure, impeding those who try to sabotage or criticize staff learning, and replacing negative stories of professional development with concrete positive results.

CONCLUSION

Today, shaping culture is even more important because of the national focus on higher curriculum standards, assessments, and accountability.

Standards-based reform efforts attempt to align content, teaching, and assessment. But without a culture that supports and values these structural changes, these reforms can fail.

Schools need both clear structures and strong, professional cultures to foster teacher learning. Carefully designed curriculum and assessments are keys to successful reform, along with teacher professional development. The school's culture either supports or sabotages quality professional learning. Developing and sustaining a positive, professional culture that nurtures staff learning is the task of everyone in the school. With a strong, positive culture that supports professional development and student learning, schools can become places where every teacher makes a difference and every child learns.

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RESOURCES

- *Shaping School Culture Fieldbook*, by Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson. (Jossey-Bass, 2002).

This new book describes ways to shape school culture. It includes concrete tactics, reflective questions, and group activities that can be used with school staffs to read, assess, and transform their cultures.

- “Shared Culture:A Consensus of Individual Values,” by Joan Richardson. *Results*. May 2001.

This article describes a school that has developed a deep professional culture. Excellent concrete examples are provided of how one school shaped its culture.

- “School Culture Survey.” *Tools For Schools*, April/May 2001.

This survey can be used with school staffs to assess underlying norms and values. The survey provides an excellent tool for assessing the culture.

- “Norms Put the Golden Rule Into Practice for Groups,” by Joan Richardson. *Tools For Schools*, August/September 1999.

This article discusses the importance of positive norms and ways to build these group norms with a school team. A wealth of suggestions can be used to build positive group norms.

Stein, M. (1998). *High performance learning communities District 2: Report on Year One implementation of school learning communities. High performance training communities project*. Washington,DC: Office of Educational Research

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The evolution of a
**PROFESSIONAL
 LEARNING TEAM**

BY ANNE JOLLY

Teachers in your school already may work in school-based teams and committees.

Groups of teachers may meet to plan specific school activities, develop the school improvement plan, or help with a special school initiative. Perhaps teachers in your school also plan together as departments.

But as groups prepare to meet in learning teams, questions may flash through teachers' minds or even be asked aloud.

How is our professional learning team work going to be different from any other teacher meeting? Don't we work together already?

In typical meetings, teachers gather to plan department activities, work on discipline issues, discuss logistics for school events, address school improvement issues, or work on plan-



ning a unit. The focus of these traditional meetings might shift from week to week, and meetings frequently address several different topics.

Professional learning team meetings, on the other hand, have one primary purpose: improved teaching and learning in an area of identified

student need. These meetings are about teacher professional learning and growth. The reason for meeting is simple: Better teaching results in better student learning.

The aim is *not* to develop professional learning teams. The purpose is to provide a way for teachers to become increasingly accomplished instructors for the ultimate benefit of students.

THE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE

In introducing teachers to information about
Continued on p. 2

**WHAT'S
 INSIDE**

**The
 Professional
 Learning Team
 Decision-
 Making Cycle**

Reference guide keeps the learning team process in focus and on track.
Page 4

**Meeting
 Overview
 Checklist**

Activities learning teams can use.
Page 5

**Appropriate
 Use of
 Learning
 Teams**

Use this checklist to determine which activities will work — and which ones won't — for your learning team meetings.
Pages 6-7



National Staff
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 Council
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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

COVER STORY

PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING TEAM
BASICS

Teams are the vehicles for teacher professional growth and ongoing learning focused on effective classroom instruction.

Teams develop a shared goal based on student needs as determined by a variety of data and information.

Teams meet regularly throughout the school year and use an organized approach to guide their work.

Team members rotate roles and responsibilities.

Team activities revolve around a decision-making cycle that engages teachers in questioning, studying, reflecting, planning, experimenting, monitoring, revising, and assessing instructional effectiveness and student progress.

Teams establish multiple channels for regular communication and sharing among school faculty, other educators, and other stakeholders.

The evolution of a professional learning team

Continued from p. 1

professional learning teams, keep in mind that formidable foe — years of ingrained and accepted practice in isolation. Morton Inger (1993) notes: “By and large ... teacher collaboration is a departure from existing norms, and in most schools, teachers are colleagues in name only. They work out of sight and sound of one another, plan and prepare their lessons and materials alone, and struggle on their own to solve their instructional, curricular, and management problems.” Conflicts between the current way of doing business in schools and collaborative initiatives may limit implementation, effectiveness, and ultimately, sustainability of professional learning teams.

Although most teachers have informal conversations and often assist individual colleagues, fewer teachers regularly take part in formalized meetings that promote systematic group sharing. And most teachers, it’s safe to say, do not engage in joint work that promotes interdependent professional learning and teaching. The aim of professional learning teams is to build teachers’ skills in engaging in collaborative joint work. As teachers gain experience collaborating, these meetings continually evolve and change.

This story from a North Carolina middle school illustrates the fluid and evolutionary nature of professional learning teams.

TEAM PROGRESS OVER TIME

When 8th-grade teacher Molli Rose first heard the news, she felt a surge of apprehension. She took a deep breath and thought, “*How am I going to do this? How are any of us going to pull this off?*” It’s not that Rose and other teachers at Chowan Middle School in Tyner, N.C., didn’t see the value in the new, schoolwide focus on reading. It’s that some of the staff felt ill-equipped to tackle the imposed challenge.

The goal of the initiative was clear: to improve all students’ reading comprehension skills. Determining how to reach this school goal, however, was less clear. In spring 2001, the school decided to help teachers learn to teach reading in

all subjects across the three grade levels. To help improve instructional strategies, the school used an outside consultant from SERVE Center at the University of Carolina at Greensboro. The consultant worked throughout the year to implement professional learning teams that would focus on helping all teachers in the school become accomplished teachers of reading.

Christy Casbon, SERVE communications specialist, tells this story. The school already used teaming and provided common planning time for teachers to work together as departments and in core groups. The principal designated one of the existing planning times each week for professional learning team work. During this designated 60-minute block, teachers studied research-based practices in reading, considered strategies that might work with their students, and developed lessons and approaches they could pilot in their classrooms.

Unsurprisingly, when professional learning teams were first mentioned, Chowan teachers weren’t delighted about participating in what they suspected was yet another meeting that would eat up time. They also weren’t thrilled at the idea of planning teaching strategies every week with colleagues in other disciplines. And they weren’t sure about the process itself. Why was it necessary? How did it differ from other planning meetings?

Despite their doubts, the teachers gamely undertook the work. Each team comprised four teachers who shared common students. Team members began by sharing what they were doing already to assist students in reading. They looked at literature about teaching reading and decided which strategies could best help their students. Next, they chose common strategies, used these in their classrooms, met to reflect on students’ responses to the strategies, and worked together to revise their instruction and monitor students’ learning. The teams kept logs to document their progress, how they were collaborating, and what they were learning and doing. They shared these

Continued on p. 3

NSDC’S BELIEF

Schools’ most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.

Types of collaboration

Teachers may feel that they already engage in regular collaborative activities, and they generally may — to a degree. Many experience at least four types of collaboration with regard to teaching and instructional practices:

Informal conversations. This is the most basic stage of collaboration and generally takes place in the hallway, lunchroom, or at times when teachers meet informally during the school day. While teachers may discuss instruction, researcher J.W. Little (1990, p. 6) is skeptical of the idea that “brief stories told of classrooms could advance teachers’ understanding and practice of teaching.” These types of conversations can, however, promote collegial relationships among the staff.

Individual assistance. Teachers generally are agreeable to advising colleagues when asked. How much this advice actually improves a colleague’s teaching practice depends on the quality of the questions asked, the quality of the advice given, and the follow-up provided. Formal coaching and one-on-one or mentoring programs often produce genuine benefits and advancement for teachers. However, a coaching or mentoring program alone may not be enough to overcome the norms of isolation and individual-

ism that pervade a school’s culture.

Group sharing. When groups meet, teachers often share ideas, lesson plans, and materials with one another. Most learning team meetings begin with this stage. In fact, group sharing may even be a necessary first step in developing more meaningful collaboration. Inger (1993) notes that teachers need time to overcome years of habit and organizational separation, and sharing can be a safe and enjoyable activity for them. While such sharing is a good use of time in early meetings, without careful guidance teams may never deepen and expand their collaborative work to the next level.

Joint work. When groups of teachers work together as interdependent colleagues and rigorously examine together teaching and learning, they are engaging in mature, collaborative work. In this type of collaboration, teachers *learn* together. They jointly develop and coordinate their instructional practices. Teachers develop a collective sense of responsibility for each team member’s success and feel joint responsibility for the students they teach. When this type of collaboration occurs schoolwide, the school becomes a professional learning community in the truest sense.

Continued from p. 2

logs electronically with the principal, the entire faculty, and SERVE staff.

Building collaborative skills across the faculty took time. “During year one, most teachers didn’t see the relevance of learning teams,” admits Shannon Byrum, a Chowan 8th-grade teacher. In the second year, however, teachers’ thinking noticeably shifted. The faculty began to develop a sense of trust and willingness to experiment. Rose, for example, videotaped herself modeling a reading strategy in her class. The lesson wasn’t highly successful, and she knew it, which is precisely why she shared the video with her team. She asked them to critique the lesson, help her determine why the approach didn’t work, and offer suggestions for how to improve it. She had another motive for sharing, too. “Teachers usually see videos of accomplished teaching and don’t

know how the teacher reached that point,” says Rose. “I wanted to show them where I started. This is as real as it gets!”

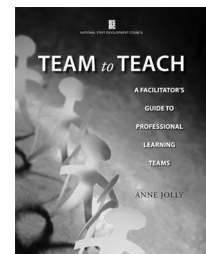
In the second year, teams e-mailed their logs to the entire school staff to encourage schoolwide sharing of ideas. Not only were teachers realizing the value of collaborating on instruction, but they also saw the importance of continual learning. “I know now that last year wasn’t a waste after all,” says Byrum. “You have to evolve to this point.”

District administrators were impressed as well. “Our goal was to create an environment where self-directed learners met high expectations,” says Allan Smith, superintendent of Edenton-Chowan Public Schools. “Professional learning teams have provided the framework whereby teachers direct their own focused professional growth to this end.” ■

COVER STORY

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Excerpted from *Team to Teach: A Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams*, by Anne Jolly. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008.

See p. 8 for more details.

NSDC TOOL

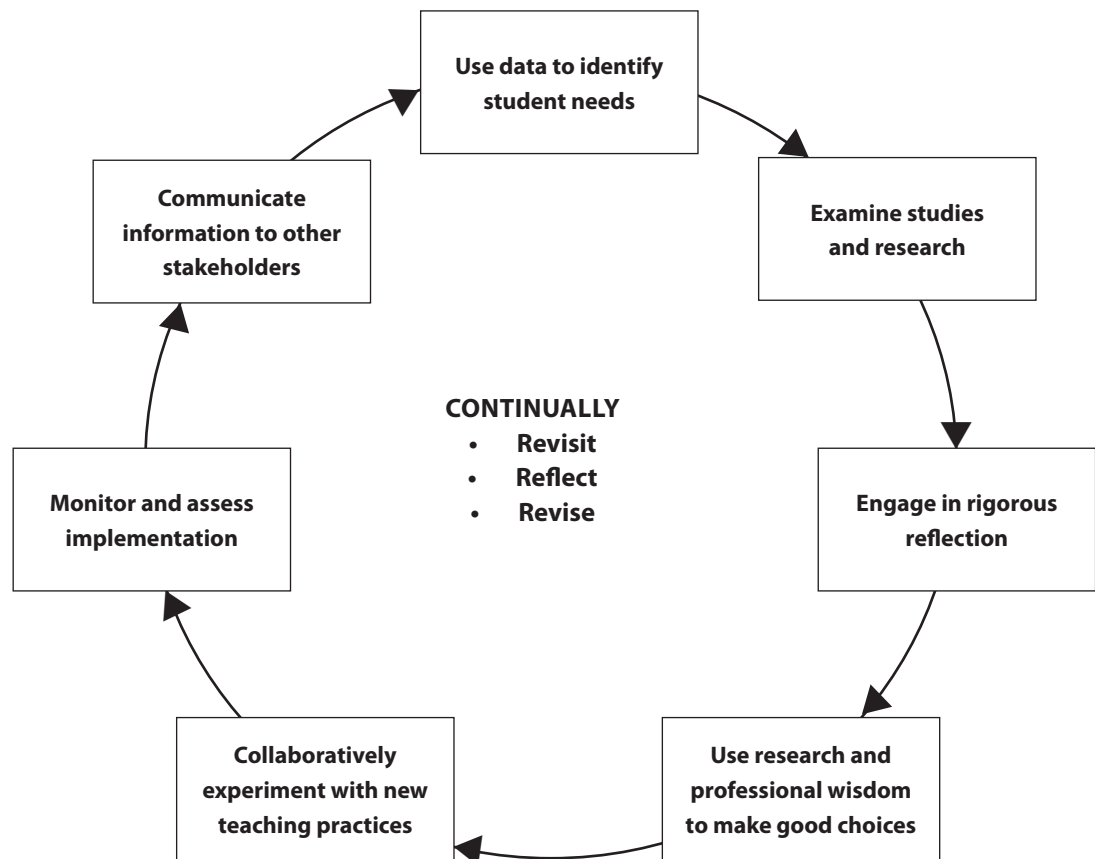
The professional learning team decision-making cycle

PURPOSE: This tool can be a reference throughout the year to help groups keep the professional learning team process in focus and on track during discussions and activities. Team members need autonomy in making decisions about the direction their team will take. Point out that this cycle illustrates the value of team members’ professional wisdom in selecting and applying appropriate practices.

TIME: 15 minutes

STEPS:

1. Copy and laminate this tool for each team.
2. Suggest that teams post the cycle in their meeting room where they can easily refer to it during their meetings.
3. Discuss the cycle with teachers.
4. Note its focus on teachers’ professional wisdom and judgment and their autonomy to decide what activities will help them better meet student needs.
5. Call attention to their freedom to experiment with new practices, the need to monitor and assess implementation, and the importance of communicating what they are learning schoolwide.
6. Point out that the process is not necessarily linear, that teams will go back and forth among the steps of the cycle throughout the year.



Adapted from the Evidence-Based Decision-Making Cycle, SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Reprinted from *Team to Teach: A Facilitator’s Guide to Professional Learning Teams*, by Anne Jolly. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008.

Meeting overview checklist

Directions: There is no single way to conduct learning team meetings. This list suggests ideas for some activities. Refer to this list periodically for ideas that might have value for your team. Include as many activities as possible throughout the year.

ALL MEETINGS

- Communicate! Keep records (logs) of all team meetings. Include big ideas from the meeting discussions, decisions made, and plans for the next meeting. After each meeting, e-mail the log or post it on a school wiki. Read logs from other teams and offer insights.
- Plan the next meeting.

INITIAL MEETING(S)

- Take care of team logistics.
- Set team norms.
- Determine a team goal.
 1. Look at a variety of student data and information.
 2. Decide on an area in which teachers need to increase their expertise, based on where students need the most help.
 3. Plan an initial course of action.
 4. Determine what information and resources are needed.

CONTINUING MEETINGS

- Examine research and information (books, articles, etc.).
- Share, develop, and/or modify instructional practices to address student needs.
- Coordinate and systematically apply new instructional practices in classrooms.
- Monitor student responses.
- Reflect on and discuss classroom applications and make needed adjustments.

POSSIBLE MEETING ACTIVITIES

- Develop joint or coordinated lessons.
- Examine student written work.
- Examine videotapes or DVDs of student responses to particular activities.
- Examine teacher assignments.
- Observe other team members or teachers using specific activities with students.
- Observe a videotape or DVD of a colleague implementing a particular strategy.
- Discuss the effectiveness of teaching strategies and approaches.
- Monitor the team's progress toward instructional goals.
- Monitor the team's functioning as a collaborative group.
- Keep the team's work public. Post logs on web sites, e-mail logs and activities school-wide, engage other teachers, run ideas by the faculty, and honor their input.
- Develop a tool kit of information and practices that can serve as a resource for other teachers.
- Modify and improve the professional learning team process throughout the year.

REFLECT: Keep a list of additional activities in which your learning team engages over the course of the year, and make these ideas available to other teams.

Reprinted from *Team to Teach: A Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams*, by Anne Jolly. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008.

NSDC TOOL

Appropriate use of learning teams

PURPOSE: This activity can get teachers thinking about suitable activities for team meetings and which activities might be better for other types of meetings. Note that these are suggestions. If your situation leads you to prefer a different response than the one listed at the end of these activities, then use your professional wisdom while keeping in mind the purpose of these meetings — to focus on teacher professional learning.

TIME: 1 hour

STEPS:

1. Make a copy for each teacher.
2. Ask each to put a check mark in the thumbs-up or the thumbs-down column for each activity, depending on whether he or she thinks the activity is appropriate for a learning team. Thumbs-up indicates the activity is appropriate; thumbs-down indicates an inappropriate activity.
3. Lead teachers in a discussion of their responses.



Professional learning teams:

1. Keep the same team members all year.		
2. Focus on school improvement issues.		
3. Coordinate and improve classroom teaching strategies.		
4. Keep the same focus for the entire school year.		
5. Work on curriculum alignment and mapping.		
6. Examine student work and analyze student thinking.		
7. Look at and apply research-based information on teaching.		
8. Focus on classroom management and discipline.		
9. Meet at the school and during the school day.		
10. Examine the impact of new teaching strategies on students.		
11. Include the principal as a member of the team.		
12. Rotate responsibilities among team members.		
13. Focus on teacher professional learning and growth.		
14. Discuss department or grade-level issues.		
15. Observe colleagues using relevant teaching strategies.		
16. Attend all learning team meetings.		
17. Document team activities and discussions in a meeting log.		
18. Work on procedures for improving standardized test scores.		
19. Discuss administrative and front-burner issues.		
20. Share team logs and accomplishments schoolwide.		
21. Keep the team size small (three to five members).		
22. Study a book about instruction (book study).		
23. Meet on an as-needed basis.		
24. Keep a focus on classroom instruction.		
25. Periodically evaluate team functioning.		

Reprinted from
Team to Teach: A Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams, by Anne Jolly.
Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008.

Appropriate use of learning teams — answer guide

The following suggested answers and information will help guide the follow-up.

1. Thumbs-up. The idea is to keep teams as stable as possible. If teams meet during planning periods and their schedule changes each semester, then a new team might have to form each semester.

2. Thumbs-down. School improvement issues generally are not focused on teacher professional learning and should be reserved for a different meeting.

3. Thumbs-up. A focus on teaching strategies is a means of improving instruction and is the heart of professional learning.

4. Thumbs-up. Teams would find it difficult to study, practice, and gain deep knowledge of ways to address a student need, such as comprehending written text, while simultaneously addressing another need — in mathematics, for example. This does not mean that teachers should not address other areas, but they might do so in department or other meetings. In learning team meetings, teachers take time to work to become accomplished in a particular area and permanently incorporate specific changes into their instruction.

5. Either thumbs-up or thumbs-down. Curriculum mapping engages teachers in identifying curriculum gaps that may contribute to student learning difficulties. In that sense, curriculum maps could provide data for teachers to analyze to determine areas for instructional focus. However, curriculum mapping also may be a procedural task that does not involve teachers in real professional learning or growth. As a stand-alone activity without follow-up, curriculum mapping may not fully accomplish the team's purpose.

6. Thumbs-up. Working collaboratively to analyze student work is one of the most meaningful forms of professional learning.

7. Thumbs-up. Reviewing best practices is an obvious form of professional learning.

8. Thumbs-down. An isolated focus on discipline generally does not result in more accomplished and effective instruction. Learning teams often address this issue by studying research-based methods of providing effective instruction to meet the needs of a variety of learners, which often leads to a resulting drop in disciplinary issues.

9. Thumbs-up. Learning that occurs on the job allows groups of teachers to join together in continual professional growth.

10. Thumbs-up. Collecting data and analyzing results leads teachers to a greater awareness of their practices and professional growth.

11. Thumbs-down. To encourage and value teachers' ability to make decisions and be self-directed, principals should make only an appearance at team meetings. Professional learning teams are a means of building capacity within the staff. The principal may support low-performing teams by briefly serving as a member to keep meetings on track.

12. Thumbs-up. Rotating responsibilities builds leadership and stretches each member of the team in new ways, leading to professional growth.

13. Thumbs-up. The essence of learning team meetings is a focus on what teachers need to learn to improve instruction that leads to better student achievement.

14. Thumbs-down. Discussing department or grade-level issues is tempting, but this is not the same as focusing on teacher practice.

15. Thumbs-up. Observation with reflection is a direct form of professional learning.

16. Thumbs-up. Teams require participation for all members to learn to collaborate effectively and to provide the benefit of their wisdom and experience to colleagues.

17. Thumbs-up. Records of team meetings help members both recall and report progress in their professional growth.

18. Thumbs-down. Standardized test scores are data to use to make decisions about areas of student need, but are not themselves the focus for a learning team meeting. Professional learning team work will affect student test scores in the long term.

19. Thumbs-down. These discussions do not result in teacher learning and growth.

20. Thumbs-up. Sharing information reinforces team members' own understanding, benefits other teams and staff, and may result in cross-team sharing of knowledge and ideas.

21. Thumbs-up. Smaller groups give team members more opportunities to connect, participate, and express ideas.

22. It depends. Studying a book about instruction and using it as a resource for improving teaching is great, even recommended. But teachers must apply what they learned from the book study for this activity to be legitimate learning team work.

23. Thumbs-down. Learning teams require regular meetings as part of the work of continually improving.

24. Thumbs-up. Improving classroom instruction is the purpose for learning teams.

25. Thumbs-up. A periodic evaluation helps keep the team on track.

Reprinted from *Team to Teach: A Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams*, by Anne Jolly. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008.

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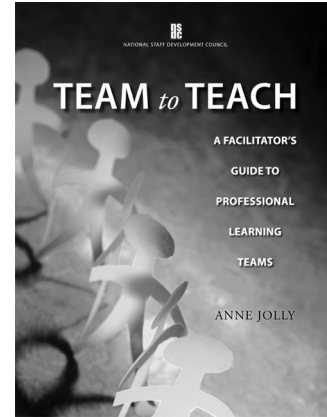
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Develop learning teams to achieve your goals

“When I entered the teaching profession,” Anne Jolly writes at the opening of her book, *Team to Teach: A Facilitator’s Guide to Professional Learning Teams*, “a set of unwritten rules seemed to govern teacher behavior and interactions.” She proceeds to describe the culture of isolation and system of norms that guided unchanging strategies that might — or might not — reach students.

Jolly has set out to change those behaviors. In a step-by-step format in this book, she guides readers through the process of forming an effective learning team that will help teachers work collaboratively. Those already meeting in groups can benefit from picking and choosing among the chapters and the myriad tools Jolly offers for each stage.

The book covers preparation for forming learning teams, implementing teams, examining results, and facilitating the process. Jolly’s years of consulting on how to improve learning teams’ work will help practitioners learn how to set the stage and maintain the momen-



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tum for the kind of school-based learning we now know is most effective for advancing both teachers’ practices and student achievement.

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PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING
COMMUNITIES

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Many professional learning teams pass through these 7 stages

BY PARRY GRAHAM
AND BILL FERRITER

Imagine having the opportunity to work at a new middle school, built around professional learning community principles. From day one, teachers are organized into professional learning teams working to define essential curriculum, develop common assessments, and analyze student data. Similarly, administrators work as a team to support the development of professional learning teams and emphasize a distributed model of leadership. Several years ago, we had the opportunity to work as a teacher and an administrator in this new school in the Wake County (N.C.)



Public School System.

With little experience to guide us, we learned a number of important lessons. First, professional learning teams represent a powerful mechanism for improvements in teaching and learning. Second, developing successful professional learning teams is difficult, requiring concerted effort from teachers and administrators. And third, while different teams develop at different rates and with different personalities, most professional learning teams pass through similar stages in terms of the nature of their work.

Like many, we found that the work of professional learning teams progressed from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. Helping teams make that progression, however — and emphasizing effective dialogue and reflection along the way — are key components in building a professional learning community. Here we outline these stages of development and provide recommendations for supporting and challenging teams.

**STAGE 1:
FILLING THE TIME**

The first question that novice teams often ask is: “What exactly are we supposed to do?” Initial meetings can be rambling affairs, especially for teams lacking clear guidelines. As teachers initially explore collaboration, meetings can swing from one extreme to the other: either struggling to fill time or tackling too many tasks in hour-long meetings. Frustration is inevitable for groups struggling with new responsibilities.

The best way to help teams move quickly out of this stage is to set clear work expectations. Defining specific tasks — such as identifying essential objectives or creating a common assessment — lends direction to an ambiguous and overwhelming process. Sample agendas, suggested team roles, and sets of adaptable

norms are helpful for developing teams. When school leaders fail to provide basic structures for early meetings, collaboration can quickly become confusing and seen as a waste of time by teachers comfortable with isolation.

**STAGE 2:
SHARING PERSONAL PRACTICES**

A common next question is: “What is everyone doing in their classrooms?” Teachers may be genuinely interested in what other teachers are doing, hoping to pick up new ideas. Or it may be that talking about teaching feels like collaboration. Initially, there is great value in these conversations because sharing practices makes instruction transparent. More importantly, conversations about practices are comfortable, serving as a first step toward establishing positive patterns of interpersonal dialogue among team members.

Unfortunately, many groups fail to move beyond sharing instructional practices to the real work of learning teams: Reflection resulting in teacher learning and improved instruction. School leaders can promote meaningful work by requiring team members to arrive at collaborative decisions around curriculum, assessment, or instruction. Teams can create shared minilessons that all teachers will deliver, shifting the focus from individual efforts to a collective exploration of effective instruction.

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**STAGE 3:
PLANNING, PLANNING,
PLANNING**

As teachers learn to work together, teams will wonder: “What should we be teaching, and how can we lighten the load?” Planning — a task that consumes all teachers — becomes an ideal place for collective efforts.

At this stage, school leaders may see a self-imposed standardization of the curriculum emerge. All teachers within a team begin teaching roughly the same content at roughly the same time in roughly the same way. Less experienced or effective teachers benefit from the planning acumen of more successful colleagues. Teams are also able to delegate responsibilities. Rather than each teacher individually planning every lesson, different members take responsibility for sets of lessons and share their work.

Unfortunately, teams often grow comfortable with shared planning and fail to focus on results. Unless challenged, team attention remains centered on teaching rather than learning. The most effective way for school leaders to move teams forward is to structure efforts to use student achievement data in the planning process. School leaders must ask teams to answer basic questions about outcomes: “Are your students learning what you want them to learn? How do you know?”

**STAGE 4:
DEVELOPING COMMON
ASSESSMENTS**

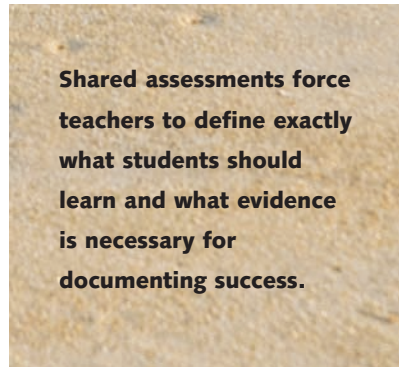
New thinking related to student outcomes forces teams to ask: “What does mastery look like?” This question can cause controversy by tapping into teachers’ deepest philosophies. Should the classroom focus be on basic skills or on applying knowledge in real-

Unfortunately, many groups fail to move beyond sharing instructional practices to the real work of learning teams: Reflection resulting in teacher learning and improved instruction.

world situations? Which is more important: being able to get the right answer or being able to explain your work?

Teams first struggle with these questions while developing common assessments. Shared assessments force teachers to define exactly what students should learn and what evidence is necessary for documenting success. Novice teams may work to avoid common assessments, thereby steering clear of difficult conversations, but common assessments are essential if teams are to shift their focus from teaching to learning.

Productively wrestling with fundamental beliefs requires teachers to develop the interpersonal skills necessary for working through contention. Having set individual direction with little intervention for years, many



experienced teachers lack the skills for finding common ground. While teams with positive relationships thrive on the synergy generated by complex conversations, teams struggling with personalities need real support. School leaders should consider moderating difficult conversations and modeling strategies for joint decision making.

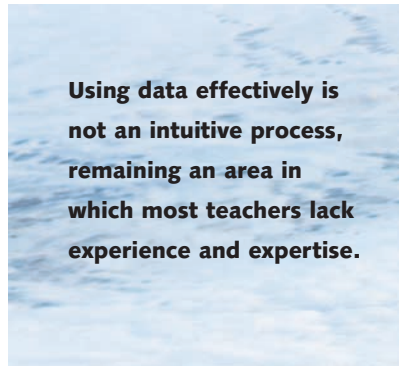
Teams may also need additional skill development in assessment during this stage. While teachers often possess an intuitive understanding of their students, common assessments require a measure of standardization, both of task and of judgment, to provide reliable comparisons. Investing energies in simplistic measures of performance will only frustrate teams and stall future work. Time spent on a study of the core differences between assessments *of* learning and *for* learning as well as a review of strategies for assessing a wide range of outcomes ensures that joint evaluation of student learning will be embraced by developing teams.

STAGE 5: ANALYZING STUDENT LEARNING

After administering common

assessments, the next question is perhaps the most challenging: “Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?” It is at this stage that professional learning teams begin to shift their focus from teaching to learning. This is also the stage where teacher teams need the most technical and emotional support.

Technically, teachers often require significant training on data analysis and interpretation. Using data effectively is not an intuitive process, remaining an area in which most teachers lack experience and expertise. School leaders who provide structures and tools for effective data analysis are rewarded with highly motivated teams driven by results. Many successful learning communities repurpose positions, hiring teachers trained in data analysis to assist teams in identifying



trends in student learning.

Common assessment data will reveal varying levels of student success across classrooms, leading to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and defensiveness. Teachers are put in the delicate position of publicly facing what they will inevitably — yet inaccurately — view as individual successes and failures. This intensely personal reaction

is understandable from invested professionals confronted with hard evidence.

When handled properly, analysis of student learning can lead to rich conversations about effective instruction. As teachers spot patterns in data, they can work as a unit to respond productively. On highly functioning teams, collective intelligence provides a never-ending source of solutions for addressing shared challenges. Getting teams to this point, however, requires emotional support and patience.

School leaders are encouraged to create safe environments in which teachers can discuss common assessments and to model nonjudgmental approaches to data. Separating the person from the practice is an essential first step for teams examining results. School leaders should also

“walk the walk,” sharing reports reflecting their own work, such as faculty or parent surveys, in public forums.

By modeling a data-oriented approach, school leaders send the message that data analysis is about improving outcomes, not judging individuals.

**STAGE 6:
DIFFERENTIATING FOLLOW-UP**

While teacher teams almost naturally move to the next stage of development — responding instructionally to student data — school leaders can facilitate this transition in two important ways: by asking teams to reflect on the right questions and by giving teams the resources needed to craft appropriate responses.

As teams become adept at analyzing student data, school leaders should no longer be directing team development, instead serving as collaborative partners in ongoing conversations about teaching and learning. Teams at this point in the process are typically performing at a high level, taking collective responsibility for student success rather than responding as individuals.

The most effective way to further develop a team at this level is to pose questions, both to the team and to individual members: “Which instructional practices are the most effective across

your team? What concepts do your students struggle with? Are your students able to apply knowledge to novel problems?” By posing provocative questions and demonstrating flexibility as teams pursue various approaches for intervention and enrichment, school leaders encourage

the professional ownership that defines accomplished educators.

More importantly, however, school leaders must identify concrete ways to support differentiation. Traditionally, this has meant identifying professional development opportunities or providing substitutes so that teachers can plan responses as a group. Interested teams are often engaged in partnerships with sister schools sharing similar student populations. Funding is provided for after-school tutoring, honoring the talents of teachers filling once voluntary roles.

But supporting differentiation also requires a commitment to nontraditional school structures and processes beyond the classroom. Effective administrators reallocate positions, focusing resources on struggling students. Rethinking the role of guidance counselors, secretaries, teacher assistants, media specialists, assistant principals, and literacy coaches creates a pool of human capital that can be tapped to address the challenges involved in differentiating learning for all students.

Action from those beyond the classroom is essential to maintaining a learning community’s momentum. While school leaders can begin to move out of a directive role with individual teams, their efforts to coordinate available resources, support innovative approaches to differentiation, and engage faculty members in new work will determine how successful a building will be at meeting the needs of every learner.

**STAGE 7:
REFLECTING ON INSTRUCTION**

Teams performing at a high level will eventually ask one final question: “Which practices are most effective with our students?” This question brings the process of professional learning team development full circle, connecting learning back to teaching.

Teams at this point are engaged in deep reflection, tackling innovative projects such as action research or lesson studies.

At this point, school leaders should facilitate a team’s ability to explore the teaching-learning connection. Efforts might include giving teachers the opportunity to observe each other or providing released time to complete independent projects. When multiple teams in the school are at this level, school leaders may facilitate cross-team conversations, creating opportunities for practices and perspectives to migrate school-wide.

NAVIGATING A CHALLENGING PATH

While the process of developing a professional learning team may feel uniquely personal, we believe certain stages of development are common across teams. We hope that by helping educators to understand that these stages exist and by describing both the challenges and opportunities inherent in each stage, we can improve the chances of success.

The path to building learning communities may be difficult, but students will benefit from the process. While teachers face significant challenges, so do school leaders committed to supporting substantive teacher collaboration. Those leaders must play multiple roles — at times, walking with the members of a professional learning team; at times, walking a few steps ahead and anticipating the next turn in the road. ■

As teams become adept at analyzing student data, school leaders should no longer be directing team development, instead serving as collaborative partners in ongoing conversations about teaching and learning.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1999



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Tools For Schools™

A bi-monthly
publication
supporting student
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through school
improvement

Norms put the ‘Golden Rule’ into practice for groups

By Joan Richardson

Lillian always arrives late and thinks nothing of chatting with her seatmate while someone else is trying to make a point. Arthur routinely reads a newspaper during each meeting. Barbara can't wait until each meeting ends so she can head to the parking lot to tell someone what she could have said during the meeting.

Later, most of them grumble that “these meetings are just a waste of my time. We never get anything accomplished.”

Having a set of norms—or ground rules—that a group follows encourages behaviors that will help a group do its work and discourages behaviors that interfere with a group's effectiveness.

Think of norms as “a behavior contract,” said Kathryn Blumsack, an educational consultant from Maryland who specializes in team development.

Norms are the unwritten rules for how we act and what we do. They are the rules that govern how we interact with each other, how we conduct business, how we make decisions, how we communicate, even how we dress when we get together. “Norms are part of the culture. They exist whether or not you acknowledge them. They exist whether or not you formalize them,” Blumsack said.

Pat Roy, director of the Delaware Professional Development Center, said identifying a set of norms is an effective way to democratize a group. Writing norms helps create groups that are able to have

honest discussions that enable everyone to participate and be heard, she said.

WHO NEEDS NORMS?

Any group that meets regularly or that is trying to “do business” needs to identify its existing norms or develop new norms. In school districts, that would include department groups, grade level teams, interdisciplinary teams, content area teams, school improvement teams, action teams, curriculum committees, leadership teams, advisory committees, and special project groups.

Although a group can pause and set norms at any time, Blumsack and Roy agree that it's ideal to set norms at the beginning of a group's work together.

“If you don't set norms at the beginning, when the behaviors become ineffective you have a harder time pulling behavior back to where it should be,” Roy said.

Because every group has unspoken norms for behavior, groups need to work at being explicit about what they expect from each other. “Get those assumptions out on the table,” Blumsack said.

CREATING NORMS

Some groups would prefer to have a set of norms handed to them. But Roy and Blumsack both said groups will feel more ownership of the norms

Continued on Page 2

Tools For Schools

Norms put ‘Golden Rule’ into practice

Continued from Page One

if they identify and write their own.

“If they don’t do this, 10 minutes after you’ve handed them a list, they’ll begin violating the norms because they aren’t their norms,” Roy said.

There are two distinct ways to write norms. The first is by observing and writing down the norms that already are in use.

That’s how the NSDC Board of Trustees established the set of norms it has used for about eight years. The NSDC board meets for two days twice a year, each time with a lengthy agenda of material that must be addressed.

The norms (which are published on Page 5) grew out of a board discussion about how it operated and how it wanted to operate. Pat Roy, who was then a board member, was tapped to observe the board’s implicit norms during one meeting and draft a set of norms. “Essentially, I wrote down what I saw in operation,” Roy said.

Roy’s first draft was edited and refined by staff and other board members. That set of initial norms has been largely unchanged over the years.

The second way is to have group members suggest ideal behaviors for groups, eventually refining those suggested behaviors into a set of norms. (See the tool on Page 3.)

Blumsack cautions that norms must fit the group. Not every group would feel comfortable with the same set of rules, which is why each group must create its own rules, she said.

For example, she recently worked with a group that was “very chatty, very extroverted.” Initially, the group wanted a norm that banned side conversations. Two days into their work, the group was frustrated because Blumsack, as the facilitator, kept trying to enforce the norm against side conversations. Finally, the group agreed to

modify the norm to fit its unique personality. Their new norm was: “If you need to make a comment, do so but return quickly to the main conversation.”

PUBLICIZING THE NORMS

Simply writing norms does not guarantee that the group will remember and respect them. Groups need to continually remind themselves about the norms they’ve identified.

At a minimum, the norms should be posted in the group’s meeting room, Roy said. “Post them and celebrate them,” she said.

Blumsack recommends creating tented name cards for each group member. On the side facing out, write the group member’s name; on the side facing the member, print the group’s norms.

The NSDC board receives a list of its norms along with materials for each of its twice-a-year board meetings. Then, at the beginning of each meeting, the president reintroduces the norms to reacquaint board members with them. Since new board members join each year, this also helps to acculturate newcomers with the board’s expectations.

Sometimes, the board uses activities to aid in that. During one meeting, for example, each board member was asked to illustrate one norm and the others tried to identify the norms based on those illustrations. Those illustrations were then taped to the meeting room’s walls as visual reminders to be vigilant about the norms. Another time, board members were asked to write down as many board norms as they could recall from memory.

ENFORCING THE NORMS

Perhaps the toughest part of living with norms is having the norms enforced.

“The reality is that every group will violate every norm at one time or another. So you have to talk about violations and

how you’ll deal with them,” Roy said.

Blumsack agrees. “If you don’t call attention to the fact that a norm has been violated, in effect you’re creating a second set of norms. For example, a common norm is expecting everyone to be on time. If you don’t point out when someone violates that norm, then, in effect, you’re saying that it’s really not important to be on time,” Blumsack said.

After a group identifies its norms, they suggest asking how they would like to be notified that they have violated a norm.

Roy recommends finding light, humorous ways to point out violations. One group she worked with kept a basket of foam rubber balls in the middle of the table. Violation of a norm meant being pelted with foam rubber balls. Other groups have used small colored cards, flags, or hankies that could be waved when a violation was noted.

Having all group members take responsibility for enforcing the norm is key, Blumsack said. Enforcing the norms should not be just the job of the group’s leader.

EVALUATING THE NORMS

Finally, each group needs to periodically evaluate its adherence to the norms. A group that meets once or twice a year might evaluate each time they meet; a group that meets weekly might evaluate once a month or so.

Blumsack recommends giving each group member an opportunity to speak about what he or she has observed or take each statement and ask group members “how well did we do on this norm?”

Each member should be encouraged to identify the group’s areas of strength as well as its areas of weakness, but not to single out violators.

“The more ‘up front’ you are about how the group is doing, the easier it will be to communicate about the other issues you’re dealing with,” Blumsack said.

August/September 1999

Developing norms

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules. In existing groups, anonymity will help ensure that everyone is able to express their ideas freely. That is the reason for suggesting that the facilitator provide pens or pencils and ask that everyone use the same type of writing implement.

SUPPLIES: Index cards, pens/pencils, poster paper, display board, tape, tacks.

TIME: Two hours.

Directions

1. Indicate to the group that effective groups generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the group, and enables the group to accomplish its task.
2. Provide examples of norms by posting the list of norms that appears on Page 5 of this issue of *Tools for Schools*.
3. Recommend to the group that it establish a set of norms:
 - To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
 - To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
 - To facilitate the achievement of its goals.
4. Give five index cards and the same kind of writing tool to each person in the group.
5. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each of their cards. Time: 10 minutes.
6. The facilitator should shuffle all the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals, especially if the group has worked together before.
7. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. Tape or tack each card to a display board so that all group members can see it. As each subsequent card is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Cards with similar ideas should be grouped together.
8. When all of the cards have been sorted into groups, ask the group to write the norm suggested by that group of cards. Have one group member record these new norms onto a large sheet of paper.
9. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

Source: Adapted from *Tools for change workshops* by Robby Champion. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, 1993.

Writing norms helps

create groups that are

able to have honest

discussions that enable

everyone to participate

and be heard.

Tools For Schools

Developing norms

WHEN ESTABLISHING NORMS, CONSIDER:	PROPOSED NORM
<p>TIME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do we meet? • Will we set a beginning and ending time? • Will we start and end on time? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>LISTENING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we encourage listening? • How will we discourage interrupting? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>CONFIDENTIALITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the meetings be open? • Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence? • What can be said after the meeting? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>DECISION MAKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we make decisions? • Are we an advisory or a decision-making body? • Will we reach decisions by consensus? • How will we deal with conflicts? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>PARTICIPATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we encourage everyone’s participation? • Will we have an attendance policy? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>EXPECTATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we expect from members? • Are there requirements for participation? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

August/September 1999

Source: *Keys to successful meetings* by Stephanie Hirsh, Ann Delehant, and Sherry Sparks. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, 1994.

Norms of the NSDC Board of Trustees and Staff

WE WILL WORK TOGETHER as a community that values consensus rather than majority rule.

WE WILL BE FULLY “PRESENT” at the meeting by becoming familiar with materials before we arrive and by being attentive to behaviors which affect physical and mental engagement.

WE WILL INVITE AND WELCOME the contributions of every member and listen to each other.

WE WILL BE INVOLVED to our individual level of comfort. Each of us is responsible for airing disagreements during the meeting rather than carrying those disagreements outside the board meeting.

WE WILL OPERATE in a collegial and friendly atmosphere.

WE WILL USE HUMOR as appropriate to help us work better together.

WE WILL KEEP CONFIDENTIAL our discussions, comments, and deliberations.

WE WILL BE RESPONSIBLE for examining all points of view before a consensus is accepted.

WE WILL BE GUIDED BY the NSDC mission statement which focuses on organization and professional development which enhances success for all students.



Tools For Schools

Norms for meetings

- ▶ Start on time.
- ▶ Develop and review the agenda.
- ▶ Conduct one piece of business at a time.
- ▶ Participation is a right...and a responsibility.
- ▶ Initiate ideas.
- ▶ Support...challenge...counter. Differences resolved constructively lead to creative problem solving.
- ▶ Give others a chance to talk. Silence does not always mean agreement.
- ▶ Communicate authentically; what a person says should reflect what he thinks as well as what he feels.
- ▶ Conduct group business in front of the group.
- ▶ Conduct personal business outside of the meeting.
- ▶ Develop conditions of respect, acceptance, trust, and caring.
- ▶ Develop alternative approaches to the solution of a problem.
- ▶ Test for readiness to make decisions.
- ▶ Make the decision.
- ▶ Assign follow-up actions and responsibilities.
- ▶ Summarize what has been accomplished.
- ▶ End on time.

Source: Building systems for professional growth: An action guide, by the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1989. Reprinted from Keys to successful meetings by Stephanie Hirsh, Ann Delehant, and Sherry Sparks. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, 1994.

Norms within which we agree to work

WE WILL:

- ▶ Expect a leadership team member to make a commitment for one year.
- ▶ Meet only when there is a meaningful agenda.
- ▶ Start and end on time.
- ▶ Dress comfortably.
- ▶ Have refreshments.
- ▶ Have a different facilitator and recorder for each meeting.
- ▶ Keep meetings open.
- ▶ Differentiate between brainstorming and discussion.
- ▶ Only address schoolwide issues.
- ▶ Express disagreement with ideas, not individuals.
- ▶ Feel responsible to express differing opinions within the meeting.
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality regarding disagreements expressed during the meeting.
- ▶ Reach decisions by consensus.

Source: Hamilton Park Pacesetter School, Richardson Independent School District, Dallas, Texas.



