

# Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond

**A TOOL KIT FOR NEW JERSEY EDUCATORS**



New Jersey Department of Education  
Office of Academic and Professional Standards  
New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board

In cooperation with the National Staff Development Council

Joellen P. Killian

Director of Special Projects

Author

# Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond:

## A TOOL KIT FOR NEW JERSEY EDUCATORS

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**Articles within the tool kit provide a wide range of strategies that have been used successfully across the nation. In some instances, the strategy may conflict with district or state policy. Please note these strategies are merely tools to spark discussion.**

# TOOLS BY CHAPTER

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<b>Tool 6.6</b>	Becoming a productive team.	<b>Tool 11.7</b>	How to launch a community.
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<b>Tool 7.4</b>	Time enough for teaching and learning.	<b>Tool 12.3</b>	Break the inservice habit.
<b>Tool 7.5</b>	Making time for adult learning.	<b>Tool 12.4*</b>	School professional development plan synthesis.
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<b>Tool 8.3*</b>	Data analysis protocol (informal).	<b>Tool 13.5*</b>	Logic model template.
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<b>Tool 8.7*</b>	Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet.	<b>Tool 13.9</b>	Professional learning communities II: A focus on common assessments.

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Audit of the culture starts with two handy tools.	<b>Tool 5.2</b>	Principals' strategies for increasing staff capacities for continuous learning.	<b>Tool 11.4</b>
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Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning.	<b>Tool 7.6</b>	School culture survey.	<b>Tool 5.1</b>
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Fears and hopes.	<b>Tool 3.4</b>	Team agenda template.	<b>Tool 10.4</b>
Fishbone diagram.	<b>Tool 8.6</b>	Team agreement template	<b>Tool 6.5</b>
Forming a recommendation.	<b>Tool 7.7</b>	Team learning scenario task.	<b>Tool 3.1</b>
Frequently asked questions about professional development.	<b>Tool 5.6</b>	Team meeting assessment.	<b>Tool 13.2</b>
Getting everyone to buy in.	<b>Tool 11.8</b>	Team planning template.	<b>Tool 10.2</b>
Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together.	<b>Tool 9.4</b>	Team summary report template.	<b>Tool 10.5</b>
How to launch a community.	<b>Tool 11.7</b>	Teamwork on assessments creates powerful professional development.	<b>Tool 9.3</b>
Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet.	<b>Tool 8.7</b>	The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop.	<b>Tool 1.2</b>
If not a workshop, then what?	<b>Tool 12.2</b>	Think outside the clock.	<b>Tool 7.3</b>
In the right context	<b>Tool 11.5</b>	Time enough for teaching and learning.	<b>Tool 7.4</b>
Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams.	<b>Tool 11.3</b>	Time use flows from school culture.	<b>Tool 7.1</b>
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Making time for adult learning.	<b>Tool 7.5</b>	Which stage is your team in? A survey.	<b>Tool 6.4</b>
New Jersey Professional Development Standards for Teachers.	<b>Tool 2.3</b>		
New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers.	<b>Tool 2.1</b>		

*“True learning communities are characterized by disciplined, professional collaboration and ongoing assessment. This is the surest most promising route to better school performance, and the reasons are compelling. 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 a radically different way . . . 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

Professor, Graduate School of Education

University of California, Berkley

(Little, as cited in Schmoker), pp. 141-142.

#### **Reference**

**Schmoker, M. (2005).** No turning back. In R. DuFour, R. Eaker, & R. DuFour (Eds.), *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities* (pp. 141-142). Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

# OVERVIEW

"My colleagues and I were excited. We realized that we had the power to affect change by working collaboratively. I was taking ideas directly from our book club sessions and immediately applying the strategies in my classroom. Book club members were impressed with each other's abilities and we realized we could learn more from each other than we could from any one-day workshop. The sharing of craft knowledge fostered an excitement for professional learning. Other teachers from the district, as well as other school communities visited our classrooms, extending our learning community outside our own school's walls."

– Beth Warren, former teacher,  
in *A Community of Learners: One School's Journey – Two Viewpoints* in Chapter 4

**I**n the last five years, New Jersey teachers have committed to a significant amount of professional growth and development. As required by regulation, all teachers participate in 100 hours of professional development every five years to refine their knowledge, skills, and behaviors as professionals. Together with New Jersey's Professional Development Standards for Teachers, this new requirement and teachers' overwhelming response to it have heightened the focus on professional development and required districts to improve and expand learning experiences available for teachers. Working through Local Professional Development Committees (LPDC), teachers have raised their expectations and are demanding high-quality professional development.

The Commissioner's Task Force on Quality Teaching and Learning recommends teacher professional development that is engaging, relevant to the work they do, more specific to their practice, and occurs closer to the classroom and within the school day. The concept of school-based professional development recognizes that the school is the primary center of learning and that teachers can often learn best with and from one another. This does not exclude opportunities for learning across schools, within a district, region, or state, or in national conferences or programs. It does recognize that a part of each teacher's professional responsibility is continuous improvement and active membership in a learning organization. Further, it recognizes that teachers within schools have enormous knowledge and skill that often remains untapped while districts seek outside experts to solve complex problems within their schools.

Collaborative professional learning addresses some

of these unfortunate contradictions. Collaborative learning engages teachers in learning — at their school, with their colleagues, and about their content and students. It seeks to redesign work that teachers do in isolation into opportunities for them to learn from one another. It strives to build a community of adult learners within a school and transform the culture of a school from one of isolation and competition to one of collaboration and interdependence. Thus, if a teacher successfully develops her students' understanding of fractions, she can then be a resource to other teachers who want to expand their capability to teach fractions in the same way. Collaborative learning is everything teachers want in high-quality professional development — teacher-directed, engaging, relevant, work-related, and meaningful.

To have the greatest impact on a school's culture and student learning, all adults in a school, not some, participate in collaborative professional learning teams. All teaching staff and administrators learn and work together to improve their practice and student learning. Unfortunately, in some schools where collaborative professional learning occurs, only some staff participate. However, when all teaching staff, including content-area teachers, nurses, librarians, counselors, technology teachers, and other teaching staff contribute their expertise to solve complex problems related to student learning jointly, results for students increase.

*Collaborative Professional Learning in School and Beyond* is designed to assist all teaching staff members, principals, supervisors, school leadership teams, central office staff, Local Professional Development Committee members, and professional development providers. It will help them transform professional learning from occasional events that occur outside the school or outside the regular work of teachers into an integral part of what teachers do each day in coordination with their colleagues. Sections of the tool kit address the major decision areas a school and district will encounter as they consider the benefits of shifting the center of learning for adults closer to their work.

The tool kit provides chapters that are specifically devoted to understanding the concept of collaborative professional learning, as well as the critical implementation issues to establish professional learning teams. Each chapter provides an overview of a key issue and practical tools for implementation. Three types of tools are included:

1. Articles to build foundation knowledge and provide opportunities for deeper conversation;

2. Process maps to make implementation decisions;
3. Tools for team work.

The accompanying CD-ROM contains all of the tools in PDF format, and some tools in both PDF and Word formats. The tool kit is a versatile resource that includes multiple tools from which users can choose. School and district personnel who are new to the concept of school-based or collaborative professional development, as well as those more experienced with this form of professional learning will find helpful resources in the tool kit to develop and extend their understanding and practice in professional development.

### **New frontier for professional development in New Jersey**

Recommendations contained in the Commissioner's Task Force on Quality Teaching and Learning are creating a new frontier for professional learning in New Jersey.

New Jersey is among the first of the states to recognize the potential of collaborative professional development that:

- Occurs primarily at school;
- Is more closely linked to New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS);
- Occurs over time;
- Offers ongoing school- and classroom-based support for application of learning;
- Involves educators in collaborative learning;
- Links to a teacher's teaching assignment;
- Links to a school's and district's identified improvement targets;
- Engages teachers in collaborative learning with and from each other;
- Recognizes some of the routine work teachers do as powerful opportunities for professional learning;
- Deepens teachers' content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy;
- Is intensive and rigorous;
- Builds cultural competence; and
- Recognizes models throughout the state (*Quality Teaching in New Jersey: A Report*, 2005).

### **Reference**

**Commissioner's Task Force on Quality Teaching and Learning. (2005).** *Quality Teaching in New Jersey: A Report*. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education.

**This tool kit is designed to assist the following audiences:**

<p><b>Teaching staff</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take an active role in learning with and from one another at school and about issues related to their content areas, their students, their instruction, and area of responsibility.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teacher leaders</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the development of the structure, support system, and culture for collaborative professional learning linked directly to teaching and student learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principals</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work actively with teachers and teacher leaders to provide the structure, support, and culture for collaborative professional learning linked directly to teaching and student learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supervisors</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate collaborative professional learning teams;</li> <li>• Ensure that teams have adequate resources and strategies to improve teaching and student learning; and</li> <li>• Work actively with teachers and teacher leaders to provide the structure, support, and culture for collaborative professional learning linked directly to teaching and student learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>District administrative staff</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support schools in creating collaborative professional learning opportunities that align with school and district goals;</li> <li>• Ensure that school staff have access to resources for collaborative professional learning;</li> <li>• Provide expertise and resources about content areas, instruction, assessment, data, and professional development; and</li> <li>• Oversee the development of a Local Professional Development Plan that reflects the needs of individual schools and teaching staff and supports collaborative professional learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Professional Development Committees</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Local Professional Development Plan that reflects the needs of individual schools and teaching staff and supports collaborative professional learning;</li> <li>• Use professional development plans from local schools to drive the design of district support;</li> <li>• Serve as local experts about state and district policy and provide research about professional learning; and</li> <li>• Ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality collaborative professional learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional development providers</b> so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model collaborative professional learning;</li> <li>• Integrate collaborative professional learning strategies into all their work;</li> <li>• Support schools in developing collaborative professional learning teams;</li> <li>• Focus on the needs of individual schools; and</li> <li>• Provide school-based support and follow-up to enhance transfer of learning and results for students.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 1

# A NEW KIND OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### TOOL

**Tool 1.1** Assessment of current reality of professional development. *3 pages*

**Tool 1.2** The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop. *2 pages*

Where are we?

**Most teacher professional development occurs outside the school day.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Most teacher professional development occurs outside the school.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Most teacher professional development is designed by teachers for teachers.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**T**oday's professional development requires a shift from its more traditional form of adult pull-out programs or after-school and summer learning to a form that brings learning into the forefront of what teachers experience each day in school. If teacher learning continues to be separate from the work teachers do each day, most will continue to view it as irrelevant, dissatisfying, and disconnected from what they do in their classrooms. Moving professional development to the school means teachers can lead their own learning and use external learning opportunities to expand and extend their learning.

Schools that have made dramatic improvement in student learning have done so as a result of teachers learning together, focusing on core curriculum standards, and using common assessment data to measure student progress toward standards. Teachers work with one another and assess their own learning based on their students' classroom performance on teacher-designed, standards-referenced assessments. Teachers value opportunities to focus collaboratively on their "real" work, teaching and learning. When teachers' learning aligns strongly with the results they want for their students, they are far more likely to find the learning experience worthwhile. And, such learning for teachers produces stronger learning for students.

#### TRANSFORMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FROM ACTIVITY-DRIVEN	TO RESULTS-DRIVEN
Consensus of opinions	<b>Research-based standards</b>
Pull-out	<b>Daily job-embedded structures</b>
Provider-driven	<b>Teacher-driven</b>
Individual learning	<b>Team learning</b>
Generic pedagogy	<b>Content-specific pedagogy</b>
Focus on adult work	<b>Focus on student work</b>
Process orientation	<b>Results orientation</b>
Professional development	<b>Professional learning</b>

Adapted from Roberts, S. & Pruitt, E. (2003). *Schools as professional learning communities: Collaborative activities and strategies for professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

This shift in professional learning can be characterized in the way shown in the box above.

#### **Activity-driven to results-driven**

When professional development is planned in isolation of data about student performance, it is merely an activity to meet requirements for professional development hours rather than a strategy to improve student learning. Teachers often dread professional development sessions, and or teacher absenteeism often is higher on old-style inservice days. Why? Because teachers perceive little or no value in the professional development delivered to them. They often have little involvement in the planning, design, or delivery of their learning experi-

ences. The process becomes an exercise in futility rather than a strategy to improve student learning.

### **Consensus of opinions vs. research-based strategies**

What is a research-based strategy? In many cases, what is called research is really the opinion of an expert in the field. When the phrase “research-based” is used in education, it most often means the opinion of an expert who brings considerable knowledge and experience rather than the result of a clinical trial or comparison study. In the field of professional development, the number of “gold standard,” or randomized clinical trial studies, are limited. Professional development has historically relied on qualitative studies for its information base. While the research field views qualitative studies as valid, some educators dispute the validity and reliability of these studies.

To make decisions about professional development, it is preferable to use evidence of success from a rigorous study rather than from the opinion of one or two people and from multiple examples of success under different conditions.

The National Staff Development Council summarized professional development programs that have evidence of impacting student success in the three *What Works* books — *What Works in the Elementary School*; *What Works in the Middle*; and *What Works in the High School* (Killion, 2002).

By studying the successful programs identified in the core content areas, professional development leaders can determine which practices contribute to improved teacher and student learning.

### **Pull-out vs. daily job-embedded structures**

The current practice of professional development continues to isolate learning for teachers from the work they do each day. Slowly, however, changes are occurring. Some schools are making significant progress in improving how learning happens for teachers. Rather than being focused on the occasional inservice day — a day when students are released from school so teachers can participate in occasional training programs — professional development is integrated into each day as teachers collaborate to plan, teach, assess, and analyze data about student performance.

### **Provider-driven vs. teacher-driven**

As new evidence emerging from research on brain-

based learning confirms, learning is an active, social process of constructing understanding and meaning. Provider-driven professional development often fits the “sit and get” mode; you come and sit in the school library or the district training center and you get the wisdom imparted to you by knowledgeable, experienced providers who live and work outside of your district or school.

In teacher-driven learning, teachers determine what they need to know based on what they know about their students’ learning. They formulate their own learning experiences and call upon experts to provide information when they want it. Teachers in teacher-driven learning environments set common goals for learning, engage with one another to discover the answers to their questions, explore student work to learn how students are learning, and read and share their expertise to benefit one another. They also are committed to ongoing learning and development because it is meaningful, relevant, and results-oriented.

### **Individual learning vs. team learning**

While individual learning has the benefit of improving a teacher’s practice, team learning impacts multiple classrooms rather than a single classroom. Teachers learning in a team build a support system for implementation and are motivated to implement what they are learning and to work through problems associated with implementation. Teams of learners have the capacity to spread learning more broadly and in a more systemic way.

Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert (1993) found that schools where strong teacher communities exist are able to produce results for teachers and students. Others found similar results in research and practice. When schools want to reform enabling teams, rather than individuals, to focus collectively on improvement just makes more sense.

### **Generic pedagogy vs. content-specific pedagogy**

Teaching is both a science and a craft and teaching mathematics is not the same as teaching reading. Yet for many years, professional development was not content-oriented and offered whole-faculty training in generic instructional processes. Today, it is clearer how the disciplines differ in structure, why teaching matters, and how content-specific pedagogy aligned to the core curriculum content standards enhances student learning. While contemporary research offers excellent understanding of

instructional pedagogy (for example, Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2002), unless teachers learn how to select instructional strategies based on content standards, instruction is still likely to be less effective.

When teachers have deep understanding about pedagogy and curriculum, their actions are more likely to lead to results more quickly. Content-specific pedagogy, rather than generic pedagogy, allows teachers to streamline instruction with a more laser-like focus. This, in turn, produces more time for additional content learning and/or advanced proficiency.

#### **Focus on adult work vs. focus on student work**

To shift a school's focus on teaching to a focus on learning is both essential and challenging. Schools in which teachers begin to think more about student learning and less about teaching are schools in which more students learn. Most professional development focuses on what teachers know and do and lacks emphasis on the next step — what students learn. Dennis Sparks, in thinking about how deep change happens in schools, talks about the importance of the final two percent. “The final two percent is that cluster of experiences that literally change the brains of teachers and administrators,” asserts Sparks. “Educators have these experiences when they read, write, observe, use various thinking strategies, listen, speak, and practice new behaviors in ways that deepen understanding, affect beliefs, produce new habits of mind and behavior, and are combined in ways that alter practice. Such professional learning produces complex, intelligent behavior in all teachers and leaders and continuously enhances their professional judgment” (Sparks, 2005, p. 159).

Starting by emphasizing the work students produce gives adults in schools information for making better decisions about their actions. Examining student work to develop a clearer understanding of what contributes to student success or failure will help teachers choose appropriate instructional strategies and resources to foster learning by all students.

#### **Process orientation vs. results orientation**

Focusing on results, rather than processes alone, ensures that the processes selected for professional learning are not only enjoyable, but also productive. For years, evaluators of professional development have collected end-of-event participant reaction to learning experiences to document the success of professional development. Yet, evidence about how well professional

development is designed or received will not reveal how it impacts student learning.

Another common practice in professional development is to focus excessively on the delivery of professional development and inadequately on its content and follow-up. A good deal of professional development insufficiently develops deep content and rarely emphasizes what teachers will see as students begin to benefit from implementation of the practices.

Mistakes commonly occur when delivery of a service or teachers' acquisition of knowledge and skills are the goals of professional development. For example, if the goal of professional development is to help teachers learn new strategies for teaching reading, student learning is left to chance. On the other hand, if the goal of professional development is to improve students' performance in reading, helping teachers acquire new strategies becomes a step on the pathway to this goal.

#### **Professional development vs. professional learning**

The term professional development conjures an image of teachers sitting around tables in a classroom, school library, cafeteria, conference room, or conference center meeting room. At the front of the room is a speaker, a noted expert in his or her subject area. The speaker talks to teachers, often telling them how to do their work. Typically, teachers listen respectfully, consider what the speaker recommends, and — silently or aloud — wonder if what the speaker suggests will work in their classrooms.

This form of professional learning assumes educators are passive recipients of knowledge and that some information and perhaps skills will be sufficient to transform their classroom practice. However, for more than 20 years, the research studies of Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1988) have reminded us of the importance of follow-up that includes study groups, coaching, or problem solving as essential elements in transforming new learning to classroom practice.

Professional learning, on the other hand, emphasizes learning rather than delivery. Just as the emphasis on student work supersedes the emphasis on adult work, professional learning focuses on the learning of professionals rather than on didactic development of educators. The former emphasizes the cognitive process associated with transformation of knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors, while the latter connotes the actions associated with the development process.

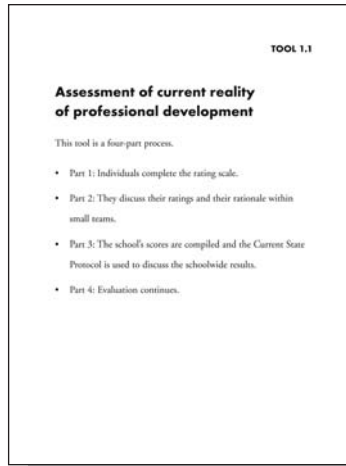
Tool 1.1 provides a guide to engage staff members in analyzing the current state of professional learning in their school. This four-part tool includes a brief survey, recommendations for using the survey results, a discussion protocol to analyze the survey's results, and recommendation to repeat.