Learning about developing norms

- **How to Make Meetings Work** by Michael Doyle and David Straus. New York: Jove Books, 1982. Describes how to stop wasting time and make meetings more effective. ISBN 0-515-09048-4. Check your local bookstore or library for a copy.
- **Joining Together: Group Theory and Skills** (6th edition) by David Johnson and Frank Johnson. Needham, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1996. Explores trust, leadership, and group development theory, including development of norms and why they are needed. Provides activities and simulations. ISBN 0-2205-19750-7. Check your local bookstore or library for a copy.
- **Keys to Successful Meetings** by Stephanie Hirsh, Ann Delehant, and Sherry Sparks. Oxford, Ohio: NSDC, 1994. A manual that provides the knowledge, skills, and processes necessary to conduct team meetings. Includes more than 70 guide sheets for immediate reproduction and use in

meetings. NSDC stock # B39. Price: \$80, non-members; \$64, members. To order, phone (513) 523-6029 or visit the NSDC Web site at www.nsd.org.

- **Skilled Facilitator** by Roger Schwarz. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1994. Practical guide for leading groups effectively, including many suggestions about developing norms. ISBN 1-55542-638-7. Price: \$30.95. To order, phone (415) 433-1740.

- **Team Building Toolkit** by Deborah Harrington-Mackin. New York: American Management Assn., 1994. Spells out guidelines for turning a diverse group of employees into an effective team. Offers helpful lists of tips and tactics for team members and group leaders. ISBN 0-8144-7826-3. Price: \$ 17.95. Phone (212) 586-8100.

- **Tools for Change Workshops** by Robby Champion. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, 1993. Eighteen workshop modules help groups learn more about the four phases of organizational change. Includes ready-to-use structured exercises, case studies, instruments, transparencies, and handouts. Includes discussion about development of norms. NSDC stock # B27. Price: \$150, non-members; \$120, members. To order, phone (513) 523-6029 or visit the NSDC Web site at www.nsd.org.



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August/September 1999

Tools For Schools

Ask Dr. Developer



Dr. Developer has all the answers to questions that staff developers ask. (At least he thinks he does!)

A simple test can be revealing

Q *I think spending hours to develop norms is a waste of time. Everyone attending these meetings is an adult. Adults know how to behave and participate in meetings. We just want to get to work when we get into one of these meetings. We don't want to sit around and talk about how we're going to do that work.*

A I wonder if everyone attending these meetings agrees that everyone knows how to behave. Whenever I've asked groups if they need to develop norms, I usually hear from at least two or three persons who like the idea. I've discovered that these individuals often haven't been able to fully participate in meetings. Often, they believe that one or two individuals dominate the discussion, resulting in decisions that they can't support.

Answering these questions may help you decide whether your group needs to spend time developing norms:

- Does every member join in your group's discussions?
- Does each member listen as the others speak?

- Does any single member dominate the discussions?
- Do all members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting?
- Is everyone prepared to do their work when they arrive?
- Does each member of the group believe his or her time at the meeting has been well spent?

One way to test whether everyone agrees on the norms that guide your meetings is to ask the members of your group. Distribute index cards and, on each card, ask each member to write one norm that they believe governs the group's behavior. Post those responses so that all members can see the responses.

If you find that the group identifies the same norms and wants to continue those norms, then you merely need to assemble them into a list that can be easily shared with your group.

On the other hand, if your group is not in agreement on the norms, you still have work to do.

Ultimately, all members of the group should have a voice in deciding whether the group needs to spell out norms and then in working to identify what they should be.

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TRUST factors

DIRECTIONS: The characteristics below help to increase trust among team members. Build a picture of the trust level in your team by placing marks on the chart (p. 8) at the appropriate level for each trust factor. Consider your team members as a whole when indicating the level of trust.

- **Care:** We care about each other professionally and personally, and we are willing to go the extra mile for one another. We show sensitivity to one another's needs, desires, and interests.

- **Collaboration:** We limit our competitive tendencies to lower the barriers between us. We share power and control during the course of our work rather than hoarding it.

- **Competence:** We believe in each other's ability and willingness to fulfill our responsibilities effectively. We believe that everyone on our team has skills and is capable of contributing.

- **Confidence:** We have confidence in one another, and we lean on one another. We believe we will all fulfill our obligations and do the right thing for the right reasons.

- **Consistency:** We behave in consistent and predictable ways. Our words match our subsequent actions, and we honor our team commitments. We do what we say we will do.

- **Integrity:** We trust each other to put the interests of students first and to make changes to meet their needs. We are clear about the intentions and motives for others' actions.

- **Openness:** We communicate accurately, openly, and transparently. We lay our cards on the table respectfully, and others accept who we are and what we think.

- **Conviviality:** Our team meeting atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable. People can be direct in their communications.

- **Respect:** We acknowledge one another's ideas and interact in courteous ways. We genuinely listen to one another and treat each other with dignity.

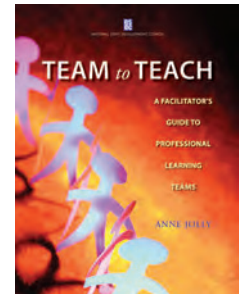
- **Self-acceptance:** We are comfortable with ourselves. We accept ourselves and our potential.

- **Support:** We verbally and publicly support each other.

- **Familiarity:** We get to know each other. We know each other's interests, contributions, abilities. We are aware and accepting of team members' assets and shortcomings.

From the book

This is just one of dozens of tools from *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams* by Anne Jolly. Published by NSDC, this step-by-step book includes the guidelines and tools learning team leaders need to build a successful professional learning team.



Order through the NSDC bookstore at www.nsdccstore.org or call 800-727-7288. Item #B394, member price: \$40.00, nonmember price: \$50.00.

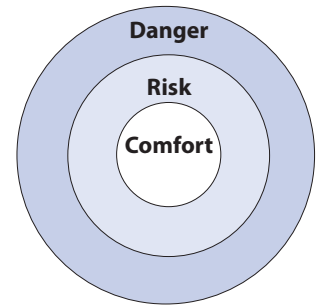
	10												
	9												
	8												
	7												
	6												
	5												
	4												
	3												
	2												
	1												
		Care	Collaboration	Competence	Confidence	Consistency	Integrity	Openness	Conviviality	Respect	Self-acceptance	Support	Familiarity

WHAT A DISTRICT LEADER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ...

ZONES OF COMFORT, RISK, AND DANGER

CONSTRUCTING YOUR ZONE MAP

1. Draw a diagram of concentric circles in the following manner:
 - a. The middle circle is comfort, the second is risk, the third is danger.
 - b. Consider the various aspects of your work (as a Critical Friends Group coach, for example). Think about the aspects that feel really comfortable to you, those that feel like there is some risk involved, but generally positive, and those aspects that you know get your hackles up, make you feel defensive, cloud your judgment, make you want to retreat.
 - c. Decide on the size of each zone based on your consideration. Do you work a lot in your comfort zone, your risk zone? Do you work only a little in your danger zone? Make the size of the zones reflect the quantity of time you work there.
2. Think about the different activities you do and/or affective domains in which you work (i.e. facilitating groups, leading protocols, designing meetings, guiding peer observation, responding to conflicts between group members...). Make a list if it helps.
3. Put each activity or affective domain into the zone that best represents your sense of relative comfort, risk or danger.



OBSERVATIONS ON THE ZONES

1. **The comfort zone** is usually a place where we feel at ease, with no tension, have a good grip on the topic, like to hear from others about the topic, know how to navigate occasional rough spots with ease. It is also a place to retreat to from the danger zone. For example, one of your danger zone aspects may be when people start disagreeing with passion and even disrespect. You might find that when that happens, you retreat into your comfort aspect of listening and not intervening, or even find a way to divert the conversation to a topic that is in your comfort zone.
2. **The risk zone** is the most fertile place for learning. It is where most people are willing to take some risks, do not know everything, or sometimes do not know anything at all, but clearly know they want to learn and will take the risks necessary to do so. It is where people open up to other people with curiosity and interest, and where they will consider options or ideas they haven't thought of before.
3. **Generally it is not a good idea to work from either your own danger zone or anyone else's.** That area is so full of defenses, fears, red-lights, desire for escape, etc., that it requires too much energy and time to accomplish anything from that zone. The best way to work when you find yourself there is to recognize that it is a danger zone and work on some strategies to move into the risk zone (either on your own or with colleagues).

For example, if I feel my anger rising and my body getting rigid when someone says it's time we really clamped down on standardized tests and taught to them right now before the kids failed any more and it is suggested that our Critical Friends Group should work in that direction as our main focus, I recognize the signs of being in my danger zone and know I probably won't be rational when I speak. Therefore I need a strategy. In this case, my strategy will be to ask calmly, "What are the advantages for the students if we do that? What are the advantages for teaching and learning? What are the disadvantages?" Then I have to listen and list. I can't trust myself to do more than ask questions until I become more rational and this isn't such a high level danger zone for me.

HOW TO APPLY THE ZONES PRODUCTIVELY: CONNECTION TO DILEMMAS

The Consultancy

1. Review your zone map and select a dilemma represented there.
2. Make some notes to give more detail to the dilemma. Notice what zone the dilemma appears in, or if it is a complex dilemma and has aspects in several zones.
3. Break into triads and plan your order and time for three consultancies.
4. As you present your dilemma, use your zone map as a reference for the group. The group may find fertile ground for probing questions or feedback in your map, and can see how your dilemma relates to other aspects of your work.



Alternative to the Consultancy

1. Write a dilemma about your work before you come to the zones workshop.
2. After you have done the zones map, divide into triads.
3. Take turns reading your dilemmas aloud to each other.
4. Discuss the following questions for each person (20 minutes each):
 - a. How does your dilemma relate to your zone map? What zone(s) is the dilemma happening in for you? For others related to your dilemma?
 - b. Are you working in your danger zone? Someone else's? Do you need to know about other people's danger zones?
 - c. If your dilemma is in your danger zone (or someone else's), how can you move those issues into a risk or comfort zone? How might this movement contribute to solving the dilemma?
 - d. What would the other people who contribute to or are affected by your dilemma say about your dilemma?

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www.nsrffharmony.org.

Quick check

Directions: After each meeting, look at your list of your team’s basic ground rules and take a minute to consider whether team members followed them. You may use the suggestions below to add to the ground rules your team has set.

- Did every member join in the team’s discussions?
- Did each member listen attentively as others spoke?
- Did one or two members dominate the discussions?
- Did all members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting?
- Were all members prepared for the meeting when they arrived?
- Were all members “totally present” during the meeting?
- Did each member of the group believe that his or her time at the meeting was well spent?

WHAT WE DID WELL

WHAT WE WILL IMPROVE

Source: “A simple test can be revealing,” by Joan Richardson. (1999, August/September.) *Tools for Schools*, 8.

DECEMBER/JANUARY 1999



NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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INSIDE

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- 4** Scoreboard
- 5** Checklist for resolving conflicts
- 6** Positions and interests chart
- 7** Resources
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CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Common goals override individual interests

By Joan Richardson

The school improvement team is tussling – again – over the issue of how to create more time for teachers to meet together. One of the teachers on the team is hunkered down in one corner, quietly ignoring the discussion; other teachers are arguing for a variety of options. A parent on the team complains loudly – again – that students are being deprived of instructional time. The principal argues that one meeting day every three months is plenty of time for teachers.

How would you resolve these conflicts?

Although physical violence makes newspaper headlines, most of the conflicts in schools involve neither guns nor other weapons. Instead, the conflicts tend to swirl around values and beliefs, perceptions of who's in charge, and disagreements over how to reach decisions. Sometimes, the battles between adults are teacher versus teacher, or teachers versus principals, or educators versus the community.

What is conflict? Conflict is any disagreement between two or more parties in which one party

believes his, her, or their rights are deprived, suggests Joellen Killion, a staff developer with the Adams Twelve Five Star district in Northglenn, Colorado, who frequently teaches conflict resolution workshops.

Conflict occurs when “two or more parties discover that what each wants is incompatible with what the other wants. A want that is incompatible with another is one that interferes with or in some manner hinders the achievement of, the second,” writes Thomas Kayser in *Building Team Power*.

The first step in effectively resolving disputes is recognizing that conflict is a natural part of the change process, say experts in the subject. It is neither good nor bad, they say.

“Conflict is an ordinary occurrence in life. That’s the number one thing that people don’t understand. They think that if they’re having conflicts that something is wrong. Conflict is actually a pretty good way to grow,” says Judith Warner, a trainer with Aiki Works.

Kayser agrees. “If all members’ approaches, perspectives, and values were the same, there would

Continued on Page 2

Conflict is any disagreement between two or more parties in which one party believes his, her, or their rights are deprived.

Conflict Resolution

Tools For Schools

Common goals override individual interests

Continued from Page One

be little need for group decisions at all,” he writes.

Since all groups can be expected to experience conflict at one time or another, developing a strategy for dealing with disputes can guide a group through the rough patches, say the experts.

The following process is adapted from the work of Thomas Kayser, Joellen Killion, and Cindy Harrison.

Identify the situation/question/problem as a group.

When the group defines the problem, there is a greater likelihood the entire group will understand the problem thoroughly.

With the facilitator writing on a flip chart, write down the issue. In the example above, the issue might be explained as “Establishing weekly time for teachers to meet together without sacrificing instructional time.”

If the group is large, break into smaller groups and report back.

List interests of the individuals involved.

“Interests define the problem. The basic problem lies not in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each side’s needs, desires, concerns, and fears...Such desires and needs are interests. Interests motivate people; they are the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions. Your interests are what caused you to so decide,” write Roger Fisher and William Ury in *Getting to Yes*.

In the example above, what are the interests of the various parties? Assume that the teachers who are searching for more time to meet together are doing so because they’re eager to discover new ways to teach. The quiet teacher may feel inadequate, even fearful, about talking with colleagues about his teaching. The parent could be concerned that increasing time for teachers to meet will mean that children will have a shorter



Since all groups can be expected to experience conflict at one time or another, developing a strategy for dealing with disputes can guide a group through the rough patches.

school day and her schedule at home will be disrupted. The principal may fear loss of influence if teachers are allowed to meet more often.

Use the tool on Page 6 to help with this.

Define the common interests and the common areas of difference.

Look for the interests that are in common and circle them. Ask those whose interests are not in agreement with anyone else to explain the reason for their interests. Sometimes, by talking through the interests, it’s possible to identify other interests behind the stated ones and find interests that align with others that have already been identified.

Generate possible resolutions to the problems/questions/situation.

Use a flip chart to generate a list of resolutions that will address the common interests of this group. Or have the group list each possible resolution on a strip of paper.

Identifying possible resolutions should be a creative process and can be done in smaller groups. Individuals should be encouraged to think “outside the box.” At this stage, no solutions should be rejected. Report out to the larger group if small groups are used.

Combine or collapse items that overlap or connect in obvious ways.

When the full group is assembled, the list of ideas or the strips with ideas should be posted at the front of the room.

Then, the facilitator should read through each suggested resolution and ensure that all participants understand what is being proposed.

If the strips of paper are used, participants should then group together the strips with overlapping ideas. If the flip chart is used, the facilitator should guide the discussion and create a new, shorter list of potential resolutions.

Test the acceptability of resolutions.

Rate the items generated using a criteria matrix of the interests that are in common with others. Each individual should rate the resolutions individually then, as a small group and, finally, as a large group. The facilitator can take all responses and calculate a grand total to identify resolutions that merit further consideration.

It’s best not to take the single best resolution at this point without some discussion. Typically, a new resolution – one that is a modified version of one previously identified or a combination of several – will emerge from the discussion which is given far more value by the entire group.

Resolving conflicts is really about how to get people to recognize that their interest alone is not good for the whole school, says Killion. “What makes a school a wonderful, democratic environment is that you have people who bring their individual interests and can work collaboratively to reflect what the whole community wants. It’s really about self-interest versus the good of the community,” she said.

Warner agrees. “Conflict resolution is not about two people walking into the sunset holding hands. It’s about de-escalating the problems and having everyone feel respected and honored for their contributions.”

How I act in conflicts

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity will help team members identify the attitudes they bring to team discussions. Use it in the early stages of your team development. It is not intended to be used when the team is actively engaged in trying to work through an issue.

TIME: 45 minutes.

SUPPLIES: Make one copy of this page and the scoring page for each team member.

Directions

Proverbs state traditional wisdom. The proverbs listed below can be thought of as descriptions of some of the different strategies for resolving conflicts. Read each proverb carefully. Using the scale given below, indicate how typical each proverb is of your actions in a conflict.

5=Very typical

4=Frequently typical

3=Sometimes typical

2=Seldom typical

1= Never typical

- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ 1. It is easier to refrain than to retreat from a quarrel. | _____ 20. Only the person who is willing to give up his or her monopoly on truth can ever profit from the truths that others hold. |
| _____ 2. If you cannot make a person think as you do, make him or her do as you think. | _____ 21. Avoid quarrelsome people as they will only make your life miserable. |
| _____ 3. Soft words win hard hearts. | _____ 22. A person who will not flee will make others flee. |
| _____ 4. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. | _____ 23. Soft words ensure harmony. |
| _____ 5. Come now and let us reason together. | _____ 24. One gift for another makes good friends |
| _____ 6. When two quarrel, the person who keeps silent first is the most praiseworthy. | _____ 25. Bring your conflicts into the open and face them directly; only then will the best solution be discovered. |
| _____ 7. Might overcomes right. | _____ 26. The best way of handling conflicts is to avoid them. |
| _____ 8. Smooth words make smooth ways. | _____ 27. Put your foot down where you mean to stand. |
| _____ 9. Better half a loaf than no bread at all. | _____ 28. Gentleness will triumph over anger. |
| _____ 10. Truth lies in knowledge, not in majority opinion. | _____ 29. Getting part of what you want is better than not getting anything at all. |
| _____ 11. He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day. | _____ 30. Frankness, honesty, and trust will move mountains. |
| _____ 12. He hath conquered well that hath made his enemies flee. | _____ 31. There is nothing so important you have to fight for it. |
| _____ 13. Kill your enemies with kindness. | _____ 32. There are two kinds of people in the world: the winners and the losers. |
| _____ 14. A fair exchange brings no quarrel. | _____ 33. When one hits you with a stone, hit him or her with a piece of cotton. |
| _____ 15. No person has the final answer but every person has a piece to contribute. | _____ 34. When both people give in halfway, a fair settlement is achieved. |
| _____ 16. Stay away from people who disagree with you. | _____ 35. By digging and digging, the truth is discovered. |
| _____ 17. Fields are won by those who believe in winning. | |
| _____ 18. Kind words are worth much more and cost little. | |
| _____ 19. Tit for tat is fair play. | |

Source: *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*, Sixth Edition by David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson. Copyright 1997, Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted with permission.

Tools For Schools

Conflict resolution styles



Each individual has his or her own way of responding to conflict. Recognizing your personal style of confronting conflict can help you – and your group – become more effective in resolving disputes.

WITHDRAWING

Unassertive and uncooperative. Retreats from discussion. Indifferent to the needs of others. Does not address the conflict or even acknowledge it. Usually uncomfortable with the issue or uninterested in resolution.

FORCING

Assertive and uncooperative. Pursues his or her own goals at the expense of others.

SMOOTHING

Unassertive and uncooperative. Opposite of competing. Minimizes differences. Neglects his or her own needs in favor of the needs of others.

COMPROMISING

Moderately assertive and cooperative. Negotiates. Recognizes that all parties are making inflated requests and must give a little to get a little.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Both assertive and cooperative. Confronts issues directly. Employs creative problem solving. Recognizes that the conflict is not resolved until all parties are comfortable with solution and their needs satisfied.

“How I act in conflicts” scoreboard

Directions

Write your scores from Page 3 in the correct blanks. Total your scores for each column. Your natural style for dealing with conflict will be the column with the highest score.

_____ 1.	_____ 2.	_____ 3.	_____ 4.	_____ 5.
_____ 6.	_____ 7.	_____ 8.	_____ 9.	_____ 10.
_____ 11.	_____ 12.	_____ 13.	_____ 14.	_____ 15.
_____ 16.	_____ 17.	_____ 18.	_____ 19.	_____ 20.
_____ 21.	_____ 22.	_____ 23.	_____ 24.	_____ 25.
_____ 26.	_____ 27.	_____ 28.	_____ 29.	_____ 30.
_____ 31.	_____ 32.	_____ 33.	_____ 34.	_____ 35.
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
WITHDRAWING	FORCING	SMOOTHING	COMPROMISING	PROBLEM SOLVING

Source: *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*, Sixth Edition by David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson. Copyright 1997, Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted with permission.

Checklist for resolving conflicts

Directions

This tool can be used to aid individual team members in identifying how they can prepare for meetings. Make and distribute one copy of this page for each team member.

Before meeting with _____.

1. Identify my needs in this situation.
2. Determine the degree of importance I place on this situation and the relationship I have with the other party to assess my willingness to resolve this conflict.
3. Clarify the conflict situation for myself and include:
 - _____ The other person's/party's needs.
 - _____ A mutual perspective recognizing that the problem is a shared one.
 - _____ A specific, limited focus that can be addressed.
 - _____ My feelings about the other party's actions using clear "I messages."

In meeting with the other party, I:

4. State my willingness to work collaboratively to resolve the conflict.
5. State my needs and interests and ask the other party for his/her/their interests.
6. Am honest with my feelings and reactions.
7. Avoid blaming, accusing, or finding fault.
8. Listen carefully and with openness to understanding the other party's perspective as well as my own.
9. Ask questions to clarify and paraphrase and summarize frequently.
10. After clarifying and agreeing to the specific issue or problems in this conflict situation and listing interests of both parties, jointly generate possible resolutions that would meet the needs of both parties.
11. Work to reach agreement on the selection of the resolution.
12. After reaching agreement, restate my understanding of the resolution and express my appreciation to the other party for working collaboratively to resolve the conflict.

*E*ffective
communication

between the parties

is all but impossible

if each plays to the

gallery.

— Roger Fisher

and William Ury,

Getting to Yes

Source: *Conflict Resolution* by Cindy Harrison and Joellen Killion. ASCD, 1994.

December/January 1999

Tools For Schools

Positions and interests chart

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This tool can be used to illustrate the positions and interests of each team member. Use this during discussion, not during decision making.

TIME: 30 minutes.

SUPPLIES: Flip chart or poster paper and markers or an overhead projector with transparencies and markers.

PREPARATION: Draw the chart below on a large sheet of poster paper or a flip chart or create transparencies. You may also want team members to create their own charts as you create one for the group to view.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>POSITIONS</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">What we want</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>INTERESTS</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Why we want it</p>
<p>A)</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>
<p>B)</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>
<p>C)</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>

Learning about conflict resolution

- ❑ **Building Team Power: How to Unleash the Collaborative Genius of Work Teams** by Thomas Kayser. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional Publishing Co., 1994. Comprehensive guide to team developing, including a chapter on conflict resolution. ISBN 0-7863-0302-6. Price: \$25. Phone (800) 634-3966.
- ❑ **Conflict Resolution** by Cindy Harrison and Joellen Killion. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1994. Audio recording of a workshop offers practical suggestions for resolving conflicts in schools. Six cassette tapes plus a workbook. ASCD Stock #612-93151. Price: \$89, ASCD members; \$107, non-members. Phone (800) 933-2723, (703) 549-9110, fax (703) 549-3891.
- ❑ **Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In** by Roger Fisher and William Ury. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. Offers a concise, step-by-step strategy for coming to mutually acceptable agreements. Based on the work of the Harvard Negotiation Project. ISBN 0-14-015735-2. Check your local library or bookstore.
- ❑ **Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills** by David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997. Introduces readers to theory and research findings to understand how to make groups work effectively. Describes skills required to apply that knowledge in practical situations. Includes numerous exercises. ISBN 0-205-19750-7. Price: \$51. Order through your local bookstore or by calling (800) 278-3525.
- ❑ **The Magic of Conflict** and **The Magic of Conflict Workbook** both by Thomas Crum. Practical guidebook for resolving conflicts successfully. Applicable to both personal and professional arenas. Based in part on Aikido, a martial art and mind-body discipline. Price: \$14 book and \$10 workbook. Order directly from Aiki Works, P.O. Box 251, Victor, NY 14564, phone (716) 924-7302, or fax (716) 924-2799.



Loyalty to a petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.

— Mark Twain

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December/January 1999

Tools For Schools

Ask Dr. Developer



Dr. Developer has all the answers to questions that staff developers ask. (At least he thinks he does!)

Communication key in easing conflicts

Q *The hottest conflicts in my district have occurred because parents don't like what's going on in their child's school. These usually are very loud and come up very quickly. How can you possibly resolve a conflict with someone who yells rather than talks to you?*

A This is probably one of the toughest situations schools face these days. With the increased interest and involvement of parents, there is likely to be emotion and passion for certain issues.

In your school and district, create a "preventive conflict resolution plan." Be objective about the work you are doing and new programs being proposed. Consider the potential reactions of various interest groups. Prepare yourself to respond to their concerns even before they raise them.

Operate with a "no surprises" attitude. Look for opportunities to communicate with parents about your work and changes you're considering. Send information home to parents. Include your local newspaper in your plan for sharing news with

the community.

Be sure communication goes both ways. Solicit opinions instead of waiting to hear from them. Have an open-door policy at each school and throughout the district. Ensure that parents know who to call, when, and what phone numbers to call. Consider having a regular "meet the principal" coffee or identifying office hours when parents and others can drop in and chat with the principal or with teachers.

If an angry parent does confront you, react calmly and urge your staff to react calmly. Resist the urge to yell back even if he or she is yelling at you. Acknowledge the parent's concern and acknowledge that he or she is reacting out of concern for a child. Question them to understand their concern more deeply. Angry parents may be reacting to something much different than the situation at hand. Thank parents for coming to you with their concern and for allowing you the opportunity to respond.

More than anything, respect their right to have their opinion and express it. And leave the door open for them to continue to share their concerns with you.

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How to turn conflict into an effective learning process

Luci considers her options as she designs the agenda. Teachers are at odds with one another about student discipline. They have different procedures from classroom to classroom, and schoolwide practices vary. Some teachers feel others are not meeting their responsibilities for disciplining students. At the next day's meeting, the group will explore the assumptions that inform their different perspectives.

Conflict in schools is not unique. All schools have internal conflicts relating to differences of opinion, contrasting ideologies, diversity, change, issues of civility, scarcity, or power and control. In fact, Stephen Ball (1987) wrote, "Schools are arenas of struggle, poorly coordinated and ideologically diverse, making conflict, not cooperation, the norm." Luci knows that conflicts can be constructive or destructive. What makes the difference is how they are addressed. She knows she must facilitate this meeting in such a way that cognitive conflicts can be expressed and affective conflict avoided.

Cognitive conflict is disagreement about ideas and approaches. Issues are separated from people. Cognitive conflict is a characteristic of high-performing groups. Affective conflict is interpersonal, with either person-to-person or group-to-group antagonism. Affective conflicts sap energy, sidetrack tasks, and block work.

As long as disagreements among team members focus on substantive, issue-related differences of opinion, they tend to improve faculty effectiveness. Such cognitive conflict is a natural part of a properly functioning team. Cognitive conflict occurs as team members examine, compare, and reconcile these differences. Some cognitive conflict is necessary to improve school functioning and student

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learning. It focuses attention on the assumptions that may underlie a particular issue.

Affective conflict lowers a faculty's effectiveness by fostering hostility, distrust, cynicism, avoidance, and apathy among team members. This type of conflict focuses on personalized anger or resentment usually directed at individuals or groups rather than ideas.

As can be seen in the chart below, schools improve when group members disagree about ideas without feeling interpersonal tension. Three resources are required to work productively with conflict: group member skills, meeting protocols, and appropriate use of processing time.

GROUP MEMBER SKILLS

In Adaptive Schools work, we identify three sets of basic group member skills critical to resolving conflict:

- **Sending:** stating the intention of communications; revealing all relevant information; providing facts, ideas, opinions, suggestions; announcing modification of one's views; using proper

voice; owning ideas ("I feel," not "they say"); and making clear statements of advocacy.

- **Receiving:** checking for understanding by paraphrasing, pausing, inquiring, and probing for specificity.

- **Paying attention to oneself and others:** being aware of one's own thoughts and feelings; staying alert to others' voice patterns, nonverbal com-

munications, and use of space; maintaining consciousness about group task and mood.

MEETING PROTOCOLS

Certain strategies provide psychological safety. This feeling of safety is necessary for candid engagement with others. Safety for some can mean knowing one is protected from verbal attack. Or it can mean having a sense that one's contributions are recognized, perhaps not agreed with, but understood. It can mean not losing face, not being embarrassed, or avoiding feelings of inequality. It can mean freedom from a fear of retribution. For some members it can



In each issue of *JSD*, Robert J. Garmston writes about the challenges of creating effective groups. His columns can be found at www.nsd.org/library/authors/garmston.cfm

Outcomes of conflict in teams

AFFECTIVE CONFLICT	COGNITIVE CONFLICT
Poorer decisions	Better decisions
Decreased commitment	Increased commitment
Decreased cohesiveness	Increased cohesiveness
Decreased empathy	Increased empathy
Reduced progress	Increased understanding

Adapted from Amason, Thompson, Hochwarter, & Harrison, 1995

mean time to reflect before talking. It can mean conversations not dominated by the voices of a few highly verbal members. Very importantly, it also means freedom from having to be certain. One of the greatest barriers to learning and working effectively with conflicts is believing that one must speak with certainty.

Without protocols, groups tend to either avoid hard-to-talk-about topics or do so in ways that evoke affective conflict. Protocols provide safety by shaping conversations. They provide a focus for talking, name strategies to be used, indicate the cognitive skills required, and set boundaries for behavior and topic. Members need a sense of safety to risk putting ideas on the table and to participate, but protocols go beyond comfort. Members are likely to be uncomfortable. This is to be expected, is normal, and is valuable — discomfort often is a window to learning.

Facilitators choose strategies along a continuum of loose to tight structures depending on the group's skills, members' emotional intensity, and the cognitive complexity of the issue. Two highly structured protocols are:

First word/last word. Individuals read a section of relevant text, preferably before the meeting. Individuals highlight portions that have special meaning for them. In small groups, each person in turn shares an item he or she highlighted, but does not comment on it. Group members take turns commenting on the item named with no cross talk. The person who named the item then shares his or her thinking about the item and gets the last word. The pattern is repeated around the table.

Assumptions wall. This structure surfaces assumptions. Assumptions drive perceptions, positions, logic, and feelings. They are rarely stated, and when they become public, members can examine the rationale, become less judgmental, and understand one another better.

1. Members list their assumptions related to a topic. Luci probably will use discipline.

2. Members choose the assumption that most drives their thinking related to the topic, write it on a sentence strip in eight to 12 words, and post it on a wall.

3. Group members inquire about the assumptions in round-robin turns.

Each member can ask about one of the assumptions or may pass. Some areas for inquiry about assumptions are: origin, inclusiveness, values, importance, and consequences. Questions are asked in an approachable voice and might be phrased this way: "I'm curious about what makes this assumption important to you." "Help me understand the values you feel this assumption represents." "Are there conditions in which you think this assumption might not apply?" "Can you help me understand your thinking by sharing what data you are basing this on?" Each inquiry starts a brief conversation between the inquirer and the

assumption-maker so as to reveal the deeper meaning behind the assumption. The facilitator guides and intervenes if necessary to keep the tone of the questioning about discovery, not challenge.

PROCESSING TIME

The third resource necessary for effective conversations is what Michael Doyle and David Straus (1993) call a proper allocation of gum and chewing. "Gum" is the content of the meeting. "Chewing" is the interactive process and strategies you provide with which participants can reflect, hear others, state thoughts and opinions, and generate and test ideas. How much "gum" and how much "chewing" you provide becomes a dominant concern in meeting design.

As a rule of thumb, the more emotion involved, the greater the complexity, and the larger the ideological challenges, the more process time is required. Although content-process ratios can't be described in percentages, a logical progression of increased processing time exists in proportion to the factors noted above.

The purposes and types of processes will vary according to the meeting goal. To generate information, meetings are either information-intensive or composed of strategies in which the group assembles data. Organizing information demands greater cognitive complexity and cooperation. Members must clarify understandings, search for and agree to categorization schemes, and develop some initial levels of consensus. As the challenges grow more complex, different protocols and extended periods of processing may be required. For emotionally challenging issues, the group must move slowly to ensure members are understood.

Luci feels secure in the faculty's ability to communicate effectively, thus helping the teachers stay free from affective conflict as they work through their differences. One of her goals will be to keep members focused on principles, not preferences. She will use strategies that allow members to speak freely and challenge the premises of other members' viewpoints without the threat of anger, resentment, or retribution. And, essential to achieving her goals, she will be strategic with processing time.

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Tools

FOR SCHOOLS

EVERY EDUCATOR ENGAGES IN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVERY DAY SO EVERY STUDENT ACHIEVES

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Winter 2011

Vol. 14, No. 2

4 KEY STRATEGIES

help educators
overcome resistance
to change

By Anthony Armstrong

When principals Dot Schoeller and Mike Starosky needed to make dramatic changes in their schools, they both had different goals to achieve, but used similar strategies to implement sustainable schoolwide change.

Schoeller, currently principal at Jenkins Elementary, Lawrenceville, Ga., had previously taken over another elementary school that hadn't made Adequate Yearly Progress and was recovering from the recent suicide of its principal. In addition to turning the school around while staff members were still in an emotionally sensitive state, she needed to implement an inclusive education model to end the isolation of individualized education plan (IEP) students and English language learners (ELL). Schoeller created a coaching model that brought IEP and ELL teachers into the general education classrooms to collaborate and co-teach.

Use the tools on pp. 4-7 to implement lasting change.



Six years later, student scores almost doubled on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills from 38 to 71, the number of gifted students doubled, and 55% of the students exceeded the state standards. Schoeller's school was the only Title I school in the top seven of her county, and she attributes her success to the many smaller changes she made, including instructor collaboration, small student groups, and an inclusive education model applied to both IEP and gifted students.

Starosky's changes started with implementing high-quality professional learning communities (PLCs) at Whitman Middle School, Seattle, Wash. As a member of Learning Forward's Learning School Alliance, Starosky knew that professional learning communities would help improve students success as well as create a channel for other planned changes, such as implementing distributed leadership and overhauling how they handled IEP students. He began by transforming his school's professional learning system. "We had to look at how to conduct our professional

Continued on p. 2

COVER STORY Change strategies

Continued from p. 1

learning, what the staff was currently doing, and what high-quality PLCs do,” said Starosky. “Now, our teachers see the benefits and they don’t like it when their PLC time is cut.”

ADDRESS RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Those who have tried to implement lasting change can attest that it is a complicated process. Numerous studies, theories, and books on the change process have flourished within the last 20 years. “Change is a science now,” said Shirley Hord, educational consultant and scholar laureate for Learning Forward. “We have studied it for over 40 years and know a great deal about it.”

While change itself is a complicated process, a review of change literature reveals four basic stages that help innovators preemptively reduce the amount of resistance encountered and provide ongoing frameworks for preventing and overcoming resistance: build trust, create a clear vision, ensure a strong and consistent implementation, and support the change with consistent follow-through.

BUILD TRUST

Educators and authors often cite trust as a critical ingredient for building cooperation and buy-in. For Starosky, giving others the opportunity to provide input is important for building trust. Staff meetings often begin with staff writing and reflecting individually, then discussing the topic within small groups, with someone from each group sharing their main ideas or concerns. Starosky gives staff “exit tickets” to write down opinions or concerns that help inform teams and committees; he also surveys the staff and local community to avoid becoming isolated. For example, when identifying new elective classes, Starosky used surveys to see which electives parents wanted. Starosky made changes based on parent input and ultimately encountered no resistance, a success he attributes to proactively reaching out to the community.

Other strategies for building trust include open communication, developing a coalition to help lead the changes (Kotter, 2010), avoiding manipulation, demonstrating a willingness to compromise, sharing ownership of the

change, and building a reputation for integrity (Bruckman, 2008, pp. 215-217).

CREATE A CLEAR CHANGE VISION

During this stage, innovators can establish a clear message that creates a sense of urgency and establishes a direction for the change (Kotter, 2010).

Schoeller likened her changes to an airplane headed for the ski slopes. “If anyone was on my plane and wanted to go to the beach, they were on the wrong plane,” Schoeller said. “I told them that if they didn’t want to teach using the inclusive collaborative model, they weren’t necessarily bad teachers, they were just going in a different direction.”

Reaching out to the community when developing a clear vision has become a regular part of Starosky’s planning cycle. Currently, Starosky and his staff are planning changes with school discipline policies. “We all have completely different views on discipline,” said Starosky of the faculty, parents, and community. “So we are reading the same book together to come up with answers.” Currently, he has four book-study meetings planned with the parent-teacher organization.

ENSURE A STRONG AND CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION

Once lead innovators and their teams have crafted a change vision, they disseminate their message consistently through multiple channels of communication and through their actions (Kotter, 2010). Delivery should also include specific strategies for implementing change (Fullan, 2001, p. 18). According to Hord, implementation strategies can include professional learning, how often it will be provided, and what resources, equipment, and materials will be available. “Implementers also need to know they will have plenty of time for the implementation,” added Hord. “They must be given time to make changes. Change doesn’t happen in a day, month, or even a year.”

Implementation of the vision may result in a loss of staff. Schoeller saw 68 teachers transfer out of her school the first two years; however, change leaders advise educators to not let a fear of loss or dissent stifle discussions of proposed changes. Often, resistant voices offer valuable insights and learning opportunities (Fullan, 2001, p.41; Kotter & Whitehead, 2010, p. 88).

Continued on p. 3



Principal Dot Schoeller:

“I told them that if they didn’t want to teach using the inclusive collaborative model, they weren’t necessarily bad teachers, they were just going in a different direction.”

Learning Forward BELIEF

Sustainable learning cultures require skillful leadership.

Continued from p. 2

Starosky ensured consistent and clear implementation by communicating the change message to staff verbally and in newsletters. Change leaders also went to grade-level team meetings to address their concerns, talk about issues, model behaviors, develop teacher support, and problem-solve.

SUPPORT WITH FOLLOW-THROUGH

Once changes are under way, continue to use actions to build credibility and ensure the staff that change efforts are not temporary (Bruckman 2008, p. 216). Innovators can continue to make small, successful changes and celebrate those successes (Kotter, 2010).

To help ensure the ongoing stability of the changes, Schoeller modified the school's professional development program to reward teachers for working with coaches, demonstrating implementation, and raising test scores.

For Starosky, follow-up and ongoing support and problem solving were critical. "The idea of what the change is going to look like and the reality of the result can be very different," said Starosky. "So it is helpful to follow up regularly to see what unanticipated problems arise and collectively discuss the problem."

Starosky also uses a data-driven approach to drive a cycle of continuous improvement with the professional learning communities. "We use our PLCs and administration teams to look at students through lenses of equity to problem solve for specific students, grade levels, and content areas," said Starosky. "We can look at what works with the students and explore where teachers struggle."


BIGGEST CHALLENGES

The biggest challenges Schoeller and Starosky faced in implementing change both required internal reflection.

Schoeller recognized that she needed to work on making everyone comfortable with telling her the truth about the changes. "People wanted to please me so bad, they wouldn't tell me the truth," said Schoeller.

Starosky cited the need to remain open and trusting as a leader. "You can't assume you have all the right answers," he reflected. "Do your homework so you know as many sides of the issue as possible. Trust that people have the same end result in mind and want what's best for kids."

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Read more about

overcoming resistance to change using the stages of concern and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model in *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes* by Gene E. Hall & Shirley M. Hord (Pearson, 2011).

Learn more using Learning Forward's archives

When introducing a new change in your school, scholar laureate Shirley Hord offers these tips.

1. Use **data** to establish a need and create a sense of urgency. Be sure to first celebrate where students and teachers are doing well before scrutinizing where the results need improvement.
2. Use the **stages of concern** at the beginning of and throughout the change effort to read people's feeling on change and to provide support and assistance to help them address those feelings.
3. Use **Innovation Configurations** to illustrate what the change will look like. Principals, administrators, coaches, and teachers can use these to determine what the change will look like once it is put in place.

You can learn more about each of these tips by visiting Learning Forward's complete archive of publications (www.learningforward.org/news/journalsearch.cfm), or Learning Forward's bookstore at (www.learningforwardstore.org), and searching for the phrases in bold above.



TOOL

School’s orientation to change

Explore your school’s openness to change by thinking about what you need to do to ensure success.

Time: 55 minutes total

INDIVIDUALS Time: 5 minutes	SMALL GROUPS Time: 25 minutes	WHOLE FACULTY Time: 25 minutes
<p>Recall a change the school has been involved in during your time on the staff. Write your responses to these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the change? • Who initiated it? • When did it occur? • Who led the change effort? • What happened with the change? • How long did the change last? • How successful was the change? • How did you feel about the change? • How successful do you think you were with making the change? • How many changes has the school undertaken in the last two year? • How does the staff generally respond to change? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share your notes about the change you recall. (2 minutes each) 2. As a group, describe the school’s orientation to change. How well does the school respond to change? What kinds of change are more accepted? Who are the school’s champions of change? How successful is the school in making changes? 3. Be ready to report your assessment of the school on this question: On a score of 1 to 10, with 10 being open, enthusiastic, and ready for changes that improve teaching quality and student learning to 1 being highly resistant and suspicious of anything new, where do you think the school is in its orientation to change? (10 minutes) 4. As you think about implementing or refining collaborative professional learning within the school, what challenges do you anticipate? What might be done to head off some of those challenges to ensure success from the outset? (10 minutes) 5. Identify a group spokesperson to share your group’s response to Parts 2 and 3 with the whole group. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask each group spokesperson to share his or her group’s response to questions 2 and 3 in no more than 2 minutes each. 2. Have staff share responses to these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn about the school’s orientation to change? • What actions will you take as a whole staff to ensure that you are successful with this change?

Adapted from: Killion, J. & Roy, P. (2009). *Becoming a learning school*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

6 considerations for delivering a change message

When crafting a change message, it may help to consider Robert Cialdini's six principles of persuasion and how they can strengthen your change efforts. These six principles are a result of Cialdini's three-year study on what moves people to change behavior.

Commitment and consistency: We tend to act consistently with commitments we made in the past. For example, if people commit early in the process to what is best for students, subsequent requests that are positioned as best for students will have more influential power. *What commitments can you get implementers to make early in the change process that align with your change efforts?*

Social proof: We often look to the actions of others for clues about how to behave. Be careful, though, to avoid appearing as if you are trying to jump on the latest bandwagon. *Who else, inside and outside your organization, is successfully implementing the change you desire and has the data to verify that success?*

Reciprocation: The need to repay even the simplest acts of kindness can greatly influence others. Compromise, concessions, and additional support fall within this category. *What types of compromises, concessions, and support are you willing to make to demonstrate your ability to collaborate and move change efforts forward?*

Authority: Persons of authority (by position or respected status) often carry a large amount of influence. Use caution not to rely upon this influencer too much as it can appear as a desperate tactic and damage your credibility as a leader. *Which persons of authority, in or outside your organization, will support your changes?*

Liking: We often like people who are similar to us, complement us, and assist us in achieving shared goals, and allow them greater influence over us. *What do you and your implementers have in common and how can you reinforce that you are willing to cooperate to reach your shared goals?*

Scarcity: Opportunities seem more valuable when they are difficult to find or easily missed. *How can you create a sense of urgency, or demonstrate that now is a critical time to act?*

Adapted from: Cialdini, R. (2007). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*. New York: HarperCollins.

Encountering resistance

Some common types of resistance encountered by professional developers



Aggressive resistance. This is the easiest type to identify, because it's overt and no effort is made to disguise the refusal to change.

For example, a colleague confronts a lead teacher with: "Under no circumstances will I participate in another curriculum committee. Let someone else do the work."

Passive-aggressive resistance. In these cases, staff members appear willing to change, but change never materializes. It's common to hear people say, "I'll be glad to lend a hand as soon as I finish this paper work," or "I'll try clear my schedule so I can attend the conference."

Unfortunately, the paperwork never ends, the calendar is never cleared, and "try" never becomes "will." Meanwhile, support for an initiative slowly erodes.

Phantom obstacles are also common: For example,

teachers may express interest in working with a university professor to explore new math teaching strategies, but then back away from change by claiming that "parents don't like us experimenting with the way we teach."