This new kind of professional development means changing the school's culture and many of its current professional development practices. Change is challenging, yet the results of this change will increase teachers' sense of satisfaction, professionalism, and professional judgment. Teachers' expertise will be acknowledged, tapped, and used to improve teaching and student learning. Schools will be places where teachers and students want to come each day to learn and perform at high levels. Teachers will feel supported, encouraged to use their professional judgment, and given latitude to take risks for the benefit of their students. The culture in schools will be transformed.

This new kind of professional development also works best in a culture that supports collaboration, professionalism, and experimentation. However, not all schools currently have such a culture. Fortunately, there is a recursive relationship between collaborative professional learning and the culture of a learning organization. Working on one improves the other. It doesn't matter whether teachers and principals decide to take action to improve the school's professional culture or whether they decide to implement collaborative professional learning teams. Doing one simultaneously leads to the other. Improving the school's culture is a proven result of implementing collaborative learning teams. Improving the school's culture leads to teacher collaboration and deprivatization of practice. Working on both only accelerates the results. Chapters 5, 9, 11, and 12 offer ideas for creating a supportive culture for collaboration.

Tool 1.2 describes the value of teachers working in communities. It offers a brief and easy-to-read overview of the rationale for this new kind of professional learning.

Even though the benefits of this approach to professional development comes with many benefits, there will be problems along the way. Change requires



Tool 1.1



Tool 1.2

patience, persistence, and planning. Michael Fullan, perhaps one of the greatest authorities on school change, encourages leaders to approach change in three stages — initiation, implementation, and institutionalization.

- **Initiation** includes clarifying expectations, informing key stakeholders, defining parameters, introducing the rationale and expected results, and identifying the plan for implementation.

- **Implementation** includes developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors of those involved with the change, supporting early implementation, providing ongoing support for refinement, responding to resistance in a productive manner, and supporting integration of the new behaviors into routine practices.

- **Institutionalization** involves continuous evaluation and improvement.

Change takes time. Fullan reminds us that there will be ups and downs along the way. To keep moving ahead, it is important to celebrate success, log lessons learned, admit mistakes, never give up, listen thoughtfully to criticisms, work collaboratively rather than alone, measure progress toward the end, raise concerns in a public forum and in a constructive way, and keep the goal in sight at all times. It is also helpful to remember that there will be resistance; no change is exempt from it.

What makes a difference, though, is how resistance is handled. Usually resisters have legitimate concerns that merit a hearing and problem solving. It is also helpful to remember that not all people approach change in the same way. Some will do so with great

enthusiasm while others will be slower to act. A useful rule of thumb is to apply the what's-in-it-for-me principle to keep focused on the individual needs and differences among adults as learners. With these actions, educators can achieve their goals.

Despite the challenges, the rewards are great, as former New Jersey teacher Beth Warren reports.

“The staff had been on one big roller coaster ride. After several principals, each with a different style and philosophy, the staff was scattered in their thinking and practice. Although we were a group of talented professionals, we were all working in different directions. There was an overall feeling of negativity and a lack of common goals . . .

“Although I was receptive to the development of new committees, I was skeptical that they would make a significant impact. Throughout the years, I had served on numerous groups charged by the leader with the responsibility for some school change. Rarely did the leader take part in the actual committee work. I was impressed with the new principal's full participation in committee discussions. This led to decisions that actually had an impact on the daily life of the school. For example, her participation in our character education initiative allowed her to effectively reinforce those lessons when dealing with discipline in the office. What a novel idea! Everyone was on the same page! I was eager to participate because I knew my ideas were valued. As trust built, more teachers took responsibility for their group's work by voicing concerns and sharing ideas. I could see everyone finally taking ownership for our school's improvement.”

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**TOOL 1.1****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
<b>Activity-driven</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Results-driven</b>	
<b>Consensus of opinions</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Research-based standards</b>	
<b>Pull-out</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Daily job-embedded structures</b>	
<b>Provider-driven</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Teacher-driven</b>	
<b>Individual learning</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Team learning</b>	
<b>Generic pedagogy</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Content-based pedagogy</b>	
<b>Focus on adult work</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Focus on student work</b>	
<b>Process orientation</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Results orientation</b>	
<b>Professional development</b>	1	2	3	4	5	<b>Professional learning</b>	

**PART 2**

Choose Column A or B.

**OPTION A**

- 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.

**OPTION B**

- 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.

**PART 3**

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.

**ANALYZE CURRENT REALITY PROTOCOL**

- 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?

**PART 4**

**Repeat assessment in three months.**

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

**Repeat assessment in six months.**

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

**Repeat assessment in one year.**

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

**Repeat assessment in two years.**

- 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.nsdcc.org/library/authors/dufour.cfm](http://www.nsdcc.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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## Chapter 2

ALIGNING THE STANDARDS:

# MAKING THE CASE

### TOOLS

**Tool 2.1** New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. 1 page

**Tool 2.2** New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders. 2 pages

**Tool 2.3** New Jersey Professional Development Standards for Teachers. 4 pages

Where are we?

**Our whole staff is implementing the core curriculum content standards.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Our whole staff uses the professional standards for teachers and core curriculum content standards to design their professional growth plans.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Professional development in our school meets New Jersey's standards for professional development.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**C**ollaborative Professional Learning in School and Beyond is designed to facilitate the implementation of New Jersey legislation and policy regarding teacher professional development, school leadership, and student learning. School, district, regional, or state agency personnel may find the tool kit helpful to design collaborative professional learning that meets state standards for professional development and aligns with teacher, school leader, and content standards. By aligning standards for students, teachers, school leaders, and professional development, New Jersey policy makers have established a coherent system to support student learning.

The integration of standards for student learning, standards for teachers and school leaders, and standards for professional development forms the support necessary to ensure academic success for all students throughout the state. Figure 2.1 depicts the connection among the three sets of standards.

#### **New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards**

New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards identify the essential knowledge and skills expected and guaranteed for students in New Jersey’s public schools. These content standards provide both a unifying direction for educators and benchmarks for student success in nine curricular areas (Visual and Performing Arts; Comprehensive Health and Physical Education; Language Arts Literacy; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; World Languages; Technological Literacy; and

Career and Consumer, Family, and Life Skills) The standards are available in their entirety at [www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs).

#### **Standards for teachers and school leaders**

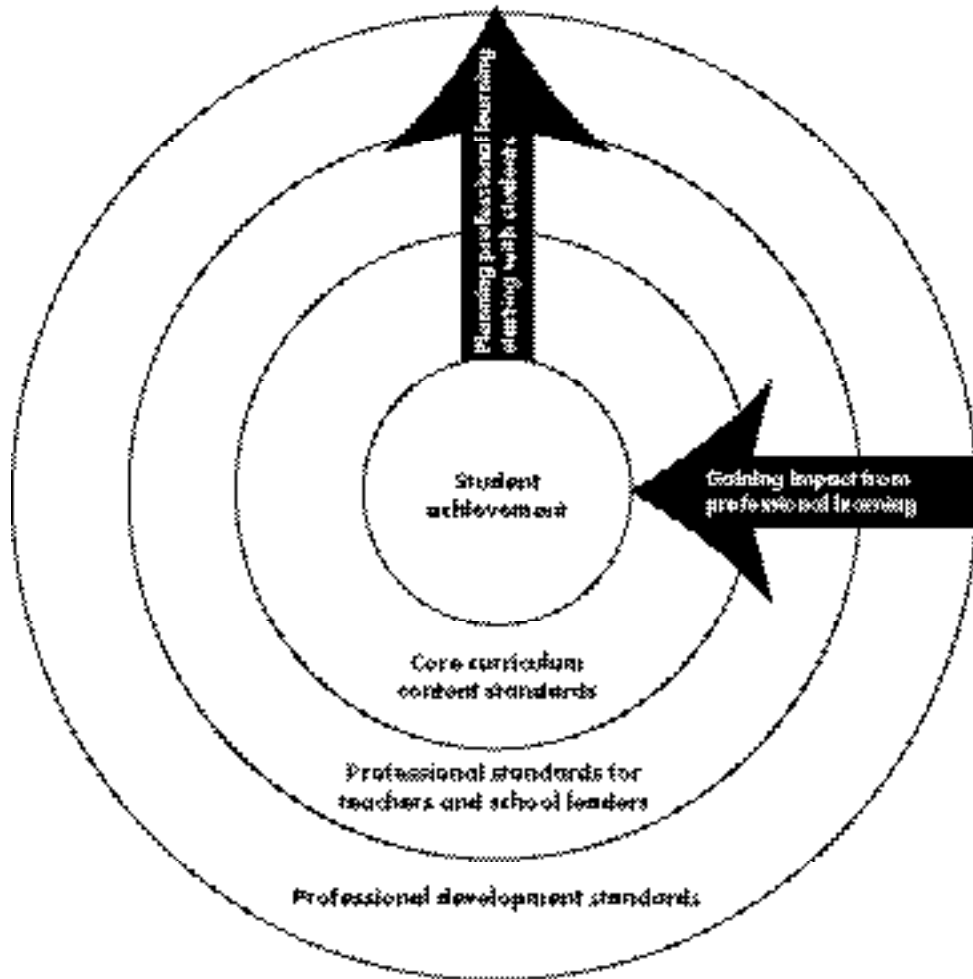
Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders identify the core competencies expected of all New Jersey educators. These standards outline the foundational knowledge and skills of successful educators. The standards for both school leaders and teachers, while different, are linked. In other words, teachers are more successful when school leaders are knowledgeable and skillful. School leaders, too, are more successful when teachers have deep content knowledge and use multiple approaches to instruction, management, and assessment. This document may be downloaded at [www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/profstand/standards.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/profstand/standards.pdf)

#### **Professional development standards**

New Jersey’s Professional Development Standards for Teachers stress the importance of linking professional learning to student success and core curriculum content standards and of engaging teachers in collegial and collaborative learning experiences.

“The professional strengths and accomplishments of the school faculty at large must work to complement the learning needs and requirements of the entire student population. Professional development activities must also complement both the needs of the educator and the goals and objectives of the school district. Further, these activities must focus on the conditions

Figure 2.1  
Relationship among standards and student achievement



TOOL 2.1

**New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers**

**STANDARD 1: Subject matter knowledge**  
Teachers shall understand the content concepts, tools of inquiry, structures of the discipline, equitably as they relate to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), and design developmentally appropriate learning experiences making the subject matter accessible and meaningful to all students.

**STANDARD 2: Human growth and development**  
Teachers shall understand how children and adolescents develop and learn in a variety of school, family and community contexts and provide opportunities that support their intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.

**STANDARD 3: Diverse learners**  
Teachers shall understand the practice of culturally responsive teaching.

**STANDARD 4: Instructional planning and strategies**  
Teachers shall understand instructional planning, design long and short-term plans based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, community, and curriculum goals and shall employ a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies in order to promote critical thinking, problem solving and the performance skills of all learners.

**STANDARD 5: Assessment**  
Teachers shall understand and use multiple assessment strategies and interpret results to evaluate and promote student learning and to modify instruction in order to foster the continuous development of students.

**STANDARD 6: Learning environment**  
Teachers shall understand individual and group motivation and behavior and shall create a supportive, safe and respectful learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-reflection.

**STANDARD 7: Special needs**  
Teachers shall adjust and modify instruction to accommodate the special learning needs of all students.

**STANDARD 8: Communication**  
Teachers shall use knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication techniques and the tools of education to foster the use of inquiry, collaboration and supportive interactions.

**STANDARD 9: Collaboration and partnerships**  
Teachers shall build relationships with parents, guardians, families and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

**STANDARD 10: Professional development**  
Teachers shall participate as active, responsible members of the professional community, engaging in a wide range of reflective practices, gaining opportunities to grow professionally and establishing collegial relationships to enhance the teaching and learning process.

Tool 2.1

TOOL 2.2

**New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders**

- The new Professional Standards for School Leaders are comprehensive, forward looking and focused on teaching and learning.
- Based on the recommendations of the State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP) Consortium, a state advisory group on school leadership policy, the State Board of Education adopted the national standards of the International School Leaders Consortium (ISLCC). These are national model standards for school leaders. The ISLCC standards were developed by a consortium of states brought together by the Council of Chief State School Officers and reflect the best thinking of educators across the nation. New Jersey participated in the development of the ISLCC standards as a member of that national consortium. The state's administration provided input through focus groups run by ISLCC across New Jersey.
- The standards shift the focus of the job from one which was concerned primarily with efficient management and administration to one emphasizing the role of the administrator as the educational leader concerned with teaching, learning and school improvement. Research in the last decade has shown that a principal role the school leader has in promoting excellence in instruction and creating a culture that promotes improved student achievement.

Tool 2.2

TOOL 2.3

**Professional development standards for teachers**

**PREAMBLE**

The New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board believes that education must be dedicated to a continuous plan of professional development that begins with their pre-service activities, that continues with their induction into the profession, and that extends through the life of their professional career in education through and sustained professional development endeavors. We further believe that effective educators are learners, that professional development must be a process of refining skills, improving best practices, and developing new methods.

The professional strengths and accomplishments of the school faculty at large must work to complement the learning needs and requirements of the entire student population. Professional development activities must also complement both the needs of the educator and the goals and objectives of the school district. Further, these activities must focus on the conditions which affect student learning in order for students to develop the knowledge and expertise needed to enable students to function as independent thinkers and creative learners both in the school community and in the larger environment of society as a whole.

In addition, professional development must engage each educator in a collegial and collaborative dialogue with other educators and education partners to broaden the knowledge and expertise needed to guide students toward the successful attainment and mastery of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and to create supportive and effective schools.

We further believe that effective implementation of new techniques requires financial supports, time and planning. Therefore, these new techniques and practices should be promoted and nurtured as well as appropriately evaluated. Experimentation that is supported by a nurturing environment will encourage an atmosphere where educators constantly seek to learn about their work and to give from the experience.

Tool 2.3

STANDARDS	ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
<b>Core curriculum content standards</b>	Establish the focus for the content for professional development that intends to deepen teachers' content knowledge and expand their content-specific pedagogical processes; guide decisions about what teachers need to know and be able to do to help students meet content standards.
<b>Standards for teachers and school leaders</b>	Focus content of professional development on core teacher competencies and guide decisions about which competencies educators want to develop and refine.
<b>Professional development standards</b>	Define attributes of high-quality professional learning; guide decisions about how teams structure learning experiences and how schools and districts support educator learning.

which affect student learning in order for teachers to develop the knowledge and expertise needed to enable students to function as independent thinkers and creative learners both in the school community and in the larger environment of society as a whole.

“In addition, professional development must engage each educator in a collegial and collaborative dialogue with other educators and education partners to broaden the knowledge and expertise needed to guide students toward the successful attainment and mastery of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards

and to create supportive and effective schools” ([www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/standards.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/standards.htm)).

The professional development standards define success for schools and districts. In addition, they serve as a framework for planning and implementing professional learning. The table above illustrates how the various standards contribute to professional development. Professional development standards may be downloaded at [www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/) and appear in Tool 2.3.

**TOOL 2.1**

## New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers

### **STANDARD 1: Subject matter knowledge**

Teachers shall understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, structures of the discipline, especially as they relate to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), and design developmentally appropriate learning experiences making the subject matter accessible and meaningful to all students.

### **STANDARD 2: Human growth and development**

Teachers shall understand how children and adolescents develop and learn in a variety of school, family and community contexts and provide opportunities that support their intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.

### **STANDARD 3: Diverse learners**

Teachers shall understand the practice of culturally responsive teaching.

### **STANDARD 4: Instructional planning and strategies**

Teachers shall understand instructional planning, design long- and short-term plans based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, community, and curriculum goals and shall employ a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies in order to promote critical thinking, problem solving and the performance skills of all learners.

### **STANDARD 5: Assessment**

Teachers shall understand and use multiple assessment strategies and interpret results to evaluate and promote student learning and to modify instruction in order to foster the continuous development of students.

### **STANDARD 6: Learning environment**

Teachers shall understand individual and group motivation and behavior and shall create a supportive, safe and respectful learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.

### **STANDARD 7: Special needs**

Teachers shall adapt and modify instruction to accommodate the special learning needs of all students.

### **STANDARD 8: Communication**

Teachers shall use knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication techniques and the tools of information literacy to foster the use of inquiry, collaboration and supportive interactions.

### **STANDARD 9: Collaboration and partnerships**

Teachers shall build relationships with parents, guardians, families and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

### **STANDARD 10: Professional development**

Teachers shall participate as active, responsible members of the professional community, engaging in a wide range of reflective practices, pursuing opportunities to grow professionally and establishing collegial relationships to enhance the teaching and learning process..

**TOOL 2.2**

## **New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders**

- The new Professional Standards for School Leaders are comprehensive, forward looking and focused on teaching and learning.
- Based on the recommendations of the State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP) Consortium, a state advisory group on school leadership policy, the State Board of Education adopted the national standards of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). These are national model standards for school leaders. The ISLLC standards were developed by a consortium of states brought together by the Council of Chief State School Officers and reflect the best thinking of educators across the nation. New Jersey participated in the development of the ISLLC standards as a member of that national consortium. The state's administrators provided input through focus groups run by ISLLC across New Jersey.
- The standards shift the focus of the job from one which was concerned primarily with efficient management and administration to one emphasizing the role of the administrator as the educational leader concerned with teaching, learning and school improvement. Research in the last decade has shown what a pivotal role the school leader has in promoting excellence in instruction and creating a culture that promotes improved student achievement.

**TOOL 2.2****School leaders standards**

The Standards for School Leaders are:

- Built from the raw materials of leadership, reflecting the actual work of the school leader;
- Anchored in teaching and learning;
- Focused on student achievement; and
- Concerned with ensuring the success of all children.

**STANDARD 1**

School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

**STANDARD 2**

School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

**STANDARD 3**

School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.

**STANDARD 4**

School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

**STANDARD 5**

School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.

**STANDARD 6**

School administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

**TOOL 2.3**

## **Professional development standards for teachers**

### **PREAMBLE**

The New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board believes that educators must be dedicated to a continuous plan of professional development that begins with their preservice activities, that continues with their induction into the profession, and that extends through the life of their professional career in education through, ongoing, and sustained professional development endeavors. We further believe that effective educators are learners, that professional development must be a process of refining skills, inquiring into practice, and developing new methods.

The professional strengths and accomplishments of the school faculty at large must work to complement the learning needs and requirements of the entire student population. Professional development activities must also complement both the needs of the educator and the goals and objectives of the school district. Further, these activities must focus on the conditions which affect student learning in order for teachers to develop the knowledge and expertise needed to enable students to function as independent thinkers and creative learners both in the school community and in the larger environment of society as a whole.

In addition, professional development must engage each educator in a collegial and collaborative dialogue with other educators and education partners to broaden the knowledge and expertise needed to guide students toward the successful attainment and mastery of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and to create supportive and effective schools.

We further believe that effective implementation of new techniques requires financial support, time and planning. Therefore, those new techniques and practices should be protected and nurtured as well as appropriately evaluated. Experimentation that is supported by a nurturing environment will encourage an atmosphere where educators constantly seek to learn about their work and to grow from the experience.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

A common set of beliefs about teaching and learning is reflected in the following standards for professional development plans pursued by individual teaching staff members and for professional development plans created by the local professional development committees in school districts. These standards represent a new vision for professional development and provide guidance for the successful completion of the professional development requirements. The individual and district professional development plans should incorporate and be consistent with the standards, recognizing that not every standard needs to be addressed by every plan.

- 1. Enhances knowledge of subject content**
  - 1.1.** Assists educators in acquiring content knowledge within their own discipline(s) and in application(s) to other disciplines
  - 1.2.** Enables classroom professionals to help students achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS)
  - 1.3.** Routinely reviews the alignment of professional development content with CCCS and with the Frameworks in all disciplines
- 2. Improves understanding of the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of each learner and ensures that educators utilize appropriate teaching skills to enable students to meet or exceed their potential**
  - 2.1.** Enables educators to adjust instructional strategies based on knowledge of how students learn and develop
  - 2.2.** Enables educators to plan and design approaches and strategies to support the intellectual, social and personal development of each learner
  - 2.3.** Assists educators to recognize students' strengths and potential
  - 2.4.** Enables educators to respect students' talents, abilities and perspectives
  - 2.5.** Enables educators to plan and design instructional strategies for inclusive classrooms
  - 2.6.** Encourages the establishment of a learning environment that enhances student learning and critical thinking
- 2.7.** Supports a philosophy of school- and classroom-based management which maximizes student learning
- 3. Reflects best available interpretations of relevant knowledge, including empirical research and the consensus of professional opinion in teaching, learning, and leadership**
  - 3.1.** Enables educators to:
    - 3.1.1.** Keep abreast of current educational research
    - 3.1.2.** Integrate new understandings into content and instruction
    - 3.1.3.** Enhance student learning through scholarship and experience
  - 3.2.** Enables educators to provide challenging and developmentally appropriate curricula that engage students in learning and
  - 3.3.** Acknowledges and respects the intellectual and leadership capacity of educators
  - 3.4.** Enables educators to enhance their leadership skills and utilize them in the education community
- 4. Encourages educators to develop a variety of classroom-based assessment skills**
  - 4.1.** Assists educators in adapting instruction based on observation and analysis of student work
  - 4.2.** Enables educators to select, construct, and use assessment strategies for monitoring student learning
  - 4.3.** Assists educators to develop assessment strategies linked to the CCCS

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS**

- 5. Provides for integrating new learning into the curriculum and the classroom**
  - 5.1. Empowers educators to connect their learning to what they teach and to incorporate new concepts into practice
  - 5.2. Provides for initiation and implementation of desired change to achieve student outcomes
  - 5.3. Provides for ongoing support for individual educators within the school environment
  
- 6. Is based on knowledge of adult learning and development**
  - 6.1. Recognizes adult motivation, stages of development, personal goals and needs and levels of expertise
  - 6.2. Encourages both the individual and the collaborative talents of educators
  - 6.3. Applies what is known about motivation for growth and enhances positive feelings of self-worth
  - 6.4. Fosters confidence in educators' abilities to achieve success
  - 6.5. Utilizes a variety of models and approaches, such as individually guided staff development, observation/assessment, involvement in a development/improvement process, training, inquiry, etc.
  
- 7. Is periodically assessed to show its impact on teaching practice and/or student learning**
  - 7.1. Utilizes a careful analysis of classroom, school and other data to guide future professional development efforts uses educators' self-assessment to evaluate the impact of professional development
  
- 8. Results from clear, coherent, strategic planning that is embraced and supported by the district's governing body and by all levels of the school system**
  - 8.1. Delineates what students are expected to know and be able to do
  - 8.2. Supports a clearly delineated vision and is aligned with the district and school goals
  - 8.3. Focuses on sound, research-based theories in school management
  - 8.4. Focuses on individual, collegial, school, and district improvement
  - 8.5. Is perceived by the professional staff and the community as a critical part of the district's quest for excellence
  - 8.6. Fosters the use of reflection and self-assessment in professional and intellectual growth
  - 8.7. Allows educators to pursue personal educational opportunities that reflect the district's strategic plan
  - 8.8. Encourages careful experimentation with new practice and creative use of best practice
  - 8.9. Reflects the educational outcomes the district seeks to achieve
  - 8.10. Assists educators in analyzing disaggregated student data (i.e., gender, socioeconomic, ethnicity, and language) and in making decisions based on that data
  
- 9. Develops a school culture that fosters continuous improvement and that challenges traditional roles and relationships among educators**
  - 9.1. Recognizes that collegial support and interaction are essential to the success of every aspect of education
  - 9.2. Provides for ongoing and meaningful collaboration among educators
  - 9.3. Values individual efforts at self-improvement
  - 9.4. Provides educators with incentives and support to pursue a plan of continuous improvement
  - 9.5. Involves strong leadership from all areas of the school community to encourage a commitment to learning
  - 9.6. Encourages creativity and innovation
  - 9.7. Supports the ongoing development of new skills in a collaborative environment
  - 9.8. Values the contribution of practitioners in the pursuit of enhanced student learning

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS**

**10. Is supported by the intellectual and financial commitment which enables the achievement of professional development plans**

- 10.1. Is a process which respects the personal strengths and needs of each educator
- 10.2. Encourages governing bodies to support and participate in learning experiences that will enhance their understanding of good professional development
- 10.3. Encourages school administrators to support and participate in professional development that will enhance student learning
- 10.4. Is supported by a continuous and sufficient commitment of funding to achieve the professional development plans
- 10.5. Increases public understanding and encouragement for professional development, including the need for time and financial support
- 10.6. Includes access to technologies and other modern resources that are essential to effective professional work and learning

**11. Is supported by sufficient time during working hours to engage in collegial consultation and learning and to support professional development**

- 11.1. Provides time for educators to team plan, collaborate, analyze data and student work, develop and implement instructional practices, curricula and assessments, implement federal, state, and local mandates, etc.
- 11.2. Recognizes and considers the professional and personal obligations of the individual educator

**12. Empowers educators to work effectively with parent and community partners**

- 12.1. Assists educators in establishing relationships and partnerships with parents and families
- 12.2. Enables educators to identify and use community resources to foster student learning
- 12.3. Promotes an environment where educators feel comfortable and confident working collaboratively with other educators, parents, business and community leaders

\* These rules affect all active teaching staff members employed as of September 2000 whose positions require possession of the instructional or educational services license in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6:11-6.10 and 11.

## Chapter 3

# COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### TOOLS

**Tool 3.1** Team learning scenario task. *9 pages*

**Tool 3.2** NSDC's Standard for Staff Development/Learning Communities. *2 pages*

**Tool 3.3** Set goals for learning with a sense of urgency. *1 page*

**Tool 3.4** Fears and hopes. *1 page*

**Tool 3.5** Possible staff meeting agenda. *1 page*

Where are we?

**Teachers work independently on the routine tasks associated with teaching.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers choose the professional development that interests them.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Professional development involves teachers working in teams to improve teaching and students' learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers typically attend professional development away from school.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**A**s schools strive to improve their bottom line, more and more are using professional development as their primary intervention. Yet, decades of practice in professional learning have demonstrated little long-term impact on teaching or student learning. This may be because beliefs about what good professional development is are shifting. Research is pointing to the relationship between teachers working in learning communities and improvement in student learning. *“Researchers point to an ‘emerging consensus’ regarding the kind of professional development most likely to improve teacher practice and thus student performance. This consensus suggests that the highest impact professional development directly relates to the instructional content and material teachers must use, takes place in their own schools and classrooms with coaching and ongoing feedback, and seeks to involve all teachers so that the activity emphasizes schoolwide as compared to just individual capacity”* (Burney, D., Corcoran T., & Lesnick, J., in press; Elmore, R, 2002; Garet, M., Porter, A., Desimone, L., Birman, B., & Yoon, K., 2001)” (Miles, K.H., Odden, A., Fermanich, M., & Archibald, S. 2005, p. 9).

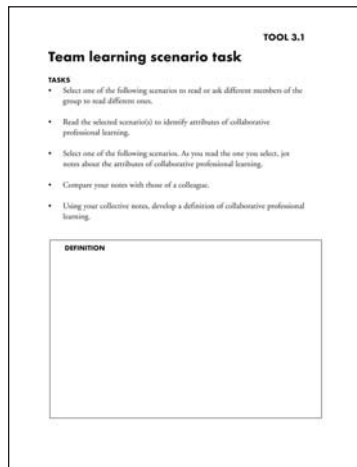
Collaborative professional learning is a form of professional development in which teachers work together to improve teaching and learning. It has several attributes that distinguish it from other forms of professional learning. Collaborative professional learning engages teachers in teams that work together over time to improve teaching and learning.

Until the last decade, professional development was viewed as a matter of personal preference for teachers. This approach to professional development produces few long-term changes in teaching behavior or results for students. However, this approach to professional development is so common a practice in school districts that moving beyond it to consider a different approach is challenging.

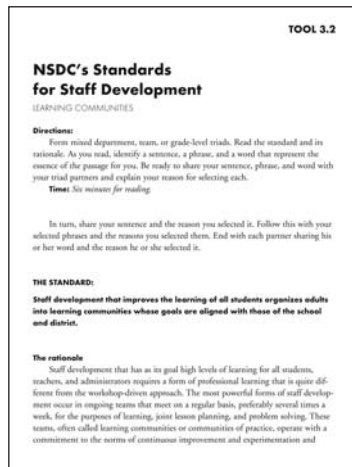
Professional development, until recently, was not viewed as a means for improving teaching and learning. Other means such as curriculum, assessment, materials, programs, and school structures took priority over professional development as vehicles for improvement in early school reform efforts. Now, the significance of professional development is clear; yet what is also clear is that the past practices of professional development will not improve schools. Dennis Sparks,

executive director of the National Staff Development Council, summarizes both the importance of professional development and the particular form of professional development that will improve student learning:

*“If every student is to have a competent teacher, then virtually all their teachers must be learning virtually all the time. While that learning will occasionally happen in workshops and courses, most of it will occur as teachers*



**Tool 3.1**



**Tool 3.2**



**Tool 3.3**

*plan lessons together, examine their students' work to find ways to improve it, observe one another teach, and plan improvements based on various data. Those of us concerned about teacher expertise must take leadership in designing such a system for learning” (Sparks, 1998, p. 2).*

Tool 3.1 is useful in helping educators understand the attributes of collaborative professional learning. By working through the inquiry-based activity outlined in Tool 3.1, educators can picture how collaborative professional learning might look in their school. Teams, of course, have the freedom to create their own concept of collaborative professional learning provided these key features are all evident:

- Creating support for teams of teachers;
- Working together over time;
- Constructing joint work related to curriculum, assessment, and instruction; and
- Improving teaching and learning.

Collaborative professional learning, according to Mike Schmoker, is “the best, least expensive, most professionally rewarding way to improve schools” (Schmoker, 2005, p. 137). It is the practice of educators working together to solve problems, and design and refine instruction, curriculum, assessments, and interventions for student learning. Using successful practices long present in business and industry such as quality circles, collaborative professional learning brings teachers together most often within their school to co-construct knowledge, share knowledge, and distribute knowledge about teaching and learning throughout the school.

Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage (1995) identified factors of schools that achieve disproportionately

higher student performance in math, science, and social studies. These schools had staff members who formed learning communities, focused their attention on student work and assessment, and changed their instructional practices to improve their results with students. Common goals, consistent messages about learning objectives and methods, and collective responsibility, say Newmann and Wehlage, increase teacher efficacy. In addition, they believe that teachers’ collaborative activity increases their technical competence and collective responsibility.

*“Collaborative activity can enhance teachers’ technical competence. As teachers work with students from increasingly diverse social backgrounds, and as the curriculum begins to demand more intellectual rigor, teachers require information, technical expertise, and social-emotional support far beyond the resources they can muster as individuals working alone. When teachers collaborate productively, they participate in reflective dialogue to learn more about professional issues; they observe and react to one another’s teaching, curriculum, and assessment practices; and they engage in joint planning and curriculum development. By enriching teachers’ technical and social resources, collaboration can make teaching more effective.*

*“[C]learly shared purpose and collaboration contribute to collective responsibility: one’s colleagues share responsibility for the quality of all students’ achievement. This norm helps to sustain each teacher’s commitment. A culture of collective responsibility puts more peer pressure and accountability on staff who may not have carried their fair share, but it can also ease the burden on teachers who have worked hard in isolation but who felt unable to help some students. In short, professional community within the*

*teaching staff sharpens the educational focus and enhances the technical and social support that teachers need to be successful” (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995, p. 31).*

Collaborative professional learning engages teachers in job-embedded, results-driven, and standards-based learning. New Jersey’s Professional Development Standards advocate for professional development that engages teachers in “collegial and collaborative dialogue.” The National Staff Development Council’s Standards for Staff Development (2001) advocates for professional learning that organizes teachers in learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. Tool 3.2 includes the rationale for NSDC’s Learning Communities Standard. This rationale is a brief synthesis of the research and can be useful to help staff members understand the value of collaborative professional learning.

Shirley Hord and a team of researchers from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) studied professional learning communities in 22 schools.

As a result of their research, they identified five themes that served as the characteristics of teachers learning together in collaborative teams:

*“Supportive and shared leadership requires that collegial and facilitative participation of the principal who shares leadership — and thus, power and authority — by inviting staff input and action in decision making.*

- *Shared values and vision include an unwavering commitment to student learning that is consistently articulated and referenced in the staff’s work.*
- *Collective learning and application of learning requires that school staff at all levels are engaged in processes that collectively seek new knowledge among staff and application of the learning to solutions that address students’ needs.*
- *Supportive conditions include physical and human capacities that encourage and sustain a collegial atmosphere and collective learning.*
- *Shared practice involves the review of a teacher’s behavior by colleagues and includes feedback and assistance activity to support individual and community improvement” (Hord, p. 7).*

**TOOL 3.4**

### Fears and hopes

**FEARS**  
After developing an understanding of the attributes of collaborative professional learning, identify the fears, concerns, or worries that come to mind when you think about implementing collaborative learning in your school.

- Write your fears, concerns, or worries individually on index cards five.  
*Time: 1-2 minutes.*
- Share your fears, concerns, or worries using a round-robin process (each person in turn shares one idea at a time until all ideas are shared).  
*Time: 3 minutes.*
- Discuss the patterns or themes that emerged in the fears, concerns, or worries people expressed.  
*Time: 1 minute.*

**HOPEs**  
After developing an understanding of the attributes of collaborative professional learning, identify the advantages or hopes that come to mind when you think about implementing collaborative learning in your school.

- Write your advantages or hopes individually on index cards five.  
*Time: 1-2 minutes.*
- Share your advantages or hopes using a round-robin process (each person in turn shares one idea at a time until all ideas are shared).  
*Time: 3 minutes.*
- Discuss the patterns or themes that emerged in the advantages or hopes people expressed.  
*Time: 1 minute.*

Collect the fears, hopes, and patterns and compile them to share with staff.

**Tool 3.4**

**TOOL 3.5**

### Possible staff meeting agenda

TIME	WHAT	WHO	NOTES
5 minutes	Introduction Purpose for today’s meeting • Develop an understanding about the attributes of collaborative professional learning • Understand how collaborative professional learning might add value to school improvement plans • Understand the staff’s role and responsibility in collaborative professional learning	Principal/teacher	
20 minutes	Attributes of Collaborative Professional Learning (Chart 3.1)	Principal/teacher	
20 minutes	Rationale for Collaborative Professional Learning • Read the rationale for collaborative professional learning and to offer a brief summary of the rationale to each other (2 minutes) • Share definitions, either written or on the flipchart, that will aid in the understanding of the rationale (2 minutes) NDCS: Decide the staff will use groups. They will read the rationale for NSDC’s Learning Communities Standard (Chart 3.2). Then the other half read the NSDC’s article by James G. Thompson (2001).	Principal/teacher	
20 minutes	Complete Fears and Hopes activity in Tool 3.4	Principal/teacher	
20 minutes	Reconnect that action regarding collaborative professional learning in the school	Principal/teacher	

**Tool 3.5**

When teachers are working and learning together, they improve both their practice and their students’ learning. This form of professional development differs from typical professional development in a number of ways.

Collaborative professional learning is:

- Frequent/ongoing;
- Done during contract time;
- Done with teaching colleagues;
- Supports current classroom work and personal professional development goals, and school improvement goals;
- Designed by teachers;
- Facilitated by teachers and teacher leaders and/or co-facilitated by school-based and district-based educators;
- Supported and monitored by school administrators; and
- Contextually appropriate to the needs of the students, teachers, and school community.

This tool kit assists schools and teachers in linking professional learning to teachers’ routine work by recognizing that collaborating about curriculum, assessment, instruction, and student learning is a legitimate form of professional development. Teachers will find that they more easily, quickly, and satisfactorily meet the requirement for 100 hours of professional development because the work that they have traditionally done in isolation will be done with the value-added of their colleagues’ thinking. When teachers work collaboratively on their routine work and reflect on and continuously improve their practice, they will be driven less by the desire to earn 100 hours and more by the satisfaction

they feel when they see the results of their learning.

Teachers from New Jersey to California who have committed to work in communities of learners report that while getting started requires an investment, they find the rewards to be significant. They report that their work is more satisfying, that they save time because they are sharing responsibility with their peers, that their work is more focused, and that they would not return to the way they previously worked in isolation. Schools in which teachers work in collaborative teams make steady progress toward their improvement goals, have a clear focus, share goals, and produce results.

Collaborative professional learning will look different in large and small schools. In large schools, there are likely to be more teams and maybe bigger teams meeting. Teachers are more likely to serve on more than one collaborative team. The role of the principal, teacher leaders, and/or supervisors in coordinating and supporting the teams will be greater. Communication between and among teams will be more challenging and require more concerted effort. Creating a sense of community may be more challenging in a larger school where teachers do not work as closely together, although this is not necessarily a factor related to size. It is more closely connected to the culture within a school. Even large schools can have highly successful collaborative professional learning teams, as demonstrated by Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Ill., a school of more than 4,000 students.

Once a week, teachers at Stevenson High School arrive at their regular time at 7:45 a.m. and students arrive late. Teachers use this block of time each week to meet in their collaborative teams often by department or course areas.

**Adlai Stevenson High School's  
late-start schedule**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Time</b>
1	10:30 - 11:05 a.m.
2	11:10 - 11:40 a.m.
3	11:45 - 12:15 p.m.
4	12:20 - 12:55 p.m.
5	1 - 1:35 p.m.
6	1:40 - 2:15 p.m.
7	2:20 - 2:50 p.m.
8	2:55 - 3:25 p.m.

In smaller schools, teachers may serve on cross-level teams or interdisciplinary teams. Because teachers know each other better in smaller schools, teams are likely to

**Video resources**

These help educators “see” collaborative professional learning in action.

- Critical friends groups in action. Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

**[www.annenberginstitute.org](http://www.annenberginstitute.org)**

- Designing and evaluating professional development for increased student learning. The School Improvement Network.

**[www.schoolimprovementnetwork.com](http://www.schoolimprovementnetwork.com)**

- Let's talk about PLC: Getting started (three parts). National Educational Services

**[www.solution-tree.com](http://www.solution-tree.com)**

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

**[www.annenberginstitute.org](http://www.annenberginstitute.org)**

- Looking at teacher work: Standards in practice. Collaborative Communications Group.

**[www.publicengagement.com](http://www.publicengagement.com)**

- Schools that learn: High standards for teacher and principal performance. Collaborative Communications Group.

**[www.publicengagement.com](http://www.publicengagement.com)**

- Whole faculty study groups: Collaboration targeting student learning. The School Improvement Network.

**[www.schoolimprovementnetwork.com](http://www.schoolimprovementnetwork.com)**

become more productive more quickly. The principal may be able to be a member of all the teams in a smaller school. Certainly communication between and among teams will be easier. Creating a supportive culture may be easier because staff members are more likely to have a sense of community in a smaller school.