Passive resistance. This looks like wholehearted acceptance until action fails to take place. Staff members willingly discuss change, and may in fact seem enthusiastic, but never follow through.

This is the most difficult form of resistance to detect because it's subtle and sounds supportive. All too often, staff developers hear exclamations of "sounds great," "count me in," and "let's do it" in meetings, only to discover weeks later that action failed to materialize.

Excerpted from: Janas, M. (1998, Spring). Shhhhh, the dragon is asleep and its name is Resistance. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19(3).

Scheduled maintenance

Every education innovation should include a maintenance plan. Sketch out ways to follow up on the innovation before you begin.

Decide who will determine teacher concerns. If the change was initiated outside the school, will the original facilitator address questions? Will the school-based leader address questions?

Will the initial leader/facilitator of the innovation be available for follow-up interviews? How often and how long? Or will someone else assist staff members? What support will he or she receive to lead this work?

Once a concern is identified, who will provide support? For example, if a teacher is concerned about getting proper equipment, who is responsible for ordering it and following through to see that it is received? Who will provide any necessary retraining?

Who will identify teachers who can help others? Who will provide the support and learning that those teachers need to be successful at this new task?

Will those teachers be given free time to aid others? How will this be arranged?

Are the resources — time, people, and money — available for ongoing evaluation and support of the change? How can they be found?

TOOL 5.17

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Lights, camera, PD!

Learning Forward's Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh recently appeared on Lifetime Television's "The Balancing Act" to join show host Danielle Knox and Judith Baenen, educational consultant with the National Middle School Association, in the show's Parent-Teacher Corner. Hirsh discusses effective teaching and high-quality professional development. You can view the segments at www.learningforward.org/news/thebalancingact.cfm.

Please share the video with peers, parents, and community members with an interest in effective professional learning.



Photo by Sarah Lesko/Learning Forward

Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh, second from right, on the set of "The Balancing Act" with host Danielle Knox, seated at left, and Judith Baenen, right.

Shhhhh, the dragon is asleep and its name is Resistance

BY MONICA JANAS

Journal of Staff Development, Spring 1998 (Vol. 19, No. 3)

CAN YOU RECOGNIZE A COMMON ELEMENT IN THESE THREE SCENARIOS?

- Mary Jones, a principal, listened to her faculty when they requested release time for peer coaching. After lengthy collaborative planning with faculty and staff, she implemented a schedule that supported the peer coaching initiative. But after one semester, she noticed that many teachers never participated in peer coaching activities. In fact, some teachers who originally spoke up about the need to work with colleagues appeared to be socializing during release time instead.
- As director of staff development for a school system, Dave Thomas supervised an annual districtwide staff learning day. A veteran at structuring opportunities for professional development, Thomas conducted an interest survey before working with representatives from across the district to create an agenda that reflected the interests and needs of a wide range of school personnel. Thomas believed his committee had designed an outstanding plan. However, on the morning of the event, he overheard one teacher saying to another: “I wonder what the dog-and-pony show is this time? I don’t know about you, but inservice days are a complete waste of my time and the school district’s money. I came early to get a seat in the back so I can work on a unit I’m doing.”
- Working closely with the staffs of local schools, Jane Smith, a faculty member at a local college, conducted a needs assessment survey of topics for professional

education courses. After developing a number of courses in consultation with the school district administrators, Smith arranged to offer a slate of courses to meet the needs that had been identified. Unfortunately, registration was so poor that most courses had to be canceled.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Can you recognize a common force that worked against change in each of these typical but fictitious scenarios?

If you responded “resistance,” you successfully identified a major barrier to potential change. Resistance — the sleeping dragon of the change process — can be a challenge for every professional committed to reform and innovation. As these scenarios illustrate, resistance thwarts goals, disrupts action plans, and undermines progress.

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In spite of the long history of educational reform efforts, resistance continues to play a noteworthy role in change (Friend & Cook, 1996; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995). In a review of the most significant advances in staff development, Guskey (1994, p. 6) concluded: “The gap in education

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RECOGNIZING THE FACE OF RESISTANCE

Some common types of resistance encountered by staff developers:

- **Aggressive resistance.** This is the easiest type to identify, because it's overt and no effort is made to disguise the refusal to change. For example, a colleague confronts a lead teacher with: "Under no circumstances will I participate in another curriculum committee. Let someone else do the work."
- **Passive-aggressive resistance.** In these cases, staff members appear willing to change, but change never materializes. It's common to hear people say, "I'll be glad to lend a hand as soon as I finish this paperwork," or "I'll try clear my schedule so I can attend the conference." Unfortunately, the paperwork never ends, the calendar is never cleared, and "try" never becomes "will." Meanwhile, support for an initiative slowly erodes. Phantom obstacles are also common: For example, teachers may express interest in working with a university professor to explore new math teaching strategies, but then back away from change by claiming that "parents don't like us experimenting with the way we teach."
- **Passive resistance.** This looks like wholehearted acceptance until action fails to take place. Staff members willingly discuss change, and may in fact seem enthusiastic, but never follow through. This is the most difficult form of resistance to detect because it is subtle and sounds supportive. All too often, staff developers hear exclamations of "sounds great," "count me in," and "let's do it" in meetings, only to discover weeks later that action failed to materialize.

between our knowledge base and general practice remains depressingly large." Even with ideal conditions, high expectations, and motivated educators, problems still arise when working toward innovations and reform (Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992). Resistance to change occupies a large part of the gap between knowledge and practice; between vision and reality.

However, resistance is not always a negative force. If identified and managed correctly, resistance can actually become a force for improving professional development, enhancing program innovation, and providing rich opportunities for reflection, growth, and renewal. This can be aided by a three-step process:

- Being aware of resistance.
- Identifying sources and types of resistance.
- Developing and applying proactive strategies for managing resistance.

BEING AWARE OF RESISTANCE

Broadly defined, resistance is a fearful response to change (Marshak, 1996; Valencia & Killion, 1988). A natural part of any change process (Theron & van der Westhuizen, 1996), resistance frequently occurs as a response to an interpersonal

or organizational change that has the potential of personal impact (Friend & Cook, 1996).

Resistance to change is not all bad, or always an obstruction to reform. Resistance often serves a constructive purpose (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995) and is frequently an appropriate response to a situation, especially when it is a symptom of deeper problems. For instance, people may legitimately resist change required by a program that's poorly designed, underfunded, or focused on unnecessary activities. A teacher who has seen numerous ill-conceived, irrelevant staff development initiatives come and go will understandably view new programs with suspicion.

SOURCES AND TYPES OF RESISTANCE

Sources of resistance are not always clear, in part because on some level, resistance to change is a normal, valued function of existence. An individual naturally resists threats to the stability of their personality, for example (Watson, 1969). The same tendency also can be seen on a system or group level: Homeostasis, the tendency to prefer the known to the potential of the unknown as a result of change, is well documented (Friend & Cook, 1996).

Staff developers need to assess stakeholder beliefs

Article reprinted from *Journal of Staff Development*, Spring 1998 (Vol. 19, No. 3), pp. 13-16.

and actions to determine the presence of resistance. This needs to be an ongoing part of talking with stakeholders and working with them on staff development activities. However, developers need to keep in mind how difficult this assessment process can be. Regardless of whether resistance is an individual or group reaction, it is difficult to recognize because it can take several forms (Karp, 1984).

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES

Overcoming resistance is important, complex work (Clift, Holland, & Veal, 1990). Staff developers need to play pivotal roles in recognizing, understanding, and minimizing resistance before it evolves into a barrier to progress. This means being proactive: helping stakeholders identify key issues and potential roadblocks so the change process remains on track. (See “10 things to do” for examples of ideas and actions that can help staff developers craft successful proactive strategies.)

The “sleeping dragon” metaphor illustrates the duality and complexity of managing resistance. Change agents often tiptoe around this dragon, hoping it will not awaken. If awakened, they fear, resistance will wreak havoc. A proactive approach to managing resistance, however, can help staff developers tame the dragon and, thus, turn resistance into a positive force that influences staff development efforts and helps narrow the gap between reform initiatives and educational practices.

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10 THINGS TO DO ABOUT RESISTANCE

A review of the relevant literature reveals numerous behaviors and actions that can help prevent or minimize resistance.

1. Acknowledge change as a process. Change is not an isolated event, but a series of stages that requires time (Valencia & Killion, 1988). Remember that the process of educational change is lengthy and may take years from goal-setting to stable establishment (Fullan, 1991). Missteps and setbacks are common (Gallegos, 1994). Conflict and resistance are natural products of change, not automatic signs of failure.

2. Empower stakeholders. As critical components of innovation, stakeholders must be included as decision makers. If change means individual needs are met, negative behavior and resistance are less likely (McCarty, 1991). Empowering people means creating mechanisms that provide them with genuine authority and responsibility, or else change efforts will become incoherent (Speck, 1996). Remember, however, that real or perceived shifts in power can spark resistance by colleagues, administrators, or board members (Janas & Boudreaux, 1997). To minimize discord, the change process should be guided by negotiation, not by issuing of demands.

3. Encourage all stakeholders. Stakeholders

must be active, invested participants throughout the change process. Often it's beneficial to focus directly on helping participants understand the innovation being tried (Hartzell, 1996; Khan, 1995). Providing a variety of opportunities — for both individuals and groups — to vent concerns also can be particularly effective. Being “heard” is fundamental in establishing understanding and consensus (Caine & Caine, 1997).

4. Set concrete goals. Agreed-upon goals should form a shared agenda reached by consensus, thus creating a broad sense of ownership and strengthening communication among stakeholders. This step is critically important because if anything goes awry later in the change process, the stakeholders will be able to return to a shared agenda and refocus their intent and efforts.

5. Show sensitivity. Managing conflict means being aware of differences among individuals. Each stakeholder must genuinely feel he or she is an equal and valued party throughout the change process, not just in the initial trust-building stage. All persons need respect, sensitivity, and support as they struggle to redefine their roles and master new concepts.

6. Model process skills. Teaching through modeling the appropriate process skills and actions (Caine & Caine, 1991; Lowery, 1997) is fundamental

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

to successful staff development initiatives. Staff developers may find, for example, that reflecting publicly and straightforwardly on their own doubts and resistance to change may help others (Guskey, 1992). At the very least, honesty goes a long way toward building credibility. When staff developers model desirable behaviors, they give other stakeholders a chance to identify with someone going through the difficult process of change.

7. Develop strategies for dealing with emotions. All too often, educators concentrate on outcomes and neglect the emotional experiences — anxiety, fear, loss, and grief — of change (Marshak, 1996). Effective staff development programs should include activities and strategies to address those emotions. Focus on such questions as: How will our lives be different with the change? How do we feel about the changes? Is there anything that can or should be done to honor the past before we move on?

8. Manage conflict. Ideally, change is a negotiated process (Fullan, 1991). Stakeholders should be invited to negotiate on issues that provoke their resistance. For example, an assistant principal may

need to negotiate the needs of the whole school with faculty members who rank their departmental priorities higher.

9. Communicate. Openness in communication is a necessary component of collaborative problem solving (Bandy et al., 1995, Khan, 1995). Communication that focuses on differences can move issues of concern out of the shadows (Friend & Cook, 1996). Another technique that increases communication is reflective questioning: The questioner tries to help stakeholders explore their thinking, feelings, needs, or attitudes. Such questions can include: Where are we in the change process? What has changed so far? Where are we headed?

10. Monitor process dynamics. The constant interplay between the various tensions within the change process must be monitored, and appropriate adjustments must be made. Evaluation begins with the original assessment of the need and readiness to change (Lowry, 1997) and remains a key factor throughout systemic reform (Guskey & Sparks, 1991). Reflection forms the scaffolding of the evaluation process and ongoing assessments of progress serve as checkpoints on the reform journey.

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MODULE 6

How can instructional coaches contribute to collaborative professional learning teams?

- Tool 6.1: Collaboration takes center stage
- Tool 6.2: Let data do the talking
- Tool 6.3: Tools of engagement
- Tool 6.4: Coaching request form
- Tool 6.5: Preobservation map
- Tool 6.6: Reflective feedback protocol
- Tool 6.7: From group to team
- Tool 6.8: 3 steps lead to differentiation
- Tool 6.9: From solo to ensemble

A large, vibrant red curtain hangs from the top of the page, partially obscuring the background. The curtain is gathered on the left side, creating deep folds and shadows. The right side of the curtain is pulled back, revealing a white background where the main text is located. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the fabric.

theme/ TRANSFORMING TEACHING

COLLABORATION TAKES CENTER STAGE

**Interactive teaching through a schoolwide focus
on the performing arts
leads to dramatic improvements in learning**

BY JEFF WILLIAMSON AND DIANE ZIMMERMAN

Consider these learner-centric outcomes that great teachers address before, during, and after a lesson.

While engaged in teaching students, the teacher not only learns a curriculum more completely, he or she moni-

tors student progress, adapts the lesson to student needs, pays attention to the struggling student, analyzes the effectiveness of the learning situation, decides which tools and resources are needed to further learning, designs situations for students to apply new learning, examines student learning modes in use, assesses mastery of standards, and monitors personal practice.

Teaching is so much more about learning than it is about teaching.

In the Old Adobe Union School District in Petaluma, Calif., our goal is to assure that all teachers make the fundamental shift from teacher-centric to learner-centric thinking. For us, this is what distinguishes great teachers from good teachers. We believe this level of expertise takes years to develop and that schools play an important role in assuring that all teachers become expert and that all teachers learn to bring their students to a higher level of understanding.

THE SCHOOL JOURNEY

Before Principal Jeff Williamson's arrival at Old Adobe Elementary School, the teachers had committed to integrating the visual and performing arts into their curriculum and had purchased a Yamaha music lab. In his first year as principal, Williamson focused his energy on getting the lab running and on helping teachers feel comfortable with this complex technology. Williamson knew that this emphasis on things and activities was not going to get the school where he wanted it to be. He was anxious to start working with teachers in ways that asked them to examine their beliefs about learning. He wanted to interact with teachers to discover areas for growth, analyze limiting condi-

tions, examine resources available for improvement, form and implement a plan for addressing these needs, and monitor this process.

At the same time, the Old Adobe Union School District Board of Trustees asked each school in the district to develop a guiding question that would serve as a focal point for school improvement efforts. Williamson and his staff framed a guiding question that would shift their focus from things and activities to student learning and teacher beliefs that guide their actions. The staff asked, "How can we offer a well-rounded curriculum integrating the visual and performing arts in every classroom, and verify that this benefits students?" Overnight, the emphasis shifted from conducting activities in a technology lab to engaging in deep discussions about performing arts processes and how they could be used to engage the hearts and minds of children. Two years later, we know this singular focus on the arts pushed the teachers and principal to think more deeply about the cognitive demands and complexity of teaching and learning. We call this level of expertise panoramic outcomes, where educators maintain a constant focus on sophisticated outcomes for the learner and the collaborative expertise and shared vision needed to get there.

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THE POWER OF A CATALYST

Once the school framed its focus for improvement, Williamson began searching for the right instructor to work side-by-side with teachers. “What I know about teachers is that if they see the value of a new idea in terms of its success in improving student learning, teachers will be more likely to embrace new ideas and put them into practice,” Williamson says. His eureka moment came when he saw teacher Kristina Wenz organize the school talent show. As a drama teacher, she knew how to make each moment count by integrating the arts processes to create meaningful learning activities. She could elicit fabulous responses from kids, adapting as she taught to increase engagement, challenge, and excitement.

She never left an interaction with students without building in success.

Williamson invited Wenz to join him in collaborative planning with his teachers. The format would be simple. Each grade level would identify the content areas that would focus their work with Wenz to draw upon her vast knowledge of the

performing arts and classroom instruction. Wenz served as a catalytic change agent. She facilitated the infusion of the arts into the curriculum and guided the teachers in making this enhanced educational experience their own. For the teachers, this often meant a change in instructional practices. Williamson notes, “I believe the catalytic processes involve reflecting with colleagues, side-by-side teaching, and finally the commitment — articulating student and teacher learning.” (See “Catalytic lesson plan sequence” above.)

As the first teacher to engage in this collaborative process, Kathy Buckley identified 4th-grade social

CATALYTIC LESSON PLAN SEQUENCE

Team members include the specialist, Kristina Wenz, and the principal and grade-level team.

1. Grade-level team identifies content/unit focus.
2. Planning meeting: Team collaborates to plan lessons for the next week.
3. For one week, Wenz, as process expert, spends two hours a day in each classroom conducting side-by-side teaching.
4. Team reflection meeting: Review lessons, document new learning, make commitments, and identify other supporting actions.

studies lessons that focused on the geography of California. Wenz helped Buckley plan lessons in which the students would sculpt a giant floor map of California, and then using improvisational techniques, the students would body-sculpt the flora and fauna for each region. Not only did the kids have fun, the teacher found that after the activity, the students conversed knowledgeably about the various regions of California. The experience had exceeded everyone’s expectations and set a standard for future job-embedded learning experiences. Throughout the rest of the year, each grade-level group had a chance to collaborate in this type of team.

From the beginning, it was clear that the framework of the performing arts paired with teacher experts was increasing the cognitive complexity of teacher planning and reflection. We had crossed a threshold. The teachers started to collaborate on their own, and there has been no stopping them.

In the words of Malcolm Gladwell (2000), we had reached a tipping point: the moment when teachers took charge of their own learning.

Professional collaboration has woven its way into our school’s culture. Teachers work together in planning lessons, implementing instruction, reflecting on the results, and improving instruction, working in an ongoing cycle. The teachers have moved beyond fear and worries about how they are perceived as they share ideas and ask questions. Focused professional development and collaboration are built into teachers’ workday, and teachers frequently engage in reflective conversations on improving practice. Everyone at Old Adobe School has become engaged in learning conversations, from the kindergartners, to staff, to parents. The blurring of the line between teachers and learners has created a school where all are leaders in their learning and that of others.

COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

The primary mission of any school is to create engaged, caring, and responsible citizens. This requires that we capture the hearts and minds of our children while raising the cognitive complexity of learning in ways that assure learner success.

Williamson believes that in order to make learning relevant to all learners, teachers must interact with other teachers and with students as they craft lessons. He explains that in effective learning communities, the line between teacher and learner moves, creating new plateaus for understanding. He also asserts that teachers need to be confident and clear about the goals of their work, based on identifying student needs, while at the same time constantly questioning what they do to find ways to move students toward new plateaus of learning. When teachers reflect on practice at this level, they become the

Everyone at Old Adobe School has become engaged in learning conversations, from the kindergartners, to staff, to parents.

STAGES OF LEARNING BASED ON MATURING OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY

The entry point for inexperienced teachers.

- What do I want to accomplish in this lesson?
- What will I do to make it happen?
- What will my students be doing if they are accomplishing it?

CONTENT

When paired with activity, content becomes gateway outcome.

- What concepts and skills do students need in place to access deeper learning and demonstrate their learning?
- What situations will we create to foster learning and its application?
- How will students demonstrate content mastery?
- How will teachers give feedback?

PROCESSES

Tipping point for teachers in the journey from good to great.

- What processes are best for this learning?
- What processes are necessary for each learner?
- How is the learner engaged in these processes?
- How does the learner monitor and express progress throughout these processes?
- How will those involved evaluate processes used?
- How does my school support our collective work in this area?

DISPOSITIONS

Gaining schoolwide consensus is the tipping point for school leadership.

- What habits or dispositions of

mind will learners use and develop as they become involved in reflective learning?

- How will available resources aid them in developing more powerful habits of mind?
- How will they uncover or express new understandings?
- How will the learner identify next steps and a means to reach them?

STATES OF MIND

Emergence: The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Learners facilitate the learning of others.

- In which states of mind do we wish all learners to become more resourceful as a result of their learning?
- What has empowered them?
- How will this new empowerment be demonstrated?
- How will learners reflect on their progress and apply new understandings?
- How will we establish and communicate new learning goals?
- How will learners lead in their own growth?

NEW PLATEAUS

Learners exceed expectations and are now independent learners.

- How has the learner's approach to learning situations changed?
- What resources and support are needed to further independent exploration?
- How will learners reflect with others and identify what coaching they need?
- In what ways is feedback articulated and used to establish further empowerment?
- How is this learning shared with others and used to empower others?

(Adapted from work of Costa & Garmston, 1998.)

drivers for the direction professional development and collaboration take.

MOVING FROM MATURING TO PANORAMIC OUTCOMES

On a visit to the school to learn about this collaboration, Superintendent Diane Zimmerman listened to a teacher and excited students describe what they had learned about the regions of California using drama and improvisation. Zimmerman realized that these teachers and students had embarked on a challenging journey to change the way they think about teaching and learning. The change was palpable, but difficult to put into words. Just two years before, the school was focused on how to use the new music lab in instructional activities. Now everyone was involved in complex conversations about how students learn deeply.

To gain clarity about our journey, we use the work of Costa and Garmston (1998) on maturing outcomes as a lens for our reflection (see “Stages of Learning ...” at left). Zimmerman notes, “Although we did not set out to think about maturing outcomes, we were excited to discover that we could reflect on this work and gain deeper insights using this framework.” Costa and Garmston suggest that as teachers gain experience, their thinking about the outcomes of instruction develops beyond activity and content to higher-order thinking. They divide higher-order thinking into two outcomes — process and disposition or habits of mind. So, activity and content are gateway outcomes for all new teachers. Then, as teachers gain experience, we would hope that their outcome focus would mature and include thinking strategies

Just two years before, the school was focused on how to use the new music lab in instructional activities. Now everyone was involved in complex conversations about how students learn deeply.

— those from the disciplines and also habits of mind.

As we began to reflect on our work, we found that through focusing on processes and dispositions, teachers made rapid shifts toward complex learner-centric outcomes. The visual and performing arts are process-rich disciplines, and thus the bid to integrate arts into all lessons created a rich forum for process conversations. These conversations integrating process into the lessons became a powerful catalyst for the examination of beliefs about student engagement. Teachers gained more precision in their content outcomes, and as a result, would completely rethink their activities. Now classroom activities were tightly coupled to process or disposition outcomes.

We are finding that when teachers engage in complex planning and reflection, they take control of their own learning while finding ways for students to do the same. The principal has the responsibility to articulate how efforts to teach at the process and disposition levels improve instruction. In addition, the principal reinforces language that supports collective learning and fosters improvements in classroom practices. This

is why we are using job-embedded professional development followed by collaborative reflection and planning.

To summarize, expert teachers

When teachers engage in complex planning and reflection, they take control of their own learning while finding ways for students to do the same.

Old Adobe Elementary School

Petaluma, Calif.

Enrollment: 268

Staff: 32

Racial/ethnic mix:

White: 71%

Black: 2%

Hispanic: 16%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 6%

Native American: 1%

Other: 4%

Limited English proficient: 15%

Languages spoken: 8

Free/reduced lunch: 24%

Special education: 6%

Contact: Dawn Walker, administrative office assistant, dwalker@oldadobe.org

facilitate activities designed to support content that generates integrative processes and fosters productive dispositions about learning. To work as a school to accomplish these ends is the true work of any productive learning community. To frame our conversations on positive expectations, we picked up “panoramic outcomes” from the Costa and Garmston article and believe this term describes our achievement.

ACHIEVING PANORAMIC OUTCOMES

The cumulative result of the Old Adobe School functioning as a learning community while infusing the classroom curriculum with the arts is evident throughout the school. Examples of increased student learning abound at Old Adobe School. We see evidence in student writing, student presentations and performances,

and students justifying their thinking as a routine part of classroom discussions.

Old Adobe Elementary is lucky to have high-functioning students, and yet we have not achieved the goal of meeting all students’ needs. We are confident that this will happen as a result of our journey and that our most challenged students will begin to love school in the same way as their more advantaged peers.

In 1916, John Dewey stressed the importance of a school becoming an environment where stakeholders interact, learn together, and improve their service to students. Like Dewey, we believe that schools are hungry for clarity in purpose and a single-minded focus on the improvement of learning. At Old Adobe Elementary, we have chosen the arts, a discipline rich in process outcome opportunities. However, all disciplines have process skills that can bring the focus needed to start the journey, and all schools can come to consensus on the enduring dispositions to be modeled in everything that they do.

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LET DATA DO THE TALKING

Clarify goals and roles by examining data

BY VALERIE VON FRANK

They go by many names — coaches, instructional

specialists, or various other titles. The job title, however, isn't the only ambiguous aspect of the position expert teachers fulfill by working with their peers on practices that will lead to greater student achievement.

Few schools have clearly defined these specialists' responsibilities, according to Michael Murphy, director of education at the Salesmanship Club Youth and Family Centers, where he provides coaching and leadership for two of the agency's programs (2009). That ambiguity, he says, leaves many who take on the role struggling with how best to



begin once they have the job.

Murphy says the answer is to begin with data.

"Tools can help specialists generate data to create data pictures and initiate a dialogue about classroom practice and potential student results," he writes in *Tools & Talk* (NSDC, 2009). "Coupled with building relationships between the participants, tools can provide structure, boundaries, and a framework

for a focused conversation about improvement. Participants find comfort in a clear structure and a roadmap for thoughtful conversations."

Specialists and teachers often do not know how to initiate conversations about practice

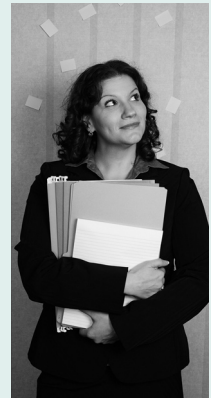
Continued on p. 2

WHAT'S INSIDE

The Responsive Scan Tool

Examine factors that contribute to an equitable instructional environment.

Pages 4-6



Types of Data Conversations

Multiple data sources offer a range of options for exploring improvement.

Page 7



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COVER STORY

Let data do the talking

Continued from p. 1

without a starting device, he says. According to Murphy, collecting classroom data, talking about the data, and using the information to address school issues is the root of change. In *Tools & Talk*, Murphy provides several specific tools that allow specialists to gather data and outlines ways for specialists to use the data in productive, side-by-side conversations with their colleagues.

Data are essential to changing practices, states Joellen Killion, NSDC's deputy executive director. "Educators are not yet sufficiently using data in the one place where data can make the greatest difference in students' learning — the classroom," Killion writes (2009, pp. 7-8).

Murphy says administrators too often overlook the data specialists gather in classrooms, instead focusing only on student test scores. Specialists, school leaders, and leadership teams can use classroom data both to support individual teachers' growth and to create a better sense of the overall strengths and weaknesses in the school, information that can be used for improvement planning.

Using data, specialists have a starting point for collegial conversations with teachers that can help elevate the quality of classroom instruction and allow specialists to connect teachers with ideas and resources that will enhance teacher performance and raise student achievement levels, Murphy says.

"The hope of coaching rests with coaches providing teachers foundational support that can make a significant impact on teacher practice and student learning," according to Killion (in Knight, 2009, p. 22). "Coaches who focus their services on strengthening the quality of teaching and learning will likely make a greater contribution to achieving that goal."

THE RESPONSIVE SCHOOL SCAN AND EXCHANGE

Murphy suggests five interrelated tools that school-based specialists can use to drive improvement. Measuring a school's responsiveness

to families and children of varying backgrounds is one tool specialists can use to support teachers and link their work to overall school improvement. See Responsive School Scan on pp. 4-6.

Responsive schools actively and systematically work to create an atmosphere where students can learn by building meaning through their own cultural frames of reference (Murphy, 2009, p. 89). Responsive schools that focus not on students' "deficiencies," or what they are not, but on the strengths and capacities the students bring, have a significant effect on student

NSDC'S BELIEF

Student learning increases when educators reflect on professional practice and student progress.

achievement, according to Joyce Epstein, director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and principal investigator for the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Epstein (2005, p. 2) cites research that concludes that if schools are welcoming, involve families, and focus on systems to

support diverse students, students achieve more, have higher attendance rates, earn more course credits, are more prepared for class, and show other indicators of success in school. Geneva Gay (2000) says African, Asian, Latino, and Native American students will perform better on multiple measures of achievement when teaching is filtered through students' own cultural experiences and frames of reference.

The Responsive School Scan allows school-based specialists to begin to assess the cultural sensitivity of the school environment. The Responsive School Scan is useful when other information indicates the school needs work in structural, organizational, or pedagogical responsiveness or when leaders or staff want to quantify how well teachers are building on the strengths and interests of a diverse student population.

USING THE TOOL

The Responsive School Scan has 28 indicators of a school's quality in four areas: a welcoming school environment; information and

Continued on p. 3

According to Murphy, collecting classroom data, talking about the data, and using the information to address school issues is the root of change. In *Tools & Talk*, Murphy provides several specific tools that allow specialists to gather data and outlines ways for specialists to use the data in productive, side-by-side conversations with their colleagues.

A RESPONSIVE SCHOOL

This tool provides data to help answer questions in these areas:

- **A welcoming environment:** What efforts have been made to create a welcoming environment for parents, guardians, and students? Do signs, physical surroundings, and communication create a first impression of intentional respect?
- **Information and access:** Can diverse visitors, parents, and guardians access information about the school and community services? Has the school tried to involve parents, guardians, and students in school goals?
- **Student voice:** Do the school's common areas have current, attractive displays of diverse student work, and language-appropriate explanations of the works? Do procedures honor students while offering a safe, orderly environment? Do students feel emotionally safe? Are students' diverse perspectives evident in school displays?
- **Culturally responsive classrooms:** Do teachers create attractive classrooms that promote collaboration, communication, and flexibility by adjusting to learning needs? Are students' lives evident in the artifacts and work displayed in interesting and useful ways in the classrooms?



Continued from p. 2

access; student voice; and culturally responsive classrooms. Observers spend about a half-hour walking around the school to look at common areas including the hallways and offices, then about five to 10 minutes in each randomly selected classroom. Observers use a scale indicating whether each of the 28 points rates as: 1) museum quality; 2) meets the target; 3) needs work; or 4) didn't find it. All individual classroom data remain anonymous, key in building trust to be able to use the instrument, Murphy says, adding that the tool is *never* used in an individual's evaluation.

Preparing to use the tool requires building staff members' comfort level by having them review the tool before it is used and discussing the intent of gathering the data, along with how results will be used, Murphy says.

After completing the scan on the announced day, the observer summarizes the data on one sheet. The school leader and leadership team meet to review the scan for patterns in the data or for related indicators that demonstrate strengths

or weaknesses, getting a sense of the overall school feel in terms of welcoming atmosphere and responsive instructional climate.

The goal of the exchange conversation is to help the school leader or leadership team understand how to be more intentional and to focus on planning for changes to address indicators from the scan, proposing actions they believe will create a more inviting, responsive, equitable school for parents and students. Leaders then meet and share the information with the faculty. Using the scan periodically allows leaders and specialists to measure and document their efforts to create a more responsive school learning environment and provides a critical starting point for conversations with faculty about school improvement.

"Tools," Murphy writes, "provide the school leadership team with information to link individual accomplishment to school accomplishment and to bridge the two concepts, and help teachers achieve what they naturally want — a sense of personal worth and efficacy, connections to the organization and the people within it, and results" (p. 21). ■

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NSDC TOOL



THE RESPONSIVE SCHOOL SCAN TOOL





School name _____ Date and time _____

Responsive School Scan Tool team member(s) _____

INDICATORS					NOTES
WELCOMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT					
Is there inviting, accurate, and language-appropriate information on the outside school sign?					
Are the school's physical surroundings attractive to visitors and families?					
Is the tone of directions on all exterior entrances high-quality and friendly?					
Are visitors and families greeted and directed to sign in when they first enter the building?					
Are visitors and families warmly and appropriately greeted in the office?					
INFORMATION AND ACCESS					
Do staff in the main office exhibit friendliness, focus, and organization?					
Do visitors and families have a comfortable place to wait in the office?					
Do visitors and families have places near the office or front entrance where they can review information about the school?					
Does the school provide displays or make information readily available for parents to connect with community resources?					
Are the school's mission and vision current and displayed for parents and visitors to see?					
Does the school have a bulletin board on which parents can post announcements or news?					
Does the school have clear and fair processes for families and visitors to access school leaders?					

Source: *Tools & Talk: Data, Conversation, and Action for Classroom and School Improvement*, by Michael Murphy. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2009.





THE RESPONSIVE SCHOOL SCAN TOOL continued

INDICATORS					NOTES
STUDENT VOICE					
Are quality student work and student achievements displayed throughout the common areas in sensitive and attractive ways?					
Is the purpose of the displayed student work communicated in writing and in appropriate languages?					
Do common areas showcase culturally relevant posters, pictures, or displays?					
Does the media center or teacher resource room contain varieties of culturally responsive materials and resources?					
Do students in common areas demonstrate a sense of focus, purpose, and orderliness?					
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS					
Are the classrooms designed to be intellectually attractive and stimulating to the students?					
Do classrooms include pictures, artifacts, or displays that reflect the students who occupy them?					
Do classrooms include areas for small groups and comfortable places to work and study?					
Does the teacher's classroom appear to be designed for a variety of student groupings?					
Does the teacher use a variety of materials for instruction?					
Has the teacher posted fair and clear procedures for students to view and use to manage their own behavior?					
Does the teacher appear to use fair and equitable management strategies that support student learning and achievement?					

Source: *Tools & Talk: Data, Conversation, and Action for Classroom and School Improvement*, by Michael Murphy. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2009.





NSDC TOOL

THE RESPONSIVE SCHOOL SCAN TOOL continued

INDICATORS					NOTES
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS continued					
Has the teacher set clear goals for achievement?					
Do displays of classroom work honor and promote high-quality student learning?					
Do students seem engaged in their learning?					
Have teachers capitalized on student interests and/or real-world connections?					

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

KEY

	Museum quality. There was evidence of extremely high quality.
	Meets the target. The indicator met the operational definition and was on target.
	Needs work. Evidence shows either preliminary or partial effort. Varying and/or inconsistent evidence was noted, and it is recommended that the team construct new efforts to meet this indicator.
	Didn't find it. The indicator was not found to be present at the time of the team visit.

Source: *Tools & Talk: Data, Conversation, and Action for Classroom and School Improvement*, by Michael Murphy. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2009.

Data conversations put evidence to work in the classroom

NSDC TOOL

With the many varieties of data available to them, educators don't lack for information. What they need are structures and time to investigate and interpret the data, whether it comes from formal or informal assessments, high-stakes tests, demographic information, or other sources. Conversations are a logical beginning. The framework below suggests a variety of data conversations that can be useful in different contexts.

TYPES OF DATA CONVERSATIONS

Type of data dialogue	Data used	Who is involved	Conversation topics	Frequency
Whole-school conversations	State assessments, district benchmarks	School improvement team, entire staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patterns of student achievement. Needs for schoolwide programs (instructional, curricular, professional learning). Needs for additional knowledge and skills for staff. 	2 times a year
One-on-one conversations with focus on multi-year growth of students	State assessments, benchmark exams, end-of-course assessments, classroom assessments, common assessments	Teacher and administrator and/or coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth of students. Overall proficiency of students. Instructional strategies to meet student learning needs. 	2 to 3 times a year
Department and/or grade-level teams with focus on individual student interventions	Student performance on classroom and common assessments, discipline records, student work	Core teams, grade-level teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnosis of individual knowledge and skills. Next steps for students. Grouping of students for instruction and intervention. Pyramid of interventions. 	Once a month or more often
Department and/or grade-level teams with focus on instructional strategies	State assessments, benchmark assessments, common assessments, unit assessments	Grade-level or content-area groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth of students. Patterns in proficiency. Instructional strategies. Assessment strategies. 	Once a week to once every 6 to 8 weeks
Student goal-setting conversations	Student work, grades, state assessments, common assessments, benchmark assessments	Teacher and individual students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal setting. Strategies for success. Celebrations of learning. 	Once a week to once a month

Source: Adapted from Harrison, C. & Bryan, C. (2008). Data dialogue: Focused conversations put evidence to work in the classroom. *JSD*, 29(4), pp. 15-19.

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USE DATA TO SPUR ACTION

How do teachers and coaches start a conversation that will lead to improved practice? Michael Murphy's *Tools & Talk* provides structures and suggestions to answer that question for anyone who works with classroom teachers to find new ways to improve student learning.

Ready-to-use tools kick start discussions around how to build responsive, brain-based classrooms, create engaging student tasks, and form a classroom community of respect and learning. Data-gathering tools help teachers and coaches examine student engagement, how lesson and classroom design work together to support optimal learning, whether the school and classroom environment welcomes all students, and how well teachers are managing instructional processes.

Murphy provides a framework for conversations around the data, as well as prompts that allow coaches to discuss the findings in a collaborative way that encourages teachers to think critically about their own practices.

With an emphasis on strengthening supportive relationships, Murphy shows principals, assistant principals, instructional specialists, and anyone in a position to affect instruction how to gather and use data to improve teaching and contribute to schoolwide change.



Buy *Tools & Talk* from the NSDC bookstore at www.nsdstore.org or call 800-727-7288.

Item #B425
Member price: \$33.60
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TOOLS *of* ENGAGEMENT

SHARING EVIDENCE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
SPARKS CHANGES IN TEACHER PRACTICE

ANN MINNETT, MIKE MURPHY, SANDY NOBLES, AND TRINA TAYLOR

When visitors tour our classrooms at the J. Erik Jonsson Community School, a 3-year-old through 5th-grade laboratory school just south of downtown Dallas, Texas, they sense that something is different. Visitors remark about the respectful, caring environment of

the school and the high-powered instruction, and they want to learn how they can implement these qualities in their own schools.

As part of the research, professional learning, and leadership team at the Jonsson School, we regularly share the work of the Jonsson School with other educators and communicate Jonsson's sim-

ple success formula: Powerful pedagogy + trusting relationships = student engagement for learning

In fall 2006, we grew curious about what the teachers were actually doing in the classroom to elicit this powerful student engagement. We hypothesized that if we could develop a way to collect evidence about student engagement in classrooms and share that evidence with our teachers, they would begin to transform their practices based on what they were learning about their students. Our supposition was supported by NSDC's Standards for Staff Development Data-Driven standard, which reminds us that "the study of such [classroom] evidence is itself a

potent means of staff development (NSDC, 2001).

We asked many questions, including: How do Jonsson teachers establish learning relationships with students? What exactly do our teachers do in the classroom to engage their students in learning? How engaged are our students as a result of teachers' actions? Is Jonsson student engagement really related to what they learn? Our

questions, the classroom research during the school year 2006-07, and the data and dialogue with participating teachers created a startling exchange of evidence and resulted in changes in teacher practices.

THE DESIGN OF OUR ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH

Our team first needed a tool to use to collect evidence of teacher behaviors and resulting student engagement actions. We culled through research about student learning and engagement and our findings about classroom relationships to study

After we visited classrooms using this tool, we intended to talk with participating teachers and share the relationship of their actions to student engagement.

Actions that we observed

BY THE TEACHER

- Call on individual student
- Latency
- Help
- Delve
- Higher-order question
- Affirm
- Praise
- Reason for praise
- Listen
- Acknowledge feelings
- Proximity (teacher-initiated)
- Courtesy
- Show personal interest
- Touch
- Desist/redirect

BY THE STUDENT

- Raise hand
- Ask (teacher) a question
- Answer teacher's question
- Follow directions
- Proximity (student-initiated)
- Active listening (look at)
- Off-task with peer
- Off-task alone
- Disrupt other student

how teachers engage their students in learning. We developed the engagement visit tool (see p. 27) and adopted the teacher actions variables from the Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement program, a set of classroom behaviors found to reduce student achievement disparities (Gottfredson, Marciniak, Birdseye, & Gottfredson, 1995). We intentionally selected from only the positive variables. We were interested in develop-

ing a tool that captured what teachers did to engage their students, to establish and maintain a learning relationship.

Another reason for the focus on the positive in classrooms is that we wanted to engage teachers in the reflective process. After we visited classrooms using this tool, we intended to talk with participating teachers and share the relationship of their actions to student engagement. Acknowledging the teacher's strengths and building upon them would, we predicted, strengthen the foundation at our school to regularly share real data about classroom practice. We thought that when the teacher learned that the focus was on how to better engage the students, the more open to change he or she would become and the more changes he or she would voluntarily implement.

Thus, the engagement visit tool contained 15 positive teacher actions. The nine student behaviors on the engagement visit tool reflected our desire to capture positive student behavior toward the teacher and avoid emphasis on negative intent or misbehavior, although we did include off-task and disruptive categories of behavior. The student variables were taken from our collective experience and research in hundreds of classrooms over 30 years.

Our engagement visit tool contained one more component. The student self-rating of engagement tool was adapted from Schlechty's assessment strategies for engaging students in learning. Schlechty defined five levels of student engagement: authentically engaged; ritually engaged (work-

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Engagement visit tool

DATE AND TIME _____

SCHOOL _____

GRADE _____ SUBJECT _____

CLASSROOM TEACHER _____

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY DURING OBSERVATION _____

Student names					Notes
ENGAGING TEACHER ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS					
Call on student					
Latency 5+					
Help					
Delve					
Higher-level questions and extensions					
Affirmation					
Specific praise					
Listen					
Accept feelings					
Proximity to student (teacher-initiated)					
Seek student ideas, thoughts, opinions					
Courtesy					
Personal interest or connection to student					
Touch					
Desist					
STUDENT ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS					
Raise hand					
Ask the teacher a question					
Answer teacher's question, respond					
Follow teacher's direction					
Proximity to teacher (student-initiated)					
Active listening to teacher (look at)					
Check in					
Off-task with peer					
Off-task – alone					
Disrupting others					

Teacher addresses whole class (tally): _____

Additional information: _____

Source: Salesmanship Club Institute for Excellence in Urban Education, Dallas, Texas

ing for the grade); passively engaged (to avoid negative consequences); actively retreating; and openly rebellious (Schlechty, 2002). We asked students to become involved with our research. We defined these levels in a separate tool so our students could understand the differences and rate themselves on their engagement. (Our research found that children as young as 1st graders were able to indicate their level of engagement on the quick survey and that they did so with greater discrimination than did their teachers or other adult observers.)

Armed with our tools, we were ready to begin our classroom research. The Jonsson Community School is unique in that it employs a classroom researcher who works with the school's sponsoring agency in evaluating the agency's programs. This person would conduct the classroom

research, and since she had no evaluative responsibilities over the teachers, the context seemed right for side-by-side research and dialogue. Eight Jonsson teachers volunteered for the research project over the course of the school year.

THE INVITATION

We shared all materials and procedures with the participating teachers before observing in the classroom, and they understood that they

would receive copies of their data and that we expected them to use the information for reflection about their practices. The classroom researcher visited each classroom prior to formal observations to help teachers and students feel more comfortable with her in the classroom. Student buy-in was also important. The classroom researcher arranged with the teacher

J. Erik Jonsson Community School

Dallas, Texas

Grades: Pre-K-5

Enrollment: 232

Staff: 23

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	3%
Black:	2%
Hispanic:	94%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	0%
Native American:	0%
Other:	1%

Limited English proficient: 64%

Languages spoken: English and Spanish

Free/reduced lunch: 77%

Contact: Mike Murphy, director of education and professional learning, Salesmanship Club Youth and Family Centers

E-mail: mmurphy@salesmanshipclub.org

to have five to 10 minutes of class time to discuss project details with the class, and she enlisted the teacher to join her in presenting the project to students.

WHAT WE FOUND

Over the school year, our classroom researcher observed all students and teachers in the eight 1st- through 5th-grade classes, five times for each student in each class. Since the relationship between the teacher actions and student behaviors was at the core of our research questions, our researcher deliberately selected four random students per session to target for observation and documented their behaviors with the teacher and classmates for 15 minutes each time, regardless of what they were doing. This practice ensured that the researcher wouldn't focus on students who were acting out or displaying disruptive behavior in the classroom.

THE EVIDENCE

Our multiple classroom observations, tallies from the engagement tools, and subsequent exchanges with

participating teachers revealed the following evidence:

- Students as young as 1st grade were able to identify their levels of interest in classroom activities, and all Jonsson students were engaged about 90% of the time.
- All positive student behaviors were related to teachers calling on them and calling them by name in a conversational manner and in close proximity.
- Students' positive behaviors were highly correlated with the teacher's affirmation and listening to their students.
- Teachers engaged students at close range — teacher-initiated proximity to a student was correlated with the student's active listening, asking and answering questions, and positive self-ratings of engagement.
- Teachers successfully managed and minimized students' off-task behavior at close range, with light touch, using the student's name, and with redirection.
- Both teachers and students were regularly more active and more engaged in their work during morning hours than in the afternoon.