Regardless of the size of the school, however, the process for creating teams is the same. The type of work teams do remains the same. The difference is the focus on multiple grades, courses, or core content areas rather than a single one.

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**TOOL 3.1****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.
- Select one of the following scenarios. As you read the one you select, jot notes about the 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 on a very different note at Fremont Elementary School. Instead of the normal large school professional development day that involves a presentation, Frieda Jackson leads the teachers through an analysis of student achievement. The meeting lasts all morning, as teachers dig through various data sets and work in a variety of different configurations to learn how their students performed on state tests. At the end of the meeting, teachers begin to think about some actions the school will take.

The afternoon is set aside for each grade level to repeat the process looking specifically at data about incoming students. Jackson, with the help of the district testing specialist, prepared data for the grade levels as a whole and for each teacher for his or her new class. The expectation for the afternoon is that each grade level works as a team looking to create a specific plan about what they will do during the year to improve student performance.

Fremont's 4th-grade teachers spend their two hours of the afternoon talking about their incoming class of 4th graders. They study the composite and content-specific scores from these new 4th graders' performance on the 3rd-grade tests. They also look at the scores of students divided into their new classrooms. Teachers use a simple data analysis protocol that Jackson gave them in the morning to study the data. They identify the strengths and apparent weaknesses in reading, writing, and math sub-skill areas.

They make a list of their observations on a large piece of chart paper. As they are about to choose a focus area, Jackson stops by and asks how things are going. She expresses her appreciation for the team's efforts last year and notes the significant improvement the 4th

graders made on the state tests. As she is talking with the teachers, she reads over the chart they have made identifying areas of focus. Jackson smiles when she sees writing on the list. She, too, knows that it is an area of need. It is clear that these incoming 4th graders are making substantial progress in reading and math, yet are not doing well in writing.

Jackson gets up to leave indicating that she wants to visit other teams. As she leaves, she reminds them that their plan is due on Friday and that she is available to assist. Walking out of the room toward the 5th-grade pod, Jackson ponders, "It will be interesting to see what they decide to focus on this year. I hope it is writing. I know it is their choice. If they have done a thorough data analysis, they will see that writing is the appropriate focus area. I trust them to make a good decision, and if it isn't the right one, they discover that on their own. They have always worked well as a team."

After Jackson leaves, the team decides to make writing a focus for their collaborative work while also continuing to improve students' reading and math scores. They make a plan for the first several weeks related to writing. Their plan includes giving a writing assessment within the first three days of school, scoring a select sample of those together at their next professional development meeting, and developing lesson plans to address the specific areas of deficit. They decide not to pursue a recommendation by one team member to use cross-classroom flexible grouping until they see for themselves how their students perform. They also decide which books to read aloud to students in the first week of school that best represent the use of figurative language. Together, they craft some possible questions to ask, and one member volunteers to type them up and e-mail to everyone.

They agree to meet each Tuesday and Thursday during their team planning time to continue their discussions about how to improve student writing. At their next professional development day meeting, they plan to bring their writing samples for scoring and analysis to identify areas in which to concentrate. By the end of

the first week of school, they hope to complete their analysis so they can begin planning specific instruction related to major deficits in student writing.

The grade-level chair asks for a volunteer to help her prepare the grade-level's plan for Jackson that is due on Friday. The plan asks the team to identify their area of focus, a SMART goal related to this goal, three benchmark points along the way, ways they will assess student performance at these benchmark points, and the action they will take to achieve the goals. All the teachers agree to stay and help develop the plan. They worry that it will not be as complete, and the chair reminds them that they can change it when they have a better idea of specific actions they want to take and have decided how to assess student performance in writing at three points in the year. She says she will talk with Jackson about this being a draft plan and let them know if Jackson expresses any concerns.

When the grade-level chair meets with Jackson to review the draft plan, Jackson assures her that the plan is a living document and that she hopes they will continue to review and refine it throughout the year. She also helps revise the goal so that it includes all the elements of a SMART goal (S=specific, M=measurable, A=attainable, R=results-driven, T=time bound) and offers some possible actions for the team to consider when they get to the action planning part of their plan. Jackson shares a copy of the 2nd-grade plan because they, too, have identified writing.

## SCENARIO 2

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

The curriculum coach at Peterson High School meets with science teachers to talk about ways to reduce the poor performance of female and underrepresented students in that discipline. Teachers, too, express frustration because they had recognized that students in upper-level courses were mostly white and Asian males. As they discussed possible reasons for the situation, the coach asks teachers 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 identify issues related to students' motivation, high absenteeism, lack of basic study skills, and general lack of interest in science.

Teachers agree there are some significant issues to study. They agree to use their professional development time to gather data and examine the problem they identify as underenrollment of underrepresented students (mostly blacks and Hispanic) and female students in upper-level science courses. This problem becomes the focus of a four-month inquiry by the science teachers that involves the curriculum coach, counselors, the district's science specialist, the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, the school's reading specialist, and a physical education teacher.

First, the coach suggests teachers ask the counselor to gather data about students who fall into their four identified groups of interest — female students who are successful in upper-level science classes; blacks and Hispanic male students who are successful in upper-level science classes; and students of both groups who have performed poorly in basic science classes and choose not to enroll in other science classes. Teachers want to compare how students in each group perform

in other classes, their attendance, how many hours they are employed outside of school, if they participate in extracurricular activities, their scores on the achievement tests given in 10th grade, etc.

The coach works with the department on one of their professional development days to analyze the data. Teachers discover some interesting patterns in the data. On the next professional development meeting day, they invite the assistant principal, counselor, reading specialist, and district science specialist to discuss the patterns they found. Basically, they found no difference among the students who attended school more regularly and those who did not. Involvement in extracurricular activities gave them little insight into student performance. They found no significant differences between those who work outside of school. Analysis of the achievement tests were not particularly helpful except to tell them what they already knew — some students perform better than others.

But one finding does stand out: students who perform poorly in basic science perform poorly in other classes, especially classes involving a great deal of reading and writing. The same students perform much better in classes that require more physical activity or creative expression such as physical education, family and consumer science, some technology classes, drama, art, and music. Teachers begin to understand that there might be something about the type of learner they are dealing with that they want to study further.

The physics teacher says he wants to learn whether using different instructional processes can change how students learn. He volunteers to try to recreate an upcoming unit using more physical activities if he can figure out what to do. Other teachers point out that, while he has a good idea, the students in the current physics class are not the students they worry about. Two teachers of Introduction to Science ask if they might work with the physics teacher to develop a unit that they would teach. All agree that this would be a solid action research project. Other teachers want to join the planning team.

A team of about seven teachers meets at their next professional development block to figure out how to teach resistance. They decide to invite a physical education teacher to help them figure out what kinds of physical activities they might engage students in to demonstrate the concept of resistance. She gladly joins them and works with them to create activities to help students develop an understanding of resistance. After the unit is designed, one Introduction to Science teacher agrees to teach it first. The physics teacher and the other Introduction to Science teacher ask the assistant principal to arrange coverage of their classes so they can observe the first two days of the unit.

During lunch after each class, the three teachers debrief what occurred, how they would tweak what they designed for their students, and begin to think about how they would know if students really understand the concept. On the third day of the unit, other science teachers and the physical education teacher request a report on how the unit is progressing. They agree that debriefing the unit will be the focus of their next professional development block.

To prepare for that meeting, 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 wants to talk about two students in particular, students in their target group who had failing grades before the unit and who aced the work on resistance. The assistant principal also provides two short articles on multiple intelligences and differentiation to share with the science teachers. The physics teacher agrees to facilitate the meeting and set the agenda.

When teachers leave the meeting, they agree that this form of collaboration is essential to help them learn how to alter their instruction to meet the needs of learners who are not typically successful in science. They know that if they work together more often they will be able to help more students succeed in science. They acknowledge that their instructional practices often do not accommodate learners who are different than the majority of the teachers. They appreciate the expertise of the physical education teacher and acknowledge that cross-departmental collaboration is critical. And, they identify the next problem they want to tackle as a department — the high rate of failure in chemistry — even though they have a long way to go to revamp all their instruction to incorporate different strategies to

engage students. The physical education teacher sits quietly as the decision is made. She is already thinking about how to use physical movement to help students understand electrons, molecules, nuclei, and the periodic chart.

The principal meets with the department chair after the debriefing meeting and asks that they make 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 the department goals for the next two years to sustain the work they began and to expand it.

## SCENARIO 3

### SCHOOL-BASED TEAM LEARNING: Martin Middle School

The 8th-grade test scores are back and as usual the 7th-grade teachers hear the 8th-grade teachers voicing the same excuse they have for the last five years: Entering 8th graders are unprepared so they must reteach the 7th-grade curriculum which leaves little time to teach the 8th-grade curriculum. Each year, the story is the same.

Seventh-grade teachers acknowledge that they have the highest failure rate of all grades in the middle school. They attribute this to their high expectations and to the fact that they are helping students learn to be responsible for their actions — an important life skill. They know that if they do not help students realize that they are responsible for their own success or failure and how to face the consequences of their actions, the high failure rate will continue. If 7th graders fail to learn that lesson now, they will be in serious trouble in high school. Because this is an important learning, 7th-grade teachers have agreed to be less lenient on work that is late, incomplete, or poor quality. The lack of leniency leads to higher failures, and those are logical consequences students face. Seventh-grade teachers prefer that students experience those failures now rather than in high school.

Each year, Theresa Sanchez, the principal at Martin, has talked with team leaders about the number of failures in 7th grade. Yet, she agrees that she has not taken specific actions to address the issue. She can no longer avoid the issues because she recognizes that it contributes to ill feelings between 7th- and 8th-grade teachers. She decides to act and asks both the 7th- and 8th-grade team leaders to meet with her after school on Tuesday.

At the meeting Tuesday, Sanchez expresses her concern about the increasing ill feeling between 8th- and 7th-grade teachers. She shares some data to support her

conclusion. She also indicates the school must address its low 8th-grade performance on the state test or face sanctions. She invites the team leaders to be part the solution

Sanchez lays out a plan to form a new professional learning community to address this problem. She asks the team leaders to identify people to serve on the team. She listens as they talk about including a counselor and at least one 6th-grade teacher, and equal representation from 7th and 8th grade. Sanchez asks if including a parent or student would be helpful. They decide that it would not be advantageous now, but reserve the right to include students and parents as information sources later.

Sanchez asks the team leaders to select one representative from each grade to be facilitators of the team. She also indicates she will provide some released time so the new team can have a half-day meeting to initiate their work and offers to help the facilitators plan the agenda. She expresses a desire to be a member of the team.

At the first meeting, the new team of volunteers assembles — three 7th- and three 8th -grade teachers, a 6th-grade teacher, the 7th -grade counselor, the school social worker, and Sanchez. The two facilitators engage the members in a team building activity to introduce team members to each other and to help them understand the purpose of this new learning community. The team hears the history of what brought them to this point.

Then the counselor shares data about student academic performance. He presents absentee rates, state test performance for 8th graders, CAT test scores for 6th graders, grade distributions for each grade, repeater numbers, and parent and student climate survey results. The facilitators share a protocol for examining the data. Team members divide into teams of two and each pair takes two sets of data and analyzes the data.

The team identifies several patterns within the data and begins to discuss these patterns across pairs. The facilitators ask the pairs to share their findings and to

chart them. When each pair has reported out, they exchange data sets with another team and repeat the process so that two teams of two review each data set. Additional findings are added to the chart begun by the first team.

The first meeting ends with a long list of findings. The facilitators ask each team member to share the findings with their respective grade level and to discuss which they believe may be the greatest contributor to 8th graders' performance on the state tests. They will use this input at their next meeting to plan a course of action.

## SCENARIO 4

### CROSS-SCHOOL TEAM SCENARIO: West Grove Township School District

Teachers had mixed reactions when the West Grove superintendent began talking about transforming professional development days into weekly time for professional collaboration. Some teachers loved the idea; some were less enthusiastic. Some who were less than enthusiastic included teachers of singleton academic courses within their schools or non-instructional staff. They did not understand how school-based collaborative learning teams would benefit them.

Lauren Garibaldi is the only Calculus instructor at West Grove High School. She really appreciates the idea of transforming professional development into something that would be more valuable to her, but wonders who will be on her team since she is the only Calculus teacher. She discovers that other singleton teachers, some elective teachers, the school's two counselors, the media specialist, and some of the special education staff have similar questions.

She talks with the principal about the district's plans for teachers like her. She is delighted to hear that she will create a team with her counterpart in the other high school. She learns that the plan includes asking each of them to meet at one another's schools during the same time teachers in their own schools will be meeting with teachers at their own schools. She knows the travel time will reduce their meeting time but she is grateful that her team will focus specifically on the content of Calculus and looks forward to sharing lesson ideas, developing common assessments, and units with the other high school's Calculus teacher.

When the collaborative professional learning teams begin in January on their professional development day, Garibaldi joins Ben Simpson, the other high school's

Calculus teacher, during the district's half-day training on the essential skills for collaborative teams. In the afternoon, teachers meet in their teams to discuss how to set up their teams, types of data to study, and where they will hold their bi-weekly meetings.

At their afternoon meeting, Garibaldi and Simpson set a schedule for their meetings, identify where they will meet, and then discuss what they will bring to their first meeting. High school math teachers do not have formal, standardized student achievement data other than math scores on SATs, ACTs, and Advanced Placement scores. They agree to bring these data to their next meeting to see what they can discern about students' math achievement in their district and respective schools.

At the next meeting, after pouring through the data, they discover some discrepancies in student performance. At Simpson's school, students do much better than they do in Garibaldi's school. Garibaldi recognizes that the problem could lie anywhere and engages Simpson to help her figure it out.

To their next meeting, they both bring the district curriculum documents, the state's core curriculum content standards for math and the texts they are each using and used in other advanced-level math classes. They make a huge wall matrix on chart paper and identify where each math standard is referenced in the district curriculum and in their respective texts. Their 100-minute meeting is over before they know it. Both agree that they want to spend more time looking at how the standards are addressed in each of the core science classes and texts. They both realize that they need far more time and some help for their colleagues who teach other advanced-level math classes. They schedule their next meeting and agree to invite one or two other math teachers from each of their schools to join them. They complete their mandatory team log and talk about what they want to accomplish at the next meeting.

At their next meeting, Garibaldi, Simpson, and their colleagues complete the math course map that identifies where each standard is addressed and deter-

mine where each standard's mastery is expected. 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. For example, several standards are addressed briefly or not at all.

For the next three months, their meetings focus on understanding where each math standard is taught in the high school math curriculum, sequencing the knowledge and skills included in each, and ultimately determining the specific courses in which math knowledge and skills embedded in the standards are introduced, developed, and mastered so they have a comprehensive scope and sequence within the high school math curriculum. This work has given them a deeper understanding of the content and places where they can expect students to need more instruction. By becoming content experts, they recognize how to help students master the standards. After eight meetings, they feel they have achieved a great accomplishment because they have developed a curriculum that reflects a logical sequence of their curriculum standards. Next, they agree to design common assessments for Calculus that will assess students' mastery of the standards, not just the textbook content.

## TOOL 3.2

## NSDC's Standards for Staff Development

### LEARNING COMMUNITIES

**Directions:**

Form mixed department, team, or grade-level triads. Read the standard and its rationale. As you read, identify a sentence, a phrase, and a word that represent the essence of the passage for you. Be ready to share your sentence, phrase, and word with your triad partners and explain your reason for selecting each.

**Time:** *Six minutes for reading.*

In turn, share your sentence and the reason you selected it. Follow this with your selected phrases and the reasons you selected them. End with each partner sharing his or her word and the reason he or she selected it.

**THE 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 rationale**

Staff development that has as its goal high levels of learning for all students, teachers, and administrators requires a form of professional learning that is quite different from the workshop-driven approach. The most powerful forms of staff development occur in ongoing teams that meet on a regular basis, preferably several times a week, for the purposes of learning, joint lesson planning, and problem solving. These teams, often called learning communities or communities of practice, operate with a commitment to the norms of continuous improvement and experimentation and

engage their members in improving their daily work to advance the achievement of school district and school goals for student learning.

Learning teams may be of various sizes and serve different purposes. For instance, the faculty as a whole may meet once or twice a month to reflect on its work, engage in appropriate learning, and assess its progress. In addition, some members of the faculty may serve on school improvement teams or committees that focus on the goals and methods of schoolwide improvement. While these teams make important contributions to school culture, learning environment and other priority issues, they do not substitute for the day-to-day professional conversations focused on instructional issues that are the hallmark of effective learning communities. Learning teams meet almost every day and concern themselves with practical ways to improve teaching and learning. Members of learning communities take collective responsibility for the learning of all students repre-

sented by team members. Teacher members of learning teams, which consist of four to eight members, assist one another in examining the standards students are required to master, planning more effective lessons, critiquing student work, and solving the common problems of teaching.

The teams determine areas in which additional learning would be helpful and read articles, attend workshops or courses, or invite consultants to assist them in acquiring necessary knowledge or skills. In addition to the regular meetings, participants observe one another in the classroom and conduct other job-related responsibilities. Learning communities are strengthened when other support staff, administrators, and even school board members choose to participate and when communication is facilitated between teams. Because of this common focus and clear direction, problems of fragmentation and incoherence that typically thwart school improvement efforts are eliminated.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

# Set goals for learning with a sense of urgency



*Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council*

*Most schools can make progress in creating high-quality professional learning in a single school year.*

The welfare of young people and the future of our nation requires that *all* students have quality teaching and supportive relationships with peers and adults. Unfortunately, in virtually all schools, poor quality or mediocre teaching in too many classrooms constrains the life choices of at least some students — usually those who are most vulnerable — by not providing essential skills and by diminishing the sense of possibility these students have for their lives. In addition, too many students lack meaningful relationships with their peers and with adults. This is true, in my experience, in well-financed suburban schools as well as in those challenged by poverty and racism.

A related problem is that too many teachers continue to experience professional development that numbs their minds, demeans their professionalism, and creates dependency. When the workshop or course component of “pull-out” models is well executed, the effort seldom extends to the classroom nor is sustained over a sufficient length of time to change instructional practice. Even the most successful forms of traditional types of professional development seldom affect more than a handful of teachers in a school, and those effects are usually short-lived because these programs typically have little affect on a school’s culture.

The solution to these problems is high-quality, school-based professional learning and collaborative work that affects all teachers every day, the kind of staff development that NSDC wants for all teachers in all schools by 2007. In such schools:

- Teachers hold challenging goals for all students and continuously reflect on multiple forms of evidence regarding student learning.
- Teachers share planning and learning time that promotes meaningful collaboration within the broad context of a professional learning community. Teachers participate in one or more learning

teams in which they are mutually accountable for student learning.

- The organization’s culture fosters mutual respect, high levels of trust, and innovative solutions to problems. Teachers experience the emotional and social support such cultures provide.
- Teachers are intellectually stimulated by their work. Their interactions with peers and with outside resource people deepen their understanding of the content they teach and broaden the range of instructional strategies they bring to their classrooms.
- Methods such as classroom coaching, demonstration lessons, lesson study, the examination of student work, and action research ground professional learning in daily practice and focus teachers on improving student learning.
- Teachers pursue professional learning through courses, institutes, and conferences when their content is important for the achievement of school goals. They also participate in cross-school or district networks that strengthen content knowledge and pedagogy.

The National Staff Development Council’s Standards for Staff Development, the Council’s Code of Ethics, and other professional literature available at [www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org) provide information that will deepen your understanding of these approaches.

Fortunately, virtually every school can make significant progress in creating such forms of professional learning in a single school year. The first important step is for school and district leaders to declare high-quality professional learning for all teachers as part of their daily work a priority goal within their settings and to set about achieving it with the sense of urgency it deserves.

Students pass through our schools only once, and they will be the ultimate beneficiaries of the quality teaching such professional learning can produce. Let’s do it for them, now.

**TOOL 3.4****Fears and hopes****FEARS**

After developing an understanding of the attributes of collaborative professional learning, identify the fears, concerns, or worries that come to mind when you think about implementing collaborative learning in your school.

- Write your fears, concerns, or worries individually on index cards first.  
*Time: 1-2 minutes.*
- Share your fears, concerns, or worries using a round-robin process (each person in turns shares one idea at a time until all ideas are shared).  
*Time: 3 minutes.*
- Discuss the patterns or themes that emerged in the fears, concerns, or worries people expressed.  
*Time: 5 minutes.*

**HOPES**

After developing an understanding of the attributes of collaborative professional learning, identify the advantages or hopes that come to mind when you think about implementing collaborative learning in your school.

- Write your advantages or hopes individually on index cards first.  
*Time: 1-2 minutes.*
- Share your advantages or hopes using a round-robin process (each person in turns shares one idea at a time until all ideas are shared).  
*Time: 3 minutes.*
- Discuss the patterns or themes that emerged in the advantages or hopes people expressed.  
*Time: 5 minutes.*

**Collect the fears, hopes, and patterns and compile them to share with staff.**

**TOOL 3.5****Possible staff meeting agenda** *Total time: 85 minutes*

<b>TIME</b>	<b>WHAT</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
5 minutes	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Purpose for today's meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an understanding about the attributes of collaborative professional learning.</li> <li>• Consider how collaborative professional learning might add value to our school's professional development.</li> <li>• Understand the staff's fears and hopes regarding collaborative professional learning.</li> </ul>	Principal/ teacher leaders	
30 minutes	Attributes of collaborative professional learning	Principal/ teacher leaders	
20 minutes	<p>Rationale for collaborative professional learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the staff to meet in pairs according to the different selections they have read and to offer a two-minute summary of their readings to each other. <i>(5 minutes)</i></li> <li>• Revisit definitions written earlier in the Team Learning Scenario Task (Tool 3.1) and add any other ideas stimulated by the rationale. <i>(3 minutes)</i></li> </ul> <p>NOTE: Divide the staff into two groups. Have one half read the rationale for NSDC's Learning Communities standard (Tool 3.2). Have the other half read the May 2004 article by Dennis Sparks (Tool 3.3).</p>	Principal/ teacher leaders	
20 minutes	Complete Fears and Hopes activity (Tool 3.4).	Principal/ teacher leaders	
10 minutes	Recommend next actions regarding collaborative professional learning in the school.	Principal/ teacher leaders	

## Chapter 4

# GETTING STARTED

### TOOL

**Tool 4.1** A community of learners: One school's journey. Two viewpoints. 4 pages

Where are we?

**Teams of teachers in our school meet regularly to learn and work together.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Some teachers in our school meet regularly to learn and work together.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers tend to work independently in our school.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**All teachers in our school are members of collaborative professional learning teams.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**I**n the last several years, researchers have examined the links among instruction, teacher professional development, school leadership, and student learning. Most educators understand that, when teachers have deep content knowledge, design and deliver data-driven instruction targeting student content standards, and work in a supportive, collaborative, and productive environment, students will be successful.

Working collaboratively to construct joint work, solve common problems, plan instruction, and design and score common assessments are some examples of how teachers engage in collaborative professional learning and acquire the required 100 hours of professional development. In collaborative professional learning, teachers use their routine work as opportunities for learning and improving their practice and student learning. In this way, professional development is naturally integrated into their daily work and connected to what they are teaching.

While most agree that collaborative learning time for teachers is valuable, many schools and districts are still unwilling to adjust their current professional development practices to add more time for collaboration among teachers. The many reasons for this hesitation range from finding time to trusting teachers to use the time wisely. Whatever the reasons for not launching collaborative professional learning have been in the past, this tool kit addresses them. It is designed to assist school and district staff to transform typical professional development into collaborative learning centered around content, assessment, content-specific pedagogy,

and student learning.

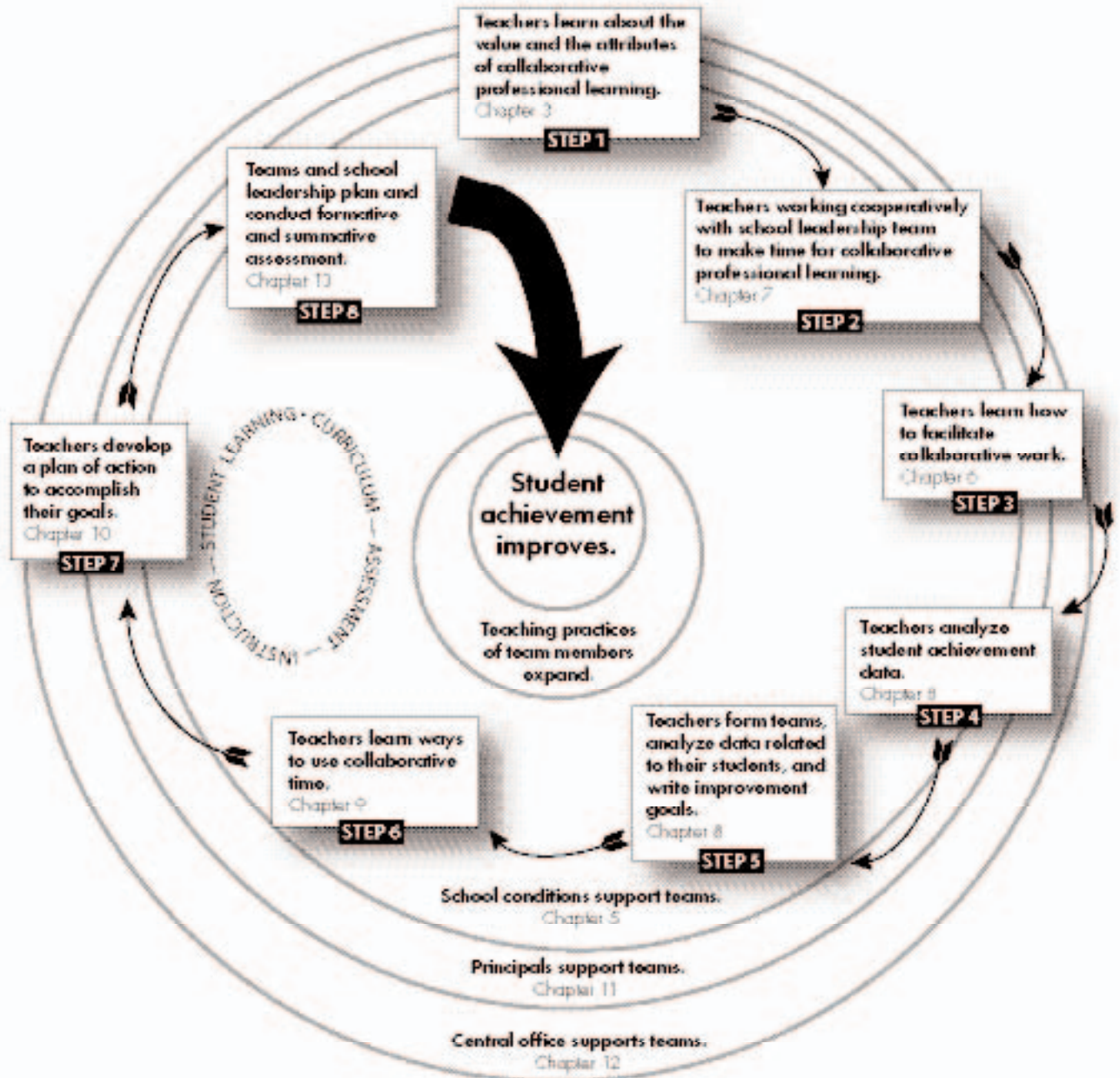
The major question facing those who have not yet added collaboration into their professional development programs is where to begin. For those who have already launched some collaboration, the question is how to improve team's effectiveness. Jody Westbrook and Shirley Hord say it best, "Creating a professional learning community in a school is no easy task. . . . Any school change requires abundant time, energy, and resourcefulness, along with large quantities of school leadership" (Westbrook & Hord, 2000, p. 2). A deceptively simple process when looking from the outside in, collaborative professional learning requires a deep infrastructure that creates the necessary conditions for learning to be professionally rewarding for teachers and impact students.

The model that follows offers a theory of change for collaborative professional learning. It explains how teacher learning impacts student learning when teachers are working and learning with their colleagues. "A program's theory of change delineates the underlying assumptions upon which the program is based. It includes not only the components of a program and also incorporates an explanation of how change is expected to occur.

A program's theory of change can be based on existing research, current practice, or the program developer's implicit theories of action" (Killion, 2002, p. 55). The theory of change for collaborative professional learning in Figure 4.1 offers a road map for the process of initiating, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining collaborative professional learning.

Figure 4.1

**Collaborative professional learning: Theory of change**



This theory of change is based on several assumptions:

- When teachers learn within a community of learners, their learning is richer and more meaningful.
- Teachers who learn within a community of learners are more likely to find value in their learning and to apply what they learn in their classrooms.
- Teachers' content knowledge impacts their ability to design instruction to meet rigorous core curriculum content standards.
- Teachers use data about student learning to design and deliver instruction to students with varied abilities.
- School leaders are an integral part of both teacher and student success.

Teachers' access to high-quality, job-embedded professional development that includes ample time for collaboration creates a learning culture within the school that promotes both teacher and student learning.

The theory of change for collaborative professional learning is depicted in Figure 4.1.

- Steps 1-3 are the preparatory steps.
- Steps 4-6 are the collaborative professional learning process. Once teams have gained some foundational knowledge, they can repeat steps 7-13.
- Steps 7-8 are the heart of the collaborative learning process and describe the cycle of learning for each team.

The model suggests that collaborative work focused on student learning is cyclical. In other words, teachers identify a focused, SMART goal (S=Specific, M=Measurable, A=Attainable, R=Results-driven, T=Timebound), teach, assess students' achievement of the goal, and use data from the assessment to identify the next goals. This cycle may be repeated in various lengths of time ranging from monthly to annually depending on the amount of time teams meet. For teams who meet daily, the cycle of learning might be monthly; for a team that meets only weekly, the cycle might be by semester. Other teams may decide to establish a plan for the entire school year even if they meet daily or weekly. However, shorter cycles allow for more targeted work and have the potential to impact learning



**Tool 4.1**

more directly.

For schools that have not yet initiated collaborative professional learning, the cycle identifies some of the foundations to consider before starting. For the many schools that have initiated some form of collaborative professional learning, the theory of change offers guidance about where to improve their effectiveness. They might want to consider if they have created time for teachers to meet in collaborative teams and provided adequate opportunities for teachers to learn what a collaborative professional learning team is, how it can add value

to teachers' lives, or how to facilitate learning teams or use their time. Even teams that have been meeting together for some time can benefit from examining the theory of change and comparing it to their own work.

The theory of change for collaborative professional learning offers a process map for initiating, improving, or monitoring a school's collaborative professional learning process. Checking it frequently helps teams know if they are on track for producing the results they want.

Tool 4.1 is by New Jersey principal Patricia Wright and teacher Beth Warren. Together, Wright and Warren reflect back on their efforts to create collaborative learning within their school and offer their individual perspective. This tool demonstrates how the theory of change looks in action within a New Jersey school.

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## TOOL 4.1

## A community of learners. One school's journey — two viewpoints

A story told by

**Patricia Wright**, former principal, now superintendent  
of Spring Lake (N.J.) Public Schools

**Beth Warren**, former teacher, now supervisor of language arts  
in East Brunswick (N.J.) Public Schools

The following is the story of one school's transformation into a professional learning community. It details the steps of the process. The first voice is that of the leader who engaged the staff in a shared vision for high levels of achievement for all of our students. The second voice describes the teacher's reaction to the changes. It reveals that building a learning community is a process that involves creating a school culture built on mutual respect, collegiality, collaboration, celebration, shared leadership and shared responsibility.

**Wright:** Years of experience as a teacher had taught me the impact, both positive and negative, that leadership has on a school community. As I assumed my first principalship, I knew I wanted to establish a safe, respectful and productive learning environment for all students and staff. My goal was to be an instructional leader who created an ongoing dialogue about learning. I was thrilled when I saw that the mission statement of my new school claimed, “We are a community of learners.”

**Warren:** The staff had been on one big roller coaster ride. After several principals, each with a different style and philosophy, the staff was scattered in their thinking and their practice. Although we were a group of talented professionals, we were all working in different directions. There was an overall feeling of negativity and a lack of common goals.

**Wright:** I spent the first few months in my new position listening and observing. I quickly realized that not only were the teachers not talking about teaching and learning, some were not talking to each other at all! A staff and student survey revealed that student discipline was an area of concern. I decided to use this area to develop our first common school goal. The collective dialogue began. A group of interested teachers volunteered to be our Character Education Core Team. Discussions at faculty meetings led to the staff's conclusion that any character education efforts had to be directly tied to the school's discipline policy. Another collaborative team was born — one that took on the job of revising the existing discipline policy. Still another committee was formed to develop schoolwide activities to support our initiative. We planned a series of lessons that taught students the importance of respect and the steps of conflict resolution. We also let students know that bullying would not be tolerated. The number one school rule became respect for everyone in the school community. The staff modeled that rule and the core program lessons of anti-bullying and conflict resolution daily.

**Warren:** Having a common purpose gave us the opportunity to begin to work together. I was excited. There was a cautious feeling of optimism. Not only were we seeing a difference in student behavior, but we also began to shift our attitudes as we modeled respectful behavior and conflict resolution strategies. Communication improved and a dialogue focused on school improvement was begun.

**Wright:** As principal, I took part in every committee. My character education core team and I attended conflict resolution training and we used faculty meeting time to train the rest of the staff. Students were taught these skills so they could solve problems peacefully. The same skills were used by the adults as they worked side-by-side on this initiative. Within a few short months, teachers saw an improvement in the school climate. This was due not only to the students' response to our efforts, but also to a renewed sense of collaboration and mutual respect among the staff. We had tackled a problem together and we had met success.

**Warren:** Although I was receptive to the development of new committees, I was skeptical that they would make a significant impact. Throughout the years,

I had served on numerous groups charged by the leader with the responsibility for some school change. Rarely did the leader take part in the actual committee work. I was impressed with the new principal's full participation in committee discussions. This led to decisions that actually had an impact on the daily life of the school. For example, her participation in our character education initiative allowed her to effectively reinforce those lessons when dealing with discipline in the office. What a novel idea! Everyone was on the same page! I was eager to participate because I knew my ideas were valued. As trust built, more teachers took responsibility for their group's work by voicing concerns and sharing ideas. I could see everyone finally taking ownership for our school's improvement.

**Wright:** The dialogue started, the climate improved and it was time to focus on learning. I initiated a professional book club. Several teachers from various grade levels and disciplines eagerly joined the breakfast group as we read our first selection, *Mosaic of Thought*, by Ellin Keene. The teachers would leave a session and try some of the ideas in their classrooms, come back and share both successes and failures. As the teachers engaged, they learned more about each other personally and professionally. In the process they were building trust and the school culture was changing from one of isolation to one of collaboration. As they reflected on research and practice, the group defined a problem. We currently did not approach the teaching of reading comprehension consistently across grade levels and contents. The group then worked on a solution. They developed a set of active reading strategies and shared them at a faculty meeting. Posters of the strategies were made for every classroom. Ultimately, the strategies became part of the district-wide literacy curriculum and our teachers led summer workshops to share their ideas with others across the district.

**Warren:** My colleagues and I were excited. We realized that we had the power to affect change by working collaboratively. I was taking ideas directly from our book club sessions and immediately applying the strategies in my classroom. Book club members were impressed with each other's abilities and we realized we could learn more from each other than we could from any one-day workshop. The sharing of craft knowledge fostered an excitement for professional learning. Other teachers from the district, as well as other school com-

munities visited our classrooms extending our learning community outside our own school's walls.

**Wright:** Together, the staff and I identified other areas of need. School goals were collectively developed and Professional Improvement Plans were written. Teachers chose to work in focus groups on areas of interest. These groups met regularly to read and reflect on current research. Classrooms became laboratories as teachers implemented new ideas and provided feedback on results. Teachers examined student work and used data to drive instruction. The groups had the opportunity to share successful strategies with the entire staff at faculty meetings. The following are some of the groups that were formed over the past six years: meeting the needs of all learners, narrative writing, technology, parent communication, study and organizational skills, reading and writing across the curriculum. The work of these groups has had a significant impact on student achievement.

**Warren:** The school was alive with discussion that focused on instruction. In the halls, the faculty room and even the parking lot, I often heard, “Did you try...” or “You should see what my students did!” or “Can I come in and see that lesson?” The principal was part of the dialogue. She visited my classroom to see the impact that the focus group discussions were having on student learning. She encouraged my colleagues and me by her consistent involvement whether it meant finding a book that supported a project, sharing success stories or arranging for class coverage so we could observe in each others' classrooms. Classroom doors were wide open and teacher isolation was a thing of the past. Observations took on a new life because the principal could relate the content of my lesson directly to my professional development experiences and talk with me about my changing practice.

**Wright:** I was not only the leader but the lead learner. In the beginning, I attended every focus group meeting. As more groups developed and teachers became more confident in their collaboration skills, they took on leadership roles as facilitators and recorders. They scheduled their own meetings, sent e-mail updates to members and ensured that the rest of the staff was kept up-to-date on their work.

**Warren:** My professional development experiences

provided me with knowledge, tools and strategies that impacted student learning. Slowly, I also developed a new skills set. I realized the power of active listening, conflict resolution, constructivist facilitation and organizational skills. Without even realizing it, I was honing my ability to lead. I was empowered by the potential a professional learning community had to change teaching and learning, school climate and myself.

**Wright:** A true learning community adopts the notion that failure for students is not an option. Our Intervention and Referral Services team increased its effectiveness by devising a meeting protocol and a method for examining student work. We focused on developing sound intervention plans. We communicated with members of all the focus groups in order to develop and share the most effective strategies for helping at risk learners. Instead of talking about why a student was experiencing difficulty, the focus was now on how we would ensure his or her success.

**Warren:** I participated in Intervention and Referral Services Team meetings throughout my career either as a teacher who had referred a student, or as a member of the I&RS team. Meetings became more meaningful. There was a richer dialogue about possible interventions and accommodations that would increase each student's chance of success. The work of the focus groups produced a broader repertoire of behavioral and instructional strategies from which to choose.

**Wright:** Our school won several awards including a New Jersey Best Practice and a New Jersey Star School Award. Everyone in the school community took pride in these accomplishments because along the way we celebrated everyday — a note of congratulations in the school bulletin, a word of praise to a colleague, shared stories of student successes. We became a community of learners that took collective responsibility for failures and achievements.

**Warren:** I was excited to see my colleagues meet with success. There was a renewed pride in our school. The awards were just the public confirmation of the success of our collaborative work.