THE EXCHANGE

These data are interesting, but the process of feedback and teacher reflection was the most important component of our research. All of the teachers were eager to learn what the classroom researcher had seen in their classrooms. To facilitate this, the researcher shared copies of the tallied tools with each teacher. Each tool showing teacher actions and student behaviors painted a picture of interactions and behaviors during that particular observation segment and provided the foundation for each exchange between researcher and teacher.

We learned so much from the teachers about how to exchange this

All of the teachers were eager to learn what the classroom researcher had seen in their classrooms. To facilitate this, the researcher shared copies of the tallied tools with each teacher.

evidence. Teachers needed to receive the information when they were free from teaching responsibilities and could reflect on what it meant. We also felt that the immediacy of the feedback was crucial. Teachers were provided the evidence of student engagement in a face-to-face meeting later in the same observation day, or at the very least, at the end of each week of classroom observations.

To assist in using the tools for reflection, we set up discussion mechanisms. A discussion board on the school's intranet site was valuable in addition to a question-and-answer box in the teacher workroom for anonymous suggestions. By far, the face-to-face exchange was the most important part of the learning. The classroom researcher learned that teachers needed time to mull over the tallied tools, noting patterns of marks

for student behaviors and their own behaviors toward students. The researcher was not in a hurry to force conclusions. She found that by asking teachers to reflect on what they saw in the tools, teachers would naturally respond to the data, ask questions, and wonder what would happen if they changed their behaviors. The classroom researcher used a menu of questions to delve into the teachers' reflections:

- What was going on during this time?
- How, if at all, do you behave differently toward students of varying ethnicity?
- Is there more behavior toward one gender?
- Is there more interaction with high-achieving students than others?
- How does time of day relate to

your teacher-student interactions?

- How does your student grouping (individual seatwork, small groups, whole class) affect your behavior toward students?
- Are students of all ethnic groups equally engaged in classroom activities?
- How do the students' self-ratings of engagement relate to their behavior toward you?
- What's happening in the classroom when students go off-task?
- Given this information, what would you want to do to more consistently engage your students?

POSITIVE CHANGES

The participating teachers flooded our leadership team and the classroom researcher with ideas and additional questions after reflecting on the data. These reflections formed the ground-

work for concrete changes in practice to enhance student engagement in classrooms. Over time, we found that participating teachers began to adjust their actions to gain more student engagement, a trend reinforced by subsequent observations of these teachers. Indeed, the most rewarding part of our work came toward the end of the school year, when we worked with four Jonsson teachers who wanted more specific information about what had happened in their classrooms. Here are two brief stories that describe how two teachers used the research to further their own learning.

Over time, we found that participating teachers began to adjust their actions to gain more student engagement, a trend reinforced by subsequent observations of these teachers.

Rachel, a 3rd-grade teacher, was challenged by two students' behaviors in her class. They made good grades, but our observations noted that they were often off-task and that Rachel rarely acknowledged them or redirected their behavior. When Rachel reviewed the coding sheets from her room, she was genuinely surprised by those students' actions, and she noticed that both students were distracting other students. When the researcher returned in a month to observe again, she found that not only was the teacher more

responsive to both students in all aspects of their behavior, but the students rated themselves as more engaged in the classroom activities, and their behavior was more controlled.

Another teacher, Ted, was not convinced that student engagement was really connected to student learning, which was one of our original questions. Ted thought that his 2nd graders' ratings of their own levels of engagement were inaccurate and were not related to their learning, so the classroom researcher collaborated with him to investigate his question. Ted conducted four geography lessons, and our team collected the students' ratings of their engagement in each lesson. Immediately following the lesson, each student answered three questions about content, and our team correlated the levels of engagement with the students' scores. Sure enough, those who were more engaged made better grades on the quizzes. And now Ted believes not only the data about frequencies of actions, but that students' self-ratings have merit.

We now call our system of engagement tools and facilitated feedback the Engagement Exchange, reflecting the critical role the exchange of the evidence plays in teacher practice transformation. During the 2007-

08 school year, we have continued to use our student engagement tools in classrooms at the Jonsson Community School and in three other schools in the Dallas area. We have gained important information as to how our teachers engage students. More importantly, we have discovered a powerful device to encourage teachers to recognize and own their student engagement practices. A simple tool used to collect data about the relationship between teacher actions and student behaviors coupled with facilitated feedback and the creation of a feedback stream have encouraged teachers to continue to wonder about their own practice and nurtured evidence-based changes for students.

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Coaching request form

TEAM: _____

Support requested (be specific). Please check the appropriate box and add more details in the space below.

- Resource materials to help us _____
- Strategies for _____
- Assistance with _____
- Feedback on _____
- Assessment of _____
- Training on _____
- Recommendations for _____
- Other _____

Please give more specifics about your request.

Best way to deliver what is requested is (check one):

- Give to (name) _____
- E-mail to _____ at (e-mail address) _____
- Come to our next meeting on _____ at _____ in Room _____

Timeline (when the team needs this support): _____

Contact for more information: _____

Coach notes:

Preobservation MAP



This tool is designed to assist a coach in discussing an upcoming lesson observation with a teacher. Together, coach and teacher outline the focus areas for observation, and the notes from the observation become a critical component of debriefing conversations and reflections that follow the observation.

Teacher: _____ Coach: _____

Date of lesson: _____ Time of lesson: _____

Lesson objective: _____

Standard: _____

Number of students in class: _____

Accommodations needed: _____

Assessment method: _____

Instructional strategy planned: _____

Resources needed: _____

Observation focus area: _____

Data to be collected and reported: _____

Data collected method: _____

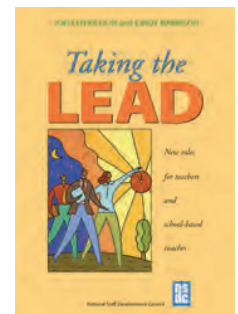
Post-conference date and time: _____

Source: *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teacher Leaders and School-based Coaches*, by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2006.

Support for coaches

Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teacher Leaders and School-based Coaches (NSDC, 2006) by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison is an essential guide to support coaches. Included are descriptions of 10 school-based leader roles and dozens of facilitator tools organized by role.

Available at www.nsdctest.org, item #B352, \$36 (member price), \$45 (nonmember price).



Reflective feedback protocol

Teacher _____ Coach _____

Conference date _____

Tell me about the highlights of your lesson.

How was this lesson different than what you planned? What do you think accounted for those differences?

What evidence from the lesson tells you if your students achieved the lesson's goals?

Teachers make many decisions as they teach. What decisions did you find yourself making during this lesson? Tell me about some of them and share your decision-making process. How did you arrive at those decisions?

What did you learn that you will apply to a future lesson?

Source: Killion, J. & Harrison, C. (2006). *Taking the lead: New roles for teacher leaders and school-based coaches.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

theme / THE BASIC INGREDIENTS



FROM GROUP TO TEAM

Skilled facilitation moves a group from a collection of individuals to an effective team

BY GINNY V. LEE

It is a Saturday morning, and I am sitting with a group of 15 new and aspiring school site administrators. As part of their work toward an MS in educational leadership, this group of experienced educators is enrolled in an elective course, “Group Facilitation for School Leaders.” The 12 women and three men are all experienced K-12 teachers. Collectively, they have led and served on numerous committees

and work groups at their sites and in their districts.

We are discussing the concept of teams and communities in school settings. I ask the group, “In your view, what is the difference between a group and a team?” They think for a minute. How IS a team different from a group? They toss around some ideas: Is one made up of volunteers and the other not? Does one have a formal affiliation and the other not? As they postulate and discard ideas, their thinking becomes clearer, and

they decide that the most important ways that a team differs from a group are these:

- Teams share a common purpose and goal.
- Team members are interdependent; they understand that they need to work well as a unit in order to complete their task.

As the group discusses what it’s like to work as part of an effective team, they realize that high-functioning teams require member commitment to the group and its purpose;

collaboration and cooperation; mutual respect and support; accountability to each other and to the desired outcomes; and a trusting and safe environment. They conclude that all teams are groups but not all groups are teams.

Groups, for example, may consist of people who share a role and responsibilities that provide an opportunity for the group to evolve to a team (for example, 4th-grade teachers, English department members), but this evolution does not always occur (Killion, 2006).

When I ask the group how many of them have been part of a high-functioning, effective team at their site or in their district, two people raise their hands. Most are shaking their heads as they realize how little experience they have with effective teamwork. They cite instances of contrived collegiality (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) and working on joint tasks in the most expeditious way possible, pushing hastily through challenging discussions, arriving at decisions on the fly, and focusing on getting the work done. At this point, I present concepts and strategies that support facilitators in understanding and addressing key issues that emerge during the initial stages of team development.

TEACHER COLLABORATION: PROMISES AND PITFALLS

Since the publication of Little's 1982 study, "Norms of collegiality and experimentation: Workplace conditions of school success," educators have compiled a considerable body of knowledge around the importance of teacher collaboration as a component of professional learning (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Lieberman, 1996; Speck & Knipe, 2001). We see the concept of collabora-

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tion embedded in the concept of professional learning communities as well as in NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001). As districts and schools embrace the promise of collaboration to support teachers in honing practice, educators have become increasingly adept at developing structures and processes that establish regular opportunities for teachers to come together and engage in meaningful professional dialogue focused on student learning.

In many ways, our understanding of teacher collaboration for professional learning parallels a body of work on team development and performance.

Despite the plethora of examples, strategies, formats, protocols, and promise, the transition from a group to a collaborative team is not always smooth or effective. Given the norms of autonomy and private practice that have informed teaching for so many decades (Little, 1982), this is not surprising. Nevertheless, many efforts to support teachers in moving from being participants of groups to being members of collaborative teams miss

the mark by overlooking stages in team development that can make or break the process.

In my experience working directly with collaborative groups and listening to my students describe their experiences, I have come to identify a number of false assumptions that educators often make about such work:

1. If group members don't know each other well, a series of ice-breakers will bring them together.
2. A group of educators knows how to engage with each other as professionals.
3. If the facilitator of the group is unsure about the group's capacity to engage professionally, developing a set of norms will resolve this issue.
4. Being clear with a group about tasks, structure, and accountability will lead to quality group output.

While the strategies in the list above contain some useful ideas for supporting team or community development, these ideas oversimplify and trivialize the issues that members bring to a team. Such Band-Aid solutions might establish a surface of civility among group members, but they will not suffice to support the kind of deep connection (with each other and with the team's purpose) and trust that enable teams to soar.

As I listen to students discuss negative colleagues, individuals who don't understand why collaboration is good idea or who take a "been there, done that" attitude, I am touched by the depth of their frustration and their belief in the potential benefits to be gained. What I see missing for them is a deep understanding of the questions and issues that team members naturally bring with them to a team

In many ways, our understanding of teacher collaboration for professional learning parallels a body of work on team development and performance.

and a lack of authentic tools with which to address these matters.

MODELS OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

One of the best-known theories of team development is captured in Tuckman’s model of groups going through the predictable stages of “forming, storming, norming, and performing” (Tuckman, 1965). This model acknowledges the inevitable clash of assumptions, beliefs, perspectives, goals, and values that individuals bring with them to any group endeavor. The model recognizes the need for groups to engage in examining and resolving core relational and operational questions before they can be expected to work together effectively.

For a facilitator to support the process of a team advancing from the forming to the performing stage, he or she must understand the core issues that typically arise for team participants at each stage and realize what happens to a team when the issues are not satisfactorily resolved. Moreover, the facilitator must be able to recognize signs that individuals or subgroups have not resolved one or more of these questions and must be able to intervene appropriately. All too often, team facilitators are limited in their capacity to engage the deep issues and rely on the set of tools described above

under false assumptions: overuse of icebreakers; appealing to the “professionalism” of the individuals; expecting norms to resolve differences; and depending on clear structures, agendas, protocols, and activities to counterbalance underlying dissatisfactions.

One of the most useful tools that my students and I have used to support our work in facilitating teams is the Team Performance Model developed by Drexler, Sibbet, and Forrester (2009). In this model, the developers

and how they fit the group and the purpose. If a group member is not satisfied that she or he has a place on the team, the likely response, according to Drexler et al., is disorientation, uncertainty, and fear. Consider the following description:

Nominal members who are misfits lacking any purposeful way to relate to others are disconnected from the group. They tend to focus on this lack of connection, making others feel uncomfortable. The internal conflict experienced by these marginal persons expresses itself in various dysfunctional ways. They may become withdrawn or distant from the group, or offer unsolicited criticism, never finding much value in

the team’s work (Drexler et al., 2009, p. 8).

When the orientation stage is resolved, the group is on its way to becoming a team. Members begin thinking in terms of “us,” they identify with the purpose, and they begin to imagine what the team could achieve.

For the facilitator, achieving resolution at this stage involves:

- **Making explicit the team’s purpose and the reasons behind the membership.** An essential piece of explicating purpose is doing so without articulating an overly specific goal. “We are here to discuss ways that we can improve reading comprehension for our second language learners” will work much better than, “We are here to analyze comprehension data for our second language learners and design specific interventions consistent with adopted texts.” The key is to allow the team to arrive at specific goals that address the purpose.
- **Engaging individuals in articulating what essential knowledge, skills, history, etc., that each**

7 STAGES OF THE TEAM PERFORMANCE MODEL

1. **Orientation:** Why am I here?
2. **Trust building:** Who are you?
3. **Goal clarification:** What are we doing here?
4. **Commitment:** How will we do it?
5. **Implementation:** Who does what, when, where?
6. **High performance:** Wow!
7. **Renewal:** Why continue?

Source: Drexler, Sibbet, & Forrester, 2009.

identify seven stages that describe a team’s evolution from formation through task completion and renewal. With respect to the issues identified in this article, the first two stages of the Team Performance Model are especially relevant. In the remainder of this piece, I describe these stages with a focus on what happens when issues are unresolved for team members. Following each of these descriptions are suggestions for facilitators.

MOVING FROM GROUP TO TEAM

Stage 1: Orientation.

In the orientation stage, team members are coming together to learn about the project or initiative that it will undertake. Typically, members do not have work history with everyone on the team and may not even be sure what the project is about. In this stage, the primary concern of the members is, “Why am I here?” The emphasis at this stage is on both the team’s purpose as well as the “I” part of the question: Why was this team formed, and why was I included? Assuming that the team’s purpose is made clear, members ponder whether

Groups need to examine and resolve core relational and operational questions before they can work together effectively.

brings to the team. To share in the purpose of a team effort, each individual must believe that he or she has a meaningful role to play. Prompting members to identify what they believe are relevant knowledge, skills, and experience and then to surface the strengths and unique perspectives of each individual helps create the connection to purpose and the sense that “I belong here.”

- **Supporting individuals in imagining the power of “we,” helping members envision possibility and shared purpose.** The power of teams resides in the synergy of the collective. Thus, involving individuals at the orientation stage in tapping into their individual and collective ideas about what is possible, imagining what success would look like, and exploring outside-the-box choices can create both enthusiasm and commitment to the future of the team.

Stage 2: Trust building.

Virtually every facilitator understands that trust is a necessary ingredient for team performance. Because teams are interdependent, members must be able to relinquish full control and rely on others. If we stop to think about the people in our lives whom we trust, we quickly realize that such trust is developed experientially over time, through a deepening knowledge of the other person. To some extent, then, the development of trust is part and parcel of teams’ ongoing work.

At the beginning stages of team development, the issue of trust can be captured by the question, “Who are you?” Without some resolution of this question, a lack of trust can translate into team members being cautious with each other, perhaps maintaining

a façade, and not being forthright. When mistrust results in members not feeling free to speak their truth, the dynamics of the group are shaped by hidden agendas, unwillingness to voice issues of importance, and lack of integrity. All of these will impede both the authenticity of the work and the level of cooperation and collaboration among team members.

Resolving the trust-building stage requires that facilitators:

- **Model forthrightness, honesty, and integrity; be completely trustworthy themselves.** Essential to this stance are the concepts of transparency and forthrightness. Team members must be assured that the process is an open one and that any constraints, boundaries, or limitations are stated at the beginning of the work. Rather than keeping team members from dreaming, for example, presenting clear information about matters such as resources, timelines, expectations, and accountability help set parameters for the effort and convey the respect of the facilitator for the team’s capacity to work effectively under current circumstances. Similarly, team members must be assured that the facilitator is not doling out information selectively.
- **Create a safe environment for self-revelation; protect unpopular opinions; champion the marginalized.** Skilled facilitators are able to engage team members in increasingly courageous conversation. Neutrality is essential here, as is a willingness to ensure that the voice of each member receives equitable attention, respect, and consideration. It is especially important not to dismiss the voice of a lone individual whose thinking differs from the rest of the group. Rather, the facilitator wants to support that individual in articulating ideas, to check that

others in the group understand the person’s reasoning and/or feelings, and to make sure that the group does not move forward with an option that is unacceptable to anyone. (Note: This means avoiding votes and majority rule as a decision-making strategy. See Kaner, Lind, Toldi, Fisk, & Berger’s *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* (2007) for specific ideas about negotiating decisions.)

- **Engage participants in learning more about each other’s history, perspective, needs, individual priorities, and work styles.** One of the most insidious challenges to trust is the situation in which individuals make assumptions about others: “She’s African-American, so she must know best how to work with our African-American students”; “He teaches P.E., so he must not understand the importance of academic standards”; “She’s been in charge of grant oversight for the past five years, so she must have answers for us.” At best, such assumptions cause misunderstandings and perhaps some embarrassment that could be avoided by asking rather than assuming. At worst, such assumptions represent biases, prejudices, and intolerance that poison the possibility of trust.

CONCLUSION

School-based learning depends on teachers’ capacity to engage with each other around central issues of teaching and learning. While such collaboration is readily welcomed by some educators, others remain wedded to an “independent contractor” concept of teaching. Supporting teachers to view themselves as team members and to perform effectively as a team demands more of leaders than simply establishing structures and identifying tasks. Even assuming positive intent

Each individual must believe that he or she has a meaningful role to play.

on the part of the participants, the journey from a group to a team can be daunting. Without skillful facilitation, groups are likely to encounter personal dynamics that not only provide unanticipated challenges but may also serve as deal breakers in becoming a high-performing team. An experienced, astute facilitator who models interpersonal skills and dispositions needed for effective team work can make the difference between a group that remains a collectivity of individuals and one that forges the bonds of cohesiveness and trust that allow great things to happen.

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3 STEPS LEAD TO DIFFERENTIATION

By Linda Bowgren and Kathryn Sever

Just as all students do not benefit from a one-size-fits-all model of learning, neither do teachers. Much has been written about the value, need, and complexity of differentiating learning within every classroom based on student readiness, motivation and interest, apparent skills, learning preferences or styles, and identified cognitive needs. Teachers are encouraged to look at differentiation for students not as a formula for teaching, but rather as a way of thinking about and shaping the learning experiences of all (Tomlinson, 1999). If, as Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock note in their book, *Classroom Instruction That Works* (2001), it is the classroom teacher that is the most important factor in student success, then how can we ignore the value of differentiation for teachers?

What is differentiated learning? Rick Wormeli

(2006) tells us in his book, *Fair Isn't Always Equal*, that teachers must do whatever it takes to provide students with a chance for success. This means teachers give every learner whatever he or she needs before teaching, while teaching, and after teaching. Teachers change the nature of the learning to fit the needs of the learner. While the intent is for all students to learn the same content and standards, teachers will have to find the best path to that content for each particular learner. Differentiation does not dilute content, add to content, or change content. Rather, it presents content in differing ways with necessary adjustments to pave each learner's way to successful learning.

A district's staff is as diversified as any classroom of students. There are reluctant learners, gifted learners, those who struggle with literacy, numeracy, or technology, those who are artistic, as well as others who find it difficult to sit still for more than an hour at a time. Without different pathways that are specific to each learner's



needs, only a portion of these learners will succeed. Professional growth is vital for every educator, but it is not always shaped in ways that work for each individual. Differentiation guarantees all learners the opportunity to succeed. If districts intend to add value to professional development, they must consider the power of differentiation for teacher learning.

JOB-EMBEDDED DIFFERENTIATION

In the foreword for NSDC’s *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*, James B. Hunt Jr. writes, “It is time for our education workforce to engage in learning the way other professionals do — continually, collaboratively, and on the job — to address common problems and crucial challenges where they work” (2009). Ongoing, differentiated professional development allows teachers to optimize their learning through the context of their daily classroom practice.

As we wrote in *Differentiated Professional Development in a Professional Learning Community* (Bowgren & Sever, 2010), teachers receive the differentiated support they need to transfer theory into practice using a three-step process: “I do,” “we do,” and “you do.” The “I do” step of demonstration and expectation provides the modeling that offers teachers a common springboard from which to launch a learning process. The “we do” step of approximation and response personalizes the learning through joint practice and coaching support that ultimately results in the “you do” step of responsi-

bility and independent practice. When districts use an in-house coaching model during the second step of this model, research-based strategies are infused throughout all teachers’ classrooms, resulting in a systemic approach that increases student achievement. Coaching promises follow-up action. Effective coaching relationships are true examples of a differentiated learning model. The types of coaching offered, however, must be dependent upon each learner’s needs. Individual learners do not experience the same type of coaching, but all coaching focuses on the learning that has been demonstrated in the first step of “I do.” Following the demonstrations in this first step, learners enter the collaborative coaching of “we do,” where they are given ample time and opportunity for approximations. Together, coaches and learners decide what is missing, what learning and strategies to target, and what data to collect in order to plan next steps. Individual coaching over time allows learning to become transparent for each learner, resulting in the embedding of the new learning in each classroom setting during the “you do” step.

Teacher learning is demonstrated through changes in behavior, such as routinely implementing a teaching strategy deemed effective through the collection of student data. Brian Cambourne (2000) believes that learning, or behavior change, happens when the learner has models, feedback, peer support, and a lot of practice. Learners move from novice to more expert through social interactions with others who are more knowledgeable. As learners share expertise with peers, the learning continues. This model of learning is the “gradual release of responsibility” (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) where participants feel a purposeful shift in their level of accountability for the learning.

If districts intend to add value to professional development, they must consider the power of differentiation for teacher learning.

DOING IN-DEPTH

Let’s take a more detailed look at the steps in the model to show how all teachers can move from initial learning to successfully embedding practice in a way that is responsive to the needs of both teachers and students.

I DO

In the “I do” stage, the teacher leader demonstrates the new learning through a traditional workshop setting or through modeling during team meetings or in

classrooms. New learning topics are determined after districts, teams, disciplines, or grade levels gather and interpret student data. The “I do” step makes the connection between new learning and district initiatives and cements the purpose for any new professional development. Teachers become aware of expectations and the process for reaching them. As part of this process, teacher

leaders invite questions, develop vocabulary, and propose action research possibilities for each participant. To

In the “we do” phase, one-to-one coaching provides the meat of differentiation.

illustrate, we can envision a guided reading workshop.

Once participants learn about the necessary research base for the strategies, teacher leaders model the

process with a group of students while their colleagues observe the demonstration. One leader

may do the modeling while another cues the participants about what to observe and

why: “Listen to how Kyle is reinforcing prediction skills...” When learners observe, they see how to do something and build an understanding for its purpose and value.

WE DO

After presenting the necessary background and initial modeling, teacher leaders segue to the “we do” phase of the model. In this phase, one-to-one coaching provides the meat of differentiation.

After observing, asking questions, and reflecting, participants begin to “learn by doing” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). Each learner is allowed many tries and time to achieve self-sufficiency with the learning. Some participants now work with their coaches in a push-in model, others co-plan and co-teach, while others engage in continued observations. Each of these methods provides time for developing individual action research plans for all classrooms. Coaching requires a variety of skills and levels of trust between leaders and learners. Differentiated coaching builds emotional connections where colleagues become equal partners in search of effective learning paths. Perhaps Teacher A would like to have the “I do” teacher leader model the guided reading format with additional student groups while Teacher B feels ready to jump in and lead a group, asking the leader to provide feedback and coaching. We begin to see the need and opportunity for differentiation. While Teacher A is not quite ready to enter the collaborative effort of “we do,” Teacher B is anxious to begin a coaching relationship. The “we do” phase is the opportunity for absolute differentiation during practice, through feedback, reflection, and purposeful planning. The demonstrations of “I do” have left these two teachers in different stages of understanding and at different levels of confidence. Each will receive support that is unique to his or her readiness. This

THE MODEL IN ACTION

Differentiated, job-embedded professional learning is key to unlocking the potential of all adult learners. By experiencing the power of differentiation in their own learning, teachers will be better equipped to transfer differentiated support to their students, regardless of the focus of their own professional growth.

In the Maine-Endwell Central School District in upstate New York, the “I do, we do, you do” model has been successfully implemented to support numeracy instruction at the elementary level and literacy across the content areas K-12. Let’s consider one example.

- **Through data analysis**, middle school teachers discovered that their students struggled with editing tasks on state assessments.
- **As the colleagues** discussed the data, they realized the curriculum was not thoroughly addressing the state guidelines for this particular skill.
- **As a result**, grades 6, 7, and 8 language arts and literacy teachers adjusted their existing curriculum maps. They identified targets for each grade level that would build student ability in editing tasks.

I DO

- **These teams** of teachers expressed a need for professional development to help them develop new lessons and strategies to address current instructional gaps. During a team meeting, language arts teachers asked the middle school literacy team (three literacy teachers and one academic intervention teacher) to model some editing strategies for them to begin teaching. They had established a target and focus for the initial “I do” step of differentiated professional development.
- **Since literacy team** teachers were already involved with push-in activities with language arts teachers, they agreed to provide several demonstrations over the next few weeks. They also offered to present a two-hour workshop session to teach language arts teachers a method for teaching a strategy as well as providing a list of best practice strategies that they would be demonstrating in the classrooms.

differentiation ensures growth and eventual success for each of these teachers, and is most often missing from traditional professional development.

YOU DO

The “you do” step is a time of full control. The teacher-learners make the final shift and accept ownership of their learning through independent action, allowing them to use their own

WE DO

- **Literacy team** members provided follow-up through individualized coaching as they continued their push-in work in classrooms. In this case, language arts teachers practiced the initial demonstrations during the “we do” step with their teacher leaders now becoming their coaches.
- **A few took** advantage of colleague-to-colleague visits during this practice time in order to watch the action in other classrooms. A number of others engaged in co-teaching with their coach to solidify the methods and language of the new strategies. Still others desired more demonstrations before they were ready to try what the coach was doing. More traditional professional development might have found these teachers attending a workshop to learn new strategies, but would never have offered the coaching each would need over time to successfully transfer workshop information to classroom practice.

YOU DO

- **One by one**, these language arts teacher learners consistently embedded the new strategies into their daily work. Each entered the “you do” step of independence, able to lead their students to higher achievement levels with editing skills. They no longer needed the demonstrations and specific feedback provided in “I do” and “we do.”
- **However, they did not** all enter “you do” at the same time or with the same amount of expertise. Nevertheless, their in-house coaches continued to be available. Their professional learning was job-embedded with a coach who worked along with them in the classroom.
- **Once teachers** reached the “you do” step, coaches sustained them with encouragement and continued support through face-to-face meetings, e-mail journaling, and team sharing time to help learners maintain their level of success. And then it was on to the next topic and continued differentiated professional development.
- **When the teachers** studied initial data from the current state assessment, the growth in student achievement was astounding. Students attaining mastery on the editing section jumped 20%, while the number of students at proficiency increased by 30%. What a testimony to the power of targeted, differentiated professional development.

learning to create student learning. Colleague-to-colleague support results in deeper learning for both the participants and the teacher leaders and coaches. Haven't we all learned new things through our teaching? Through this collaboration of teacher-learner and colleague-coach, the learning is ongoing as well as job-embedded.

Even after the teacher-learner is comfortable with embedding the new learning independently, the coach is still available for a

peer observation or simply to answer questions as they arise. At this point, the teacher and coach may establish new goals for their collaborative learning journey. When professional development is differentiated, school communities become stronger, providing the foundation for student learning.

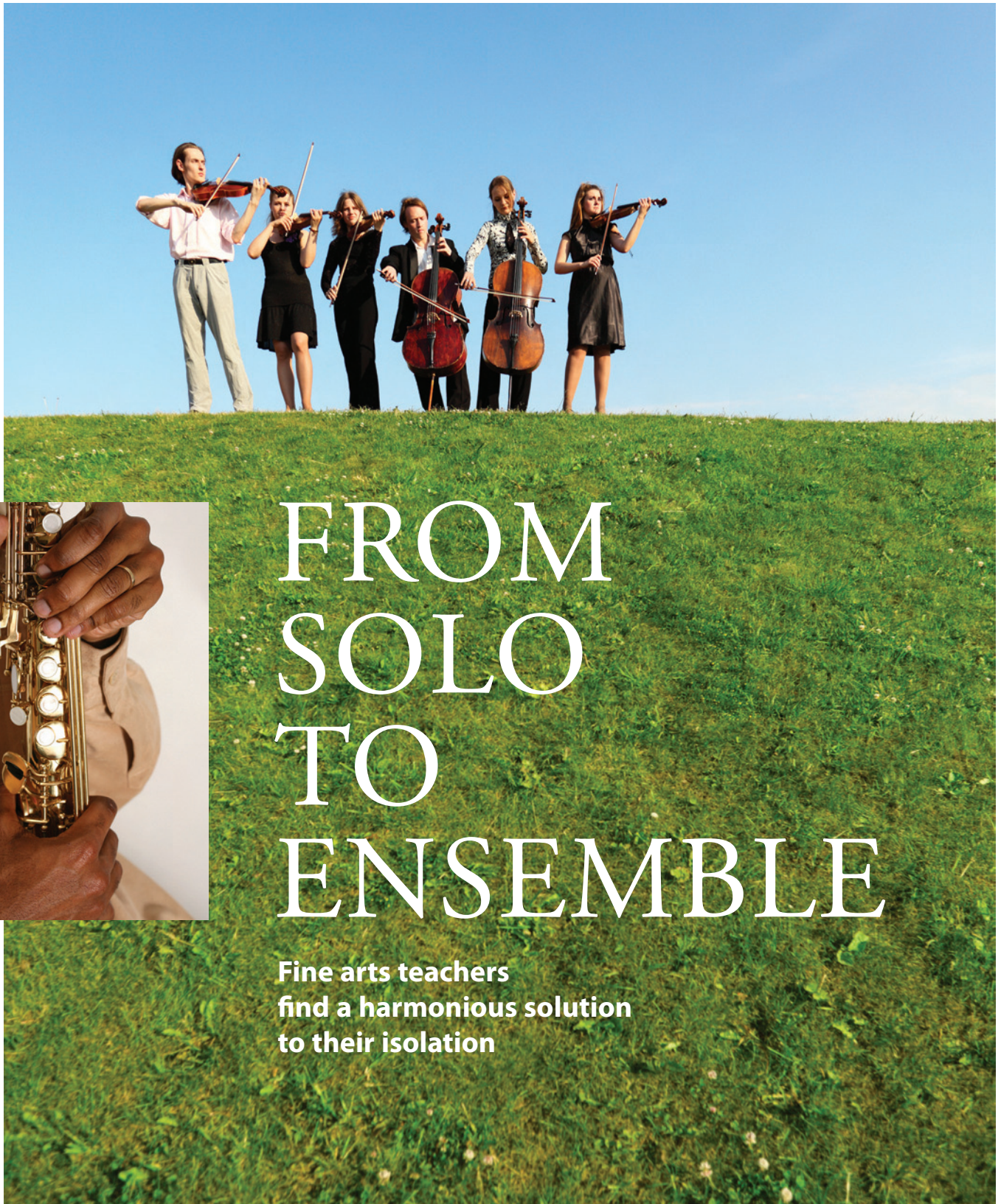
To be successful with this differentiated model of professional development, teacher leaders/coaches must experience the learning necessary to develop the coaching skills that they will need to support their colleagues. They need pedagogical expertise, yet they must also learn about adult learning and coaching. Administrators must not only “talk the talk” but must also model their understanding and prioritization of job-embedded professional development. This is reflected in how they allocate time and money.

What must educators do to redesign their professional development? Differentiation is crucial in revamping a traditional approach. Regardless of the professional development targets of your district, employing a differentiated, job-embedded model of professional development will add value to your learning community by providing an arena for teachers to improve instructional practice that will be evidenced in increased student achievement.

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FROM SOLO TO ENSEMBLE

**Fine arts teachers
find a harmonious solution
to their isolation**

**By Jeff Maher,
Christina Burroughs,
Laurel Dietz, and
AnneMarie Karnbach**



teacher sits alone at her desk, yet she is working collaboratively with a team of two dozen educators in a professional learning community.

Teachers who were once isolated by distance and the nature of their jobs are connecting across schools in online professional learning communities. While riding the wave of technology, St. Mary's County Public Schools in Leonardtown, Md., is providing a connection for teachers that extends beyond school walls.

Collaboration is at the core of professional learning in St. Mary's County Public Schools. When we began implementing professional learning communities, we established the expectation that every teacher would collaborate to foster professional learning and improved student learning. This expectation led to the need to find differentiated processes to ensure that every teacher, regardless of position or content area, had the opportunity to engage in high-quality, job-embedded learning. We found we can use electronic tools to achieve our purpose.

Collaborative professional development is focused on clarity of purpose and centered on student learning and results (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 2008). As we looked at models for professional learning, it was clear that collaborative, purposeful, and results-oriented professional development was necessary to ensure high levels of learning for both teachers and students. To get to these higher

levels of learning, teachers needed to work together, plan together, and learn together. Expectations for collaborative planning and professional learning communities are even embedded in our teacher evaluation system through a unified effort with the education association.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT COLLABORATION

With the expectation for professional learning communities, the school system began implementing new technologies to advance professional learning. Through a partnership with Johns Hopkins University, St. Mary's County schools implemented the electronic learning community, an online platform to support collaboration, sharing, and just-in-time learning. The electronic learning community had features such as discussion forums and online resource sharing, but it also included opportunities for instant feedback and collaboration. These collaborative tools gave teachers their answer to the time challenge.

While more than 2,800 discussion threads were posted for all groups across the system, nearly one-fourth of all discussion threads were posted by fine arts teachers.

Frequency of electronic learning community interactions

Theme	Announcements	Calendar events	Discussion posts	Folders	Files	Links
New teacher program	2	2	420	15	196	0
Fine arts — music	19	353	391	98	494	29
Integrating technology into instruction	7	12	298	3	1	7
Fine arts — art	10	292	266	9	6	6
Fine arts — theater	6	301	145	6	6	0
English PLC	2	28	62	55	296	2
Social studies	1	118	8	110	267	0

Despite the expectation for collaborative learning, some groups of teachers found it more difficult than others to get together. Fine arts teachers, for example, would meet a few times during the year, but the distance between schools made it difficult for them to support each other on an ongoing basis. AnneMarie Karnbach, one of the fine arts teacher leaders, made the importance of uniting clear: “Because most of the fine arts staff are singletons in their schools, we felt that the idea of improving the lines of communication would be a great place to start. As we started learning about different plans, we decided that expanding our professional learning community through the electronic learning community was the best way to allow us to communicate with each other.” This communication led to an extension of the learning community that was created during the “live” sessions.

Using new technologies is not always easy. Before teachers could get to the point of use, we had to design

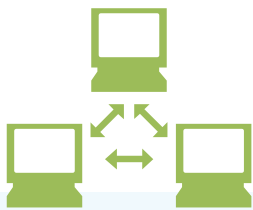
a differentiated learning plan for the teachers who would be involved. To facilitate collaboration, a group of teacher leaders formed the Fine Arts Support Teachers (FAST) Team. The FAST Team, led by the director of professional development, included former and current members of the superintendent’s leadership development academy who launched the effort to further collaboration and communication among fine arts teachers across the system. This team worked together through the leadership academy and the follow-up professional development institute offered by the school system to design ongoing and job-embedded professional development. Together, they customized professional development and gave real-time examples and instruction. These teachers took the lead in supporting others’ learning. In the professional development sessions, teachers were able to log into their electronic learning communities together, learn to post to discussion boards, and participate and run chat sessions. Initial workshops were designed for fine arts teachers in the summer professional development days before the school year started. Beyond the initial technical training, follow-up sessions involved more specific questioning and demonstration lessons, as well as real-time assistance for those who needed additional help. With the encouragement and support of the fine arts supervisor, the team successfully moved the program forward.

NSDC’s definition of professional learning (2008) emphasizes the need to find time for job-embedded professional learning. We have learned that high-quality professional development needs to be relevant and meaningful, but also just-in-time. The school system built four additional early dismissal days to provide time for collaborative planning into the school calendar. These days, coupled with the online electronic learning community, provided a blended model for follow-up.

SUPPORTING ISOLATED TEACHERS

For fine arts teachers and other special areas teachers, collaborative online learning offers opportunities to connect and learn from one another outside school walls. “One setback to the work of the fine arts professional learning community is the fact that we are all located at many different buildings throughout the system. Meeting weekly, or even monthly, is almost impossible,” said Laurel Dietz, a fine arts teacher leader. “The electronic learning community was crucial to keeping our work focused. The use of the electronic learning community allowed assessment teams to talk on a daily basis without having to be in the same place.”

Teacher teams across the district met monthly to work collaboratively designing common formative as-



SAMPLE DISCUSSION THREAD

3rd-grade indicator 4.1.a – Question 7

Laurel Dietz
03/15/2009 9:52 a.m.

You are composing music for the car chase scene of a movie. Your music would most likely have a tempo of _____.

- a. high
- b. low
- c. adagio (slow)
- d. allegro (fast)

Re: 3rd-grade indicator 4.1.a – Question 7

Christina Burroughs
03/17/2009 4:07 p.m.

I really like question 7. ... Giving the kids a scenario seems like a great way to assess their understanding of these indicators.

Re: 3rd-grade indicator 4.1.a – Question 7

Sara Zylak
03/18/2009 2:06 p.m.

I think all the questions so far are fine. However, I am slightly

concerned about 7. ... Are we being too easy by putting the definitions of musical terms they should know in parenthesis?

Re: 3rd-grade indicator 4.1.a – Question 7

Laurel Dietz
03/18/2009 2:12 p.m.

Christina and I thought of that, too. The question is not testing their understanding of the terms, but rather whether or not they know the appropriate use of each term. I feel if the definitions weren’t there, we wouldn’t know why a student missed the answer. Was it because they don’t know the appropriate use of the term or because they don’t know the definition of the term? When students are going to be asked to recall the definition while testing indicator 1.0, they will not be given the English translation. Good point, though! Thanks for taking the time to give such excellent feedback!

assessments. The electronic learning community provided an avenue for the teams to share ideas and continue the collaboration between those monthly meetings. Leaders from the FAST Team served as facilitators who set team goals and action items for the team's collaborative work.

The online collaboration in developing common formative assessments was a success. Teachers uploaded questions devised by members of the professional learning community for all members to view at their convenience. These discussions have allowed teachers to use their collective knowledge of the learner and their learning to revise and create effective questions that will accurately assess students' content knowledge. Because community members can view items in the discussion threads at their leisure, they are not bound by the limits of our buildings.

As a teacher leader observed, "Without the electronic learning community, we would have had to work in a much less convenient and inefficient way to complete our goal of a common assessment. In this time of



"We have learned that there must be protocols for these chats, involving staying strictly on topic and not getting carried away with the amusing smile icons."

— Christina Burroughs, FAST Team leader

developing a culture of staff collaboration and professional development, it has been wonderful to be given such an effective tool with which to work to make a collaborative culture happen."

While the electronic learning community was used across the system for several learning communities, the model worked especially well for fine arts teachers. For example, while more than 2,800 discussion threads were posted for all groups across the system, nearly one-fourth of all discussion threads were posted by fine arts teachers. As one participant reflected, "Our discussion boards were used for connecting and relating to our professional learning communities and assessments, but this

area also includes items needed by teachers (such as instruments, rare supplies, music, etc.), recycling materials (teacher’s manuals, books, music), and general questions (solo & ensemble, assessment festival, all-county ensembles). One of the best attributes to this area is that all fine arts staff can see it! There is no need to answer the same question multiple times. It is posted for all to see and learn from.”

The online collaboration included more than just static postings. Since teachers in special areas are spread so far apart across schools, one of the areas used frequently is synchronous chats. These are real-time and allow questions to be addressed immediately. Many of our fine arts learning communities have scheduled chats where all members log in at a specific time. Teachers were given support in implementing a professional learning community. This included guidance in establishing goals for meeting, methods for creating common formative assessments, and asking the right questions (Reason & Reason, 2007) to stay focused on student learning targets. This background in effective learning communities was especially useful as the electronic communities matured. The more focused, the

more relevant, and the more student-centered the work became, the more critical it was to stay focused. As Christina Burroughs, a FAST Team leader, put it: “We have learned that there must be protocols for these chats, involving staying strictly on topic and not getting carried away with the amusing smile icons.”

BUILDING ON VALUABLE LESSONS

The lessons from this experience are shaping the future of collaborative learning teams in St. Mary’s County. These lessons include:

- 1. Believe in everyone’s success.** Every teacher approaches learning from a different perspective and a different set of experiences. When this experience is valued, and learning is differentiated, the results are powerful.
 - For example, we expected an elementary general music teacher with more than 30 years of experience to have a tough time with this collaboration. To our surprise, she has made numerous and frequent contributions to the learning community. She has also come to outwardly celebrate her own successes with the new technology.

Be sure not to leave anyone hanging and waiting for your reply. When someone knows others are listening and interacting, they are more likely to share.

- 2. Take time to prepare and support everyone.** Some teachers need a more individualized approach and one-on-one coaching.
 - We saw a good example of this with a self-proclaimed “computer illiterate” teacher, who really struggled with getting the concepts of the electronic learning community. Knowing that the FAST Team would take the time to answer her questions, she is now a fully contributing member of the electronic learning community.
- 3. Make it personal.** Help people connect to their role, their position, and their content area.
 - When planning, we broke down our presentation by content area and grade level. This kept participants in a small and familiar setting and allowed them to brainstorm collectively their intended use of the electronic learning community. Participants were willing to take risks because they knew they were among colleagues.
- 4. Set expectations.** Make sure everyone knows what should result from his or her participation. Model this expectation by consistently following through.
 - In our first year of implementation, the FAST Team and supervisors provided the intended goal for our elementary general music group. As a team, we guided our learning community in developing common assessment questions. During our meetings and planning sessions, we asked members to use specific features of the electronic learning community to develop questions. During one session and between meetings, we used the discussion thread feature to help members conceptualize the organization of our assessment. Later, we asked members to use the chat room to develop assessment questions. Finally, the team encouraged teachers to share resources throughout the development of our assessment questions.
- 5. Stay involved.** Be sure not to leave anyone hanging and waiting for your reply. When someone knows others are listening and interacting, they are more likely to share.
 - When a specific question about an upcoming community performance was posted to the electronic learn-

St. Mary’s County Public Schools

Leonardtown, Md.

Number of schools: **27** (17 elementary, 4 middle, 3 high, 2 centers)

Enrollment: **17,217**

Staff: **2,407** (1,449 professional staff, 761 classified, 197 temporary)

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	70.47%
Black:	21.83%
Hispanic:	4.08%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	2.94%
Native American:	0.69%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: **0.73%**

Languages spoken: **22**, including English, Spanish, Russian, and Tagalog.

Free/reduced lunch: **28.88%**

Special education: **11.11%**

Contact: **Jeff Maher**, director of professional and organizational development

E-mail: **jamaher@smcps.org**

ing community, FAST Team facilitators contacted those teachers involved with the performance and requested their response so all could benefit. Once those involved responded, others were compelled to respond as well, ultimately contributing to a high attendance rate at the community performance.

6. Celebrate successes. Take time to reflect on what the group created, shared, and used.

- For the first year of implementation, facilitators sent e-mails noting specific topics of interest that had been posted to the electronic learning community. This kept everyone updated and highlighted user contributions.

7. Take the next step. When common assessments are developed, share the results. Refine your work, and make plans for furthering your work together.

- Now that common assessment questions are posted on the electronic learning community, participants are discussing revisions to the questions. Members of the learning communities are taking their learning, and their students' learning, to the next level. The fine arts department is looking at ways to streamline the organization of our curriculum using the assessment questions to help create unit and lesson plans.