**Wright:** This will be my last year as principal of this school. Looking back, I realize how much I have grown as a leader. At a recent faculty meeting, the staff

reflected on our accomplishments. All agreed that their active participation in our professional learning community played a key role in our success. I explained that many things in the school had changed, but most importantly they had changed. The ability to continue the journey belonged to them.

**Warren:** I have applied what I have learned to my new role as a district supervisor. Facilitating learning communities is a priority for me because it is a promising practice that nurtures professional growth and enhances student achievement. I currently bring grade-level teachers together and implement the model of collaboration that I learned from my principal. I can now use my knowledge to help other teachers to become leaders who affect change in their school communities.

**Wright:** As a new principal enters the building, he or she will hear teachers talking and I am sure they will continue to talk about what matters most — learning! They have truly become a community of learners who have created their own cycle of continuous school improvement.

## Chapter 5

# SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### TOOLS:

**Tool 5.1** School culture survey. *1 page*

**Tool 5.2** Audit of the culture starts with two handy tools. *12 pages*

**Tool 5.3** Teacher and principal ICs on Learning Communities. *4 pages*

**Tool 5.4** What does your community know and believe about teacher learning? A survey. *2 pages*

**Tool 5.5** Frequently asked questions about professional development. *1 page*

**Tool 5.6** Central office IC on Learning Communities. *2 pages*

Where are we?

**Our school community believes that a highly qualified teacher in every classroom is important to student success.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Parents complain when students are out of class for teacher professional development.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**The district mandates specific professional development for all teachers.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers in our school are committed to continuous improvement.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**T**he school's culture increases teachers' willingness to engage in collaborative professional learning, and teachers' willingness to engage in collaborative professional learning improves the school's culture. The circular relationship between culture and willingness sometimes makes it difficult to determine where to start. Is it best to establish a culture that supports teacher interdependence, or is it best to begin with creating communities of learners? While it is possible to argue either side, it is perhaps best to accept the existing conditions and recognize that regardless of where a school begins, both culture and willingness will be positively impacted.

#### **Conditions to support collaborative learning**

Establishing the conditions that will positively contribute to a staff's success with collaborative professional learning requires vigilance and dedication. Yet, waiting until the conditions are ideal may mean that collaborative professional learning never happens. Sometimes pushing ahead, regardless of the conditions, speeds up the change in conditions and moves a school ahead far more rapidly.

Specifying conditions that support collaborative professional learning is difficult. Some of those conditions are identified here:

- Teachers' commitment and willingness;
- Principal's commitment and willingness;
- Community's commitment and support;
- Resources available to support collaborative learning;

- District support and commitment;
- Schedule that provides time;
- Structures for learning;
- Feedback systems;
- Reporting systems;
- Clear expectations;
- Coordination systems to share learning across teams; and
- Accountability systems to produce results.

#### **School culture**

The concept of school culture has appeared in educational literature for about two decades. Some of the early definitions offer clear understanding of the concept.

School culture can be defined as the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, in varying degrees, by members of the school community.

This system of meaning often shapes what people think and how they act. Researchers have found that healthy and sound school cultures correlate strongly with increased student achievement and motivation, and with teacher productivity and satisfaction. A vision for creating a healthy school culture should be a collaborative activity among teachers, students, parents, staff, and the principal. The principal's role in changing school culture is to act with care and concern for others, work to develop shared visions of what the school should be, and work on team-building (Stolp, 1994).

Stoll, a leading British researcher, defines school

Table 5.1 **Stoll's school culture indicators (Stoll, 1999)**

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

culture as "how things are done around here." In a more implicit sense, school culture manifests itself in customs, rituals, symbols, stories, and language – culture's "artifacts" (Stoll, 1999).

In an extensive study of literacy teachers' success and the working conditions of the schools in which they taught, Langer discovered students who outperformed their peers attended schools that nurtured a professional climate for teachers. The factors that emerged across all the schools studied include:

- A shared vision for student achievement and a plan to get there;
- Teacher participation in a variety of professional communities in and outside of the school and valuing their commitment to the profession of teaching;
- Structured improvement activities that offered teachers a sense of agency;
- Caring attitude that extends to colleagues and students; and
- Deep respect for lifelong learning (Langer, 2001, 2002).  
In a study of schools that received the U.S. Department of Education Model Professional Development Program Award in 1997 and 1998, the research team found striking similarities among the schools that used professional development as the means to improve student learning. The research team offered the following recommendations:
  - Use clear, agreed upon student achievement goals to focus and shape student learning;
  - Provide an expanded array of professional development opportunities;
  - Embed, ongoing informal learning into the school culture;
  - Build a highly collaborative school environment where working together to solve problems and learning from each other become the cultural norm;
  - Find and use the time to allow teacher learning to

happen; and

- Keep checking a broad range of student performance data (WestEd, 2000, p. 12).

Tools 5.1 and 5.2 are tools to assess a school's culture. Tool 5.1 is a simple and quick survey. The instruments in 5.2 are more thorough and extensive. The first tool, Self-Assessment: School Culture Triage, is a survey to gather perceptions of staff about school culture. The second instrument is a multi-part assessment of school culture involving interviews, observations, surveys, analysis of the data, and presentation of the findings. By administering either assessment as a baseline measure and then again at the end of the next several school years, a school will have evidence of the change in school culture that occurs over time. When baseline data are gathered after collecting a completed survey from each staff member, it will be helpful to compile the results into a series of tables and graphs and engage the staff in conversations about actions they want to take to address the areas of greatest need. By identifying areas of strength and creating a plan to address areas of need in a school's culture, staff members are making a commitment to improve the culture of their school.

Tool 5.3 can be used for a similar purpose. This tool, an innovation configuration on NSDC's Standards for Staff Development on Learning Communities, identifies principal and teacher behaviors associated with learning communities. Teachers and principals can use this tool to self-assess, conduct a schoolwide assessment in which they compile their results and use the innovation configuration to discuss evidence regarding their current state.

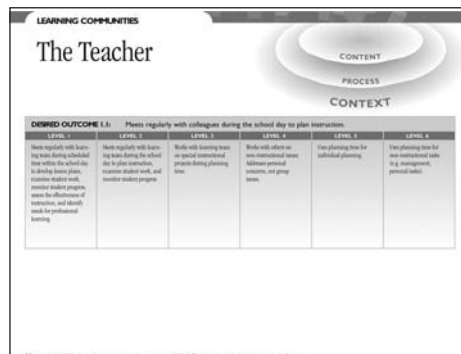
Determining whether to assess a school's culture is a decision that is best made collaboratively by the principal and teacher leadership team. Before selecting a tool to use, both the principal and teacher leaders will want to study several options, weigh the pros and cons of each, and select one that will be informative, not overwhelming. The samples included in this chapter are only



Tool 5.1



Tool 5.2



Tool 5.3

some examples of ways to assess school culture. If the school has not conducted a formal culture audit before, using a simpler tool such as the one in Tool 5.1 may be better. Tool 5.1 is based on the seminal research about school culture by Jon Saphier and Matthew King (1985). This research

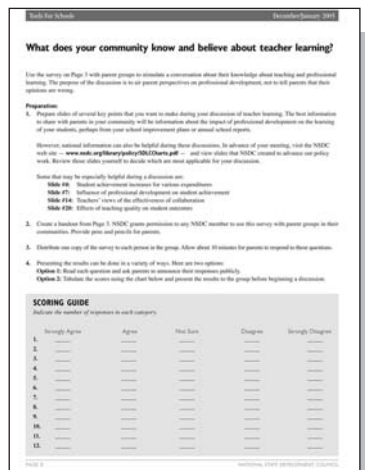
has informed the field for more than 20 years. As the school begins to develop a culture of openness and inquiry, other tools may be more useful. Regardless of the tool or process selected, regular assessment of school culture is one way to ensure that actions to strengthen the culture are data-driven and focused on areas of need.

**Community support**

Another aspect of a supportive condition is community support for professional learning. Parents often do not understand the importance of teacher learning. They often only recognize the inconvenience when students are out of school so that teachers can learn. The notion that teachers only learn on days designated as learning days is antithetical to the kind of professional learning that this tool kit advocates. Educators learn continuously and transforming traditional professional development into collaborative professional learning may actually increase both teacher and student learning

time. If school schedules are structured to provide daily opportunities for teacher learning, parents will not face the struggle they feel when school is dismissed for teacher learning.

Schools often feel the tension between providing time for professional learning and time for student instruction. School staff can take some initiative in talking with their parent community about the value of professional development. Tool 5.4 is a survey to assess parents' views about teacher learning. Tool 5.5 is a Frequently Asked Questions sheet about teacher learning.



Tool 5.4



Tool 5.5

**District support**

Another critical dimension of creating a web of support for collaborative professional learning is district support. Essential indicators of a district's support for school-based collaborative professional learning include:

- The degree to which the district administrative staff permit schools to make decisions about professional learning;
- The support that the district administrative staff provides to help school staff create collaborative professional learning teams;
- The amount and quality of training provided by the district to support teams; and
- The resources the district identifies and distributes to schools for collaborative professional learning.

Tool 5.6 is the innovation configuration for central office staff regarding the Learning Communities standard. Central office staff members might use this resource to assess their support of school-based collaborative professional learning. In addition, central office staff might consider how they bring together teachers from across schools whose learning communities are outside of their school.

Collaborative professional learning teams vary in membership based on the size of a school and the staff configuration and areas of interest. Because some learning teams exist within a school and others may exist out-



Tool 5.6

side a school, central office staff may have a role in forming cross-school or cross-district teams. In most schools, staff members form teams by departments, courses taught, grade levels, teaching team, and/or interdisciplinary areas of focus. In other schools, especially smaller schools where there is only one

teacher of the arts, health, physical education, ESL/bilingual, or technology and only one counselor, librarian, or nurse, these staff members form interdisciplinary teams or form a team with those in the same role in other schools within their district or across districts.

Sometimes teaching staff are members of more than one team. A Family and Consumer Sciences teacher who is the only one in her department may be a member of an interdisciplinary team within her school focused on character education. She may also be a member of a team of Family and Consumer Sciences from other high schools within her district or region. A school nurse may be a member of an interdisciplinary team within his school focused on student health and also a member of a districtwide learning team of school nurses.

Creating the conditions to support teacher collaborative learning also means helping teachers build trust, relationships, and voice. Jody Westbrook and Shirley Hord describe conditions necessary for professional

learning communities that emerged from their study of developing this type of community in different school settings. In their work, they found “significant foundational factors — the presence of which contributed to PLC success, and the absence of which often presaged difficulty or failure in PLC implementation . . .

**Trust.** This element is a requirement among teachers, between teachers and administrators, between campus and district-level personnel, and between school personnel and co-developers. High levels of trust promoted risk taking, honest communication, and deep commitments to school initiatives, including the PLC project. The absence of trust distracted personnel from issues of instruction to conflicts of personality and practice. Conscious efforts to build trust characterize many efforts to create professional learning communities.

**Teachers are heard.** Schools in which the insight and input of teachers is solicited and utilized tended to move more easily into — or increase their practice of — the PLC dimensions of shared leadership and collective learning. Administrators who acted without the input of teachers tended toward autocratic styles of leadership; teachers who felt their knowledge was not honored, and their suggestions not welcomed tended to resist “top-down” directives of all ilks, including PLC.

**Student centered.** Although one might expect a focus on students to characterize any school, visits to a cross-section of the nation’s schools will quickly reveal the many ways teachers and administrators can be distracted from their students’ learning and well-being. The attention of administrators and teachers alike can be consumed by any number of issues, including: test scores, and their implications for funding, status, and consequences within a district; administrative turnover and political concerns; personality clashes; and issues of equity within and between schools.

Schools where personnel asked aloud and frequently of programs, practices, and initiatives: “Is it better for kids?” tended to more easily and deeply take on PLC dimensions, and could more easily tailor the expression of those dimensions to the particular needs and culture of their school.

**Concerns about “add-on” programs.** The plethora of new initiatives, innovations, projects and reform efforts, combined with the hefty demands of teaching, have led many school personnel to a sense of “so much to do, so little time.”

Rather than being a sign of resistance, questions about the additional responsibilities and time required

of a PLC effort revealed a healthy skepticism about poorly planned or implemented efforts at reform. When these concerns could be addressed openly and completely, teachers and administrators were able to more fully commit to creating a professional learning community at their school (Westbrook & Hord, 2000, p. 2-4).

Establishing supportive conditions for collaborative professional learning is challenging work. Yet, the easiest way to do so is to establish collaborative professional learning teams. When staff members begin to collaborate, they interact about teaching and learning since that is their common interest. They naturally develop trust and respect for one another when they engage in joint work. They also simultaneously increase the transparency of their work and create interdependence. There is a reciprocal relationship between creating teams and creating a collaborative culture. Act on one and the other responds.

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Tools For Schools

# School culture survey

## COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR

This tool will help a school assess its culture based on the 12 norms of a healthy school culture identified by Jon Saphier and Mathew King in their article, "Good Seeds Grow in Strong Cultures," *Educational Leadership*, March 1985.

The facilitator should prepare individual sheets ahead of the meeting and distribute to participants.

After individuals declare their positions, the facilitator should collect the responses and tabulate privately. The cumulative responses should be shared at the next team meeting. The facilitator should then 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?*

**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

April/May 2001

a t t e n t i o n  
C U L T U R E

# An audit of the culture starts with two handy tools

By CHRISTOPHER WAGNER  
and PENELOPE MASDEN-COPAS

**A**s 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

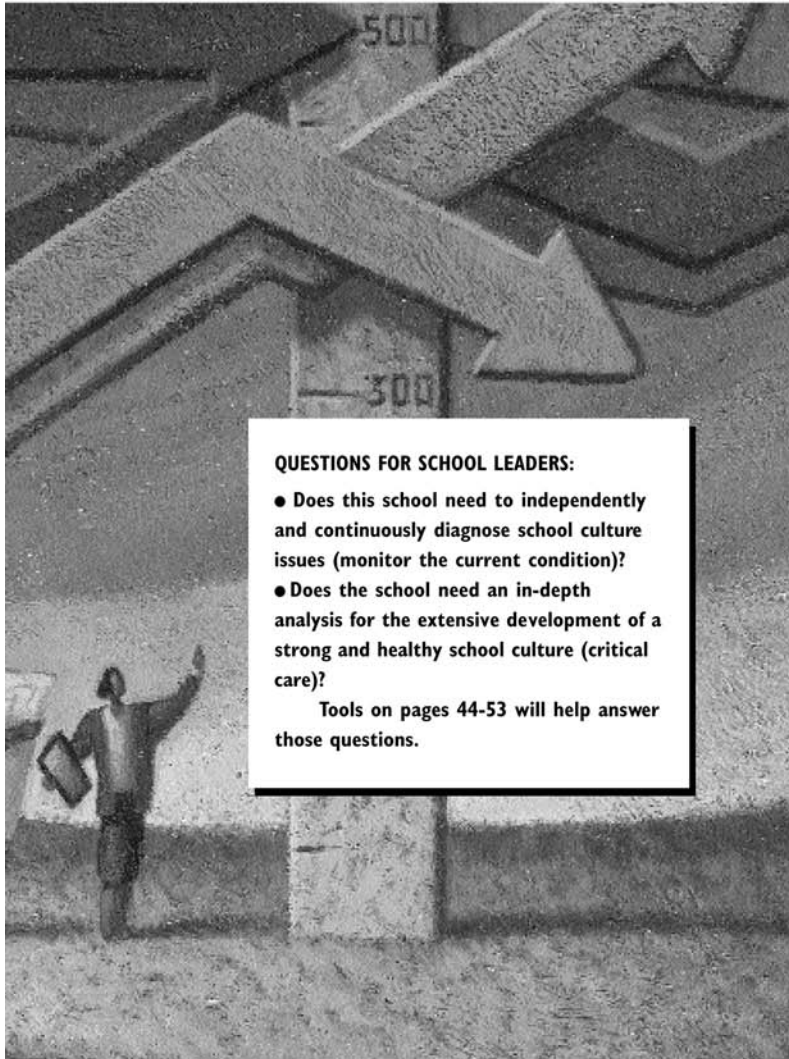


student learning. As Sheila Patterson, a teacher at South Stokes High School in Walnut Cove, N.C., recently said (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2001), “It’s an attitude, not a program.”

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,

■  
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**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.

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 inculcation 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.

**REFERENCES**

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**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](http://www.schoolculture.net)
- The National School Improvement Project  
[www.garyphillips.com](http://www.garyphillips.com)

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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
<b>PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION</b>					
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
<b>AFFILIATIVE COLLEGIALITY</b>					
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
<b>SELF-DETERMINATION/EFFICACY</b>					
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*

Note: To gain the most complete view of your school's culture, this assessment is best taken by all members of the school staff.

## 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?

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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

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**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

\* Note: Informal observations are not formal supervisory observations.

## OBSERVATIONS

**1. Collegiality.** The way adults treat each other, i.e., respect and harmony vs. disrespect and discord.

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**2. Efficacy.** Feeling of ownership or capacity to influence decisions; i.e., do people tend to live with or solve problems?

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**3. High expectations of self and others.** Excellence is acknowledged; improvement is celebrated, supported, and shared.

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**4. Experimentation and entrepreneurship.** New ideas abound and invention occurs.

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**5. Trust and confidence.** Participants believe in the leaders and each other based on the match between creeds and deeds.

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**6. Tangible support.** Improvement efforts are substantive with abundant resources made available by all.

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**7. Appreciation and recognition of improvement.** People feel special and act special.

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**8. Humor.** Caring is expressed through “kidding” or joking in tasteful ways.

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**9. Shared decision making by all participants.** Those affected by a decision are involved in making and implementing the decision.

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**10. Shared vision.** Participants understand what’s important and avoid trivial tasks.

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**11. Traditions.** The school has identifiable celebrations and rituals that are important to the school community.

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**12. Open and honest communication.** Information flows throughout the organization in formal and informal channels. Everyone receives information on a “need-to-know” basis.

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**13. Metaphors and stories.** There is evidence of behavior being communicated and influenced by internal imagery.

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Source: Christopher Wagner

## STEP THREE: SURVEY

### Directions to the facilitators

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- 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

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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

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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

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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?

Source: Christopher Wagner

### 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."

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

# The Teacher

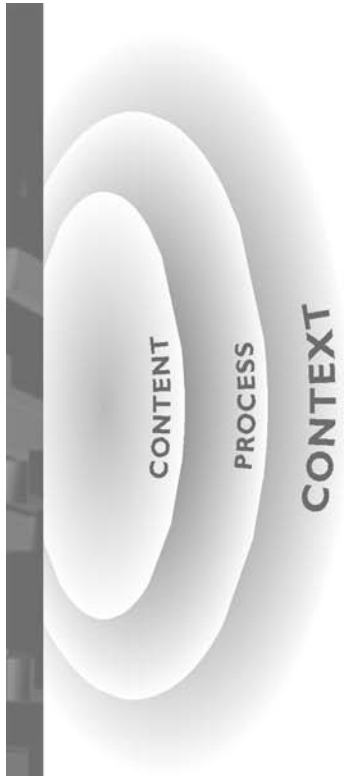
<b>DESIRED OUTCOME I.1: Meets regularly with colleagues during the school day to plan instruction.</b>					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Meets regularly with learning team during scheduled time within the school day to develop lesson plans, examine student work, monitor student progress,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

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: THE TEACHER

<b>DESIRED OUTCOME I.2: Aligns collaborative work with school improvement goals.</b>					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
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.	Aligns the work of the learning team with school-wide goals. Works in a learning team (grade level, subject matter, interdisciplinary, vertical) to address issues related to the grade or subject area.	Works in a learning team (grade level, subject matter, interdisciplinary, vertical) to address issues related to specific grade or subject area.	Works alone; addresses individual issues rather than school or grade level issues.		
<b>DESIRED OUTCOME I.3: Participates in learning teams, some of whose membership extends beyond the school.</b>					
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Participates in state, regional, districtwide and/or national networks. Participates in interdisciplinary or subject matter/grade level learning teams.	Participates in districtwide and regional networks and interdisciplinary or subject matter/grade level learning teams.	Participates in both interdisciplinary and subject matter/grade level learning teams within the district.	Participates in interdisciplinary learning teams and/or subject matter or grade level teams only.	Participates in individual learning outside grade level, subject area, and/or school.	