Collaborative teams are continuing in St. Mary's County, and the electronic learning community is growing. The perception of professional development has changed. Teachers are coming to sessions with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that work is meaningful and applicable. Each teacher knows that the common assessments, the instructional units, and the shared resources are all going directly into their classrooms. The students benefit directly from this work. The teachers are accountable to each other and own the process.

The electronic learning community has become a beacon of collective learning for teachers, guiding collaboration and extending learning beyond the traditional setting for professional development.

The success of the fine arts learning community is a microcosm of the system's efforts to integrate professional learning communities, and it is having a profound effect on teacher learning and student learning. In the past five years, as teachers have worked more collaboratively in differentiated learning communities, student learning is at the center, and achievement has increased. The fine arts program has joined other content areas in implementing formative assessments that are part of the system's online data warehouse allowing for collective analysis of student progress. St. Mary's County Public Schools has moved from being ranked below state aver-

“One setback to the work of the fine arts PLC is the fact that we are all located at many different buildings throughout the system. Meeting weekly, or even monthly, is almost impossible.”

— Laurel Dietz

ages to as high as No. 1 on state assessments, and is in the top 10 in every measure (among 24 school districts). All elementary schools made Adequate Yearly Progress, and 100% of students at five schools reached proficient levels on at least one measure. The achievement gap continues to close. Since 2005, the gap in achievement between black and white students has closed by nearly 10 percentage points in reading and math, while achievement for all students continues to rise.

To keep up the momentum, we are tapping into the next layer of leadership. This process was started by a small group of teacher leaders. However, we know that to institutionalize and sustain the efforts, others must be brought in as teacher leaders. The FAST Team continues the work by bringing in teachers to lead and support the effort. This process of building learning communities has been successful because of the involvement of teacher leaders. For its success to continue, it must involve everyone.

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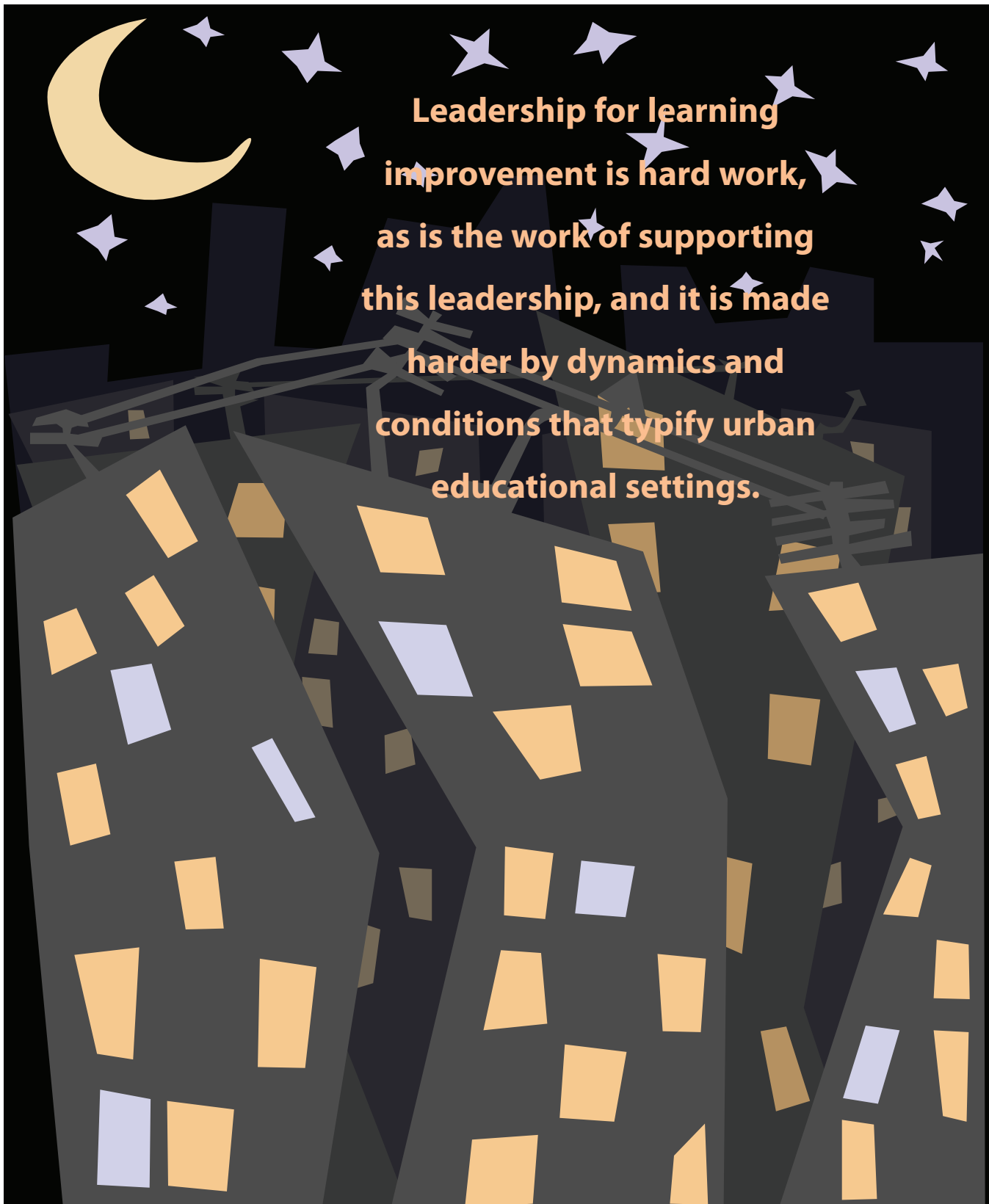
Fine arts teachers, for example, would meet a few times during the year, but the distance between schools made it difficult to support each other on an ongoing basis.



MODULE 7

What are the principal and central office responsibilities for collaborative professional learning?

- Tool 7.1: Urban renewal
- Tool 7.2: Activity: 7 major responsibilities for central office
- Tool 7.3: Boost the learning power of school-based staff
- Tool 7.4: School professional development plan synthesis
- Tool 7.5: Innovation Configuration maps: The principal
- Tool 7.6: Identifying organizational support
- Tool 7.7: Collaborative professional learning team walk-through guide
- Tool 7.8: Team spirit



**Leadership for learning
improvement is hard work,
as is the work of supporting
this leadership, and it is made
harder by dynamics and
conditions that typify urban
educational settings.**

URBAN RENEWAL



THE URBAN SCHOOL LEADER TAKES ON A NEW ROLE

By Michael S. Knapp, Michael A. Copland, Meredith I. Honig,
Margaret L. Plecki, and Bradley S. Portin

It's a familiar story: A cycle of mutually reinforcing and often self-defeating conditions shapes the schooling of young people in the nation's cities. A diverse and historically underserved student population struggles with academic learning and social adjustment in a context of limited resources. Support for staff efforts or special student needs is also limited, making it harder to attract and retain qualified staff, thereby reducing the morale of the staff who do remain — all feeding a continuing pattern of chronic low performance. Then locate this cycle in the crucible of high-stakes accountability and a press for learning improvement that has wide backing from the public. While well-in-

tended, such pressures may not always have the desired effect of motivating and producing greater effort and higher achievement.

The situation creates a major challenge for school and district leaders, who are central to the learning improvement process and who are striving to cope, intervene productively, and even thrive in this situation. Many of these leaders are rising to the occasion by bringing concentrated energy and resources to bear on the improvement of instruction, either through direct interaction with teachers or by working more indirectly to guide, direct, and support instructional improvement. These efforts raise important questions:

Given the conditions that educators must contend

This article is informed in part by research commissioned by The Wallace Foundation.

theme LEADERSHIP

with in such settings, what does the attempt to improve teaching and learning imply for the work of leaders within schools, central office staff, and for others who contribute to the system of public education?

What are the implications for the way leaders' work is supported?

One source of answers comes from a close look at schools and districts that are making progress, by varying local definitions that include measures of student learning. With support from The Wallace Foundation, the authors have conducted recent research that examines such schools and districts, and the findings of these studies substantially add to our insight into the urban educational leadership challenge.

This coordinated set of studies — collectively referred to as the Study of Leadership for Learning Improvement — closely examined leadership aimed at learning improvement in urban schools and districts. All relied heavily on qualitative inquiry strategies, conducted during the 2007-08 school year and beginning of the next, through repeated visits to a small number of districts and selected schools within them. The studies investigated leadership for learning improvement and how it is supported, from three vantage points:

- The investment of staffing and other resources in support of learning improvement and the enhancement of equity (Plecki et al., 2009).
- The configuration and exercise of distributed instructional leadership within the school (Portin et al., 2009).
- The transformation of central office work practices and district-school relationships to develop and sustain instructional leadership capacity (Honig et al., 2010).

The studies examined these matters in overlapping critical case samples — sites that were proactively addressing leadership for learning improvement.

The three studies shared two district sites (Atlanta Public Schools and the New York City/ Empowerment Schools Organization), along with selected schools in these districts. (All schools in New York City choose to be part of one of 14 school support organizations, the segment of the district central office that offers the most direct support to the school. We concentrated our research on the largest of these organizations, the Empowerment Schools Organization, which subsumes approximately 500 schools, or nearly a third of the city's schools.) Each study added one or two other sites and selected schools that offered useful contrasting windows on the study focus. While different from one another, the sites shared a press for improvement, the presence of promising practices and structures, and some evidence that progress was being made in student learning.

INSIGHTS ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Four themes capture central ideas across the three studies of leadership for learning improvement and the conditions that enable it. School and district leaders in these sites:

1. Focused persistently and publicly on equitable and powerful teaching, learning, and instructional improvement;
2. Invested in and expanded an instructional leadership cadre within and across schools through targeted investments, restructuring, and the reconfiguration of staff roles;
3. Actively reinvented leadership work practice, especially between school and district central office; and
4. Paid explicit, sustained attention to leadership support at all levels.

THEME 1

Place a persistent, public focus on improvement goals that maximize the quality and equity of instruction.

There were unmistakable signs that these systems embraced learning improvement. Consider the words of a new 3rd-grade teacher in a New York City school, barely into her seventh week of a teaching career:

“OK, the priorities for learning. I believe that, well, first of all, in terms of subject, I believe reading, writing, and math are the utmost importance for the school. I believe that [the leadership team] speaks about differentiating our instruction to reach all kinds of learners, no matter what level they are at and no matter how they learn, what modality they learn by. We really want to collect data, make sure that everything is assessment-based so that we can see where they stand and what progress, if any, they are making. That is pretty much what I have been told by the school, which I think is exactly what we need to do...”

This teacher owed much of her sense of direction to her school's leadership team. She had internalized a larger systemwide message the leaders had also internalized and owned: that the learning of each child mattered and should be approached in a way that addressed that particular student's learning needs in a way that could demonstrate what progress was being made and what needed to be addressed next.

This district, as in others we studied, was actively promoting these ideas about the improvement of teaching and learning. A member of a school reform team in Atlanta — the central office unit positioned to serve a network of schools — described her work with school principals:

“I ... spend time in [schools] helping the principals ... focus their work ... working on the quality of teaching and learning, looking at the student work, looking at the rigor, looking at best practices, giving them feedback. [If I don't] ... it's not going to pay out in dividends in the student achievement ... So taking principals who have not spent time in their classrooms and getting them to shift their focus takes a lot of work, intentional work. And then to be able to maintain that focus in a culture where

There were unmistakable signs that these systems were announcing and embracing an idea of learning improvement.

people are used to sending you kids and keeping you in an office to deal with this one [student] all day — that’s a whole other level of work And then helping people to prioritize their time, so that they do spend their time on the core business in the areas that matter the most.”

This kind of attention directed at the improvement of teaching and learning was pervasive in the sites we studied.

THEME 2

Invest in and expand the instructional leadership cadre within and across schools.

Building a systemwide approach to improving teaching and learning means more than guiding the work of school principals. A striking feature of the schools and districts studied was that many educators were exercising instructional leadership. These educators were generally organized in teams and occupied a variety of positions within a single school or across networks of schools.

Within schools, this instructional leadership cadre brought the efforts of principal, assistant principals, and department or grade-level team heads together with instructional coaches, teacher mentors, instructional leadership specialists, and assessment coordinators aimed at instructional support for classroom teachers. Across schools, staff in new or newly repurposed central office positions — administrators who acted as instructional leadership directors, such as the school reform team staff noted above or network leaders in the New York City/Empowerment Schools Organization, as well as others in more traditional positions — directed their energy to the instructional improvement taking place in schools.

Establishing or expanding the instructional leadership cadre implied several different kinds of leadership work at school and district levels. Principals and district leaders invested staffing resources strategically in instructional support arrangements, with an eye to sustaining an equity agenda, as much by reallocating existing resources as by bringing in new resources. Roles and structures within schools and the central office were reconfigured, especially in the intermediary units that work most directly with the schools, but others as well. District and school actions laid the groundwork for instructional leadership teams in schools.

THEME 3

Reinvent leadership work practice in schools and districts.

Establishing or expanding the instructional leadership cadre implied a fundamental shift and rethinking of the leaders’ work. These shifts reflect both a leadership response to a demanding environment and a deeper engagement with powerful processes of professional learning.

In schools, principals and other supervisory leaders found

At the building level, we may have a job (of principal) that’s not doable, a matter of the greatest concern right now. We have to look at what it takes to be a strong leader in schools.

themselves taking on several new kinds of leadership work, in addition to forms of instructional leadership that have long been recognized. For some, finding ways to put more time into conventional forms of instructional leadership (such as teacher supervision, informal one-on-one interactions with teachers, and participation in professional development) was a significant step forward. But for others, the instructional leadership work of the school meant:

- Creating and working through an instructional leadership team;
- Normalizing the instructional improvement work of teacher leaders and other nonsupervisory staff in the school;
- Anchoring instructional improvement activities to data, evidence, and inquiry of various kinds; and
- Building robust professional accountability systems within the school that responded to external demands such as federal/state accountability requirements while preserving a focus on school priorities and learning improvement agenda.

For their part, teacher leaders and others in nonsupervisory positions were engaging in related practices — among them, connecting with teachers and instructional improvement issues through data and inquiry and navigating the middle ground between classrooms and school leaders.

Though not school-based, educators in the district central office — especially those newly positioned to work directly and continuously with the schools — engaged school principals and others in relationships aimed at improving instructional leadership. Especially in districts that had initiated a central office transformation process, specific practices in these relationships included:

- Focusing the relationship on the principal’s instructional leadership as joint work or a shared common challenge;
- Modeling instructional leadership thinking and action;
- Developing and using particular tools to support principals’ engagement in instructional leadership;
- Brokering external resources to help principals focus on their instructional leadership; and
- Helping all principals become leadership resources for each other.

Building a systemwide approach to improving teaching and learning means more than guiding the work of school principals.

theme LEADERSHIP

For most staff in these districts, these practices represented new lines of work as a systemwide approach to improving instructional practice.

THEME 4

Give explicit attention to leadership support at all levels.

Schools and districts that made progress on a learning improvement agenda actively guided and supported leaders' work. Rather than assuming that all who were in position to exercise instructional leadership knew how to do this work or would be able to do it without ongoing assistance, these schools and districts had taken steps to provide leaders at every level a system of supports for instructional leadership work.

Within schools, the support system might consist of teacher leaders' regular access to peer-alike colleagues, regular occasions for instruction leadership team members to problem solve, or more focused mentoring relationships. Growing relationships between central office and the school provided ongoing supports for school principals especially, but also for other school-based staff involved in instructional leadership work. And for central office staff, a variety of actions, structures, and practices supported the work of the instructional leadership directors, while also reinforcing instructional leadership at the school level, among them:

instructional leadership directors, while also reinforcing instructional leadership at the school level, among them:

- Professional development and other forms of assistance for instructional leadership directors;
- Reorganization and reculturing of other central office units to support partnerships between central office and principals;
- Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process through the relentless sponsorship of executive leaders, systems that held everyone in the central office accountable for the new work, and the brokering of external resources and relationships to support improvement efforts; and
- Evidence use throughout the central office to support continual improvement of work practices and relationships with schools.

In practical terms, these practices provided different kinds of support: direction and rationale for leadership work, direct technical help and teaching, material and intellectual resources, personal and emotional help, and sponsorship.

HOPE AND THE HARD WORK AHEAD

The pattern of leadership support we observed was intimately connected to leadership for learning improvement. Leadership support is itself leadership, and it is necessarily distributed among

Participants at all levels face a steep learning curve, in part because changes in work practice are not minor incremental adjustments, but rather fundamental shifts in how teachers leaders, principals, and central office administrators do their daily work.

various people, situations, and interactions at different levels of the system. Taken together, these activities are plausibly related to improving student learning, though studies such as these cannot offer definitive causal proof.

Leadership for learning improvement is hard work, as is the work of supporting this leadership, and it is made harder by dynamics and conditions that typify urban educational settings. Our analyses underscore several aspects of the effort to support leadership for learning improvement that will continue to challenge education leaders, especially under the conditions that prevail in many urban settings. In particular, participants at all levels face a steep learning curve, in part because changes in work practice are not minor incremental adjustments, but rather fundamental shifts in how teachers leaders, principals, and central office administrators do their daily work. Pursuing these matters with an equity agenda in mind adds other resistances, from both inside and outside the school system, with which leaders must contend. Successfully meeting these resistances and staying the course while leaders learn new ways of doing business presume a modicum of stability in key leadership positions. Stable superintendents, among others, are a key source of the sponsorship that leadership for learning improvement entails. And doing all these things in the context of an economic downturn presents major obstacles that call for creativity and adaptability.

The sites we studied had made headway on most of these matters, and their successes should be attributed, in part, to their ability to develop and sustain conditions that enable leadership to prosper. Their examples offer hope and images of possibility for the future of teaching, learning, and leadership in schools.

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Activity: 7 major responsibilities for central office

Purpose: To identify the role of central office to support school-based professional development.

Materials: Copy of article — one per person, markers, sticky dots, and wall charts made poster size.

Time: 1½ hours unless reading is pre-assigned.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Ask each person to read the article. (This task could be assigned to be completed before the meeting.)
2. Groups of three should review each of the seven responsibilities and highlight key practices and behaviors in preparation for the next step.
3. Ask each person to indicate on the wall chart, with a sticky dot, his/her current level of practice concerning the suggested central office responsibilities.
4. Review the results and, as a group, identify current strengths and needs.
5. Ask each person to indicate two responsibilities that he/she views as **most** important to address. (If the group is large, ask each person to indicate the numbers of **two** responsibilities on an index card or sticky note and tally those responses.)
6. Identify the top two responsibilities. Ask small groups to brainstorm actions to take to accomplish those responsibilities. Collect the items from the small groups.
7. Compile the action steps into a single list. A smaller team can review these ideas and create an action plan to bring back to the larger group for review and revision.

When professional development moves from a centralized function in a school district to a school-based function, the work of central office does not diminish. Instead, it changes. The work changes from determining the content and delivering the learning to one that involves building the capacity of school staff to make sound decisions about their own professional development. In essence, central office staff become learning leaders who are responsible for facilitating professional development decisions at individual schools and coordinating efforts between and among schools to maximize resources and effort without diluting the individual needs and interests of schools.

In addition, central office staff is responsible to coordinate the formation of cross-school teams for singleton teachers or noninstructional staff whose primary collaborative professional learning team is outside their own school.

Central office staff members — those who work in school district offices with responsibility for curriculum, instruction, professional development, mentoring, teacher quality, and student success — have seven major responsibilities in a system that views the school as the primary center of learning. These roles include:

- Building capacity of school staff to make sound decisions about professional development;
- Providing research and models of best practices regarding professional development;
- Allocating resources to schools to support their learning plans;
- Coordinating efforts between and among schools;
- Coordinating the formation of cross-school collaborative professional learning teams; and
- Supporting collaborative professional learning teams; and
- Monitoring implementation throughout the district.

Building capacity

When professional development efforts move from the district office to the school and become more collaborative, the decisions central office has made about the design and implementation of professional development now rests in the hands of teachers and principals. Their success, however, in making sound decisions depends largely on how well the central office prepares school staff to make these decisions.

Central office staff is responsible for helping school staff members understand the standards for professional development and district and state requirements for professional development. They might use the Backmapping Model (Killion, 2002a,

Excerpted from *Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond: A tool kit for New Jersey educators*, by Joellen Killion. Oxford, OH: New Jersey Department of Education and National Staff Development Council, 2006. Pages 249-253.

2002b) to assist school staff members in understanding how to develop both school- and team-based professional learning and expand teacher leaders' and principals' understanding of high-quality professional development (Backmapping Models can be found in Chapter 2 of this toolkit). The Backmapping Model presents a process to ensure that professional development is aligned with the school's goals for student achievement. While some teachers may opt to learn outside the school because their collaborative team exists elsewhere, their primary responsibility is on improving learning in their own school. Central office staff can take an active role in helping school staff implement this process to ensure that their learning team's work focuses directly on student learning.

Because school-based collaborative professional development requires knowledge and skills that may not be present at the school, central office can provide opportunities for teacher leaders, especially department chairs, team, or grade-level chairs, or others to participate in leadership training that would prepare them to lead collaborative learning communities within in their schools. Central office staff can work with principals to identify potential candidates among teachers who can serve as leaders among their peers. These learning experiences would help teacher leaders gain the capacity to facilitate learning teams, hold effective meetings, manage multiple priorities, and plan effective learning among their colleagues.

The transfer of knowledge and skill from a few people to a broader group increases the likelihood that more educators will take responsibility for ensuring high-quality professional development occurs and for linking professional development to the needs of students. The transfer of knowledge can happen in a variety of ways. One is by training a team of teacher leaders and administrators at each school in the standards and the professional development planning, design, and evaluation process.

Central office can also facilitate professional development planning, design, implementation, and evaluation process at school sites with a local co-facilitator.

This facilitator works alongside the central office staff member to learn about critical decision areas and how to lead decisions about professional development at the school.

The more broadly the knowledge is shared, the more likely teachers and principals will be confident and successful in examining the adult learning needs within their school. If those making the decisions about professional development have limited understanding and experience with high-quality professional development, their decisions will reflect the forms of professional learning with which they are most familiar. As a result, they may continue to see limited impact of professional learning on teaching and student learning.

Provide research and model best practices

When professional development experiences move to the school site, central office staff members play a significant role in providing research and modeling best practices. When school staff experience powerful forms of professional development and see examples of different approaches to learning, they will become more familiar with alternatives to consultant-driven training. District staff can engage school professional development committee members in learning about multiple designs for professional learning (Note: In this toolkit: Chapter 3: Effective Professional Development describes multiple professional development approaches).

Compiling and disseminating research and resources about professional development to teacher leaders and principals at schools are other ways central office staff can significantly impact the quality of school-based decisions about professional development. Summarizing or sending articles, policy papers, studies, or examples about best practices can increase the likelihood that school staff members will have foundational information upon which to make local decisions about professional development. Districts can create web-based resources that link schools to other high-quality resources about professional development, ensure that school leaders know how to access

Excerpted from *Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond: A tool kit for New Jersey educators*, by Joellen Killion. Oxford, OH: New Jersey Department of Education and National Staff Development Council, 2006. Pages 249-253.

web-based sites that address professional development designs, curriculum content standards, and clearinghouses of research-based practices.

Allocating resources

Districts can help schools be successful with collaborative professional development if they advocate for the time and fiscal resources to support this form of adult learning. Time is an invaluable resource. (Note: In this toolkit: Chapter 4: Scheduling Time for Professional Development describes multiple strategies for structuring time for professional development).

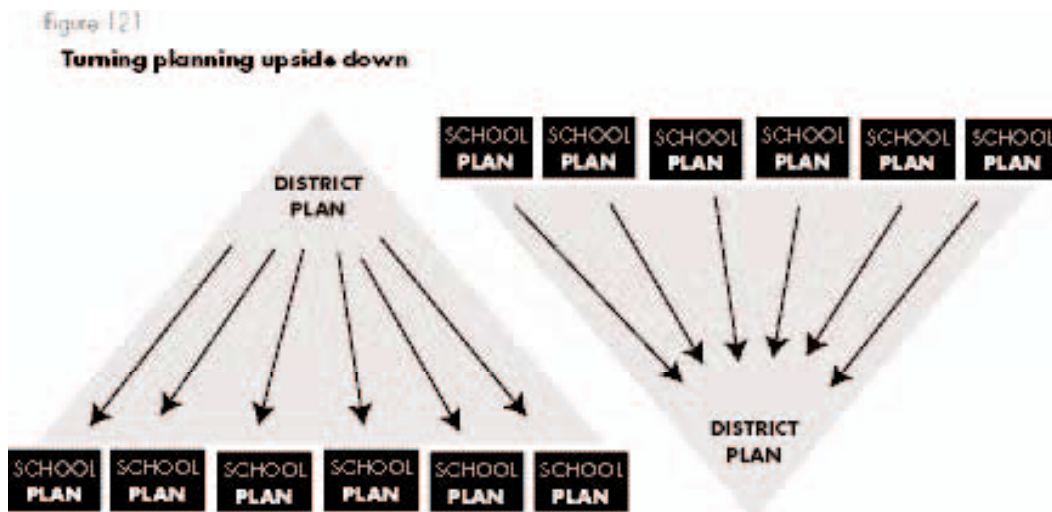
The central office has responsibility to work through the school board to build a communitywide value and support for professional learning. That includes developing support for the time that is required for teams to work together. Parents want their children to have the most qualified teachers possible. Achieving that outcome requires the continuous development of teachers. District staff can prepare teachers to talk about their professional development within the community to build support for and understanding of the value of professional development for teachers.

Districts can form teams charged with examining those policies, administrative procedures, practices, resources, and schedules that impact professional development to

ensure that they support school-based professional development. Districts can help schools revamp daily schedules to include time for professional learning. Districts can ensure that schools receive appropriate budget allocations to support high-quality professional development.

A significant portion of the district’s responsibility in this area relates to supporting the school-based Professional Development Committee or School Improvement Committee. The district’s professional development plan reflects how the district will support individual school’s professional development plans. The district’s plan looks like an inverted triangle (see Figure 1 above) demonstrating how it emerges from the plans for individual schools rather than dictating the professional development schools will have.

This change from district-driven professional development to school-based professional development is not one that will occur overnight. District office staff has a tremendous responsibility to prepare school teams to design, implement, and evaluate effective professional learning aligned to district and school goals. Districts will transform their services and responsibilities to support school-based professional learning while maintaining alignment and focus on district priorities and goals. Rather than being a top-down or one-size-fits-all approach to professional development, school-based professional development looks at the unique



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needs of each school and its students, staff, and community and responds to those differences. The work of the central office staff expands from organizing a few inservice days for the entire district to ensuring a comprehensive system of professional learning for every teacher aligned with the identified needs of each school.

Coordinate between and among schools

An essential central office function for supporting professional learning at schools is coordinating efforts between and among schools. As central office staff review each school's professional development plan, they will want to determine the strength of the plan, whether the school has allocated appropriate resources to the plan, whether the plan meets the professional development standards, and whether the school's professional development plan aligns with the school's and district's improvement goals.

Because school-based collaborative professional learning focuses on the needs of an individual school, schools often do not know about other schools in the district that are working on similar areas of improvement. Bringing common goals to the attention of all schools working on that goal can increase the potential for collaboration among schools and increase the benefit for any one school.

Central office staff might also find that they can streamline their support by serving schools clustered together by professional development goals rather than trying to do so one-by-one. Schools could also review each other's plans as a way to improve the professional development practices of each school.

One additional aspect of central office staff's role is identifying and broadcasting successful practices within the district. Individual schools will benefit from opportunities to benchmark their professional development plans against other schools within the district and beyond. They will appreciate knowing about professional development in other schools so they can learn from others.

Coordinate teams

Sometimes teachers will not have colleagues at their school who teach the same content they do. As a result, they will not have a natural team in their own school. This occurs for teaching staff such as counselors, librarians, nurses, and others. When this occurs, there are several opportunities to create cross-school teams, district teams, interdisciplinary teams, and related content area teams within a school. For example, teachers in the world languages and social studies departments along with English as a Second Language teachers may form a collaborative team focused on developing global citizens. Counselors, nurses, health and physical education teachers may collaborate on ways to improve students' physical health and emotional well-being. In another example, librarians from schools throughout a district may form a collaborative professional learning team to identify how to support classroom reading instruction within their library programs. Organizing interschool visitations within the district or across districts is a way central office can foster collaboration for those educators who are not members of an in-school collaborative professional learning team.

Central office staff members work with principals to identify those staff members who may benefit from cross-school, cross-discipline, or cross-district teams. By initiating and coordinating cross-school, districtwide teams or even regionwide teams, central office staff members ensure that every professional is involved in one or more collaborative professional learning teams that focus on student success, core curriculum content standards, assessment, and instruction. This type of professional interaction is often necessary in rural districts with small schools.

Supporting schools' efforts

By charting the schools and looking at a synthesis of their professional development intentions, central office staff members can quickly see where the clusters are and plan accordingly to provide the necessary support.

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Central office can then determine its course of action by asking schools these questions:

- If a school's or cluster of schools' goal is X, how does central office help them achieve this goal? What essential support services, resources, assistance, etc., do they need to be successful? What kind of differentiated support might the cluster of schools need?
- What type of systemic support and systemwide changes are necessary so each school successfully achieves its goals?
- How do we help schools know about and access district resources to meet their goals?
- How do school goals align with district priorities?

Monitoring implementation

Another essential role for central office is to hold schools accountable for their professional development plans. By meeting quarterly or semi-annually with school leadership teams and reviewing evidence of progress toward their professional development goal, central office staff can help schools maintain a focus on results and not the provision of services. By keeping the focus on results and asking schools to use data to review their progress, schools will be able to celebrate their successes along the way and alter their course of action when necessary.

School visits can be opportunities for learning among team members. They can be a form of classroom walk-through, a form of brief observation designed to gather data and to encourage reflection. One or more central

office staff members or teams that include principals and teacher leaders from other schools can conduct monitoring visits. Monitoring visits that include debriefing sessions with the school's professional development team, leadership team, and/or whole faculty offer support, feedback, and the perspective of critical friends to help the school stay the course. The use of data from multiple sources is important in monitoring visits so that facts — and not opinions and preferences — guide the discussion and serve as the basis for identifying successes and selecting modifications. When such data are used, decisions are likely to be more objective than subjective.

The role of central office staff members does not diminish when a school district transforms professional development from a centralized function to one that is school-based and that fosters collaboration among teachers about the real work of teaching. In fact, their role expands as they become learning leaders who facilitate school-based decisions about professional development to meet the unique and pressing needs of individual schools.

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Excerpted from *Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond: A tool kit for New Jersey educators*, by Joellen Killion. Oxford, OH: New Jersey Department of Education and National Staff Development Council, 2006. Pages 249-253.

7 CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES: WALL CHART

1. Build capacity of principal and school personnel to plan, design, and implement job-embedded professional development.

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

2A. Provide, compile, and disseminate research and resources about professional development.

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

2B. Model best practices in professional development

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

3. Allocate resources to support collaborative professional learning and job-embedded practices, such as time, fiscal resources, schedules.

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

4. Coordinate between and among schools.

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

5. Coordinate teams — create cross-school teams, district teams, and interdisciplinary teams.

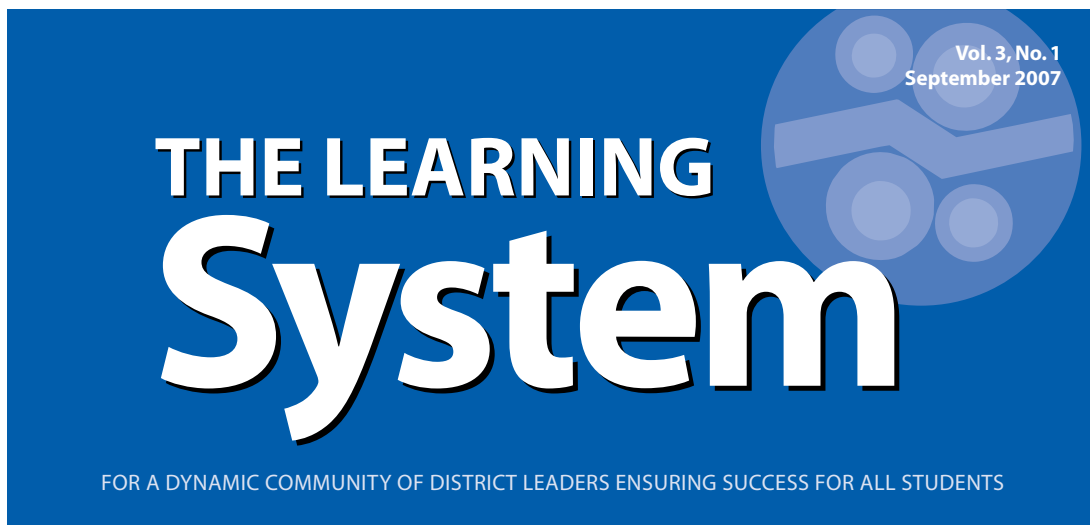
Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

6. Support schools' efforts with services, resources, technical assistance.

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*

7. Monitor implementation of school-based programs and goals.

Always *Frequently* *Sometimes* *Seldom* *Never*



BOOST THE **LEARNING POWER** OF SCHOOL-BASED STAFF

Innovation Configuration maps guide the way

BY PATRICIA ROY

Today, the concept of job-embedded staff development has come to mean that educators in many roles — superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum supervisors, principals, and teacher leaders ... — must all see themselves as teachers of adults and must view the development of others as one of their most important responsibilities. These individuals are increasingly being held accountable for their performance as planners and implementers of various forms of staff development. (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p. 83).

A decade ago, NSDC leaders began to describe a necessary shift that school systems would be required to make to ensure powerful, effective professional development that improved student learning



through enhancing the knowledge and skills of their teachers. One of those shifts is for central office staff members to build the *capacity* of school-level personnel to design, manage, and implement improvement efforts.

When it comes to educational reform, schools are considered the “center of change” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 203). In other words, the school — not the district — needs to be in control of the change process. Marzano (2003) found in his meta-analyses of educational research that “the school (as opposed to the district) is the proper focus for reform. Indeed, this is a consistent conclusion in the research literature (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993)” (p.10).

Yet, this finding should not be misinterpreted

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WHAT'S INSIDE

District Leadership
NSDC has a brand-new purpose.
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Focus on NSDC's Standards
Make staff development pay off.
PAGE 3

NSDC Tool
What a district leader needs to know about developing a shared vision.
PAGES 4-5



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NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

COVER STORY

A CHALLENGE

Do you believe that:

- **Schools** are the center of change?
- **Central office** staff members are responsible for developing the capacity of school-level personnel for high-quality implementation of new programs and practices to occur?
- **District office** administrators are responsible for providing support for school improvement activities rather than mandating changes?
- **The system** will need to shift its ideas about the role and responsibility of central office administration to attain high levels of learning for students?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, the IC maps for NSDC’s standards will be a valuable resource as you improve your system. The maps will help you determine strengths and needs within the system and also actions that will move your system toward higher quality implementation of professional learning.

Boost the learning power of school-based staff

Continued from p. 1

to mean that district-level staff have no responsibility for school-level change. The “district administrator’s task is to increase the basic capacity of the system to manage change effectively” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, p. 191). Neither *top-down* nor *bottom-up* strategies are adequate to leverage changes in schools and classrooms. Centralized (top-down) change seems not to work because it uses a uniform or one-size-fits-all approach “that is inappropriate and ineffective except for the narrowest of goals” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, p. 200). Decentralized (bottom-up) change can be difficult because of the “lack of capacity to manage change” (p. 200). These findings suggest that a combined effort will most likely result in increased learning for students. Fullan and Stiegelbauer further recommend that the district administrator’s goal is not to install a specific program but to “build the capacity of the district and the schools to handle any and all innovations” (p. 214).

EMBEDDED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

What, then, is the central office staff members’ role and responsibility in professional development? With a movement toward school-based, job-embedded professional development, their typical responsibilities — identifying programs, arranging courses, managing registrations and credit hours — shift to building the capacity of school-based personnel to use data to make improvement decisions, to identify job-embedded designs that match desired outcomes, and to design evaluation methods to assess whether

professional learning has improved student learning.

Soon after NSDC published a revised set of professional development standards in 2001, work began to help describe the roles and responsibilities that an entire system would need to adopt if it was to accept and implement these standards. One piece of this work was the development of Innovation Configuration (IC) maps (Roy & Hord, 2003). An IC, developed by Hall and Hord (2001), identifies the major components of an innovation and provides a continuum of practices that begins with ideal or high-fidelity implementation and ends with non-use. Two underlying assumptions of IC maps are that change is incremental and that implementing new practices with reliability or high-fidelity will have greater impact than using new practices at a lower level of quality.

NSDC developed IC maps for all 12 standards and eventually for 11 roles within a district system: teachers, school-based staff developers, principals, central office staff members, superintendent, school board members, director of staff development, external technical assistance provider, institution of higher education, professional association, and state education agency.

The maps begin with the teacher and students at the center because the nucleus of NSDC’s standards describes a school-based system of professional development that ensures that all educators are learning everyday with and from their colleagues. (See box at bottom of page.) The IC map describes the desired outcomes/actions

Continued on p. 7

Design standard, Desired Outcome 7.1				
Teacher	Principal	Central office staff members	Superintendent	School board
Participates in a variety of appropriate staff development designs aligned with expected improvement outcomes.	Ensures that staff development designs align with expected outcomes.	Prepare administrators and teachers to design effective professional learning experiences.	Ensures that administrators and teachers design and apply effective professional learning strategies.	

How the IC maps can be used

1. Establish a clear vision of NSDC's standards in action.

For example, to understand what full and high-fidelity implementation of the Leadership standard would entail for the entire system, each member of a team of six would read one of the role group maps for Leadership. One person reads the teacher IC maps for Leadership, a second person reads the principal Leadership maps, etc. They reassemble and share their group's primary roles and responsibilities for Leadership and discuss how those roles interconnect. This activity would help all parts of the system understand their part in implementing the Leadership standard. See the tool on Pages 4 & 5 for more direction on how to establish a clear vision of a standard.

2. Assess implementation of the standards.

Use the IC maps to determine the *current*

level of implementation of the standards. Compare current practices — as determined through interviews, focus groups, or direct observation — to the descriptions of high-fidelity implementation included in the IC maps. Individuals also can use the IC maps as a self-assessment tool.

3. Set goals and plan for continuing assistance.

When the IC maps are used to assess the current level of implementation, users will identify areas of strength and of need. Because the IC maps describe high-fidelity practice, users can clarify their next steps by examining the levels between their current practice and the ideal. They can plan for appropriate steps to help the system reach reliable implementation of the standards. Individuals can use the same process to decide their next steps for improving their practice.

Continued from p. 6

for each role. A crosswalk between the roles was developed for the first set of five roles to illustrate a clear system of support among the roles. For example, the crosswalk for the Design standard describes one teacher outcome/action as participating in a variety of appropriate staff development designs/strategies that are aligned with expected improvement outcomes. (See Page 6.) The ICs map out how individuals in other roles are responsible for making this teacher action possible. The principal ensures the availability of a variety of professional development designs/strategies that align with expected outcomes. The central office staff members prepare administrators and teachers to design effective professional learning experiences. The superintendent ensures that administrators and teachers design and implement effective professional learning strategies related to school improvement goals. The school board's roles and responsibilities focus on the context standards because their primary role is to develop policies that guide the system.

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COVER STORY

Each month, *The Learning System*

carries a column by Patricia Roy, co-author of the IC maps for NSDC's standards, which focuses on the work of system leaders in improving professional learning. Roy examines one of the IC maps for one of the 12 standards each month and provides specific guidance about system leaders' roles in implementing each standard. All of those columns are available on NSDC's web site, www.nsd.org/standards/about/columns.cfm

NSDC has created Innovation Configuration maps for 11 role groups: teachers, school-based staff developers, principals, director of staff development, central office staff, superintendent, school board members, institutions of higher education, professional associations, external technical assistance providers, and state education agencies.

CD-ROMs are available for each of the individual roles. For details, visit store.nsd.org.

Innovation Configuration maps: Central office staff members

The Innovation Configuration (IC) maps can be used as a self-assessment instrument. The IC maps provided in this tool describe the central office staff's roles and responsibilities based on NSDC's Standards for Staff Development. While the IC format is similar to a rubric, there are differences. First, ideal or high-quality behaviors are found in Level One, the first column on the left side. Rubrics typically describe the highest-quality terms on the right-hand side. All of the cells of an IC do not have to be filled in; for example, there might be three, four, or five variations provided for each desired outcome.

This tool provides an opportunity to compare central office staff behaviors to the descriptions provided in the IC maps and determine how closely those behaviors match the ideal behaviors. The purpose is to identify the kinds of practices required of central office staff to support effective, school-based professional development.

Purpose: Use the IC maps as a self-assessment to identify the similarities and differences between current behavior and ideal behaviors

Group size: 3 to 5 members or an individual

Time: 10 minutes per standard

Materials: IC maps, Practice Description and chart, Central Office Self-Scoring Sheet

DIRECTIONS:

1. A sample description of one central office staff member's actions related to the Learning Communities standard is provided here. The group or an individual should read that description and determine which level of the Learning Communities IC best matches this administrator's behaviors. This decision may take some discussion and debate to come to consensus on a final judgment.
2. Innovation Configuration maps are provided for Learning Communities, Leadership, Data-Driven, Design, and Collaboration standards. If working in a small group, group members can decide which IC maps to use and discuss.
3. Next, the individual reads each desired outcome and all the variations (or levels) and identifies the level that best matches his or her current practice. Those levels can be recorded on the Self-Scoring Sheet and dated.
4. If working in a small group of other central office staff, members can share their self-ratings and discuss with other group members what they are doing related to that outcome. The group could also brainstorm ideas and strategies for next steps toward high-quality implementation of these outcomes. The individual can use this information to decide on his or her next steps and/or to identify the kinds of assistance that might be necessary for improvement in this area.

Practice description: Central office A

Central Office Staff Member A started his career as a social studies teacher and then later served as an instructional coach. His experiences taught him that forming and sustaining effective learning teams would take a concerted effort on his part. Rather than trying to change the entire district at one time, he discussed the idea of professional learning teams at principals meetings and asked principals to indicate their interest in developing this concept at their schools. He selected one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school to pilot this work.

Principals were asked to form learning teams and designate team leaders. These leaders were provided with time for monthly sessions that focused on forming and sustaining groups, developing group norms, and analyzing data for decision-making. Principals were invited to attend these sessions and were also provided with additional information about ways to support learning teams at their school. Central Office Member A also conducted brief walk-throughs during learning team meetings to understand how well teams were functioning.

He had informally discussed the idea of learning teams with other central office staff at a meeting held by the regional educational agency. He wondered how technology might be used to support each team's goals.

CENTRAL OFFICE SELF-SCORING SHEET

DATE: _____

This scoring sheet can be used to record the assessment of your current practice compared to the levels described in the IC maps.

Learning Communities

1.1: Prepares administrators and teachers	1.2: Learning team support	1.3: Learning team member	1.4: Technology

Leadership

2.1 Enables principals	2.2: Teacher leadership	2.3: High-quality professional development	2.4: Models results-driven	2.5: Articulates results	2.6: Advocates for professional development	2.7: Models instructional leadership

Data-Driven

4.1: Disaggregated data	4.2: Variety of data	4.3: Training administrators and teachers	4.4: Supports school-level analysis	4.5: Continuous improvement	4.6: Data to design

Design

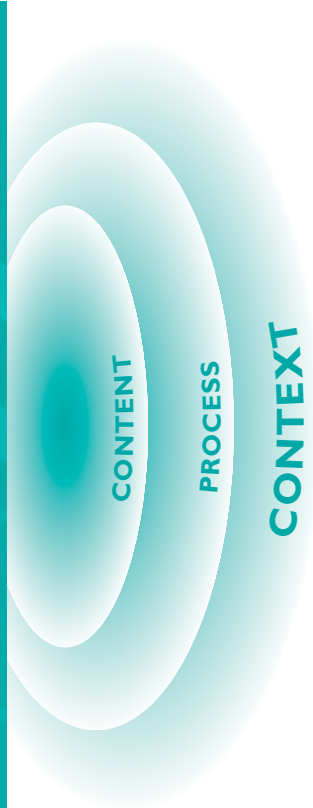
7.1: Prepares school staff	7.2: Supports and monitors	7.3: Models effective design	7.4: Long-term, sustained programs	7.5: Provides follow-up	7.6: Technology

Collaboration

9.1: District culture	9.2: Collective responsibility	9.3: Develops administrator skills	9.4: Supports school-based work	9.5: Technology

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Central Office Staff Members



DESIRED OUTCOME I.1: Prepare administrators and teachers to be skillful members of learning teams.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Develop a cadre of teachers and administrators who can work with learning teams within the schools and district. Provide intermittent support to teams by a skilled facilitator throughout the stages of group development. Schedule a skilled group facilitator to coach team leaders during learning team meetings. Provide team leaders ongoing experiences to learn about group process, group dynamics, the stages of group development, and using data in group decision making.	Provide intermittent support to teams by a skilled facilitator throughout the stages of group development. Schedule a coach team leaders during learning team meetings. Provide team leaders an ongoing series of experiences to learn about group process, group dynamics, the stages of group development, and using data in group decision making.	Schedule a skilled group facilitator to coach team leaders during learning team meetings. Provide team leaders an ongoing series of experiences to learn about group process, group dynamics, the stages of group development, and using data in group decision making.	Provide team leaders ongoing experiences to learn about group process, group dynamics, the stages of group development, and using data in group decision making.	Provide no professional development on working effectively within learning teams.	

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME I.2: Maintain and support learning teams.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Consider learning teams as an essential component when aligning the district's comprehensive staff development program with school and district goals.	Coordinate activities between and among learning teams to maximize opportunities for all. Review learning team logs in order to provide articles, videos, books, and training to support team learning goals.	Provide experiences for teachers and administrators to learn how to work within learning teams. Review learning team logs in order to provide articles, videos, books, and training to support team learning goals.	Create ad hoc study groups that meet at their own discretion but have no accountability.	Do not address issues of collegial learning within the district or school.	
DESIRED OUTCOME I.3: Participate with others as a member of a learning team.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Work with other members of a formal national, regional, and district learning team to acquire new knowledge and skills related to district priority goals.	Work with other members of a formal regional and district learning team to acquire new knowledge and skills related to district priority goals.	Work with other members of a formal district learning team to acquire new knowledge and skills related to district priority goals.	Meet in informal district learning teams with those who have similar professional interests and goals.	Work alone and do not participate in a learning community to improve professional skills and knowledge.	
DESIRED OUTCOME I.4: Support learning team use of technology.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide access to technologies that will assist learning team members in accomplishing their goals (e.g., web conferencing, online surveys, decision making tools).	Provide resources to support the goals of learning teams who are using technology.	Provide a communication system for learning team members such as e-mail, online discussion forums, and bulletin boards.	Do not provide access to technology for learning teams.		



DESIRED OUTCOME 2.1: Provide professional learning experiences to enable principals to function as instructional leaders.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Create facilitated learning teams for principals in which they problem solve and learn together. Provide extensive, ongoing learning activities that include hands-on, problem-based, and multiple practice experiences. Provide time to explore and practice specific behaviors and strategies and receive feedback on the implementation of new skills.	Provide learning activities that occur over a two-year period and include hands-on, problem-based, and multiple practice experiences. Provide follow-up, coaching, and feedback. Provide time to explore and practice specific behaviors and strategies and receive feedback on the implementation of new skills.	Provide a series of short-term sessions on instructional leadership with an expectation for changes in principals' practices at their schools.	Distribute articles to principals about instructional leadership.	Do not provide professional learning experiences for principals as instructional leaders.	

LEADERSHIP: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 2.2: Develop teachers to serve as instructional leaders.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Develop teachers to chair districtwide committees that make decisions about curriculum, instruction, resources, and professional development, and create guidelines that support these practices. Develop teachers to lead formally at grade level and/or content area meetings. Provide experiences for teachers to serve as mentors, master teachers, and instructional coaches.	Develop teachers to lead formally at grade level and/or content area meetings. Provide experiences for teachers to serve as mentors, master teachers, and instructional coaches.	Provide experiences for teachers to lead informally at district-based grade level and/or content area meetings.	Assign district personnel to chair committees. Offer no opportunities for teachers to provide leadership.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.3: Promote the knowledge of high-quality professional learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Evaluate all professional learning plans (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment, technology, special education, data-driven decision making) for alignment with staff development standards. Assist in revision of professional learning plans to ensure alignment with the standards.	Discuss research and journal articles during administrative and school improvement teams meetings to ensure a shared definition of high-quality professional learning.	Send written information about high-quality professional learning, but do not plan a districtwide professional development program with specific goals. Do not align plans with staff development standards.	Do not articulate what high-quality professional learning would look like in the district.		

LEADERSHIP: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 2.4: Model results-driven staff development for districtwide initiatives.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
<p>Monitor student-learning data in relationship to effective classroom use of new strategies to track impact of professional development. Monitor implementation and provide a variety of staff development designs (study groups, learning teams, action research, school improvement projects, individually guided activities, observation/feedback activities) to accomplish masterful classroom implementation. Provide classroom follow-up in high-priority programs. State clearly the expectations for implementation of new strategies by providing rubrics of classroom practice. Schedule multiple-session workshops and courses that meet over an extended period of time and include requirements for tasks to be completed between sessions.</p>	<p>Monitor implementation and provide a variety of staff development designs (study groups, learning teams, action research, school improvement projects, individually guided activities, observation/feedback activities) to accomplish masterful classroom implementation. Provide classroom follow-up in high-priority programs. State clearly the expectations for implementation of new strategies by providing rubrics of classroom practice. Schedule multiple-session workshops and courses that meet over an extended period of time and include requirements for tasks to be completed between sessions.</p>	<p>Provide classroom follow-up in high-priority programs. State clearly the expectations for implementation of new strategies by providing rubrics of classroom practice. Schedule multiple-session workshops and courses that meet over an extended period of time and include requirements for tasks to be completed between sessions.</p>	<p>Schedule multiple-session workshops and courses that meet over an extended period of time and include requirements for tasks to be completed between sessions. Ensure the development of new skills during the sessions and provide expert feedback.</p>	<p>Offer a catalog of single-event awareness-level sessions on a variety of topics tied to district/school improvement plans. Expect participants to become knowledgeable about but not skillful in the topics.</p>	<p>Provide professional learning experiences that are not derived from student data or district/school improvement plans.</p>

LEADERSHIP: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 2.5: Articulate the intended results of district-based staff development programs.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Engage principal and teachers in creating a clear description of the expected classroom practices resulting from the school-based program (e.g., Innovation Configuration, rubric). Articulate the intended outcomes of district-based professional development programs and expectations for implementation in relationship to the strategic plan or district goals.	Provide a clear description of expected classroom practices that result from a district-based professional development program. Articulate the intended outcomes of district-based professional development programs and expectations for implementation in relationship to the strategic plan or district goals.	Articulate the intended outcomes of district-based professional development programs and expectations for implementation in relationship to the strategic plan or district goals.	Articulate the purpose of each staff development activity as it occurs but do not make connections to the strategic plans or overarching goals.	Schedule events but do not articulate the need or expected results of the staff development program.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.6: Advocate for high-quality professional development.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Advocate for high-quality professional development with school board members, community members, business partners, and other stakeholders.	Advocate for high-quality professional development programs with the superintendent.	Advocate for high-quality professional development programs with school principals and faculties.	Advocate for high-quality professional development programs with other central office personnel.	Do not advocate for high-quality professional development programs.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.7: Model instructional leadership.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Limit program adoption to a small number to ensure full implementation and institutionalization of new classroom or school practices. Collect evaluation data that demonstrate impact on teachers and students.	Support school improvement programs that are based on research, analysis of student data, and best practice. Focus conversations with principals and teachers on current research and best practice. Create selection criteria of new programs that include evidence of impact on student achievement.	Adopt districtwide programs that provide evidence of an impact on student achievement. Focus conversations and decision making on research, data, and best practice.	Provide financial support for pilot programs in schools to determine the impact of new practices on teachers and students.	Focus on management, procedures, and budget—not instructional issues.	



DATA-DRIVEN

Central Office Staff Members

DESIRED OUTCOME 4.1: Use disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Prepare school improvement teams to analyze disaggregated student data to determine student and adult learning needs within the school.	Work with school improvement teams to analyze disaggregated student data to determine student and adult learning needs within the school.	Work with a representative group of administrators and teachers to analyze disaggregated student achievement data to determine student and adult learning needs for the district and the schools.	Analyze disaggregated student data and report the results and needs to schools. Write the district-based school improvement and staff development goals.	Use personal experience and priorities to determine program and staff development goals.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 4.2: Use a variety of student data when making program decisions.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Analyze disaggregated student learning results from a wide variety of data sources such as norm-referenced tests, student work samples, student portfolios, and district designed tests to determine student and adult learning needs.	Analyze disaggregated student achievement data—norm-referenced and criterion-referenced results. Highlight the differences by gender, SES, ethnicity, income, etc.	Analyze disaggregated student data mandated by state or federal grants. Disaggregate data by gender, SES, ethnicity, income, etc.	Analyze aggregate school and district averages when making instructional decisions within the district.		

DATA-DRIVEN: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 4.3: Provide opportunities for administrators & teachers to learn how to use data for instructional decision making.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Expect all staff to know how and use data for instructional decision making. Provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to learn to analyze student data for instructional decision making.	Provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to learn to analyze student data for instructional decision making.	Provide opportunities for school improvement teams and a small number of principals to learn to analyze student data for instructional decision making.	Provide an opportunity for a small number of principals to learn to analyze student data for instructional decision making.	Do not provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn to analyze student data to make classroom or school instructional decisions.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 4.4: Support administrator and teacher analysis of data.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Respond to requests for assistance from school staffs and administrators concerning analysis and data-driven decision making. Create charts and graphs of data in order to help school staffs and administrators analyze data for decision making. Collect pertinent data for school staffs and administrators to use.	Create charts and graphs of data to help school staffs and administrators analyze data and make decisions using data. Collect pertinent data for school staffs and administrators to use.	Collect pertinent data for school staffs and administrators to use.	Deny principals and teachers access to student data.		

DATA-DRIVEN: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 4.5: Use student data to monitor and support continuous improvement.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Use student data multiple times a year to monitor continuous improvement of schools and the district. Use baseline data to monitor improvements across the school year.	Use student data at the beginning and end of the school year to monitor the results of school and district activities.	Use end-of-year student data to monitor the results of school and district activities.	Do not use any student data to monitor the results of district activities.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 4.6: Use staff data to design districtwide professional development experiences.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Use data about participant level of use and concerns about implementation of innovations when designing district professional development experiences.	Use data about participant concerns related to implementation of innovations when designing district professional development experiences.	Use data about participant satisfaction with training when designing district professional development experiences.	Do not use data when designing district professional development experiences.		



DESIRED OUTCOME 7.1: Prepare administrators and teachers to design effective professional learning experiences.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide learning experiences for administrators and teachers to design and use formal professional development models (i.e., individually guided, observation-assessment, school improvement, inquiry, and training) and job-embedded models of professional learning.	Provide learning experiences for administrators and teachers to design and use formal professional development models (i.e., individually guided, observation-assessment, school improvement, inquiry, and training).	Provide learning experiences for administrators and teachers to design and use an effective training model.	Do not offer learning experiences related to the design of effective professional learning.	Use personal experience and priorities to determine program and staff development goals.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 7.2: Support and monitor the design of school-based professional development.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Support the principal, the professional development committee, and teacher leaders in the design of school-based professional development.	Support the principal and the professional development committee in the design of school-based professional development.	Support the principal in the design of school-based professional development.	Do not support or monitor the design of school-based professional development.		

DESIGN: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 7.3: Model effective staff development design in districtwide initiatives.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Create experiences for collaborative interactions as a major component of professional development. Create structures so that collegial teams provide support, modify practices to fit student needs, learn from each other, increase professional efficacy, and make instructional decisions that benefit student learning.	Provide a variety of staff development designs intended to support application of new skills in the classroom (e.g., curriculum replacement units, study groups, networks). Support this outcome with classroom coaching by external and internal experts.	Provide a variety of experiences intended to develop classroom instructional skills and encourage changes in classroom practice.	Provide experiences that develop participant knowledge.	Provide only awareness-level sessions that are designed to provide basic information.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 7.4: Provide long-term, sustained staff development programs for districtwide priorities.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide multiple-session staff development experiences and coaching for districtwide priorities on the same topic and for the same people over a two- to three-year period.	Provide multiple-session staff development experiences for districtwide priorities on the same topic and for the same people over a two- to three-year period.	Provide multiple-session staff development experiences for districtwide priorities on the same topic and for the same people throughout the school year.	Provide staff development for districtwide priorities as single, stand-alone events.		

DESIGN: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 7.5: Provide follow-up support for all major change initiatives.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide follow-up support through a variety of activities that support the skillful implementation of new job-related practices. Schedule follow-up activities over a two- to three-year period.	Provide follow-up support to individuals (teachers and administrators) based on their specific needs in applying new practices.	Provide follow-up support through scheduling multiple training sessions that occur throughout the school year.	Provide no follow-up for district-based staff development programs.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 7.6: Use technology as a staff development tool.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide e-learning experiences for professional learning (e.g., online courses, facilitated discussion groups, seminars, and tutorials, etc.).	Structure collegial exchange among teachers and administrators facilitated through technology (e.g., online subject-area networks, online courses, action research studies, problem solving, or lesson sharing among teachers).	Structure electronic networks among teachers and administrators to support professional learning.	Utilize CD-ROMs, e-mail, the Internet, and distance learning to support professional learning.	Use technology only as a management tool.	

COLLABORATION

Central Office Staff Members



DESIRED OUTCOME 9.1: Support a district culture that is characterized by collegiality.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide resources so that teachers, administrators, and central office staff can routinely work with each other to learn, coach, and give feedback. Act on the belief that all students are everyone's responsibility—not just the students connected directly to one's programs. Provide time for teachers, administrators, and central office staff to meet with colleagues for discussion and problem solving.	Act on the belief that all students are everyone's responsibility—not just the students connected directly to one's programs. Provide time for teachers, administrators, and central office staff to meet with colleagues for discussion and problem solving.	Provide time for teachers, administrators, and central office staff to meet with colleagues for discussion and problem solving.	Do not address district culture or take steps to develop collegiality among staff.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 9.2: Build a district culture that is characterized by collective responsibility for student learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Create expectations and support all schools to be responsible for the whole district's academic learning.	Create expectations and support feeder patterns to foster responsibility for the academic learning of related schools' students.	Expect each school to assume responsibility for its students' academic learning.	Do not address the collective responsibility for student learning.		

COLLABORATION: CENTRAL OFFICE

DESIRED OUTCOME 9.3: Provide experiences for administrators to learn how to work successfully with colleagues.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Teach administrators how to learn from each other about the improvement of instruction and implementation of new classroom practices. Provide experiences for administrators to gain knowledge of ways to monitor and adjust group interaction to improve effectiveness, group decision making, group structures, group development, and effective interaction skills.	Provide experiences for administrators to gain knowledge of monitoring and adjusting group interaction to improve effectiveness, group decision making, group structures, group development, and effective interaction skills.	Provide experiences for administrators to gain knowledge of group decision making, group structures, group development, and effective interaction skills.	Provide experiences for administrators to gain knowledge of the stages of group development and effective interaction skills.	Do not offer administrators opportunities to learn how to work successfully with colleagues.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 9.4: Support school-based professional learning about collaboration.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Advocate for the development of school-based collaboration, support collaboration with resources and materials, and provide professional learning experiences so that collegial interaction is successful.	Promote the development of new schedules that support collegial interaction centered on quality teaching. Compile information about learning teams and school schedules. Assist schools by removing obstacles to implementation.	Recognize the importance of collegial interaction to the development of quality teaching. Assist schools in developing plans and schedules to support these activities.	Do not view collegial interactions as important.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 9.5: Provide technology to support collegial interaction.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provide online technology so that educators can participate in subject-area networks and action research studies, and share lessons with their colleagues.	Create electronic discussion groups, web sites, and e-mail to support collegial interaction.	Provide e-mail and chat rooms to support collegial interaction.	Do not provide technology for collegial interaction among teachers.		

School professional development plan synthesis

Use this tool to summarize the professional development planned at each school. Collect from each school a summary of the collaborative professional learning teams’ action plans and compile a districtwide summary to prepare each district’s Local Professional Development Plan and to report to the community and other constituents about the district’s professional development plan.

- List the district schools in the far left-hand column.
- Identify the goal areas for each collaborative learning team within each school.
- For each goal area, identify the grade level for which that goal has been established.
- Identify the major actions the collaborative professional learning team plans to take to address its goal.
- Write the desired result it wishes to accomplish.

Schools	Goal area	Grade levels	Key actions	Desired results

Innovation Configuration maps: The principal

The Innovation Configuration (IC) maps can be used as a self-assessment instrument. The IC maps provided in this tool describe the principal's roles and responsibilities based on NSDC's Standards for Staff Development. While the IC format is similar to a rubric, there are differences. First, ideal or high-quality behaviors are found in Level One, the first column on the left side. Rubrics typically describe the highest-quality terms on the right-hand side. All of the cells of an IC do not have to be filled in; for example, there might be three, four, or five variations provided for each desired outcome.

This tool provides an opportunity to compare a principal's behaviors to the descriptions provided in the IC maps and determine how close those current behaviors come to ideal ones. One of the purposes is to describe the kinds of practices required of principals to support effective, school-based professional development.

Purpose: Use the IC maps as a self-assessment to identify the similarities and differences between current behavior and ideal behaviors

Group size: 3 to 5 members or an individual

Time: 10 minutes per standard

Materials: IC maps, Practice Description and chart, Principal Self-Assessment Sheet

DIRECTIONS:

1. A sample description of one principal's actions related to the Design standard is provided here. The group or an individual should read that description and then determine which level of the Design IC best matches this administrator's behaviors. This may take some discussion and debate to come to consensus on a final judgment.
2. Innovation Configuration maps are provided for Learning Communities, Leadership, Data-Driven, Design, and Collaboration standards. If working in a small group, group members can decide which IC maps to use and discuss.
3. Next, the individual reads each desired outcome and all the variations (or levels) and identifies the level that best matches his/her current practice. Those levels can be recorded on the self-assessment sheet and dated.
4. If working in a small group of other principals, members can share their self-ratings and discuss with other group members what they are doing related to that outcome. The group also could brainstorm ideas/ strategies for next steps toward high-quality implementation of these outcomes. The individual can use this information to decide on his or her next steps and/or to identify what assistance might be necessary for improvement in this area.

Practice description: Principal A

The faculty at Principal A's school is highly qualified and dedicated to helping all children learn. The principal knows that while she has some outstanding teachers, not everyone is performing at the same level. She reorganized the school's weekly faculty meeting so faculty have opportunities twice a month for collegial exchanges on a specific problem facing the school. Teachers are in charge of planning and conducting these meetings based on the results of the quarterly common reading assessment. The principal uses one of the weekly faculty meetings for committees to plan staff development, school improvement, and student discipline programs. The school improvement goal is posted in the main office, teacher workroom, and on each of the weekly staff memos. Formal professional learning days focus on some aspect of the school's improvement goals and include study groups, analyzing student work, and co-planning units and lessons. Principal A

constantly assesses the implementation and barriers to using new instructional strategies and curriculum through short conversations in the hallway, lunchroom, and teachers' workroom. She reads the pulse of what is happening in the school and responds quickly to requests for support. Technology has been a sore spot in the school; while the school was wired with cable access to all classrooms, the wiring had not been upgraded in years and would not support the use of multiple computers in the classroom. Teachers have access to the Internet, and many have created web sites for their classrooms to better communicate with parents. The principal and faculty are considering participating in an education web portal, which would provide them access to lessons, units, readings, and professional development. They are deciding whether the investment will assist them in accomplishing their school improvement goals.

PRINCIPAL SELF-ASSESSMENT SHEET

DATE: _____

This scoring sheet can be used to record the assessment of your current practice compared to the levels described in the IC maps.

Learning Communities

1.1: Prepares faculty	1.2: Supports	1.3: Incentive systems	1.4: Learning community	1.5: Participates as learner

Leadership

2.1 School culture	2.2: Continuous improvement	2.3: Teacher leadership	2.4: Involves faculty	2.5: Models continuous improvement	2.6: Articulates results	2.7: Advocates high-quality professional development	2.8: Involved in professional development

Data-Driven

4.1: Analysis with faculty	4.2: Variety of data	4.3: Engages stakeholders	4.4: Uses staff data	4.5: Monitors accomplishment

Design

7.1: Aligns design with needs	7.2: Long-term, in-depth	7.3: Expects implementation	7.4: Uses technology

Collaboration

9.1: Builds trust	9.2: Collective responsibility	9.3: Helps with learning collaboration	9.4: Models collaboration	9.5: Helps with conflict management



LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The Principal

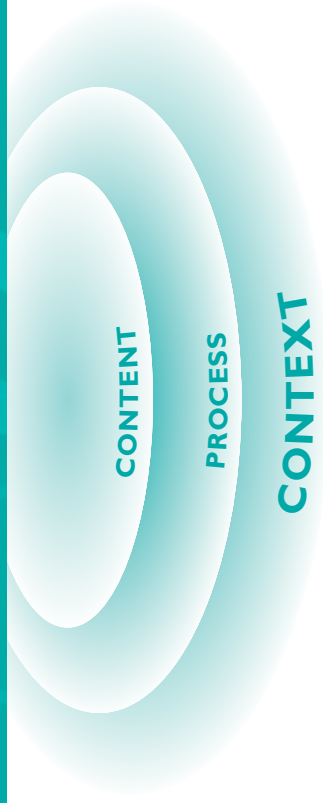
DESIRED OUTCOME I.1: Prepares teachers for skillful collaboration.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Ensures that the role of group facilitator becomes the responsibility of everyone and rotates as the skill level of group members increases. Provides training and support to develop faculty members to serve as skilled facilitators who provide support during whole school and learning team meetings.	Provides training and support to develop faculty members to serve as skilled facilitators who provide support during whole school and learning team meetings.	Provides opportunities for team leaders to learn about group process, group dynamics, the stages of group development, and group decision-making. Schedules multiple sessions throughout the year as well as coaching experiences.	Provides support to learning teams and/or whole school meetings throughout the stages of group development by supplying a skilled group facilitator.	Does not provide teachers professional development to build collaboration skills.	
DESIRED OUTCOME I.2: Creates an organizational structure that supports collegial learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Persists with a regular schedule for collegial interaction in the face of resistance. Structures time for teacher reflection about their learning. Monitors to ensure the time is used well.	Structures the daily/weekly schedule for regular meeting times during the school day for collegial interaction. Monitors to ensure the time is used well.	Uses staff meetings for collegial interaction and sharing. Grade level and content area groups meet throughout the year with the goal of sharing ideas, resources, and curricula.	Does not adapt the structure of the school to accommodate collegial learning.		

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 1.3: Understands and implements an incentive system that ensures collaborative work.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Works with teachers to create and implement an incentive system for learning teams. Recognizes and rewards joint work that results in student gains and accomplishes school goals.	Recognizes and rewards teams for working together to accomplish school goals and increase student learning.	Creates structures and processes to ensure there is mutual support among teachers while expecting each person to focus work on school goals and outcomes.	Requests that faculty members cooperate with each other.	Does not implement a support system for collaborative work.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 1.4: Creates and maintains a learning community to support teacher and student learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Builds a culture that respects risk-taking, encourages collegial exchange, identifies and resolves conflict, sustains trust, and engages the whole staff as a learning community to improve the learning of all students.	Works with faculty to create a variety of learning teams to attain different goals. Facilitates conflict resolution among group members. Supports learning teams by providing articles, videos, and other activities for use during team time.	Works with faculty to create learning teams with clear goals, outcomes, and results outlined in writing. Expects and reviews team logs each month in order to coordinate activities within and among the teams.	Creates ad hoc study teams without clear direction or accountability.	Does not create learning teams.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 1.5: Participates with other administrators in one or more learning communities.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Attends regularly learning community meetings organized at the district, regional, state, and/or national level to identify and solve school challenges, as well as to learn together.	Meets regularly with a district learning team to solve school challenges and learn together.	Meets informally with administrative colleagues to discuss school challenges.	Provides support to learning teams and/or whole school meetings throughout the stages of group development by supplying a skilled group facilitator.	Does not participate in any learning community.	

LEADERSHIP

The Principal



DESIRED OUTCOME 2.1: Promotes a school culture that supports ongoing team learning and improvement.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Recognizes and rewards the accomplishments of teams and improvement efforts. Builds a plan with the faculty to support ongoing team learning and improvement. Recognizes the value of team learning and improvement, and discusses improvement activities in staff meetings. Conducts conversations, dialogues, and discussions within the school community until team learning and improvement become a shared goal.	Builds a plan with the faculty to support ongoing team learning and improvement. Recognizes the value of team learning and continuous improvement, and discusses improvement activities in staff meetings. Conducts conversations, dialogues, and discussions within the school community until team learning and improvement become a shared goal.	Recognizes the value of team learning, models continuous improvement, and discusses improvement activities in staff meetings. Conducts conversations, dialogues, and discussions within the school community until team learning and improvement become a shared goal.	Conducts conversations, dialogues, and discussions within the school community until team learning and improvement become a shared goal. Communicates that team learning and improvement are essential processes of the school at faculty meetings.	Communicates that team learning and improvement are essential processes of the school at faculty meetings, during evaluations, and with parents and students.	Does not address team learning and improvement.

LEADERSHIP: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 2.2: Creates a school culture that supports continuous improvement.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
<p>Expects and recognizes team members for their efforts to implement new instructional procedures and share student results. Provides models in which teams review their students' achievement results, identify high-priority learning goals, and identify new instructional procedures that result in increased learning. Models continuous improvement during staff meetings by discussing current schoolwide processes that result in improvements. Assesses and diagnoses the current school culture to determine which aspects support continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Provides models in which teams review student achievement results, identify high-priority learning goals, and identify new instructional procedures that result in increased learning. Models continuous improvement during staff meetings by discussing current schoolwide processes that result in improvements. Assesses and diagnoses the current school culture to determine which aspects support continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Models continuous improvement during staff meetings by discussing current schoolwide results and identifying new processes that result in improvements. Assesses and diagnoses the current school culture to determine which aspects support continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Uses staff meetings to discuss and identify the schoolwide results and to create new procedures that result in improvements. Assesses and diagnoses the current school culture to determine which aspects support continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Assesses and diagnoses the current school culture to determine which aspects support continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Does not address cultural conditions that support continuous improvement.</p>
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.3: Creates experiences for teachers to serve as instructional leaders within the school.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
<p>Creates experiences for teachers to lead schoolwide committees that make decisions about curriculum, instruction, resources, and professional development. Establishes school guidelines that support these practices. Creates experiences for teachers to serve as mentors, master teachers, and instructional coaches.</p>	<p>Creates experiences for teachers to serve as mentors, master teachers, and instructional coaches.</p>	<p>Creates experiences for teachers to lead grade level/subject matter meetings.</p>	<p>Does not create experiences for teachers to serve in instructional leadership roles.</p>		

LEADERSHIP: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 2.4: Involves the faculty in planning and implementing high-quality professional learning for the school.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Monitors implementation of professional development programs to ensure student learning results. States clear expectations for faculty implementation of new strategies while creating a system of follow-up to support implementation of new strategies. Works with the faculty to create a schedule that allows for additional time within the calendar for professional learning. Works with the faculty and staff developers to design and implement an ongoing staff development program based on assessed student and teacher needs.	States clear expectations for faculty implementation of new strategies while creating a system of follow-up to support implementation of new strategies. Works with the faculty to create a schedule that allows for additional time within the calendar for professional learning. Works with the faculty and staff developers to design and implement an ongoing staff development program based on assessed student and teacher needs.	Works with the faculty to create a schedule that allows for additional time within the calendar for professional learning. Works with the faculty and staff developers to design and implement an ongoing staff development program based on assessed student and teacher needs.	Works with the faculty to schedule staff development activities for designated days in the calendar.	Does not solicit input from the staff when designing professional learning for the school.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.5: Models continuous improvement and professional learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Persists with the same learning goals through implementation and mastery. States publicly personal professional learning goals, practices new strategies, and asks for feedback from the faculty.	States publicly personal professional learning goals, practices new strategies, and asks for feedback from the faculty.	Participates in a variety of professional development activities (e.g., reads articles, attends professional conferences, and uses technology to learn about new practices.)	Does not participate in personal professional learning activities.		

LEADERSHIP: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 2.6: Articulates the intended results of school-based staff development.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Provides specific, expected student learning outcomes and a descriptive rubric of expected classroom practices connected to school-based staff development.	Creates a clear description of expected classroom practices that result from school-based professional development.	Describes general student learning outcomes and explains how school-based staff development supports the school improvement goals.	Schedules professional development events but does not articulate the rationale or expected results of the staff development.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.7: Advocates for high-quality school-based professional learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Advocates with school board members, community members, community partnerships, colleagues, and central office administration for high-quality, school-based professional learning.	Advocates with colleagues and central office administration for high-quality, school-based professional learning.	Advocates with colleagues for high-quality, school-based professional learning.	Advocates for high-quality, school-based professional learning.	Does not support school-based professional learning.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 2.8: Participates in professional learning to become a more effective instructional leader.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Participates in facilitated learning teams that problem solve and learn together. Participates in extensive, ongoing learning activities that include hands-on, problem-based, and multiple practice opportunities. Allocates time to explore and practice specific behaviors and strategies and receive feedback on the implementation of new skills.	Participates in learning activities that occur over a two-year period and include hands-on, problem-based, and multiple practice opportunities. Participates in follow-up, coaching, and feedback. Allocates time to practice specific behaviors and strategies and receive feedback on the implementation of new skills.	Participates in a series of short-term sessions on instructional leadership and plans to apply new knowledge, skills, and practices during the workday.	Reads articles about instructional leadership.	Does not participate in professional learning experiences related to instructional leadership.	

DATA-DRIVEN

The Principal



DESIRED OUTCOME 4.1: Analyzes with the faculty disaggregated student data to determine school improvement/professional development goals.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Works with the whole faculty to analyze a variety of disaggregated student learning results to determine school improvement goals, plus student and adult learning needs.	Works with a representative group of faculty members to analyze disaggregated student achievement data to determine school improvement goals, plus student and adult learning needs.	Analyzes disaggregated student data alone and informs the faculty of the results and needs.	Uses personal experience and opinion to determine school improvement and staff development goals.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 4.2: Analyzes a variety of disaggregated data to identify school improvement/professional development goals.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Analyzes a variety of student achievement/ learning results, as well as other data including discipline referrals, grade retention, high school completion, and enrollment in advanced courses, to determine school improvement/ staff development goals. Ensures that data are disaggregated by race, gender, SES, and special needs.	Analyzes a variety of student learning results such as norm-referenced tests, student work samples, student portfolios, and district-design tests to determine school improvement/ staff development goals. Ensures that data are disaggregated by race, gender, SES, and special needs.	Analyzes student achievement results (norm-referenced and criterion-referenced) to determine school improvement/ staff development goals.	Refrains from analyzing any data to determine school improvement/ staff development goals.		

DATA-DRIVEN: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 4.3: Engages teachers, parents, and community members in data-driven decisionmaking.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Works with parents, community members, and the whole faculty to make decisions about the focus of schoolwide work.	Works with the whole faculty to make decisions about the focus of schoolwide work.	Works with a representative teacher group to make decisions about the focus of schoolwide work.	Consults with selected teachers and/or community members before making decisions about the focus of schoolwide work.	Works alone to make decisions about the focus of schoolwide improvement work.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 4.4: Analyzes relevant staff data to design teacher professional development.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Collects and uses data from teacher concern surveys, classroom observations, walk-throughs, and informal conversations with the staff to influence the design of teacher professional development experiences.	Collects and uses data from classroom observations, walk-throughs, and informal conversations with the staff to influence the design of teacher professional development experiences.	Collects and uses data from informal conversations with staff to influence the design of teacher professional development experiences.	Does not collect or use data to influence the design of teacher professional development experiences.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 4.5: Collects, uses, and disseminates data that monitor the accomplishment of schoolwide goals.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Collects and analyzes student and teacher data at least four times a year to monitor the accomplishment of schoolwide goals. Uses baseline data to monitor improvements within the school year. Celebrates improvements and accomplishments based on data. Reports results to parents and the community throughout the year, as well as results required by the state or district.	Collects and analyzes student and teacher data at the beginning and end of the school year to monitor the accomplishment of schoolwide goals. Reports results to parents and the community throughout the year, as well as results required by the state or district.	Collects and analyzes student and teacher data at the end of the year to monitor the accomplishment of schoolwide goals. Reports results as required by the state or district.	Does not collect or use student and teacher data to monitor the accomplishment of schoolwide goals.		



DESIRED OUTCOME 7.1: Ensures that staff development designs align with expected outcomes.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Advocates for collaborative interaction as a major component of professional development. Provides training in a variety of collaborative activities that are aligned with expected outcomes (e.g., collaborative lesson design, professional networks, analyzing student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, etc.). Aligns a variety of staff development designs with expected adult learning outcomes.	Provides a variety of staff development designs aligned with expected adult learning outcomes (e.g., use of study groups to create new knowledge, learning teams for planning lessons, networks for problem solving and reflection).	Provides workshops to inform participants about new program and classroom coaching to assist with implementation of new strategies and activities.	Provides a single model or inappropriate models of professional development not aligned with expected adult learning outcomes.		

DESIGN: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 7.2: Provides long-term, in-depth, sustained staff development efforts.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Ensures that staff development provides extensive support over a two-to-three-year period, including celebrations of effort and progress. Provides multiple classroom coaching experiences to assist with the implementation of new instructional practices, as well as multiple sessions on the same topic that are scheduled throughout the school year with expectations between sessions.	Provides multiple classroom coaching experiences to assist with the implementation of new instructional practices, as well as multiple sessions on the same topic that are scheduled throughout the school year with expectations for implementation between sessions.	Provides staff development as multiple sessions on the same topic scheduled throughout the school year, with expectations for implementation between sessions. Expects participants to practice new instructional strategies during the sessions and receive feedback.	Provides staff development as single, stand-alone events.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 7.3: Establishes expectations for implementation of new classroom practices.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Works with staff to create rubrics that clearly describe expected classroom practices. Communicates how those practices connect to ongoing school improvement programs and communicates expectations for implementation of new classroom practices.	Provides a rubric that clearly describes expected classroom practices. Communicates how those practices connect to ongoing school improvement programs and communicates expectations for implementation of new classroom practices.	Communicates broad expectations for implementation of new classroom practices and how those practices connect to ongoing school improvement programs (e.g., to increase student achievement in mathematics).	Articulates the learning goal of each staff development event but does not discuss expectations for implementation.	Does not articulate the rationale or establish expectations for implementation of new classroom practices.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 7.4: Promotes technology as a staff development tool.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Structures collegial exchange among teachers that is facilitated through technology (e.g., online subject area networks, courses, action research studies, problem solving, or lesson sharing among teachers.)	Provides CD-ROMs, e-mail, the Internet, and distance learning to support professional learning.	Provides electronic resources to support independent research.	Uses technology as a management tool only.		



DESIRED OUTCOME 9.1: Builds a school culture that is characterized by trust.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Makes decisions putting the interests of students above personal and political interests. Keeps his or her word. Believes in teacher ability and willingness to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Addresses incompetence fairly and firmly. Communicates a strong vision for the school and clearly defines expectations that are upheld for all faculty members. Talks and listens to staff members with respect and courtesy. Encourages staff to disagree effectively without retribution. Takes an interest in the personal and professional well-being of faculty members.	Believes in teacher ability and willingness to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Addresses incompetence fairly and firmly. Communicates a strong vision for the school and clearly defines expectations that are upheld for all faculty members. Talks and listens to staff members with respect and courtesy. Encourages staff to disagree effectively without retribution. Takes an interest in the personal and professional well-being of faculty members.	Communicates a strong vision for the school and clearly defines expectations that are upheld for all faculty members. Talks and listens to staff members with respect and courtesy. Encourages staff to disagree effectively without retribution. Takes an interest in the personal and professional well-being of faculty members.	Talks and listens to staff members with respect and courtesy. Encourages staff to disagree effectively without retribution. Takes an interest in the personal and professional well-being of faculty members.	Takes an interest in the personal and professional well-being of faculty members.	Does not address issues related to building trust within the school.

COLLABORATION: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 9.2: Builds a school culture that is characterized by collective responsibility for student learning.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Creates expectations and supports all teachers being responsible for whole school academic learning.	Creates expectations and supports grade level or content area teams to be responsible for all their students' academic learning.	Expects teachers to assume responsibility for their own students' academic learning.	Does not address collective responsibility for student learning.		
DESIRED OUTCOME 9.3: Assists teachers in learning how to work successfully with colleagues.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Assists teachers to apply trust building and group decision-making skills, cooperative group structures, effective conflict resolution skills, and group development to the classroom and school improvement work.	Helps teachers gain and use knowledge and skills related to monitoring and adjusting group interaction to improve effectiveness, group decision-making, group structures, group development, and effective interaction skills.	Offers experiences for teachers to gain and use knowledge and skills related to group decision-making, group structures, group development, and effective interaction skills.	Offers opportunities for teachers to gain knowledge of the stages of group development and effective interaction skills.	Does not offer opportunities to learn how to work successfully with colleagues.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 9.4: Models the use of effective collaboration skills when working with faculty.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Participates in decision-making committees as "another member of the group" and encourages others to take leadership roles during meetings.	Asks a skillful teacher to act as facilitator for the group to ensure that the group makes collective decisions rather than merely "rubber stamping" ideas. Alters group process based on the stages of group development. Provides an external expert to facilitate difficult decisions.	Alters group process based on the stages of group development. Provides an external expert to facilitate difficult decisions.	Forms committees but still views role as "selling" ideas to the committee.	Does not use effective collaboration skills.	

COLLABORATION: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 9.5: Assists team members in learning effective conflict management skills.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Encourages the use of conflict resolution skills within the learning team and in grade level and whole school meetings. Provides coaching, observation, and feedback sessions to reinforce the use of new skills. Provides learning opportunities that use simulations, case studies, and role-playing. Offers opportunities to gain and use knowledge and skills related to personal conflict management strategies and effective conflict resolution behaviors and skills.	Provides coaching, observation, and feedback sessions to reinforce the use of new skills. Provides learning opportunities that use simulations, case studies, and role-playing. Offers opportunities to gain and use knowledge and skills related to personal conflict management strategies and effective conflict resolution behaviors and skills.	Offers opportunities to gain and use knowledge and skills related to personal conflict management strategies and effective conflict resolution behaviors and skills.	Provides opportunities to gain knowledge about personal conflict management strategies.	Does not provide any learning opportunities related to conflict management.	
DESIRED OUTCOME 9.6: Uses effective conflict management skills with staff and colleagues.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Serves as a role model for the school in how to address conflicts productively. Uses conflict management skills effectively with other district administrative staff.	Demonstrates mastery of conflict management skills and can discuss conflicts with any member of the faculty or staff.	Practices effective conflict management with faculty with whom trust has been established.	Practices conflict resolution on a limited basis with staff and colleagues.	Does not use effective conflict management skills and is unaware of or frightened by conflicts within the organization.	

COLLABORATION: THE PRINCIPAL

DESIRED OUTCOME 9.7: Encourages and provides technology to support collegial interactions.					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Seeks resources to provide technology and encourages staff to participate in subject area networks, action research studies, and share lessons with their colleagues. Encourages staff to participate in and distributes information about available online discussion forums, web sites, and e-mail that support collegial interaction. Supports and provides e-mail and access to chat rooms to support collegial interaction.	Encourages staff to participate in and distributes information about available online discussion forums, web sites, and e-mail that support collegial interaction. Supports and provides e-mail and access to chat rooms to support collegial interaction.	Supports and provides e-mail and access to chat rooms to support collegial interaction.	Does not encourage or provide technology for collegial interaction among teachers.		

Identifying organizational support

Purpose: Most initiatives or improvement efforts require different supports from the organization or system in order to be fully and widely implemented. This tool reviews common research-based supports and provides a discussion format that will help educators identify specific supports required to implement school or district initiatives.

Group size: 5-6 people including district office, principals, and teachers

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: An Array of Organizational Supports and Organizational Support Worksheet

DIRECTIONS:

1. Group members should review the descriptions of organizational supports that are provided with this tool. The group should ensure that each member understands each of the supports. Additional examples from the school or district could be provided.
2. The group should identify an initiative that the school or district is currently implementing. This initiative could involve curriculum, instruction, or assessment.
3. Using the worksheet as a guide, the group should brainstorm what supports are needed for the designated initiative. For example, the new reading program may require that each classroom has a complete library of books at different reading levels or may require individual computer time for each student every week.
4. The group should determine which support is the highest-priority — the support most essential to ensuring that teachers implement the new practices. Once the group has identified a priority, members plan actions to secure that support for the school or district.

AN ARRAY OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS

ALIGNED CLASSROOM EVALUATION

Classroom evaluation should support the use of the innovation. For example, cooperative learning can be noisy. The classroom evaluation should support the reality of classroom noise as a condition of cooperative learning rather than viewing noise as evidence of lack of classroom discipline or control.

COLLEAGUES

Provide access to colleagues who also are using the innovation so that staff can work together, plan lessons and units, problem solve, discuss implementation, and get ideas for how to use new practices.

MATERIALS

These include curriculum materials, software, computers, reading level books, manipulatives, hands-on science materials, graphing calculators, and any materials necessary to implement new programs or practices.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIMENTATION

Openness to experimentation is a characteristic of a school or district culture. It means that colleagues, administrators, and the community encourage staff members to experiment, to be innovative, and to challenge the status quo so they can better serve students. Schools are trusting environments where teachers are allowed to take instructional risks to improve student learning.

PROTECTION FROM INTRUSIONS

Protection from intrusions from outside the school or district that might divert energy, time, or attention from implementation is a helpful support. For example, many effective principals serve as gatekeepers for their staff — keeping additional, external programs/mandates away from faculty members so that they can concentrate on school-based practices and programs.

RECOGNITION OF SUCCESS

Celebrating success and recognizing progress are important supports when implementing new programs and practices. Many people feel uncomfortable and ineffective when they try new classroom practices. Recognize and celebrate early successes. Progress (not just final results) needs to be recognized and celebrated, as well.

RESOURCES

Examples of resources needed to support the innovation include time to meet with colleagues in learning teams, attendance at trainings or conferences, access to Internet resources, lesson plan books, teacher resource materials, and money to print or copy new student materials.

SUPPORT AT ALL LEVELS OF ADMINISTRATION

The need for principals' support of new practices has been recognized in the research for more than 30 years. More recently, research has acknowledged the need for support from central office, the superintendent, and the school board for staff to see alignment and agreement within all parts of the organization for using new practices.

SUPPORT BY COLLEAGUES

Colleagues can either support an initiative or hinder others from implementing new practices. In many schools, colleagues can extinguish enthusiasm and motivation for experimenting with new classroom practices by saying things like, "This too shall pass," "Remember when we tried this before? It didn't work then," or "You're making the rest of us look bad."

SUPPORTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

An administrator or supervisor who is knowledgeable and supportive of the innovation is needed. This person encourages teachers to use the new practice, celebrates early successes, and helps eliminate barriers to implementation.

Source: Based on *Evaluating Professional Development*, by Thomas Guskey (Corwin Press, 2000).

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT WORKSHEET

1. Identify a specific curricular, instructional, or assessment initiative that the school or district is currently implementing. Consider each organizational support identified below, and brainstorm what your initiative requires. Each area may not apply to your specific initiative.

SUPPORT	What would that support look like for your initiative?
Aligned classroom evaluation	
Colleagues	
Materials	
Openness to experimentation	
Protection from intrusion(s)	
Recognition of success	
Resources (especially time)	
Support of all levels of administration	
Support from colleagues	
Supportive administrator	

2. What does the group believe to be the highest priority support(s)?

3. What actions can be taken to ensure that this support is provided?

Collaborative professional learning team walk-through guide

WALK-THROUGH CHECKLIST

Use this checklist as a reference when conducting monthly walk-throughs of collaborative professional learning team meetings. Place a check next to any behaviors noted. Add notes as reminders of what specifically you saw for future reference in reporting data.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Team: _____ Duration: _____

Check any behaviors evident. Make special notes as desired.