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 I.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 I.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 I.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.	

## What does your community know and believe about teacher learning?

Use the survey on Page 3 with parent groups to stimulate a conversation about their knowledge about teaching and professional learning. The purpose of the discussion is to air parent perspectives on professional development, not to tell parents that their opinions are wrong.

**Preparation:**

1. Prepare slides of several key points that you want to make during your discussion of teacher learning. The best information to share with parents in your community will be information about the impact of professional development on the learning of your students, perhaps from your school improvement plans or annual school reports.

However, national information can also be helpful during these discussions. In advance of your meeting, visit the NSDC web site — [www.nsd.org/library/policy/SDLCCharts.pdf](http://www.nsd.org/library/policy/SDLCCharts.pdf) — and view slides that NSDC created to advance our policy work. Review those slides yourself to decide which are most applicable for your discussion.

Some that may be especially helpful during a discussion are:

- Slide #4:** Student achievement increases for various expenditures
- Slide #7:** Influence of professional development on student achievement
- Slide #14:** Teachers’ views of the effectiveness of collaboration
- Slide #20:** Effects of teaching quality on student outcomes

2. Create a handout from Page 3. NSDC grants permission to any NSDC member to use this survey with parent groups in their communities. Provide pens and pencils for parents.
3. Distribute one copy of the survey to each person in the group. Allow about 10 minutes for parents to respond to these questions.
4. Presenting the results can be done in a variety of ways. Here are two options:
  - Option 1:** Read each question and ask parents to announce their responses publicly.
  - Option 2:** Tabulate the scores using the chart below and present the results to the group before beginning a discussion.

### SCORING GUIDE

Indicate the number of responses in each category.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

## What do you know and believe about teacher learning?

*Please circle the response that indicates your views regarding each statement.*

1. I want my child enrolled in a school that has a deep commitment to the continuous learning of the staff.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
2. Teachers will learn more through collaboration with other teachers than attending workshops.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
3. Teachers learned everything they need to know about teaching when they were in college.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
4. What teachers know about their subject area has a direct impact on how much their students are able to learn.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
5. Teachers should do all of their learning on their own time.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
6. Science is the only subject in which we know more today than we knew 20 years ago. That means that science teachers are the only teachers who need to keep learning about new content for the subjects they teach.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
7. Teaching is a natural skill that really cannot be improved upon.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
8. Teachers only need to spend a few hours each year learning how to improve their teaching.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
9. The changing demographics in my community present new challenges to teachers and means that all teachers need to learn how to more effectively teach all children.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
10. Teachers can learn a great deal about children and teaching by talking with other teachers and observing other teachers in their classrooms during the school day.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
11. The quality of teaching has a direct impact on the quality of learning for students.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------
12. Only bad teachers need to spend time learning how to improve how they teach. Good teachers will keep getting better without making any special effort.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

## Frequently asked questions

*NSDC has answered parents' most frequently asked questions about professional learning. You have our permission to use any of these questions and answers in school or district newsletters or to post on your school or district web site as long as NSDC is credited in this way:*

*Source: National Staff Development Council, [www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org).*

*Send other questions that you want us to answer for parents to [NSDCJoan@aol.com](mailto:NSDCJoan@aol.com). We'll answer them and add them to our online FAQs for parents at [www.nsd.org/talkingtoparents.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/talkingtoparents.cfm).*

### **What is staff development anyway?**

Staff development describes the time that teachers and principals use to update their knowledge and skills so they can do their work better. Sometimes, it's called professional development, inservice, institute days, workshops, or training. Sometimes, districts enable teachers to use time during school days to meet with other teachers to plan lessons and examine student work. This is also a significant form of staff development. No matter what the name, however, staff development is time when teachers and principals learn more so students can learn more.

### **Why didn't teachers learn what they needed to know in college like other professionals do?**

Most professionals update their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. Would you go to a physician or dentist, for example, who had stopped learning after they graduated from medical or dental school?

It's impossible for teachers to learn everything they need to know for a lifetime of teaching during just a few years in college. Some of the most important lessons can be learned only after they have their own students.

Plus many changes have occurred since teachers graduated from college. There have been new discoveries in science, new research on human learning and teaching, changing demographics in communities, and new expectations for what students should learn in different subject areas. Teachers have to stay on top of all of this in order to be good teachers for your children.

### **Why do teachers have to take half days off from school for staff development? Why can't teachers do this on their own time, at night or on the weekends so they don't take time away from their students?**

The school district has a responsibility for ensuring that teachers are up to speed in what and how they teach. That means the school district is obligated to provide teachers with time to learn during their work day.

Many teachers will choose to take a university course during their personal time but that is different from the learning that the district expects of them and invests in.

### **Teachers in my child's school spend an hour to an hour and a half every day just talking to each other. I think this is really a waste of time. Why can't they spend that time teaching instead of talking to each other?**

When teachers have grade-level or department meetings, they generally use this time to ensure that all teachers are on target with their instruction. They compare lessons, test results, homework assignments, and sometimes they plan lessons that each of them will teach. That helps ensure that students are equally prepared for the next grade.

In schools where teachers just go into their own rooms and teach whatever and however they want, students often finish the year with very different experiences. That can mean that some students are not prepared for the next grade. Regular team meetings are one way to prevent that from happening.

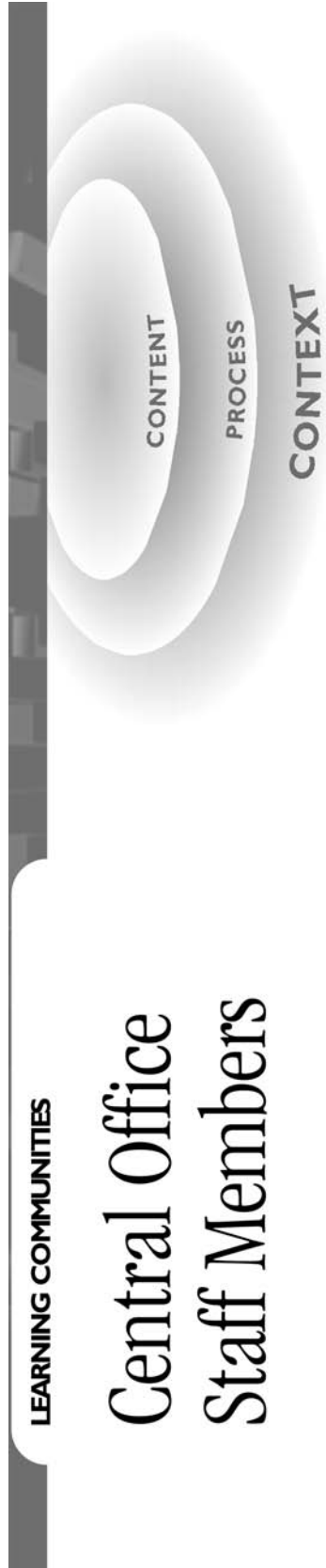
### **We have too many half days in this district. Teachers are still in the building so why aren't my children in class with them?**

When children have a half day off from school, teachers are still working. They're just working in a different way.

Ask the school's principal exactly what teachers are doing during these half days. A second question for the principal is whether other options for teacher learning would be just as effective as half days and less disruptive to a child's school day. (See NSDC's list of options for professional learning at [www.nsd.org/talkingtoparents.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/talkingtoparents.cfm).)

### **I hear teachers say that staff development days are a waste of time because they learn nothing. If teachers don't think they're valuable, why does my school keep doing them?**

When a teacher complains, ask him or her to tell you exactly what goes on during staff development. Try to determine if teachers had a voice in deciding what they would learn. Ask if this teacher's concerns are shared by others. Did teachers object to learning something new or did they object to the way the new information was provided for them? Were teachers just sitting and listening or were they doing work related to their classrooms? Were they overwhelmed by what they heard? Judge for yourself whether you believe the time could have been valuable for that teacher.



<b>DESIRED OUTCOME I.1: Prepare administrators and teachers to be skillful members of learning teams.</b>					
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>LEVEL 5</b>	<b>LEVEL 6</b>
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 ongoing series of 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 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.	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 STAFF MEMBERS

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF MEMBERS					
<b>DESIRED OUTCOME 1.2: Maintain and support learning teams.</b>					
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>LEVEL 5</b>	<b>LEVEL 6</b>
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.	
<b>DESIRED OUTCOME 1.3: Participate with others as a member of a learning team.</b>					
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>LEVEL 5</b>	<b>LEVEL 6</b>
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.	
<b>DESIRED OUTCOME 1.4: Support learning team use of technology.</b>					
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>LEVEL 5</b>	<b>LEVEL 6</b>
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.		

## Chapter 6

# FACILITATING COLLABORATIVE TEAMS

### TOOLS

**Tool 6.1** Protocol for developing agreements. *2 pages*

**Tool 6.2** Building effective teams. *2 pages*

**Tool 6.3** Transform your group into a team. *3 pages*

**Tool 6.4** Which stage is your team in? A survey. *3 pages*

**Tool 6.5** Team agreement template. *1 page*

**Tool 6.6** Becoming a productive team. *1 page*

Where are we?

**Teachers in our school meet at least weekly in collaborative teams to discuss teaching and learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers are more comfortable working independently in our school.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Our school faculty has established agreements about how staff members treat one another.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers use structures and processes for making their collaborative work efficient and productive.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**C**ollaborative professional learning teams are not a result of luck or magic. Rather, they result from discipline and commitment. A team is a collection of individuals who commit to working together to accomplish a common goal.

Team members choose to share their individual knowledge, talents, and expertise so that the team benefits. Teams have systems to ensure that they are productive and effective, engage in intentional team building, and conduct regular assessments of their work and their functioning as a team. On a good team, members make the inner workings of the team seem invisible and effortless, while below the surface structures and processes are in place to ensure the smooth operation of the team.

Teams, working collaboratively to advance professional learning and student success, often have set clear agreements about the roles and responsibilities of their members, routinize structures and processes to make their work more effective and efficient, share leadership, and value working collaboratively. This chapter identifies tasks that generally help teams increase their efficiency and effectiveness. These methods are:

- Identifying roles and responsibilities;
- Establishing agreements;
- Sharing leadership;
- Creating and maintaining a sense of team; and
- Understanding stages of team development.

#### **Identifying roles and responsibilities**

Teams, to be successful, require some structure. One way teams reach success is to determine roles and responsibilities for team members. Typical roles include

facilitator, recorder, timekeeper, and team member. While other roles can be added, these are the most basic and common.

**Team member.** A team member is an active part of the collaborative team. Members support the work of the team by staying focused on the agenda, purpose, and goal of the team. They actively engage in the team's work and monitor their own behavior(s) so that they adhere to the team's agreements. They assist the facilitator and other team members to accomplish the work of the team. They recognize that they have a responsibility for the team's success.

**Facilitator.** A facilitator is responsible for the process of the meeting. Together with the team, the facilitator sets the agenda and determines what design for learning will be used to accomplish the team's work. She or he calls the team's meeting to order, ensures the agreements are honored, moves the team through the agenda so that all items are addressed as planned, maintains the safety of the team for all members, and helps team members stay focused on the agenda and the team's success. The facilitator remains neutral so that she or he is open to all perspectives and ensures fairness and equity in the team's interactions. The facilitator may become a member of the team if necessary. Where this occurs, it is essential for the facilitator to state that she or he is stepping out of the role of the facilitator to assume the role of team member.

**Recorder.** The recorder maintains a record of the team's interactions and decisions. The recorder, with the help of the team members, completes the team meeting log. The team collectively decides how extensive its record will be. In some cases, the record is a summary of decisions and key points. In other cases, the record includes more extensive description of the discussion

and viewpoints presented. The recorder may opt to serve as both a team member and as recorder if the team is comfortable with this dual role and if she or he can simultaneously maintain the record of the meeting and participate. The recorder's challenge is to use the language of the team and to maintain neutrality in how the team's proceedings are logged.

**Timekeeper.** The timekeeper's role includes informing the team about the time. Agenda items may have specific time limits. In this case, the time keeper helps the team know how time is progressing and gives a signal when time is running out. The team may decide to table discussions that can't be finished in the allotted time or to extend the time for certain items while adjusting it on other agenda items. When teams work together over time, they become more efficient with time usage; however, the role of the timekeeper remains an important one to ensure the team's success.

### Establishing agreements

A major contributor to any team's success is its willingness to take time early on to establish clear agreements about member behavior. Sometimes called norms, these agreements are central to the team's productivity.

All teams have agreements that emerge over time. When teams fail to establish explicit agreements, implicit ones emerge. These agreements can either help or hinder a team's success. According to Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee (2002), agreements or norms:

- Provide psychological security within teams that allows team members to feel interpersonal safety;
- Prevent problems that often interfere with a team's ability to be creative and fully functioning;
- Separate a loose collection of individuals from a high-performing team;
- Maximize the team's emotional intelligence;
- Contribute to the team's ability to self-manage; and
- Address two elements of a team's emotional reality: inclusion dynamics and members' roles.

There are several areas in which teams might set agreements. These areas include time, location, communication processes, and structures. Sample agreements for each area are listed below:

#### **Time:**

- The meeting will start and end on time.
- All members are ready, present, and prepared to initiate their work on time.

#### **Location:**

- Team members will meet in each other's classrooms on a rotating basis.
- Meetings will be in the library conference room unless otherwise arranged.

#### **Communication:**

- Team members will listen with respect to all ideas.
- Team members will balance inquiry (search for understanding) and advocacy (intent to persuade).

#### **Members' responsibilities:**

- All members will participate.
- Teams members are responsible for monitoring their own and one another's adherence to the team's agreements.

#### **Decision making:**

- We will make all decisions by majority (75%) after all views have been aired.

### Creating and maintaining a sense of team

When teams come together, they are merely a collection of individuals. However, over time, as teams work together with a clear purpose and with success, they will develop a deep sense of interdependence. Team members benefit from some basic understanding of how teams develop and the stages of team development. This latter topic is addressed in the next section.

#### **Creating a sense of team.**

Teams develop over time. Initially, when people form a team, they are a collection of individuals who have their own perspectives, frames of reference, and goals. Members' interactions are characterized as congenial. Typically, in the early stage of team development, members are polite to one another. Soon, however, these interactions shift as members begin jockeying for recognized leadership or status within the group. When this happens, conflicts emerge. Teams unfamiliar with the stages of team development and unskilled in working collaboratively will simply choose to leave the team because their experience is uncomfortable. If teams have some skills to resolve differences and have persistence to work through difficult issues, they will jell and become a genuine team.

As they work together, team members develop a shared perspective, experiences, and common goals. However, the road from individuals to teams is not easily traveled. The best way to develop a sense of team is to understand one another.

#### **Maintenance of a sense of team**

Once agreements are set and an initial sense of

**TOOL 6.1**

**Protocol for developing agreements**

**Step 1.** Individually identify recommendations for agreements by reflecting about each member's needs to feel comfortable as a team member.

**Step 2.** Share publicly individual recommendations. Eliminate duplicates.

**Step 3.** Clarify abstract agreements by asking what each looks like and sounds like.

**Step 4.** Consider what might be missing. Review the sample agreements for ideas.

**Step 5.** Ask for all members to express agreement or disagreement with the proposed agreements.

**Step 6.** Seek consensus to the agreements from all members.

**Step 7.** Commit to give feedback periodically about how well the team honors its agreements to each other.

**Step 8.** Post agreements and review them frequently.

**I agree to maintain confidentiality.**

- To share issues without sharing individual comments or personalities concerning staff members.
- To keep student behavior confidential.
- To agree to have fun.
- To not take myself too seriously.
- To maintain a sense of humor.
- To have a fresh perspective.

**Tool 6.1**

**TOOL 6.2**

**Building effective teams**  
*From the Innovator Tool Box*

Reprinted from *School Team Assessment* (Adapted from material prepared by the South Carolina State Department of Education and presented at the 1995 School Team Conference by Ann Ishler and Deborah Childs-Bowen.)

Members of effective teams are committed to group goals above and beyond their personal goals and understand how the team fits into the overall business of the organization. Team members trust each other to honor commitments, maintain confidence, and support team goals, and they feel a sense of partnership with each other despite differences and disagreements.

On effective teams, everyone has a role and participates in achieving common goals on action plans, and every effective team has a clear purpose, established communication in ethics, agreed-upon ways of dealing with problems, planning procedures, regular meetings, and meeting agendas and minutes.

The following survey can help team members analyze strengths and challenges, plan self-development to address critical issues and calibrate the team's progress in becoming more effective.

**Tool 6.2**

**Tools FOR SCHOOLS**

**Transform your group into a TEAM**

BY JOHN RICHARDSON

**A** professional learning community means to improve the quality of teaching and learning. School after school is setting aside time for teachers to meet and discuss a new idea or their teaching. That's exactly the way when teachers have been accustomed to working in isolation.

Principals and teacher leaders must be very intentional about leading groups of teachers because communities of learners, not, some school districts are team development teams, and many teachers don't immediately recognize the professional learning community as "the new name for a team."

"A professional learning community is what a team does. It's not a new tool. At PLC it's not an add-on to an individual team or team-building."

Continued on p. 7

**WHAT'S NEW**  
Developing teams  
This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules.  
Page 4

**Which steps is your team at?**  
Use this tool to identify the current stage of the teamwork model that your team is presently operating in.  
Pages 5-7

**Reasons for team development**  
Page 8

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**Tool 6.3**

team is built, another important part of this work is to determine how to maintain the team. To develop, teams benefit from feedback about how well they are functioning. Early in the team's work, it is helpful to take a few minutes at the end of each meeting to assess team members' adherence to the agreements. Then, over time, teams may schedule opportunities for feedback. Tool 6.1 is a protocol to guide the development of agreements. Tool 6.2 is a survey that might be used to assess a team's productivity.

**Which stage is your team in?**

**POWERFUL WORD**  
"The most effective professional learning communities..."  
—Richardson

**OBJECTIVES**  
To identify the present stage of the teamwork model that your team is presently operating in.

**DIRECTIONS**  
This assessment contains statements about teamwork. Read 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

**Questionnaire**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We try to have set procedures or protocols to ensure that things are orderly and run smoothly (e.g., consistent interruptions, everyone gets the opportunity to have their say).

2. \_\_\_\_\_ We are quick to get on with the task at hand and do not spend our time in the planning stage.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Our team feels that we are all in it together and share responsibility for the team's success or failure.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ We have thorough procedures for agreeing on our objectives and planning the way we will perform our tasks.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ Team members are afraid or do not like to risk others' feelings.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ We allow our team's goals and objectives to fade, and we have a shared understanding.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ The team leader tries to keep order and contributes to the lack of bond and commitment to the team.