NOTES:

TEAM/INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS	NOTES
TEAM ORGANIZATION	
All members are present.	
The team facilitator has the agenda.	
Teams have their norms visible.	
Teams have their plan visible.	
Teams have their professional learning goals visible.	
Teams have their student learning goals visible.	
TEAM ENGAGEMENT	
All members are actively engaged.	
Teams use positive communication strategies.	
The facilitator helps the team accomplish its work without being directive unless the work the team is doing requires it.	
Team members contribute equitably to the work.	
Team members treat one another with professional courtesy and respect.	
TEAM'S WORK	
Teams are focusing on an identifiable curricular area.	
Teams are focusing on instruction.	
Teams are focusing on data.	
Teams are focusing on assessments.	
Teams are focusing on meeting the needs of specific students.	
Teams refer to the curriculum.	
Teams consult external resources.	
Teams discuss the purpose of the meeting.	
Team members assess their team's work, their own learning, and student learning.	
Team members set an agenda for the next meeting.	
Team members complete the meeting summary.	

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

General guidelines for giving feedback include:

- State what was observed rather than what was missing.
“Team members were looking at writing samples.”
“Only one team member spoke during my walk-through.”
- Pose questions for reflection or to probe further.
“How is the process of looking at writing different at this time of year from earlier/later in the year?”

Principals can give learning teams feedback from walk-throughs in multiple ways:

CROSS-TEAM DATA

Report on your collective observations of all teams rather than on observations of individual teams. For example:

- “Two teams were working on scoring common assessments.”
- “I observed about half of the members of each team participating during my walk-through.”
- “Most teams were working on lesson planning in literacy.”
- “Teams had evident facilitation.”

Reflection question: What decisions do teams need to make to ensure that they operate smoothly and have productive meetings?

INDIVIDUAL TEAM DATA

Report data to one team at a time. For example:

- “Three members participated.”
- “The agenda was posted.”
- “Members asked questions of one another.”
- “The focus was the most recent math assessment.”

Reflection question: What might you do to strengthen your teamwork? What do you want to celebrate about your teamwork?

INDIVIDUAL DATA

Report data to individual members privately about their participation in the learning team. For example:

- “During my walk-through, you were working on something different than the other members.”
- “You encouraged others to add their thoughts.”

Reflection question: What behaviors do you want to strengthen to contribute to the team, and what do you feel good about as a member of the team?

Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams

KNOWLEDGE

- Understanding what collaborative professional learning is and how it differs from other forms of professional development
- Benefits of collaborative professional learning
- Purpose of collaborative professional learning in the school
- How collaborative professional learning fits within a comprehensive professional development program
- How collaborative professional development helps teachers meet the state's requirements for professional development
- Expectations for collaborative professional learning within the school
- Strategies for team learning
- Processes for establishing teams, communicating about the team's work, demonstrating the team's work and results
- Stages of team development
- Knowing and teaching core content

SKILLS

- Setting agreements
- Taking various roles
- Making decisions
- Resolving disagreements
- Building trust
- Working collaboratively
- Communicating clearly
- Setting goals
- Developing action plans
- Analyzing data
- Developing and reviewing curriculum, assessment, instruction, and student learning
- Evaluating work products and processes

TEAM SPIRIT

Teachers work together to establish and achieve key goals



By Vivian Troen and Katherine C. Boles

Common experience, along with a vast collection of research, demonstrates that schools can expect a range of benefits to accrue when teachers work together. Teacher teaming can reduce teacher isolation, increase collegiality, facilitate the sharing of resources and ideas, and capitalize on teachers' individual and shared strengths. And most recently, teacher teaming has been "discovered" as an avenue toward teacher learning and enhanced professional development that can lead to gains in student achievement.

We've been working in and studying teacher teams for more than two decades, and our current work focuses specifically on analyzing the elements of effective teacher teams. So far, we have found very few teams that can truly be called effective in every sense. The reasons for this are many and vary from school to school. Too often, however, teams are created by a school leader putting groups of teachers

together, generally by grade level or subject matter, and saying, "OK, you guys are a team, now collaborate."

Unfortunately, collaboration is not synonymous with effective teaming, and most teams lack the tools and resources needed to make them successful. Our research has uncovered the most common pitfalls to team success.

COMMON TEAMING PITFALLS

- Teachers are given common planning time for team meetings but lack the facilitation skills necessary to use the time effectively.
- Teachers and principals believe that experience equals expertise; teams frequently lack internal expertise and are reluctant to look outside the team for help.
- Teachers are reluctant to exert leadership or assume leadership roles.
- Teachers choose to team around issues that are peripheral rather than central to their daily teaching.
- Good working relationships are seen

as the key to team success; the content of teaching and learning has less emphasis.

- The team has no clear purpose or goals; team members may speak of issues such as increased collegiality or mutual support, but rarely engage in instructional talk that would significantly change teaching and learning.
- Putting necessary structures in place is undervalued.
- Most teachers have no vision of what constitutes effective teaming, and they have few models to learn from.

Team tuneup worksheet.

See NSDC tool on p. 63.

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHER TEAMS

Our experience has shown that teaching teams rarely reach their potential because they lack effective team attributes. Anyone who wants to upgrade the performance of teaching teams needs not only

feature TEAMING

to understand these factors but also how to implement strategies necessary to ensure team success.

We've developed a framework, below, for evaluating the effectiveness of teams, and we look at each team we investigate using five criteria, or conditions. Within each condition are several levels of development that determine where a team's overall effectiveness lies along a broad spectrum.

A TEAMING SUCCESS STORY

We do not consider ourselves ivory-tower academicians far removed from the real life of schools and classrooms. We have each spent more than 20 years as public school teachers and fully understand the problems of transforming theoretical models into everyday practice that yields realistic results. Recently, using the framework

we developed, we worked with teams in one K-8 school in a large urban school system to improve student learning.

We will call this school Elmhurst Elementary. Its principal had read a description of what we had been calling our Millennium Team teaching model (Troen & Boles, 2003) and found funds to implement our model in her school for the 2007-08 school year. Her goal was to make this a multiyear initiative to transform the school.

THE MILLENNIUM TEAMS

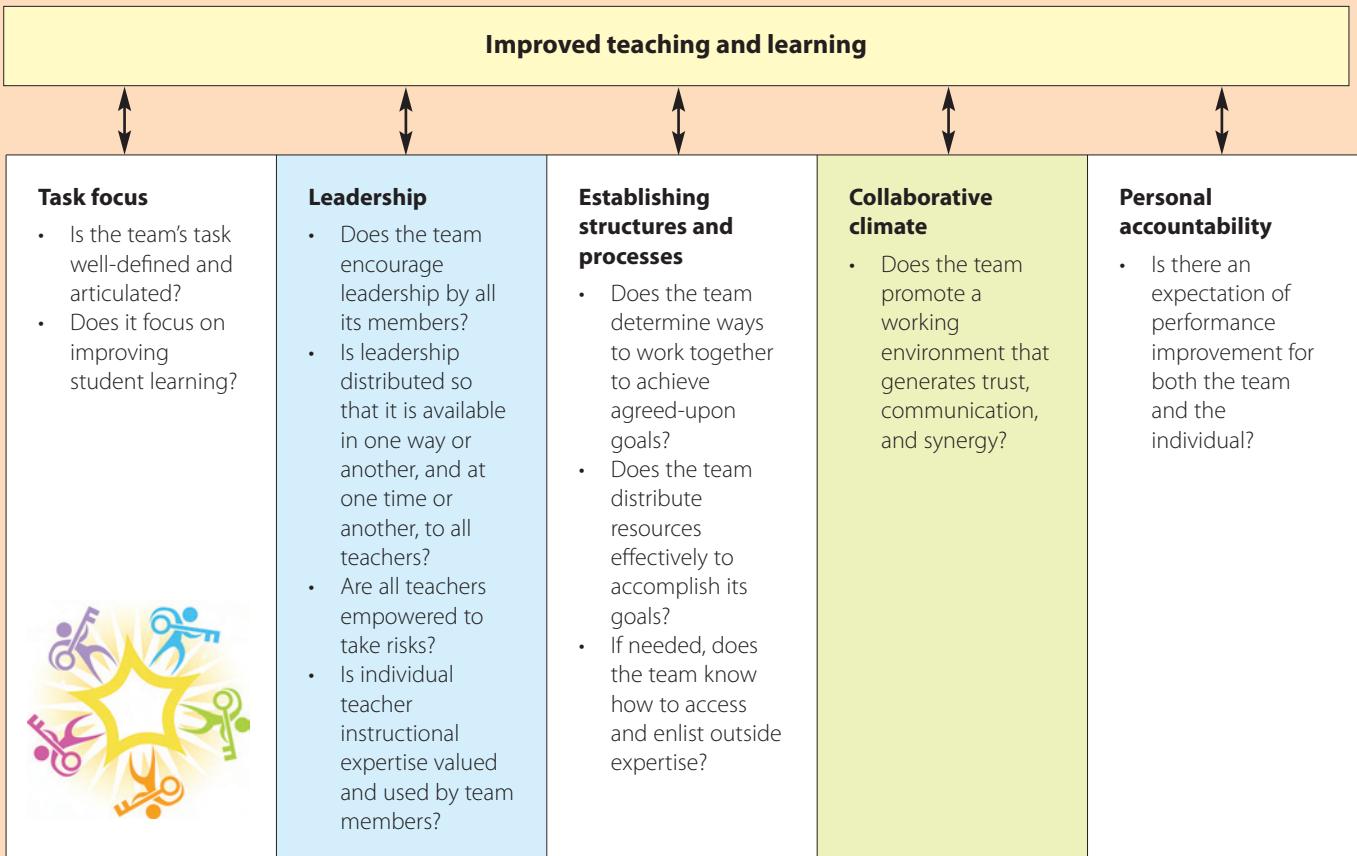
Understanding the pitfalls to teaming, we developed a series of workshops and study groups for Elmhurst Millennium Team teachers. These were designed to guide teachers in developing and reflecting on their practice as members of a team responsible for improving student learn-

ing, enhancing inclusion strategies, initiating new teachers into the profession, and/or developing a peer coaching relationship.

Agreeing that teacher learning cannot take place in 30-minute blocks, the principal arranged the master schedule to give each team an 80-minute block once a week for meeting time. A priority was to teach the teachers how to use that block of time during the school year as an opportunity to build curricular and instructional skills. We introduced the teachers to the importance of focused instructional talk as opposed to endless discussions about operations. Teams practiced using tools for co-planning, co-teaching, and observing and documenting practice in order to promote a culture of shared inquiry and collaboration.

As a result of these encounters, the

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHER TEAMS



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teachers assumed responsibility for setting their own Millennium Team goals and identifying the outcomes they hoped to achieve collectively. They defined four team goals:

1. Define and explore what constitutes instructional talk.
2. Connect team conversations to classroom planning and practice.
3. Provide opportunities to improve practice in concrete forms (e.g. using assessment data, working collaboratively on lesson plans, looking at student work, and conducting classroom observations) with room for each person's reactions, interpretations, conjectures, and analysis.
4. Develop and enact practices that ensure individual and mutual accountability within the team.

We established a structure so that teachers regularly met in ongoing study groups to raise questions, solve problems, examine student work, co-plan units, develop their teaching practices, and refine the Millennium Team model. Participants collaborated with us in the ongoing development of study group agendas and monthly “team tune-ups,” based on their evolving work.

At the team tune-ups, we gave each team member a copy of the meeting transcripts and asked them to find evidence of team talk around the four Millennium Team goals. Over the school year, teams formed definitions and judgments about attaining these goals and identified next steps. Team members agreed to hold each other accountable for attaining their team goals and developed benchmarks to evaluate progress in achieving them.

AN ASSESSMENT OF TEAM PROGRESS

A typical problem with teacher communities where team meetings are supposed to address instructional issues is that the teachers end up having discussions that merely make them feel better. Like people everywhere, teachers like to talk to each other about their jobs. But in the end, there are few tangible outcomes that demonstrate teacher or student improve-

ment. The Millennium Team challenge was to assess whether the process on which everyone had worked so hard was meeting the goals we had set for ourselves.

At the end of the 2007-08 academic year, we collected data to assess the effect of the new team structure on Elmhurst's teacher teams. We collected data for this assessment from several sources: student work and test scores, honor roll and uniform compliance data, discipline behavior records, curriculum maps, lesson plans, meeting minutes and transcripts, and interviews with the principal and teachers. We identified four major ways in which change had occurred in the teams.

1. Defining and exploring what constitutes instructional talk

Teachers had committed to improving their own conversations about curriculum and instruction in order to improve their students' learning. To prevent the common team pitfall of discussions being consumed by logistics, we had introduced a protocol that helped teams analyze a team transcript and pinpoint different kinds of instructional talk. (See p. 63.) Reading transcripts of previous team meetings allowed teachers to analyze what they had actually discussed. As they gained skill in observing their own process, teachers were ably equipped to streamline meetings to address specific learning goals.

When asked to assess the team's instructional talk at a team tune-up, one teacher commented, “To be truthful, last year team meetings were nearly all logistics. ... We never set an agenda item around the improvement of teaching and learning. Now 15% is used for logistics and 85% is used to address topics on developing better strategies for teaching to improve student outcomes.”

An examination of instructional talk and the activities occurring in teacher teams provided powerful insights to developing teacher learning and ultimately student learning.

2. Connecting team conversations to classroom planning and practice

Elmhurst Elementary put a high priority on inclusionary practices and reducing the achievement gap for special education students. For many years, middle school teachers had graded and accommodated special needs students in an individual manner. Early in the year, the issue became a focus of a day-long workshop, where teachers hammered out consistent policies. They made a coordinated effort to ensure that lessons and exams were not “watered down” for special needs students.

Two initiatives proved to affect teacher practice and student achievement. First was the creation of a coherent grading policy by content area. Second, building on the expertise of colleagues and the team's special ed teachers, each teacher's repertoire was expanded to include the best inclusive practices of the team (e.g. “lesson launches” incorporating differentiated instruction, cross-content sharing of identified gaps, accommodating assignments and exams for special education students in a consistent and sensitive way).

The change was dramatic. On accommodated-in-class assessments, the majority of special ed students showed an improvement of at least 10 percentage points, and 70% received a grade of C or better.

Figures for homework assignment completion and quality showed that special education students, with few exceptions, were completing required assignments, and regular education students were doing so with increased frequency. No failures were noted for the homework portion of students' grades, whereas in previous years, the failure rate in the homework category had been as high as 50%.

According to one 6th-grade teacher, “We are no longer spending time addressing whether or not we need to accommo-

“Now 15% is used for logistics and 85% is used to address topics on developing better strategies for teaching to improve student outcomes.”

— *Teacher assessing the team*

feature TEAMING

date lessons. We now are entering into the discussion of how to best accommodate lessons and when modification is necessary.”

The middle school math teachers, concerned with students’ inability to write about their mathematical thinking, met in content-specific teams. A math teacher commented, “Reflection pieces in mathematics experienced major gains in quality and length. Students have benefited from the specific procedures we’ve developed. Now students respond to reflection questions in a way that is consistent throughout the middle grades.”

3. Providing opportunities to improve practice in concrete forms

Teachers on the 6th-grade team voiced concern that class beginnings were not as efficient as they might be. One teacher videotaped the first 10 minutes of a number of his classes and chose one clip to analyze with the team. After commenting on this video, other teachers examined their own 10-minute openings. Teachers decided to create a consistent protocol for the first 10 minutes of class, addressing the conundrum of effective class beginnings and looking for time to complete lessons. Their collaborative solution ultimately saved an average of seven minutes per class for many team members, but more important was a significant improvement in class behavior. Discipline issues were minimized during the entire class period as a result of consistent and predictable expectations and routines established at the beginning of the class period.

4. Developing and enacting practices that ensure individual and mutual accountability

The kindergarten team, made up of teachers with very different teaching styles and beliefs about teaching, decided to address reading instruction as a team. One of the teachers, a part-time literacy coach, reviewed the many facets of Readers and Writers Workshop instruction in team meetings, and then taught the team how to analyze text to decide which teaching points were appropriate for their students. Subsequently, the team held conversations about student work produced as a result of this new learning. When, in a

team meeting, it became clear that one of the teachers had not followed the agreed-upon plan of action, the team put pressure on that teacher to follow the pedagogy in pursuit of increased student learning.

According to teacher reports, consistent practices developed by the 7th/8th-grade team were instrumental in doubling the number of students on the honor roll over four terms.

Improvements in discipline showed up in surprising ways. The dress code at Elmhurst Elementary, in place for three years, called for all students to wear khaki slacks or skirts and a blue shirt. Compliance had never been 100%, but during the 2007-08 academic year, compliance rose steadily from 27% to 71%. Teachers attributed the increase in compliance to students understanding a consistent set of expectations, rewards, and consequences implemented by all staff.

One teacher commented, “These improvements were possible because of the consistent implementation of incentives and the changes made to instruction as a result of teaming. Furthermore, the children were aware of the ways in which their teachers were working together and the efforts made by the entire team.”

PRACTICES TRANSFORMED

At year’s end, teachers assessed their own and their team’s progress and arrived at goals to work on the following year. Teachers identified the coordination of leadership responsibilities as an issue and targeted team planning in subgroups as a goal, with more content-specific professional development as part of the mix. They put creation of a regular schedule of peer/group observations on their “want list” and recognized they needed better communications between classroom and special education teachers. All team members agreed to work on developing and refining leadership skills.

Most important to us were the positive signs that a Millennium Team model had the potential to provide tangible improvements in teaching practice and student achievement by transforming teacher talk and teaching practice.

On a final note: The well-worn phrase “Change is a process, not an event” proved to

It all takes time, energy, and a willingness to stick with the process.

be more than just a cliché in the case of Elmhurst Elementary. The year’s trajectory was not entirely smooth, and there were ups and downs. There were periods of hope and growth coupled with periods of conflict and dissatisfaction. Euphoria sometimes followed disappointment. Yet one very important lesson learned is that no matter how skilled the participants in school change, a lot of patience is required. It all takes time, energy, and a willingness to stick with the process. The benefits that teachers realized through their own experiences bore this out.

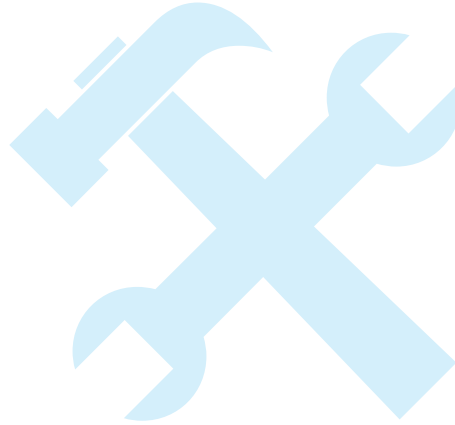
REFERENCE

Troen, V. & Boles, K.C. (2003). *Who’s teaching your children? Why the teacher crisis is worse than you think and what can be done about it*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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TEAM TUNE-UP



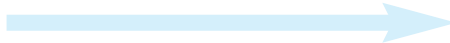
Examining team transcripts

Purpose	Use this worksheet to examine documentation of team meetings in light of goals the team has established.
Materials	Copies of team transcripts, yellow and pink highlighters, pencils.
Time	45-60 minutes.

DIRECTIONS

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the copies of the transcripts, draw a line between the major portions of the meeting (whenever the group turned its attention to a new subject). • On the right for each section, record the core content being discussed (e.g. announcements, math assessment, reading lesson, writing strategy).
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a yellow highlighter to highlight questions that were raised during the meeting. • Use a pink highlighter to note when concerns were raised. • To the right of the text, use a pencil to draw an arrow to the text where the question or concern was answered (if there was a response). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you notice about the kinds of questions that people asked? _____ • Did the group tend to pick up and respond to questions or bypass questions? Any thoughts about why? _____ • How did people tend to respond to questions and concerns (e.g. provide strategies, direct to resources, put on next agenda, empathetic response, etc.)? _____

nsdc tool TEAMING

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, what kinds of talk do you notice in this meeting? Here are some possibilities in the blue box at right.  Put a check mark next to those you find in evidence. What other types of talk can be added to the list? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying comments and questions <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating work across classes <input type="checkbox"/> Directions (this is how you do something) <input type="checkbox"/> Announcements/updates <input type="checkbox"/> Planning/organizing <input type="checkbox"/> Directive (you need to do this) <input type="checkbox"/> Making connections <input type="checkbox"/> Providing background/history <input type="checkbox"/> Explaining/providing rationale <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing <input type="checkbox"/> Generating ideas, alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> Observational comments <input type="checkbox"/> Humorous comments/jokes <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When and how are students being discussed (i.e. generic references — ELLs, special education students; specific references — individual students; positive or negative references)? What came before and caused teachers to introduce students into the conversation? 	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When are documents, resources, or other artifacts being distributed? Are they actually being discussed by the group, just referenced, or just distributed? How are they being used? Are they advancing the group discussion and learning during the team meeting? 	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is leading the conversation? Circle the name of the person leading/facilitating the conversation. Circle the names of others as/if this role shifts during the meeting. 	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is talking, and who is not? What do you notice about taking turns and the length of people's contributions? 	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence in the transcript of a facilitator, a timekeeper, a note-taker, or a norms process observer? Do they appear to influence the team's work in any way? 	

Source: Adapted with permission from Boles, K., Henry, S., & Troen, V. (2007). *Examining team transcripts. The transformative power of teacher teams*. Unpublished manuscript.



MODULE 8

How can collaborative learning teams measure their progress?

- Tool 8.1: Learning team logs
- Tool 8.2: Learning team surveys
- Tool 8.3: Protocol for discussing survey results about team effectiveness and/or team meetings
- Tool 8.4: Learning team survey
- Tool 8.5: The real measure of a professional development program's effectiveness lies in what participants learn
- Tool 8.6: Smart moves
- Tool 8.7: Focus, feedback, follow-through
- Tool 8.8: Learning walk
- Tool 8.9: Wake-up call
- Tool 8.10: Teamwork on assessments creates powerful professional development

Learning team log

Facilitator:		Date:	
Team members present:			
Primary meeting focus: <i>(5 minutes)</i>			
Chief challenges: <i>(10 minutes)</i>		Proposed solutions: <i>(10 minutes)</i>	
Action plan/next steps: <i>(20 minutes)</i>	Person responsible	Timeline	Evidence of success
Summary of meeting results:			

Collaborative learning log

Facilitator:	Date:
Starting time:	Log recorder:
Attendance:	
Topics addressed:	
Summary of outcomes/conclusions:	
Debriefing of content and process of meetings:	
Next meeting focus:	
Date/time:	Place:
Unfinished business:	
Individual assignments:	

Team progress reminders

Directions: It’s time to check your team progress. Is your team working together or simply getting together? Review the questions to help you identify your success level. Make up your own rating scale by labeling the boxes to the right, and use it to rate yourselves on how well you are succeeding.

YOUR RATING SCALE

1. Are you meeting regularly (preferably at least weekly)?					
2. Does each meeting focus on your goal and on specific outcomes you will accomplish at that meeting?					
3. Are you documenting discussions and decisions at each meeting and sending this information out in a timely manner?					
4. Is the atmosphere at team meetings friendly and supportive?					
5. Are teams becoming more effective over time in managing themselves and working together smoothly?					
6. Are team members learning more about how their students learn best?					
7. Are team members learning new research-based information about teaching?					
8. Are teachers applying new and/or improved teaching strategies in their classrooms?					
9. Do team members monitor the results of classroom applications and discuss student learning resulting from teaching practices?					
10. Is the team expanding its tool kit of field-tested strategies for teaching and making this public?					

Tools For Schools

Rate yourself as a team player

COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR

The facilitator should prepare individual sheets ahead of the team meeting and distribute to team members. Before distributing, tell them when results will be available and how results will be used.

Ensure anonymity for respondents by having team members fold their surveys and drop them into a box.

Calculate survey results privately and share the total results with the entire group publicly during the next team meeting.

Lead a discussion about possible implications of the responses. *In what areas is there already substantial agreement that the team is performing well together? What areas does this team need to work on? What are some strategies for improvement in that area?*

Effective school improvement teams are made up of individuals who respect each other and work well together. Your behavior has an enormous impact on the team’s ability to do its work efficiently and effectively. The following is a series of questions about your behavior in your work group. Answer each question honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. Describe your behavior as accurately as possible.

1. I offer facts, opinions, ideas, suggestions, and relevant information during my team’s discussions.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

2. I express my willingness to cooperate with other group members and my expectation that they will also be cooperative.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

3. I am open and candid in my dealings with the entire group.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

4. I support team members who are on the spot and struggling to express themselves intellectually or emotionally.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

5. I take risks in expressing new ideas and current feelings during a team discussion.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

6. I communicate to other team members that I am aware of and appreciate their abilities, talents, capabilities, skills, and resources.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

7. I offer help and assistance to anyone on the team in order to improve the team’s performance.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

8. I accept and support the openness of other team members, supporting them for taking risks and encouraging individuality.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

9. I share materials, books, sources of information, and other resources with team members in order to promote the success of all members and the team as a whole.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

10. Three things I might do to increase the effectiveness of our team include:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

April/May 2001

Adapted with permission of the South Carolina State Department of Education.

Tools For Schools

Team meetings

COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR

This tool will assist various teams in assessing how well they attend to the basics of successful meetings. In order for this tool to be used effectively, team members must have agreed on a set of norms ahead of time. This tool would best be used after the team has met several times and can gauge the team's attention to its goals.

The team can add its own norms in order to adapt this tool for its unique needs.

Ensure anonymity for respondents by having team members fold their surveys and drop them into a box.

Calculate the results privately and share the total results with the entire group publicly during the next team meeting.

Lead a discussion about possible implications of the responses. *In what areas is there already substantial agreement that the team is performing well together? What areas does this team need to work on? What are some strategies for improvement in that area?*

We start our meetings on time.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We review and develop the meeting's agenda/goal before the meeting begins.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We set time limits for the meeting.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We identify a recorder to compile notes of the meeting.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We encourage participation by all members.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We summarize what we have accomplished in each meeting before concluding the meeting.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We briefly evaluate each meeting in terms of efficient, productive use of time and each member's concerns.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

We end our meetings on time.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always



Protocol for discussing survey results about team effectiveness and/or team meetings

Use the compiled data from a survey of team effectiveness or team meetings such as in Tools 14.2 or 14.3 to discuss the survey results.

- Which item has the highest mean score?
- What evidence did we each use to support our score in this area?
- Which item has the lowest mean score?
- What evidence did we each use to support our score in this area?
- On what item(s) did team members agree the most? Examine both the mode and range to answer this question.
- On what item(s) did team members disagree the most? Examine both the mode and range to answer this question.
- What conclusions can we draw about the efficiency and effectiveness of our collaborative professional learning teams?
- What actions might we take to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our collaborative professional learning teams?

Learning Team Survey

School _____ Subject/grade level _____

1. How many times have you met with your learning team?
 1-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7+ _____ Have not met _____

2. What rating best describes your feelings about these meetings? *Scale: 1 (most negative) to 10 (most positive).*

Most negative (-)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Most positive (+)
Unproductive											Productive
Non-task oriented											Task oriented
Not well facilitated											Well facilitated
Incompatible group members											Compatible group members
Less than honest communications											Honest communications

3. What, if any, are the positive impacts of these meetings on you personally?

4. What, if any, are the negative impacts or concerns you have had with the learning team meetings?

5. Rate the benefit of participating on a learning team. *Scale: 1 (not much benefit) to 5 (a great deal of benefit).*

To what extent have you gained ...

Circle choice

New knowledge about teaching and learning?	1	2	3	4	5
New insights about how to reach certain students?	1	2	3	4	5
New ideas about how to improve the way you teach?	1	2	3	4	5
New perspectives on your strengths and weaknesses in teaching?	1	2	3	4	5
A new outlet for expressing and sharing frustrations, concerns, problems with teaching?	1	2	3	4	5
Greater confidence in using a wider range of instructional and assessment methods?	1	2	3	4	5
A stronger sense of connection or support from other teachers?	1	2	3	4	5
A greater sense of yourself as a professional?	1	2	3	4	5

6. With regard to your selected team focus, how successful has your group been with each activity listed here?
Scale: 1 (not at all successful) to 5 (extremely successful).

How successful has your learning team been with ...

Circle choice

Analyzing and discussing student needs?	1	2	3	4	5
Reading research and studying successful strategies for addressing student needs, and discussing applications of what we have read/studied?	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing similarities and differences in teachers' approaches and beliefs about teaching?	1	2	3	4	5
Investigating programs, strategies, and materials that might help motivate students?	1	2	3	4	5
Designing new materials, lessons, or assessments for students?	1	2	3	4	5
Trying out new techniques, materials, approaches in teaching and assessing students?	1	2	3	4	5
Sharing successful strategies you currently use?	1	2	3	4	5
Assessing and sharing results of new approaches to teaching with the learning team?	1	2	3	4	5

Learning Team Survey *continued*

7. Of the teachers on your learning team, how many do you think believe the learning team approach has significant potential to help teachers improve students' motivation and performance? _____ (give number)
8. Below is a list of activities that support teacher growth and development. Try to assess the activities in terms of whether they were practiced effectively at the school before the learning teams began. *Scale: 1 (not very effectively practiced) to 5 (very effectively practiced) before the learning teams began.*

	Circle choice				
Teachers talked to each other about how they taught and the results they got.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers learned from each other by watching each other teach.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers designed lessons, assessments, or units together.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers critiqued lessons, assessments, or units for each other.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers reviewed the curriculum across grade levels in a particular subject.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers developed interdisciplinary strategies to increase student interest and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers shared articles and other professional resources and read and discussed books.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers asked each other for advice and help with particular students and topics.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers visited other schools to examine instructional approaches in other settings.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers worked together to examine student classroom tests and other student work samples to better understand student strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers provided moral support and encouragement to each other in trying new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers helped each other implement ideas from workshops they attended.	1	2	3	4	5

9. In your opinion, what percent of your students have benefited from your learning team participation?
 Less than 25% _____ 26-50% _____ 51-75% _____ 76% + _____

10. Indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements based on your experiences so far with the learning team. *Scale: 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal).*

I think my participation on the learning team will ...	Circle choice				
Improve my overall teaching effectiveness.	1	2	3	4	5
Improve my skills in helping students learn.	1	2	3	4	5
Change my perceptions about some students' learning abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
Increase my understanding of how to motivate students to work harder.	1	2	3	4	5
Significantly change how I teach.	1	2	3	4	5
Significantly change how I work with other teachers.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. *Scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

	Circle choice				
I am enthusiastic about my participation on a learning team.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel a lot of stress during the workday.	1	2	3	4	5
I need more time for learning team participation.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with my work environment here.	1	2	3	4	5
I am excited by my students' accomplishments this year.	1	2	3	4	5
Student motivation is a major problem here.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers here tend to do their own thing in the classroom with little coordination.	1	2	3	4	5
I often feel unsure of my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers here get along well.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: SERVE, Atlanta.

Summative reflection protocol

As a team, take a minimum of 30 minutes to answer the questions in this protocol. It is not necessary to reach consensus. What is most important is that each team member has an opportunity to share his or her point of view.

- Based on the evidence we have now, have we achieved our goal?
- What has contributed to our results?
- How did working as a team impact the results?
- Which of our actions as a team contributed most to the results we achieved?
- Which of our actions as a team contributed the least to the results we achieved?
- How did our actions as individuals contribute to the results we achieved?
- What have we learned as a team this year that has strengthened our instruction and content knowledge?
- What have we learned as a team that will help us improve collaboration with other colleagues?
- Of all that we learned this year, what are the headlines that we want to share with other staff members?

The real measure of a professional development program's effectiveness lies in what participants learn.

Data that gauge participant reactions during professional development programs help leaders spot trouble areas and know when and where to adjust the program midstream. Participant reaction data also can help validate the program's design. While compelling, participant reaction data should not be confused with participant learning data. Reactions tell us only part of what we need to know. However cleverly we collect participants' impressions and opinions, these data cannot answer the question: "What are the participants actually learning?"

Happily, many professional development programs now take responsibility for real participant learning. In these programs, assessing learning goes beyond simply documenting it. It also helps accelerate participants' learning and deepen their knowledge of themselves as learners and professional educators. Professional development leaders help ensure their participants learn and can use the program content by assuming multiple helping roles — teacher, facilitator, coach, classroom observer, friendly critic, or mentor.

SOLID PRACTICES

Participant learning is being promoted through solid practices such as these:

- **Some leadership academies use a variety of tools to determine what participants know when they enter the academy and what they know and can do when they exit.** Academy participants complete a self-assessment with input from colleagues, then demonstrate their learning and increased skills through a series of performance tasks. Finally, they apply what they learn in the academy by completing an action plan or action research project at their school with help from a coach or mentor.
- **Some technology training programs, especially those in which participants start with widely varying levels of knowledge and skill, use pre- and post-assessments to measure what each participant knows and can do.** They may also help participants demonstrate what they

are learning by having them develop a practical learning product that integrates technology into their own instructional program. Many of these technology programs require that participants also display what they have learned on the program's web site.

- **Some yearlong programs gauge teacher growth through ongoing classroom homework projects.**

Participating teachers try out their growing knowledge and skills and analyze the impact of new protocols on their students throughout the year. The teachers keep an implementation log to help them reflect on what they are learning. Program leaders or peers assist by gathering observation data through "pop-in" visits in classrooms. The program also may have teachers present what they learned through their classroom experiments to peers who act as each other's "critical friend."

- **Some workshop leaders pause periodically throughout the event to check participant understanding of the important constructs or models in the program content.**

Quick checkups may involve a prompt to write, such as, "In 50 words or less, explain ..." or "Write a three-minute paper to explain ..." or "What should the teacher on the video do next to _____?" Participants check their own responses against an answer key or scoring guide, or they discuss their responses with peers and get feedback from each other and the trainer.

Programs that assess participants' learning are based on solid beliefs about the complexities of learning and assessment. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe explained that relationship in *Understanding by Design* (ASCD, 1998): "Understanding ... involves sophisticated insights and abilities reflected in varied performances and contexts. ... We also suggest that different kinds of understandings exist, that knowledge and skill do not automatically lead to understanding, that misunderstanding is a bigger problem than we realize, and that assessment of understanding therefore requires evidence that cannot be gained from traditional testing alone" (p. 5). The bad news is that in some organizations, the paradigm for professional development remains one in which the design does not include accountability for participant learning. In those places, professional development's role typically is to motivate staff or expose them to the Next New Big Thing, and possibly to demonstrate some techniques that may increase student learning. The measure of the program's success is often attendance



In each issue of *JSD*, Robby Champion writes about how to collect and evaluate data effectively. Her columns can be found at www.nsdcc.org/library/champion.html.

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records or teacher participation rather than results. In those contexts, changing to results-based professional learning will be a significant paradigm shift.

10 SUGGESTIONS

To make a professional development program accountable for participant learning, you will first need to lay some groundwork. Consider the following 10 suggestions to help you make that shift successfully:

1. Avoid surprise ambushes. Before a program begins, let participants know their learning progress will be checked frequently. They need to understand which tools will be used to check understanding and measure developing skills. Participants also need to know that the purpose of the learning assessments is to ensure that everyone successfully learns the content and begins using it. Participants will want answers to questions including, “How will the assessments be scored?”, “How will they be used?”, and “Who will see them?”

2. Design the professional learning experience to ensure participants’ learning success. Organize learning time so all participants get ample assistance in learning the content. Assume your adult learners are diverse and therefore will need varying amounts of assistance. Allow plenty of time to answer their questions, to re-explain areas of confusion, to coach individuals or teams as they begin to apply the content to their particular context, and to provide timely feedback on their application projects and learning products.

3. Check learning progress early and often. Check participants’ understanding of small chunks of the content frequently using various measurement techniques. Avoid waiting until the end of the program to measure everything. Remember that the primary purpose in gathering learning data is to facilitate participant learning, not to document what participants did or didn’t learn at the end of a program.

4. Practice what you teach about assessment tools. Model how to use the kinds of assessment tools you want participating educators to use with their own students. For example, if your professional development program content encourages the use of rubrics, scoring guides, performance tasks, assessment games, portfolios, student-made graphic organizers, learning logs, or role-play exercises for students in their schools, accelerate teachers’ and principals’ learning by using those assessment tools with them as they learn.

5. Use the learning data immediately to improve the program. Treat whatever learning data you collect as formative data, meaning that the data should be used immediately to improve the program. Once you examine the participant learning data, decide what to do with it. You need

However cleverly we collect participants’ impressions and opinions, these data cannot answer the question: “What are the participants actually learning?”

not decide by yourself what to change in the program. Collaborate with your participants about what alterations make the most sense to help them build their competence and implement what they are learning.

6. Respect your learners’ privacy. Avoid setting up the situation in which participants must make personal learning results public. For example, if you are using a pre-training and post-training assessment exercise to monitor participant learning, assume that participants do not want their scores displayed or announced. Even if you measure participant learning with a fun activity, such as a simulation, crossword puzzle, “50-words-or-less” quiz, or “three-minute paper,” avoid embarrassing participants whose scores are low.

7. Check learning at higher levels. Be sure to match the level of your learning assessments with the program’s intended learner outcomes. You likely will want your participants to do more than explain, recall, select, and list the new information. If so, tailor your assessment so participants show they can analyze, compare, contrast, classify, infer, judge, predict, estimate, create a product or performance of their own, and apply a model to new situations.

8. Before using any learning assessment tool, work out the bugs. Always field-test your learning assessments before using them. Adult learners in the field of education are savvy about assessment tools. Expect them to be quick to criticize a learning assessment if they spot that the tool is shaky, the directions are convoluted, or the scoring guide is arbitrary.

9. Assess the important constructs and skills. Limit the learning assessments to the most important constructs and major skills, not tangential content.

10. Remember to move on to the next evaluation question. Once you have evaluated participant learning, address the next question: “Are participants using what they learned?” Some tools that measure participant understanding and skill development also can be used to check how well participants are implementing what has been learned. Homework assignments done in participants’ classrooms or schools can do double duty — they not only help gauge participant learning, but can help estimate how teachers are using what they have learned.

Achieving significant results from professional development programs always will depend on several complex interrelated factors. One factor within professional development leaders’ control is checking whether our participants’ understanding and skills are growing. ■

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SMART MOVES

Achieving your vision depends on follow-through

By Joan Richardson

The vision statement has been finalized. The banners have been hung and T-shirts have been ordered. The school newsletter has been revised to prominently include the vision statement.

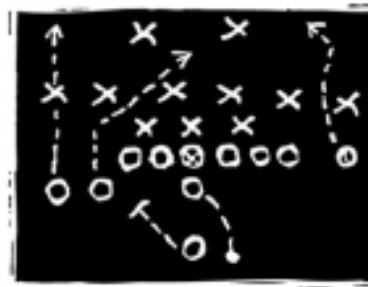
Now, what?

Publishing and publicizing a school's newly developed vision statement is an important way to communicate with the school's stakeholders. But it is only the beginning of the real work of using the vision as a guide and a measure for school improvement.

"The vision has to be tied to regular dialogue and review and mechanisms that make it live and breathe. Without that, it will never become viable," says Suzanne Bailey, who consults frequently on restructuring issues, including vision development and implementation.

Working to achieve the vision begins immediately after an organization has identified its goals. That means schools can't wait a year or, worse, five years, to determine whether they're achieving what they want.

"If you're the leader, build in mechanisms to evaluate your progress at the moment that you write the vision," she says.



That's especially the case with schools that are struggling, Bailey says. "With low-performing schools, it's unreal to pretend that you're going to aim at something that's farther away than today's lunch. It's disrespectful. Look at what you're doing today," she urges.

DATA COLLECTION

Collecting data underlies all of the work to measure progress against the vision, agree Bailey and David Conley who also has done extensive work on school restructuring.

As soon the vision statement has been written, Conley urges schools to collect baseline data to assess the current reality at the school. "It's hard to argue with your own data," he says.

Data that is typically collected includes standardized test scores, daily student attendance, number of dropouts, demographic information about students and their families, parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences, disciplinary information, courses in which students are enrolled, and post-graduate plans for students.

Bailey cautions that data doesn't have to mean just test scores and other numerical measures. "If your data set is only test scores, you're doomed," she said.

Continued on Page 2

Tools For Schools

Achieving your vision depends on follow-through

Continued from Page One

Teachers should also think about collecting classroom-based data, such as checklists of various types of activities and samples of assignments and student work.

She urges schools to write stories to describe what is happening today in their schools. For example, each teacher could write about the day in the life of a single student in his or her class. That same activity could be done at regular intervals through the year or over several years. Teachers could read those stories and “see” the progress they’re making—or not making.

“Tell the truth about things that aren’t working,” Bailey urges.

30-60-90

Before the vision-writing group returns to its regular work, Bailey suggests that group members identify where they want to be in 30-day increments. (*See Page 3.*)

What will we be doing in 30 days that we aren’t doing now? How about in 60 days? 90 days? What are we doing that we want to keep? What are we doing that we want to discard? What challenges will we have overcome? What barriers will we still face? What skills are we learning?

For example, one part of the vision might be that all students will read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. One of the 30-day goals might be learning what other schools have done to achieve that goal. The 60-day goal might be visiting one of those schools. The 90-day goal might be evaluating what ideas can be borrowed or adapted from those schools.

By describing the future in ways that are actionable and useful, Bailey says the group can break down the big work of achieving the vision into smaller, manageable chunks of work.

At the end of each 30 days, if the group can see the progress it has made, it will feel more confident that it can move forward, she says.

ACTION PLANS

Out of the 30-60-90 task comes a set of action plans. The action plans should be as specific as the team can make them. (*See Page 4 for an example.*)

For example, to achieve the first 30-day reading goal, one action plan would identify who will be responsible for identifying other schools that achieved a similar reading goal and what information will be gathered from those schools.

School teams should create one action plan for each short-term goal. Each time new goals are identified, the team should create new action plans.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Visions will wither if they don’t have a continual flow of information to sustain them.

“Once you have a vision in place, if you don’t have a rich source of ideas, you will re-invent the status quo,” Conley says.

One idea for ensuring a steady flow of is to create study groups around various components of the vision. Then, let loose a group of teachers to explore those ideas.

“Give this to those people on your staff who are the thinkers. Keep that group in intellectual turmoil. You don’t want them to settle down and become implementers. You want them to keep churning out new ideas because that brings enthusiasm back into the process,” Conley says.

STAFF MEETINGS

As schools put action plans and study groups in place, staff meetings are good opportunities to keep track of a school’s progress. Reporting and celebrating progress helps an organization build momentum and energy.

Schools that use staff meetings to regularly measure progress towards the school goals also begin to shift the school culture towards one that embraces continuous progress, Conley says. Staff understands that teachers come together to learn from each other and to talk about the work that they do, not merely to sit passively and hear information delivered

by the principal.

In the case of the reading example, staff members might share the information they have gathered from other schools. Other staff members will not only be included in what a core group is learning, they will also be able to raise questions and provide more specific direction for those collecting the information.

As the school moves farther in the process, teachers might use staff meetings to share what they have learned, what they tried with their student and with what results.

DOCUMENT PROGRESS

Create some spaces in the school year where teachers and other school team members can stop and evaluate their achievements.

“Human beings are event-oriented so create an event where everyone can sit back and think and talk about what they’ve done,” Conley says.

Bring in a facilitator, perhaps a district staff developer, to guide the discussion. Conley recommends taking such meetings off-site in order to free up discussions. Bailey recommends meeting in this way once a month

For such meetings, Bailey encourages groups to bring anything that will demonstrate what the group has achieved. This could include photographs, examples of student work, notes from journals, calendars, etc.

Then, using a chart similar to that found on Page 6, she guides the groups through a story-telling process.

THE VISION TEST

At some point, the vision should become so much a part of “the way we do business” that schools will turn to the vision for guidance on making key decisions.

The vision, rather than becoming a far-off goal to reach, will become a screen to filter out ideas. *Does this proposed program or project pass the vision test? Will this help move us towards our vision?*

“If it doesn’t pass through the filter, then set it aside,” says Bailey.

August/September 2000

Making our future closer

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This chart can be used to help the group make commitments to short-term actions.

TIME: One hour.

SUPPLIES: Poster paper, markers, tape.

PREPARATION: Facilitator should sketch out the chart depicted below and be prepared to post it on wall. Ideally, this poster will remain on a wall near the vision poster.

Directions

Describe our best “guess” of what we will be doing in 30-day increments to reach our vision.

Scenario elements	30 days	60 days	90 days
Our major focus			
What adults are doing			
What students are doing			
Skills being learned			
Tools and materials being used			
Challenges: benefits and frustrations			

Source: *Making Progress Visible: Implementing Standards and Other Large Scale Change Initiatives* by Suzanne Bailey. For ordering information, see Page 7.

Tools For Schools



FROM VISION TO ACTION

SHOW PASSION AND COMMITMENT TO THE VISION.

Express it simply but dramatically to set the tone. Show how it opens up new opportunities for the organization and everyone in it and how it can make a real difference in society. Trumpet it prominently in publications and press releases. Gain endorsement of the vision by opinion leaders inside and outside the organization.

Source: *Leaders Who Make a Difference*, by Burt Nanus and Stephen Dobbs. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

“Vision isn’t forecasting the future. It is creating the future by taking action in the present.”

— **James Collins
and Jerry Porras**

August/September 2000

Tools For Schools



FROM VISION
TO ACTION
.....

**ENGAGE OTHERS
IN ADVANCING
THE VISION.**

Bring all the stakeholders into the tent. Encourage people to assume responsibilities and take risks consistent with the vision. Solicit ideas from others, both inside and outside the organization. Celebrate progress, such as grants received to implement parts of the vision or new programs successfully launched. Show appreciation for vision champions, those who take the initiative to advance the vision.

Source: *Leaders Who Make a Difference*, by Burt Nanus and Stephen Dobbs. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

“Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things.”
— **Denis Diderot**

Action plan

GOAL:

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

WHAT WILL WE DO?

HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

WHO WILL DO THIS?

WHEN WILL THIS BE DONE?

REFLECTIONS ON ACTION

August/September 2000

Tools For Schools



FROM VISION
TO ACTION
.....

**PROVIDE THE
NECESSARY
SUPPORT.**

Secure funding targeted at important parts of the vision. Hire people or recruit volunteers who share the passion for the vision and can bring useful skills to bear in achieving it. Invest in training and pilot projects. Design policies, plans, and practices that support the vision. Help lower-level leaders develop their own visions and strategies consistent with the larger vision.

Source: *Leaders Who Make a Difference*, by Burt Nanus and Stephen Dobbs. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

“We are such stuff as dreams are made of.”

– William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night’s Dream

August/September 2000

Gather data to inform practice

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity will encourage participants to think ahead about the kind of data they will need to gather to measure their progress in achieving the vision.

TIME: 90 minutes total — 45 minutes for individuals to complete their respective charts and 45 minutes to them to work in pairs or trios. Option: the facilitator could ask participants to fill out the chart on their own and bring it to a meeting of the large group.

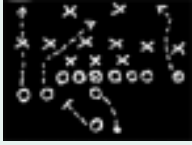
Directions

1. Facilitators should reproduce the chart pictured below and distribute individual sheets to participants. Separately, the facilitator should create the same chart on a large piece of poster paper that can be posted in the room.
2. Individuals should fill in the chart, either as pre-work or as part of the session. If this is done in the sessions, allow 45 minutes for this work.
3. Divide the group into pairs or trios.
4. Each pair or trio should discuss these questions:
 - What are we learning about our practices?
 - What themes are emerging in our work?
 - What working theories can we test to increase our results individually or as a collective?
 - What new questions are we asking?
 - What best practices can we share with others?

Situation	Action Planned	Results	Learnings
Context	What	Notable results	Insights
Question			Knowledge to share
Anticipated results	How	Actual results	
Assumptions/ beliefs			New questions and next steps

Source: *Making Progress Visible: Implementing Standards and Other Large Scale Change Initiatives* by Suzanne Bailey. For ordering information, see Page 7.

Tools For Schools



FROM VISION
TO ACTION
.....

**MEASURE PROGRESS
TOWARD
ACHIEVING THE
VISION.**

Evaluate the levels of synergy and innovation in the organization in pursuit of the vision. Determine whether the rate of progress is satisfactory and whether performance is improving on the key measures. Track the external environment to see if it is changing in ways that affect the relevance of the vision.

Source: *Leaders Who Make a Difference*, by Burt Nanus and Stephen Dobbs. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

“Worse than being blind is to see and have no vision.”
– **Helen Keller**

August/September 2000

Document your progress

COMMENTS TO FACILITATORS: This fill-in-as-you-go chart should be used in a meeting at least once a month with the core team charged with achieving the vision. This tool can be used to document the progress that schools/districts are making towards achieving their vision. By posting this in the same room where the vision is posted, the poster is also a visual reminder to teachers and others that they should be alert for evidence of how their work measures up against the vision.

TIME: One hour.

SUPPLIES: Poster paper, colored marking pens, tape.

PREPARATION: Re-create the chart below on a large sheet of poster paper and post it in the meeting room.

Directions

Assemble the core team charged with achieving the vision. Ensure that team members know in advance that they will be documenting the progress they have made in achieving the vision. The invitation for this meeting should advise participants to bring information and artifacts with them to document the work they have done.

The facilitator can be the scribe for the chart or various team members can be invited to add their own notations.

Documentation areas	First month	Second month	Third month	Fourth month
Major events and activities				
Results				
Learnings and best practices				
Artifacts				

Source: *Making Progress Visible: Implementing Standards and Other Large Scale Change Initiatives* by Suzanne Bailey. For ordering information, see Page 7.

Learning about using your vision

■ *Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* by Peter Senge, et al. New York: Doubleday, 1994. Practical guidebook for Senge's original *The Fifth Discipline*. Includes many useful ideas for putting Senge's philosophy into practice. Check library or bookstore for a copy.

■ *Idea Book on Planning: Implementing Schoolwide Programs*, (Volume 1) by U.S. Department of Education. Highlights effective methods and useful resources for planning schoolwide programs. Focuses on the issues of schoolwide program planning and combining resources and contains many examples on these issues from various schools. Includes excellent chapter on vision work. Available online at www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/. To order, call (877) 433-7827, fax (301) 470-1244, or web: www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html. No charge.

■ *Making Progress Visible: Implementing Standards and Other Large Scale Change Initiatives* by Suzanne Bailey. Focuses on aiding schools to see the progress they are making toward their goals. Offers a new idea or new tool on virtually every page. To order copies, call (707) 448-1520 or fax (707) 448-2352. Price: \$26 plus tax and shipping.

■ *Plan or Die: Ten Keys to Organizational Success*, by Timothy Nolan, Leonard Goodstein, and J. William Pfeiffer. San Diego, Calif.: Pfeiffer & Co., 1993. Guidelines for developing a clear organizational plan based on an organization's vision for its future. Check local library or bookstore for a copy.

■ *Roadmap to Restructuring: Policies, Practices and the Emerging Visions of Schooling* by David T. Conley. Eugene, Ore.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1994. Comprehensive synthesis of current

on the web

www.nsd.org/library/mission.html

Look in the NSDC Online Library for more resources on both mission and vision work. This library is updated regularly with new materials.

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thinking and practice in restructuring. Both scholarly and practical, it includes a lengthy chapter on visioning that includes description of and tips for various stages in the visioning process. To order, call (800) 438-8841, (541) 346-5044, fax (541) 346-2334, or web: <http://eric.uoregon.edu>. Price: \$23.95, paper; \$34.95, hardback, plus shipping and handling.

■ *The School Portfolio: A Comprehensive Framework For School Improvement*, by Victoria Bernhardt. Princeton, N.J.: Eye on Education, 1994. Guidebook for creating and using a school profile for sharing information about progress towards goals. Available through NSDC's Online Bookstore, www.nsd.org/bookstore.htm. Item # B90. Price: \$37, non-members; \$29.60, members.

■ "Translating school improvement into numbers," by Joan Richardson, *School Team Innovator*, February 1997. Describes a cycle for data-based decision making and can be used as a guide for implementing vision. Available in NSDC's Online Library, www.nsd.org/library. To order a back copy, calling the NSDC Main Business Office at (800) 727-7288.

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August/September 2000

FOCUS, FEEDBACK, FOLLOW- THROUGH

**Professional
development basics
guide district's plan**

BY LORI RENFRO
AND ADRIEL GRIESHABER



PHOTO BY LAURIE KING/DYSART UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Amy Martin, left, gives feedback to Sharon Densford at Kingswood Elementary School based on a classroom observation using the T4S Protocol.

Reading coach Amy Martin stepped into the classroom of 2nd-grade teacher Sharon Densford, who was asking students comprehension questions and reviewing the main idea of a reading passage. Putting pen to pad, Martin began collecting data on what Densford and the students were saying and doing, recording student engagement levels as the lesson progressed.

During a discussion afterward, Martin praised Densford for stating the lesson objective to her students

and consistently using academic language throughout the lesson. She then shared ideas for implementing higher-level questioning to help raise student engagement levels. Reminding Densford of the high reading levels of her students, Martin encouraged her to create questions that would engage the students in learning and encourage thinking beyond the comprehension

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level. At the end of the conversation, Densford reflected on how she could accomplish this and asked Martin to come into her classroom the next day to model this strategy. After the model lesson, Densford implemented the suggestions Martin had given her and immediately raised her student engagement levels. Densford reflected that it was a simple change to her instruction that made a significant impact on her students. She also noted that students loved the new engagement and questioning strategies that she implemented.

This example highlights what is

becoming common practice in the Dysart Unified School District in Surprise, Ariz.: supporting teachers through differentiated, job-embedded professional learning, using specific feedback as the vehicle to impact classroom instruction. This process has interrupted the status quo, sending ripples of excitement through what had been stagnant waters. No longer content to deliver large group, one-size-fits-all staff development, the district's recent emphasis on differentiated professional learning has pushed teachers to reconsider their mental model of professional development.

The effective professional learning implemented in the district is grounded in what educators here believe are three professional development basics: a focus on quality teaching; opportunities for specific feedback; and follow-through to ensure a high level of implementation. The payoff is increased student learning as an outcome of reducing the gap between what we know and what we do.

FACING THE FACTS

Dysart invested a significant amount of time delivering professional development focused on research-based instructional practices. Walk-throughs conducted by the educational services team, however, indicated that these strategies were not being implemented on a widespread basis in classrooms. In addition, survey data collected from administration of the NSDC Standards Assessment Inventory indicated a lack of alignment in many cases between school-level professional development practices and NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001). Dysart's professional development leadership team took up the challenge to develop a long-term professional development plan, using NSDC's standards as a guiding force. Following the guidance in NSDC's Learning standard to allow teachers

many opportunities to practice new skills and to receive feedback on their performance, the district implemented a professional learning model that emphasizes collaboration between teachers and coaches.

DEFINING QUALITY TEACHING

To effectively implement its differentiated professional learning model, the district relies on locally developed Innovation Configuration (IC) maps (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Roy & Hord, 2003; Roy & Hord, 2004). Dysart's IC maps, which are organized around four categories and four levels (see example on p. 30), "make very concrete what the expectations are for implementation of a new program or practice" (Richardson, 2004). Instructional coaches use this tool to assist teachers in reaching desired outcomes. For example, one instructional coach is helping a teacher move to the high-fidelity column in the areas of planning and teaching. The coach, using the IC map as a guide, supports the teacher in thinking through how her literacy stations could be better aligned to specific student needs, supporting the teacher's theory that differentiation is critical in moving students who are not making adequate gains in reading.

A second tool has made a big difference in the way our educational community talks about instruction. The Teach for Success protocol (T4S) (see description at right) helps us further define what we mean by quality teaching (WestEd, 2008b). Administrators, coaches, and teachers across the district come together to collaboratively discuss and examine the practice of teaching, with a universal understanding of what a concept (e.g. student engagement) means. Schools can focus on specific areas of instruction where the need is greatest. For example, Donna Eastin, a coach at Rancho Gabriela Elementary



- Professional development fosters collective responsibility for student success.
- Professional development includes job-embedded coaching and other forms of assistance.
- Teams engage in a continuous cycle of improvement that includes data analysis, goal setting, and identification of student and educator learning goals.

School, explains, "Our focus from the first year consisted of posted and communicated student-friendly objectives, mandatory student engagement throughout the learning, and differentiation strategies."

PROVIDING SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

So how do we meet the specific needs of each teacher? According to Speck (1996), opportunities must be built into professional development that "allow the learner to practice the learning and receive structured, helpful feedback." Therefore, instead of relying on unfocused, random acts of coaching, instructional coaches have consistent, specific coaching conversa-

THE T4S PROTOCOL

The T4S classroom observation protocol, which outlines six components of effective teaching, is a research-based tool that districts and schools can use to determine and plan for the professional development needs of their teachers.

tions with teachers, using the T4S protocol and a data collection process called scripting to collect the data that supports these conversations. (See “How can scripting improve teacher practice?” at right.)

Providing specific feedback “interrupts defensive reasoning,” allows people to “recognize and eliminate error,” and “helps people see the discrepancy between what they think they are doing and what they are actually doing” (WestEd, 2008a). The scripting process forms the foundation by allowing reflective dialogue to take place in an unbiased manner, highlighting cause-effect relationships that help weed out inconsistent or ineffective practices or reinforce and incorporate effective ones.

FOLLOW-THROUGH LEADS TO RESULTS

In spring 2008, between 79% and 90% of the district’s K-3 teachers were demonstrating at least level 2 behaviors in at least two categories of the reading IC map, exceeding our first benchmark by 19%. On Arizona’s state assessment, AIMS (Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards), the percent of 3rd-grade

HOW CAN SCRIPTING IMPROVE TEACHER PRACTICE?

Coaches record and collect data on what is happening in the lesson they are observing. They keep a detailed record, including actual words of the teacher and students, activities used in connection with the lesson, and the number of students on and off task. Based on these detailed notes, instructional coaches can support teachers in identifying effective and ineffective instructional strategies.

students meeting and exceeding Arizona state standards has increased 15 points in reading and 11 points in writing. Before program implementation, the percent of 3rd graders passing the reading portion of AIMS was below the state average. Now the district exceeds the state average. Dysart has also seen growth on the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), which assesses acquisition of early literacy skills. The DIBELS benchmark levels have increased between 4% and 11% in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

The district attributes these results in part to instituting accountability measures and building a system of follow-up support. Educational services teams visit classrooms regularly. Building-level teams conduct walk-throughs and data sweeps to determine the use of instructional strategies. Instructional coaches conduct classroom observations to follow through on classroom implementation of district- and school-level professional development (see “What is a data sweep?” at left). These data are used at all levels to monitor implementation and plan professional development. The district’s follow-through processes will assist educators

in moving from compliance to commitment, further reducing the knowing-doing gaps.

LESSONS LEARNED

Adults need feedback on “how they are doing and the results of their efforts” (Speck, 1996). For some teachers, however, the feedback process has been difficult to embrace. Deprivatizing practice brings down walls and exposes vulnerabilities, creating situations in which coaches have to contend with reluctant or resistant teachers. The training program for coaches cannot focus on content and instructional pedagogy. Skilled instructional coaches need to be able to “establish emotional connections with collaborating teachers” to develop a partnership approach, described by Jim Knight in *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction* (Knight, 2007).

The district has also learned that, while building relationships is critically important, it is very easy for coaches to slip too often into what Joellen Killion (2008) calls a light coaching mode in which coaches want to “build and maintain relationships more than they want to improve teaching and learning.” To change practice and impact student learning, coaches have to incorporate heavy coaching, which requires a coach to “ask thought-provoking questions, uncover assumptions, and engage teachers in dialogue about their beliefs and goals” (Killion, 2008). To ensure coaches are finding the right balance between light and heavy coaching, Dysart has put into place “coaching the coach” structures in which instructional coaches also receive specific feedback on coaching practices.

LOOKING AHEAD

In their article, “What might be: Open the door to a better future,” Rick and Becky DuFour (2007) write that “the greatest advances in profes-

WHAT IS A DATA SWEEP?

A data sweep is an organized procedure used to collect data and monitor instructional practices over time. School teams walk through classrooms, collecting data on specific areas of instruction.

For example, a school might monitor the attributes of student engagement with a data sweep. During this process, leadership teams walk through one or more grade levels and observe for a two- to three-minute period in each classroom. The team leader typically uses a form to check off whether or not the teacher is implementing particular practices or behaviors in the classroom. These data are then compiled by grade level and used by the school to determine future professional development needs.

Innovation Configuration map

K-8 READING INSTRUCTION/TEACHING LEARNING CYCLE

THE TEACHER ...	1 High fidelity	2	3	4 Nonuse
Assess	Consistently uses formative and summative assessments (e.g. weekly, unit, and diagnostic assessments from core program).	Incorporates formative and summative assessments (e.g. weekly, unit, and diagnostic assessments from core program) but is inconsistent in their use.	Seldom uses formative assessments; more emphasis on summative.	Does not use assessments from the core reading program.
Evaluate	Reflects on data from multiple sources and uses data to identify next teaching steps (e.g. analyzes assessment rubrics in order to determine student level of understanding and to identify student needs of differentiated instructional support).	Reflects on data from multiple sources and begins to use data to identify possible teaching points for differentiated instruction.	Reflects on data from limited sources, but does not evaluate data in terms of identifying next teaching steps.	Does not have assessment data or doesn't use data.
Plan	Shows in-depth knowledge of students and core reading program materials (e.g. teaches skills determined by core assessment results, plans for flexible, differentiated instruction using recommended core materials and considers and plans for different learning styles).	Shows some knowledge of students and core reading program materials (e.g. beginning to use assessment results to influence teaching, plans for flexible, differentiated instruction using some of the core reading materials, and plans for different learning styles)	Shows limited knowledge of students and core reading program materials (e.g. does not understand the connection between core program assessment data and instructional planning, shows very little student differentiation and minimal use of core resources).	Does not have knowledge of students or core reading program materials for instructional planning.
Teach	Consistently uses core program reading materials as intended and has in-depth knowledge of differentiated instruction (e.g. teaches targeted skills and strategies, differentiates instruction based on student skill needs, teaches higher-order thinking/questioning skills and elicits student engagement).	Randomly uses core program reading materials and has some knowledge of differentiated instruction (e.g. teaches some targeted skills and strategies, beginning to differentiate based on student needs, and some eliciting of student engagement).	Seldom uses core reading materials and limited knowledge of differentiated instruction (e.g. rarely teaches targeted skills and strategies, shows minimal use of differentiated instruction, and does not elicit student engagement).	Does not teach core program reading and does not have knowledge of differentiated instruction (e.g. teaches whole-group instruction with noncore program materials).

Source: Dysart Unified School District, Surprise, Ariz.

sional development will come not from identifying new strategies or processes, but rather from applying what we already know to be best practice.” As little as four years ago, the Dysart Unified School District was still delivering predominantly one-size-fits-all staff development, with limited alignment to the vision articulated by NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development. There was minimal accountability for teachers to implement newly learned strategies in the classroom. The district is now taking purposeful steps to differentiate professional learning for its teachers, following the advice that that “if schools are to increase the performance levels of all students, all educators must experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work” (Mizell, 2007). This commitment to differentiated professional learning via specific feedback is being communicated at all levels of the system. Dysart is beginning to see positive changes in classroom implementation and student learning. In the words of kindergarten teacher Miranda Linzey: “There have been so many moments of aha for me. I have become a better teacher tenfold because of the feedback!”

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Dysart Unified School District
 Surprise, Ariz.

Number of schools: 23
Grades: K-12
Enrollment: 23,438
Staff: 2,488
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	49.7%
Black:	9.8%
Hispanic:	36.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	3.2%
Native American:	1.1%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: 6.5%
Languages spoken: 35
Free/reduced lunch: 48.4%
Special education: 12.8%
Contact: Lori Renfro
 E-mail: lori.renfro@dysart.org

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Learning walk

Purpose: To extend school leadership team members' own learning of what they currently know about the content focus and what they can identify when observing in a classroom. Eventually, all teachers should be able to use the tool to engage in learning walks to extend their own learning about a specific program, such as components of a reading program.

Time: 10 to 15 minutes per classroom and 15 to 30 minutes for culminating group reflection.

Materials: A copy of the learning walk for each observer for each classroom to be observed, clipboard or hard surface, and a pencil and highlighter.

DIRECTIONS

1. Use the template to develop a learning walk form based on the content of what teachers are learning and implementing in their classrooms, such as specific instructional strategies being used (e.g. making connections, reciprocal teaching).
2. Limit the number of team members per classroom observation to three or four to avoid being too disruptive.
3. Review the components of a learning walk, and set specific norms for the visits (i.e. don't interrupt or disturb teaching and learning, don't assist struggling students).
4. Select two to three classrooms at the same grade level/subject area to visit, and arrange with the teachers for the day and time of the learning walk.
5. Complete as much of the form as possible before the classroom visit, such as the grade level, time, date, and day of the week.
6. During the observation, record what is on the walls, what the teacher and students are saying, materials they are using, what materials are available, tasks students are engaged in. Fill in the learning walk form based on the observation.
7. After completing all classroom visits, gather in a quiet space away from classrooms to reflect on observers' own learning, and answer the four questions on the second page of the form.
8. Analyze the data for trends. Use the results to further plan and monitor progress.

Learning walk

Grade level: _____ Time: _____ Date: _____

Unit: _____ Day: _____

Learning target: _____ Written - visible Verbalized

Target strategy: _____ Target skill: _____

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four	Day Five
<input type="checkbox"/> Share literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Share literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Share literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Share literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Share literature
<input type="checkbox"/> Phonemic awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Phonemic awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Phonemic awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> High-frequency words	<input type="checkbox"/> High-frequency words
<input type="checkbox"/> Whole phonics lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole phonics lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole phonics lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole phonics lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole phonics lesson
<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling lesson
<input type="checkbox"/> Group time	<input type="checkbox"/> Group time	<input type="checkbox"/> Build background	<input type="checkbox"/> Group time	<input type="checkbox"/> Group time
<input type="checkbox"/> Build background	<input type="checkbox"/> Build background	<input type="checkbox"/> Story vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> Fluency	
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening comprehension lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking and listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Group time		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Fluency		

Grouping arrangement for teaching: Whole group Small group Individual
Materials being used: Teacher edition Leveled readers Practice book

Assessments being used:
 Fresh reads for differentiated test practice Weekly selection tests
 Monitoring progress: Retelling Monitoring progress: Word reading
 Monitoring progress: Check fluency Monitoring progress: Sentence reading
 Monitoring progress: Fluency and comprehension

Source: Norwalk (IA) Community School District.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What did we learn about the overall implementation of the reading/language arts program (e.g. skill and strategy being taught; learning target(s); focus for the day – Day One, etc.; type of grouping; materials being used; assessments being given or results being used to guide instruction; target skill and strategy for the week)?

2. What were students learning?

3. How was the curriculum map being used?

4. What questions do we have about implementation of the reading/language arts program?

Source: Norwalk (IA) Community School District.

Wake-up call

BRINGS A JOLT OF ALIGNMENT TO THE CURRICULUM



Teacher leaders hear the warning and develop common assessments to improve student achievement

BY ROBERT A. MARTIN

Sometimes, bad news can be exactly what organizations or individuals need to point them in a healthier direction.

That was the case at Thompson Middle School (Southfield, Mich.) in 2002, when the staff learned that the state had temporarily identified the school as needing “corrective action” after students failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress. About this time, the state of Michigan also began grading each individual school through its Education YES! Program. Thompson received a low C, a grade too low for the staff’s comfort.

Staff embarked on a journey to align curriculum.

The double dose of bad news was a jolt to the school’s culture and climate and had some faculty complaining of stress-related headaches and stomach ailments. Although the state removed the corrective action label after the school appealed, the spotlight of that status brightly illuminated a need to focus on raising student achievement and undergirded the moral impera-

tive to impact, touch, and save the lives of students.

Staff embarked on a journey to align curriculum — an effort that, three years later, resulted in significant improvement in students’ achievement scores. The improvement process included designing and implementing common assessments and deepening teacher collaboration and professional conversation around interpreting data and allowing data to inform teachers’ practices.

A CLEAR PURPOSE

To successfully use common assessments, teachers must be clear about what the state, district, and school want students to learn. Ensuring that teachers were clear about what students should learn was essential: What’s the point, after all, of cooperating to measure something if you’re measuring the wrong thing?

Teachers at Thompson said:

- *“Common assessments took getting used to — but I found that I enjoy graphing data and understanding problems in learning. Sometimes they are simple, and sometimes it takes major adjustment.”*

Staff devoted most of the school’s professional development time over two years to creating the curriculum pathway.

- *“(Developing common assessments) forces you to work with staff members and ask, ‘What did you do well?’ This is hard*

for some teachers, but it brings out the best in the kids and adults.”

- *“(Common assessment) allows more organization of what we are teaching and shifts the focus to the areas we need to improve.”*

The first step in the school’s journey to develop common assessments was to ensure that the curriculum was aligned both within and across grade levels with the state’s curriculum standards. The school first had to ensure that what was taught was what was intended, or developing common

Thompson Middle School
Southfield, Mich.

Grades: 6-8
Enrollment: 630
Staff: 47 teachers

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	5%
Black:	89%
Hispanic:	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	0%
Native American:	2%
Other:	2%

Limited English proficient: 5%

Languages spoken: 2

Free/reduced lunch: 40%

Special education: 13%

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assessments would be a frustrating exercise and probably have little impact on improving student learning.

Each department began with the state benchmarks and standards and the district’s grade-level expectation. The Michigan Educational Assessment Program, the state’s high-stakes test, is aligned with the Michigan Curriculum Framework, so it was vital for staff to understand, interpret, and implement aligned curriculum in the classroom.

Staff devoted most of the school’s professional development time over two years to creating the curriculum pathway. Teachers had released time for professional learning, took part in after-school work sessions, and spent portions of district-mandated professional development time working on developing and aligning the curricu-

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lum. Thompson’s leadership team — department chairs, counselors, grade-level curriculum coordinators and administrators — led the faculty through this curriculum realignment.

Teachers first collaboratively agreed on essential outcomes (power standards) as the core knowledge that each student would master. These essential outcomes established a core curriculum that would ensure that every student would learn the same content, regardless of which teacher they were assigned.

Same-subject teams created and submitted common lesson plans. Teachers were not expected to teach in a mechanical or lockstep manner, but to creatively craft their lessons moving in the same direction and toward the same destination. One teacher said she grew “to appreciate the essential outcomes for the direction and clarity they provide in the midst of time demands, etc.”

Concurrently, teachers developed a pyramid of student support strategies — interventions and tutoring to provide just-in-time assistance so every student could move toward higher achievement.

Teachers next developed units of scope and sequence, along with common assessments. In the first year, teachers implemented two common or identical assessments. In the subsequent two years, staff administered quarterly assessments and began strategically analyzing the data and planning corrective actions.

Teams of same-subject teachers met to pinpoint areas where student learning lagged and developed a plan to address the shortcomings through corrective teaching strategies — immediate reteaching in the short term and future modifications and tweaking if a long-term or systemic solution was needed.

Teachers at Thompson said:

- *“Teaching your favorite way doesn’t always work so well. Sometimes you*

Student achievement at Thompson

Chart shows the increase in the percentage of students at Thompson Middle School scoring at the “meets” or “exceeds expectations” levels on the state’s Michigan Educational Assessment Program standardized test.

	Math	ELA	Science
2003	34%	42%	50%
2004	44%	49%	63%
2005	53%	65%	69%

have this wonderful lesson that you love, but they aren't learning. You have to change.”

• *“Common assessments allow teachers to focus on what is good for Thompson. We address local learning issues and then move to state and national.”*

• *“Teachers need to understand (common assessments) do not grade the teacher. It doesn't mean you have failed — it means you must change.”*

When Thompson had completed this process, staff were ready to begin developing common assessments. This step-by-step process was accomplished by devoting one week to each step during each quarter. That enabled teachers to complete two common assessment periods during each semester. The focus also shifted from class averages to individual student data analysis.

Step 1. Refine common lesson plans. Teachers design smaller and more frequent assessments looking at the student level and provide reteaching or interventions to meet students’ individual needs.

Step 2. Develop/refine rubrics. Discuss and share rubric with same-subject team for feedback. Each team is charged with developing its own rubric to guide teachers’ evaluation of student responses on the assessment.

English teachers, in particular, may want to use alternative forms of assessments, such as book reports, rather than just pencil-and-paper tests. That is fine as long as teachers create a common rubric to guide their evaluation.

Step 3. Share assignments in teaching in mastery. Practice concepts with students to be assessed. Agree on assessment and on the final draft of the rubric.

Step 4. Administer the assessment. Involve same-subject partner in external scoring by using the common rubric. This is a goal and not mandatory. Complete a data analysis for classes by calculating percentages of students who master and do not yet master the concept. Complete data analysis for individual students.

Step 5. Compare student work. Collaborate and agree on corrective teaching strategies. Implement corrective teaching strategies. Teach targeted interventions for individual students. Team members work together to identify the strategies teachers believe will be most effective in assisting students who do not master the concept.

To prepare for the second cycle of common assessments, teachers continue the pattern with some revisions.

Step 6. Revisit and refine lesson plans. Design assessments. Design and refine rubrics.

Step 7. Practice rubrics with a same-subject partner. Discuss and share the rubric with the interdisciplinary team for feedback.

Step 8. Share assignments in teaching to mastery. Practice concepts with those students to be assessed. Refine common assessment #2 in January and #4 in May.

Step 9. Administer the common assessment. Complete a data analysis for classes by calculating the percentage of students mastering and not mastering the concept. Complete a data analysis for individual students.

Step 10. Collaborate and agree on corrective teaching strategies. Implement corrective teaching strategies. Teach targeted interventions to individual students.

Each step represents one week in the 10-week marking period. Weeks six through 10 basically repeat steps one through five.

Throughout the process, teachers experienced anxiety, challenges, and victories. Teachers were stressed but found satisfaction in their new depths of collaboration and improved student achievement. In 2005,

Resources

These books are resources for schools beginning to implement common assessments:

- *From the Inside Out: Learning From the Positive Deviance in Your Organization*, by Joan Richardson. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2004.
- *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*, by Robert Eaker, Richard DuFour, and Rebecca DuFour. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 2002.
- *Power Standards: Identifying the Standards That Matter the Most*, by Larry Ainsworth. Englewood, CO: Advanced Learning Press, 2003.
- *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement*, by Michael J. Schmoker. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1999.
- *The Results Fieldbook: Practical Strategies From Dramatically Improved Schools*, by Michael J. Schmoker. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2001.

Thompson received a solid B on the state’s report card. Thompson’s achievement scores have improved and are a testimony to the results of teacher focus, collaboration, and collective wisdom. ■



BY JAY MCTIGHE AND MARCELLA EMBERGER

Teacher collaboration is a powerful form of professional learning. One focus for collaborative efforts is designing assessments. When teachers design assessments, give each other feedback through peer reviews, evaluate student work, and plan together for improvement, they are engaged in highly effective professional development.

Assessments have two common purposes. One purpose is evaluation. Many teachers think assessment is summative, something done at the end of instruction to evaluate what students have learned and to give them a grade.

A second purpose of assessment is closer to the teaching-learning process. Rick Stiggins (2002) distinguishes between the two purposes as assessment *of* learning (summative/evaluative) and assessment *for* learning (ongoing, formative, and informative). Assessments *for* learning are diagnostic rather than summative. They give both teachers and students feedback to help guide

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O R K



their actions — revising, reteaching, focusing practice.

Ongoing assessments are a vital part of the teaching-learning cycle. Without continuous assessment, student learning is limited to a one-shot, hit-or-miss event — maybe they get it, maybe they don't. Ongoing assessments give teachers feedback so they can adjust their instruction. Ongoing assessments help students focus their efforts. The most effective teachers use assessments for *learning* in addition to evaluation.

FORM AND FUNCTION

The format of assessments should match the goals being assessed and

the reason for assessing.

How does a teacher know that students *really* understand? The evidence is there when students can *apply* what they are learning to new situations and *explain* their responses (show their work, support their reasoning, justify their answers).

Performance assessments that use real situations that reflect the world beyond the classroom are called “authentic.” These tasks are typically open-ended to allow students more choices and to encourage a variety of responses, but they still are judged against established criteria.

Because classroom, school, and district assessments are less influenced

by the factors that constrain standardized tests (large-scale implementation, limited time, etc.), teachers can use performance assessments both for both diagnosis (feedback) and evaluation. Of course, teachers can and should also use other assessments such as selected-response quizzes and tests, observations, and portfolios of student work to provide a complete picture of a student's learning.

Once teachers have recognized the value of performance assessments, they face the challenge of finding or creating tasks and scoring rubrics.

Teachers use three strategies to collaborate to develop performance tasks and assessments:

1. Collaboratively design tasks and assessments based on desired learning results.
2. Have peers review tasks and assessments for feedback on designs.
3. Conduct a group evaluation of student work elicited by the tasks.

STRATEGY 1:

Collaborative design

Step 1: Form the group

Anyone can encourage a group to form to work collaboratively to design performance tasks and assessments, give feedback, and produce a portfolio

Teachers use three strategies to collaborate to develop performance tasks and assignments.

of usable performance assessments. The optimal group size is three to five people teaching the same grade level or subject area. They do not need to be from the same school or even the same district. Some teams that cross subject areas may collaborate to develop multidisciplinary performance tasks.

Step 2: Meet as a team

A facilitator helps participants address:

1. The goals or content standards being assessed.
2. The task students will perform to

Assessing understanding

A primary goal of teaching is to help students understand the important ideas and processes identified in content standards. Classroom, school, and district assessments should provide evidence of student understanding.

While it makes sense to familiarize students with the format of state standardized tests, fixating on the format is counterproductive in the long run. The best way to raise test scores over time is to:

1. Teach the key ideas and processes outlined in content standards in meaningful and engaging ways (this assumes the test is aligned with standards);
2. Use local performance-based assessments (more rigorous than one-shot, standardized tests) to find out whether students understand the content;
3. Raise the standards and quality of local assignments and assessments using the processes outlined here; and
4. Use the results of ongoing, authentic assessments and other evidence to plan improvements, rather than waiting for the once-a-year standardized test score report.

demonstrate their understanding and proficiency.

3. The criteria by which the student's performance will be judged.

Step 3: Decide which standards to measure

Each team, guided by the facilitator, decides which goals or content standards can appropriately be assessed. Not every goal requires a performance assessment. Performance assessments are needed when the goals are procedural (involve skills or processes, such as problem solving) or call for students to understand concepts and principles. For example, if the standard expects students to be able to identify state capitals or to know chemical symbols, multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank formats provide appropriate evidence of learning.

Step 4: Create a task

Teachers develop an authentic situation through which students will demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The team can brainstorm tasks using the G.R.A.S.P.S. framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998):

Goal: What is the purpose, challenge, or problem (to persuade, to

inform, to entertain, to sell)?

Role: What real-world role will the student assume (editorial writer, museum director, artist, business owner)?

Audience: For whom is the student working (newspaper reader, museum visitor, viewer, client/customer)?

Situation: What is the situation or context (a controversial community issue that must be resolved)?

Product/Performance: What will students make or do to accomplish the goal (a letter to the editor, display, mural, business proposal)?

Standards: How will the product or performance be judged as successful?

Step 5: Develop evaluative criteria

The team develops criteria that teachers and students will use to appraise students' work on the performance tasks. For most complex performance tasks, designers should use three types of criteria:

1. Criteria to assess the *degree of understanding or proficiency* (accuracy, thoroughness, thoughtfulness, efficiency).

2. Criteria to assess *work quality* (well-crafted, mechanically correct, skilled, neat, creative).

3. Criteria related to *impact or result* (Was the letter to the editor persuasive? Was the museum display informative? Did the scientific investigation actually test the hypothesis? Was the role play convincing?).

These criteria are the basis for developing a scoring rubric. The performance scale — for example, one to four — includes descriptions of the level of understanding, proficiency, work quality, and impact.

STRATEGY 2:
A peer review process

We rarely review and critique units and assessments teachers have designed. Structured peer reviews, guided by design standards, can help teachers improve designs.

Peer review teams can be homogeneous — based on content areas or grade levels — or heterogeneous. Both have advantages. In general, homogeneous groups provide more specific feedback about content-oriented criteria, such as whether a task matches content requirements (task validity) and is authentic (related to life outside the classroom).

Heterogeneous groups can provide information about whether the task is clear, potentially engaging to students, and easily implemented. Administrators and teachers who have not helped design the task are useful members of the review team.

Groups of three to five members work well.

For peer review to be successful, team members must have a high level of trust so they feel safe when giving and receiving feedback. Creating trust takes time and is built in part through practicing the skills of providing descriptive, non-evaluative feedback.

One method for building trust is practicing peer review sessions using

sample assessment tasks and rubrics. The skills of giving and receiving feedback need to be modeled and practiced before initiating the process with teachers' own designs.

Peer review is more successful when:

1. Feedback is specific, descriptive, and guided by the criteria in design standards. For example, instead of saying, "We liked your performance task," a group member might say, "The task is authentic because it asks students to apply their knowledge in a 'real world' way."

2. Feedback is not personalized. The reviewers provide feedback to help improve the task and rubric and do not praise or criticize the designers.

3. The designer listens to the feedback and asks clarifying questions. Designers should not try to explain or defend their work. After the peer review, designers can decide whether to incorporate the feedback.

4. Meetings stay on schedule. Participants must guard against tangential discussions or sidebar conversations.

Excerpted from *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, edited by Lois Brown Easton (Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2004). Available through the NSDC Online Bookstore, <http://store.nsd.org>.

STRATEGY 3:
Anchor evaluation in student work

When teachers use common performance assessment tasks and rubrics, they collect data in the form of student products and performances that can be used to determine how well students understand what they are learning. Focusing on student work increases teachers' ownership of student achievement since the work is a result of their own curriculum, assessment, and teaching.

Step 1: Reconvene teams

Reconvene the teams that designed the performance assessments and rubrics after teachers have had a

chance to use them in the classroom. Each teacher should bring five to eight randomly selected samples of student work resulting from the assessments, with enough copies of each sample for every team member. If the assessment required a performance, it should be ready to view on a videotape or listen to on an audiotape. The sample student work should not have a visible score.

anchors give teachers and students clear targets that help guide their work.

The teams examine the student work to be able to describe, rather than score or grade it, so that those who created the performance assessments and rubrics can make adjustments that are likely to improve the results.

Step 2: Describe the student work on the performance task

Working with one performance assessment and resulting student work — one sample at a time — each team describes what is in students' work. A recorder makes notes on chart paper so the group can use comments later. The group asks itself to:

Describe:

- What knowledge and skills are assessed?
- What kinds of thinking are required (recall, interpretation, evaluation)?
- Are these the results I (we) expected? Why or why not?
- In what areas did the student(s) perform best?
- What weaknesses are evident?
- What misconceptions are revealed?
- Are there any surprises?
- What anomalies exist?
- Is there evidence of improvement or decline? If so, what caused the changes?

Evaluate:

- By what criteria am I (are we) evaluating student work?
- Are these the most important criteria?

Facilitator's checklist

To help ensure the design process is successful, the facilitator should:

1. Use computers when designing tasks and rubrics to make editing and distributing them easier. Meet in or near a media center or computer lab with Internet access.
2. Provide teachers with relevant resources to support their design work. For example, have content standards documents and curriculum frameworks on hand, and provide sample tasks and rubrics to serve as models.
3. Help teachers use Internet resources related to assessment. Teachers are masters at adapting ideas and can build on others' ideas rather than starting with a blank slate.
4. Schedule multiple opportunities for the group to meet for informal sharing and feedback sessions throughout the design process. A formal peer review session toward the end of a design workshop should not be the only opportunity for feedback. A gallery walk offers a practical and energizing way to share and get feedback during any part of the process. For a gallery walk, design teams post their draft performance tasks and rubrics on a wall and participants view the works in progress, offering feedback and suggestions anonymously with sticky notes posted to the charts.

- How good is "good enough" (what is the performance standard)?
- **Interpret:**
- What does this work reveal about student learning and performance?
- What patterns are evident?
- What questions does this work raise?
- Is this work consistent with other achievement data?
- Are there different explanations for these results?

Identify improvement actions:

- What teacher action(s) are needed to improve learning and performance?
- What student action(s) are needed to improve learning and performance?
- What parent action(s) will support improved learning and performance?

After about 15 minutes of describing, evaluating, and interpreting the work, the group is ready to anchor the work to the scoring levels on the rubric.

Step 3: Anchor the work

The next step for the reconvened teams is anchoring. Anchoring means selecting examples of student work to represent each of the score points on an evaluation scale. These examples illustrate the quality or proficiency expected at each level based on established criteria. Anchors help teachers understand and apply the criteria and standards consistently when they evaluate student products or performances. Anchors give teachers and students clear targets that help guide their work and help students understand and apply the criteria when they are evaluating themselves or doing peer evaluations.

There are two models for anchoring the scoring system for performance assessments.

Model 1 uses established scoring criteria on the rubric, and each team evaluates student responses, products, or performances according to the pre-set criteria. Next, the group sorts student work by score. The group then selects responses, products, or performances for each score point that

Design standards

Design standards define the qualities of effective curriculum and assessment. Design standards are a reference point during design to be sure the assessment meets the standards, to help teachers review and refine drafts, and which can be used by independent reviewers (such as a curriculum committee) before assessments are distributed to other teachers.

The Maryland Assessment Consortium developed these design standards:

To what extent does the performance assessment task:

1. Assess student performance on the identified content standard(s) and benchmarks?
2. Establish a meaningful context based on issues, problems, themes, or student interests?
3. Require the student to apply thinking skills or processes rather than merely recall factual information?
4. Establish criteria linked to the standards/benchmarks for evaluating student products and performances?
5. Contain activities likely to engage students?
6. Provide clear, unambiguous directions to students?
7. Contain accurate and credible information?
8. Use interrelated activities to achieve its purpose?
9. Allow for easy use in the classroom?
10. Provide feedback to teachers and students about identified goals or content standards?
11. Integrate subject areas?
12. Provide opportunities for students to reflect on and self-evaluate their performance?
13. Allow students to revise?
14. Allow for a choice of products or performances?
15. Use technology appropriately?

illustrate the criteria for that score. With only five to eight samples, the group may not find an example for each score. Use Model 1 when a performance task and the scoring rubric(s) have been validated through field testing, reviews, and revision.

Model 2 uses student responses, products, or performances to identify or refine the scoring criteria. The group sorts student responses into three (high, medium, low) or four (excellent, good, fair, poor) levels

based on general quality. The group reviews each set and determines the distinguishing characteristics of the responses. They then develop criteria for each level and select several responses to illustrate those criteria. Use Model 2 when a task has been used for the first time and no rubric exists or the rubric is a draft.

The reconvened teams evaluate the student responses, products, or performances. The team member submitting the performance assessment

and rubric for anchoring does not share the scores the samples received.

At the same time, teams should examine the performance assessment task itself, particularly the directions given to students, to see if the directions lead students to produce the desired outcome. Task directions that are vague or misleading may cause students to prepare a response that fits neither the intention of the task nor the criteria on the rubric.

Tips for successful anchoring

1. Use anchoring to refine performance standards or create them if a rubric has not been designed. When

educators choose examples of student work that illustrate the various levels in a rubric, they can easily answer the question, “How

good is good enough?” Anchors also help scorers judge work more consistently and help students assess their own work more accurately. With tangible illustrations of what quality work looks like, teachers and students can understand the specific qualities

of effective work and get beyond general statements, such as “well-organized” or “persuasive.”

2. Select several examples for each level. A single example suggests that there is just one best answer or pathway rather than several approaches to an authentic task (diverse excellence). Using several anchors provides a richer set of examples to guide teachers and students.

3. Collect and publish the anchor examples at the grade, school, or district level to promote more consistent evaluations and to help teachers explain scores and grades to parents and students. Many teachers report that grading quibbles virtually disappear when clear rubrics and anchors are available.

CONCLUSION

Collaborative designs and peer reviews honor and enhance teachers’ professionalism, expertise, and collegial learning. Working in teams to evaluate student work against established criteria, identify models of excellence (anchoring), and plan

needed improvements promotes a results-oriented culture of quality.

By designing performance assessments, educators enhance their understanding of content standards and of the evidence needed to show that students really understand the important ideas and processes contained in those standards. Teachers discover that the connection between curriculum and assessment becomes clearer, teaching is more sharply focused, and evaluation is more consistent.

Ultimately, students benefit by having defined learning goals, opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in more authentic ways, and advance knowledge of the evaluation criteria so they have greater purpose in their learning.

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Ultimately, students benefit when educators work together on assessments.