Continued on p. 7

**Tool 6.4**

**Understanding stages of team development**

Teams essentially move through four stages of development. Tuckman (1965) identified the four stages as Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. With some understanding, teams can accelerate their team's development by understanding these stages. Each stage is described below.

**Forming:** The first stage of team development occurs when teams form. It can easily be represented as a group of individuals who come together and who are questioning their place within the team, the purpose of the team, their contribution to the team, and their commitment to the team's work.

**Storming:** As the purpose, required level of commitment, place, and needed contribution become clear,

reality sets in for team members. Team members experience some disagreement, even conflict, about their individual influence in the team and/or about beliefs related to and direction of the work and the processes they use to accomplish the work, etc. "Groups begin to change [be productive] only when they first have fully grasped the reality of how they function, particularly when individuals in the group recognize that they're working in situations that are dissonant or uncomfortable" (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, p. 172).

In some cases, as teams face the storming stage, they lack the support, skills, or persistence to work through these disagreements. When they do commit to work through these challenges, they move to the next stage of development.

**Norming:** Even though team members establish agreements when they first come together, after they move through the storming stage, it is helpful for them to revisit those agreements, refine them, and extend them to reflect what they have learned in the storming stage. The norming stage brings the team together not as a collection of individuals, but rather as a team with shared vision, goals, and commitment. Team members recognize the value of working in a team.

**Performing:** When teams reach this stage, they become highly productive. This is because the effort to

form a team can now be directed to the work of the team. Because there is synergy among team members, their work is easier when done collaboratively, and they prefer to be in the team because it is both personally rewarding and highly productive.

Tool 6.3 is a brief article about the stages of team development. Tool 6.4 is a survey to help teams assess their current stage of development. When team members know their team’s present stage of development, they can focus on developing their team.

Tool 6.5 is a template that team members might use to record the agreements they make about teamwork and membership. For example, team members might agree that a member who misses a team meeting is responsible for talking with another team member to learn about the meeting. When the agreements are finalized, team members also decide when they will set aside time to revisit their agreements and make desired revisions.

Once a team determines its stage of development, Tool 6.6 offers suggested strategies for working with a team at each stage of development. The notes section of Tool 6.6 stresses what is most important to teams at each developmental stage.

Successful teams are those that make a commitment to their own development. When team members invest energy and time into developing and maintaining a sense of team, they will be more satisfied with their

TOOL 6.5

**Team agreement template**

TEAM \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TEAM AGREEMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE TO REVISIT AGREEMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

**Tool 6.5**

TOOL 6.6

**Becoming a productive team**

If your team is...	Consider these strategies	Notes
<b>Forming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use team-building activities that encourage members to share something about their personal and professional interests/beliefs.</li> <li>Take time at each meeting for checking in with one another (e.g., how are you? What’s on your mind? What do you want to share?).</li> <li>Suggest a social activity.</li> <li>Highlight one member at each meeting and invite that member to share with the team what he or she is interested in, values, etc.</li> </ul>	It is important that all members feel safe and relaxed. The structure and process to facilitate discussion by one team person or faction.
<b>Norming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review norms.</li> <li>Establish new norms.</li> <li>Use scenarios to build difficult conversations.</li> <li>Use conflict resolution strategies.</li> <li>Engage in formal conflict resolution.</li> <li>Teach members about conflict resolution.</li> <li>Invite a neutral facilitator to help discuss issues.</li> <li>Use dialogue.</li> <li>Suspend actions temporarily until all members can be heard.</li> <li>Ensure all voices are given equal value.</li> <li>Conduct team assessments.</li> </ul>	Teams that are progressing into high-performing teams will have conflict. When conflict occurs, acknowledge it and handle it productively and constructively rather than ignoring it. Providing a safe forum for disagreements to occur. Collaborate the conflict issues, progress and movement toward becoming a more effective team.
<b>Performing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the norms.</li> <li>Create norms that are more focused on how people interact with one another.</li> <li>Keep the work in focus.</li> <li>Collaborate resources.</li> <li>Take time out from the work to talk about how the team works.</li> <li>Conduct team assessments.</li> <li>Take on increasingly more challenging work.</li> <li>Encourage individual members to reflect on their own belief systems and contributions to the team.</li> <li>Encourage team members to give feedback to one another privately.</li> <li>Use dialogue to address assumptions, values, and beliefs.</li> </ul>	Teams at the performing stage are ready to open up norms, share their feelings and beliefs, and are more comfortable with disagreeing. They want to work well together and are willing to talk about what will make them more productive as a team.
<b>High performing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate resources.</li> <li>Periodically assess the team’s work and its processes.</li> <li>Review norms.</li> <li>Continue to focus on maintaining the productivity and effectiveness of the team because it can wane.</li> </ul>	High-performing teams gain a tremendous amount as well as professional benefits from working together and they prefer to work together than alone. They are also very efficient and effective together. They also respect one another.

**Tool 6.6**

work and produce better work. In *The Wisdom of Crowds*, author James Surowiecki asserts that teams are more successful than individuals in making decisions. “Groups work well under certain conditions, and less well under others. Groups generally need rules to maintain order and coherence, and when they’re missing or malfunctioning, the result is trouble” (p. xix).

**References**

**Goleman, D., Boyatzis, B., & McKee, A. (2002).** *Primal leadership: Learning to lead with emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

**Surowiecki, J. (2004.)** *The wisdom of crowds*. New York: Doubleday.

**Tuckman, B. (1965).** Developmental sequence in small groups, *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384-399.

**TOOL 6.1****Protocol for developing agreements**

**Step 1.** Individually identify recommendations for agreements by reflecting about each member's needs to feel comfortable as a team member.

**Step 2.** Share publicly individual recommendations. Eliminate duplicates.

**Step 3.** Clarify abstract agreements by asking what each looks like and sounds like.

**Step 4.** Consider what might be missing. Review the sample agreements for ideas.

**Step 5.** Ask for all members to express agreement or disagreement with the proposed agreements.

**Step 6.** Seek commitment to the agreements from all members.

**Step 7.** Commit to give feedback periodically about how well the team honors its agreements to each other.

**Step 8.** Post agreements and review them frequently.

## Sample team agreements

### Example 1

- Be open and honest — say what you think and feel during the meeting, not in the parking lot.
- Individual comments are confidential.
- Be aware of your level of participation. Allow equal air time for each member so the discussion is fair share.
- Treat each person as an equal.
- Have fun.
- Set vested interests aside.
- Focus on being a change agent.
- Assist each other to be productive team members.
- Listen to understand others' perspectives.
- Respect others' ideas and perspectives.
- Speak directly to the appropriate person(s) when a need to confront, challenge, disagree, etc., occurs.

### Example 2

#### **I agree to place the interest of students at the forefront of all discussions and decisions.**

#### **I agree to share responsibility of making and supporting decisions.**

- To take responsibility for contributing time and effort necessary to reach the best decision.
- To utilize a system ensuring that everyone gets a turn to talk.
- To participate without dominating.
- To be open and honest in a positive, constructive way.
- To share rationale for my perspective and/or decisions.

#### **I agree to listen, honor, and respect all perspectives.**

- To listen with respect, empathy, and an open mind.
- To try to understand all sides of an issue.
- To treat each other with dignity.
- To avoid judgmental comments.
- To honor the individuality of all community members.
- To try to understand and appreciate all the different roles in the school.
- To treat all staff members as equals.

#### **I agree to handle conflicts as they arise in a responsible way.**

- To find out what each member involved needs.
- To be willing to brainstorm different options or solutions.
- To set aside vested interests that interfere with solving the problem constructively and mutually.

#### **I agree to be accountable for the decisions and assignments.**

- To be accountable for and support the team's decisions even if I do not agree with them.
- To follow through on agreed-upon assignments.

**TOOL 6.2****Building effective teams**

Members of effective teams are committed to group goals above and beyond their personal goals and understand how the team fits into the overall business of the organization. Team members trust each other to honor commitments, maintain confidences, and support team goals, and they feel a sense of partnership with each other despite differences and disagreements.

On effective teams, everyone has a role and participates in achieving consensus on action plans, and every effective team has a clear purpose, established communication methods, agreed-upon ways of dealing with problems, planning procedures, regular meetings, and meeting agendas and minutes.

The following survey can help team members analyze strengths and challenges, plan staff development to address critical issues and celebrate the team's progress in becoming more effective.

Reprinted from *School Team Innovator*. (Adapted from material prepared by the South Carolina State Department of Education and presented at the 1995 NSDC School Team Conference by Ann Ishler and Deborah Childs-Bowen.)

	<b>We need help with this.</b>	<b>We're making progress.</b>	<b>We have reasons to celebrate.</b>
<b>1.</b> The team includes members with varied teaching styles, learning styles, skills, and interests.			
<b>2.</b> Members respect and trust each other.			
<b>3.</b> Members agree on the team's mission.			
<b>4.</b> Members consider the team's mission as workable.			
<b>5.</b> The team has an action plan.			
<b>6.</b> The team has drawn up timelines describing project steps.			
<b>7.</b> Team members understand what resources are available to help meet team needs and goals.			
<b>8.</b> The team meets regularly.			
<b>9.</b> The team meets at times convenient for all members.			
<b>10.</b> Team meeting places are convenient and comfortable.			
<b>11.</b> Agendas are prepared and distributed before meetings.			
<b>12.</b> Written minutes are distributed shortly after meetings.			
<b>13.</b> The team has formally assigned roles.			
<b>14.</b> Members understand which roles belong to one person and which roles are shared.			
<b>15.</b> Each team member takes an active role in discussions.			
<b>16.</b> Team members listen attentively.			
<b>17.</b> The team has procedures for resolving conflict and reaching consensus.			
<b>18.</b> The team has established ways to communicate with the entire school community.			



# 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*



National Staff Development Council  
(800) 727-7288  
[www.nsdc.org](http://www.nsdc.org)

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

COVER STORY

*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.

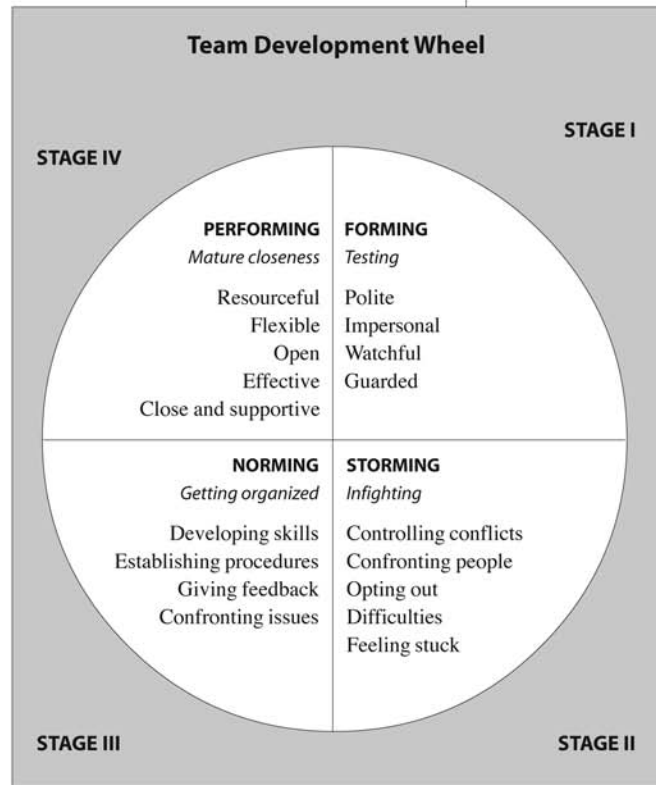
In Peck's "pseudo-community," members are afraid of differences and afraid of conflict. They are trying to get along, often pretending that they don't have major differences.

"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."

## 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**

**NSDC TOOL**

**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?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>8. _____ We do not have fixed procedures, we make them up as the task or project progresses.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>10. _____ Team members do not fully trust the others members and closely monitor others who are working on a specific task.</p> <p>11. _____ The team leader ensures that we follow the procedures, do not argue, do not interrupt, and keep to the point.</p> <p>12. _____ We enjoy working together; we have a fun and productive time.</p> <p>13. _____ We have accepted each other as members of the team.</p> <p>14. _____ The team leader is democratic and collaborative.</p> <p>15. _____ We are trying to define the goal and what tasks need to be accomplished.</p> <p>16. _____ Many of the team members have their own ideas about the process and personal agendas are rampant.</p> <p>17. _____ We fully accept each other's strengths and weakness.</p> <p>18. _____ We assign specific roles to team members (team leader, facilitator, time keeper, note taker, etc.).</p> <p>19. _____ We try to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict.</p> | <p>20. _____ The tasks are very different from what we imagined and seem very difficult to accomplish.</p> <p>21. _____ There are many abstract discussions of the concepts and issues, which make some members impatient with these discussions.</p> <p>22. _____ We are able to work through group problems.</p> <p>23. _____ We argue a lot even though we agree on the real issues.</p> <p>24. _____ The team is often tempted to go above the original scope of the project.</p> <p>25. _____ We express criticism of others constructively</p> <p>26. _____ There is a close attachment to the team.</p> <p>27. _____ It seems as if little is being accomplished with the project's goals.</p> <p>28. _____ The goals we have established seem unrealistic.</p> <p>29. _____ Although we are not fully sure of the project's goals and issues, we are excited and proud to be on the team.</p> <p>30. _____ We often share personal problems with each other.</p> <p>31. _____ There is a lot of resisting of the tasks on hand and quality improvement approaches.</p> <p>32. _____ We get a lot of work done.</p> |
|--|--|

## Which stage is your team in?

NSDC TOOL

### 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.	_____
<b>TOTAL</b>	_____	<b>TOTAL</b>	_____	<b>TOTAL</b>	_____	<b>TOTAL</b>	_____
<b>FORMING STAGE</b>		<b>STORMING STAGE</b>		<b>NORMING STAGE</b>		<b>PERFORMING STAGE</b>	

**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](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leader.html)

**TOOL 6.5**

**Team agreement template**

TEAM

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DATE

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MEMBERS

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TEAM AGREEMENTS

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DATE TO REVISIT AGREEMENTS

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**TOOL 6.6**

## Becoming a productive team

If your team is ...	Consider these strategies	Notes
<b>Forming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use team building activities that encourage members to share something about their personal and professional interests beliefs;</li> <li>• Take time at each meeting for checking in with one another e.g. How are you? What's on your mind? What do you want to share?</li> <li>• Suggest a social activity;</li> <li>• Highlight one member at each meeting and invite that member to share with the team what he or she is interested in, values, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that all members feel safe and valued. Use structures and processes to eliminate dominance by any one person or faction.</p>
<b>Storming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit norms;</li> <li>• Establish new norms;</li> <li>• Use structures to hold difficult conversations;</li> <li>• Use conflict resolution strategies;</li> <li>• Engage in formal conflict resolution;</li> <li>• Teach members about conflict resolution;</li> <li>• Invite a neutral facilitator to help discuss issues;</li> <li>• Use dialogue;</li> <li>• Suspend actions temporarily until all members can be heard;</li> <li>• Ensure all voices are given equal value;</li> <li>• Conduct team assessments.</li> </ul>	<p>Teams that are progressing into high-performing teams will have conflict. When conflict occurs, acknowledge it and handle it productively and constructively rather than ignore it. Provide a safe forum for disagreements to occur. Celebrate that conflict means progress and movement toward becoming a more effective team.</p>
<b>Norming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit the norms;</li> <li>• Create some new ones that are more focused on how people interact with one another;</li> <li>• Keep the work in focus;</li> <li>• Celebrate successes;</li> <li>• Take time out from the work to talk about how the team works;</li> <li>• Conduct team assessment;</li> <li>• Take on increasingly more challenging work;</li> <li>• Encourage individual members to reflect on their own behaviors and contributions to the team;</li> <li>• Encourage team members to give feedback to one another privately;</li> <li>• Use dialogue to address assumptions, values, and beliefs.</li> </ul>	<p>Teams at the norming stage are ready to open up more, share their feelings and beliefs, and are more comfortable with disagreeing. They want to work well together and are willing to talk about what will make them more productive as a team.</p>
<b>Performing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate success;</li> <li>• Periodically assess the team's work and its procedures;</li> <li>• Review norms;</li> <li>• Continue to focus on maintaining the productivity and effectiveness of the team because it can wane.</li> </ul>	<p>High-performing teams gain a tremendous personal as well as professional benefit from working together and they prefer to work together than alone. They are also very efficient and effective together. They also enjoy one another.</p>

## Chapter 7

# MAKING TIME

### TOOLS

- Tool 7.1** Time use flows from school culture. *5 pages*
- Tool 7.2** Analysis of current time usage with time use log. *2 pages*
- Tool 7.3** Think outside the clock. *7 pages*
- Tool 7.4** Time enough for teaching and learning. *11 pages*
- Tool 7.5** Making time for adult learning. *4 pages*
- Tool 7.6** Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning. *1 page*
- Tool 7.7** Forming a recommendation. *3 pages*

Where are we?

**Professional development in this school includes time during teachers' contract day for teachers to work together in teams whose members share common goals (school, grade level, department, team, etc.) for student learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Professional development in this school occurs after school hours.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Professional development in this school occurs in the summer.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**The leadership team (including principal and teacher leaders) in this school ensures that time available for collaborative professional learning is used in a way that impacts teaching and learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**T**he number one barrier educators cite regarding implementation of collaborative professional learning is time. There is no doubt that most schools have not yet adjusted their schedules to accommodate teacher collaborative learning;

however, more and more are doing so. The schools that are making time usually do so in one of three ways.

One way is to use available time; another way is to buy time; a third way is to create time. With each of these options, advises Joan Richardson, director of publications for the National Staff Development Council, it is necessary to be creative, to be willing to make trade-offs, be clear about the connection between teacher learning and student learning, and to be willing to experiment with multiple approaches (2002). Perhaps the biggest challenge is the perception of who owns time within the school day and who has control over what occurs during that time.

The National Staff Development Council advocates that 25% of an educator's work time is invested in professional learning and about 10% of a school district's budget. While those numbers seem astronomical, they are not, especially if the form of professional learning is the type of daily collaboration recommended in this tool kit. Most people view professional development as learning that occurs outside of the regular work of schools when guest speakers or external consultants come into the school or district, on days when students are not present, or in the summer or after school hours. In these cases, the costs that include substitutes, con-

sultant fees, and travel, can be very high. To imagine spending even more, up to 10% of a district's budget, on this form of professional development is inconceivable. However, if the form of professional learning involves collaborative teams meeting together during the work day and the cost is the portion of teachers' salaries devoted to that form of learning, the resources they might want, and the portion of the principal's time devoted to supporting the team, these costs are not so unreasonable.

The same is true for the recommendation regarding time. If professional development is exclusively viewed as occurring when students are not present in school, after school hours, or in the summer, it is unlikely that the recommendation of 25% of educators' work time would ever be reached. However, if we consider the daily interactions that teachers have with colleagues in collaborative professional learning teams during planning times and designated team time, then it is more likely that the recommended level of time would be possible. In fact, opportunities for learning occur virtually every minute. Experiences or incidents of the work day can be transformed into learning when teachers engage in reflective collaborative practice, sharing their experiences with others, analyzing the results of their actions, planning with their colleagues, and making their practice transparent to themselves and others.

In districts and schools where teachers work in a supportive culture, they meet in collaborative teams for the purpose of professional learning about teaching and student learning because they experience first-hand the benefits. In districts and schools where relationships are

Figure 7.1

**Weighted criteria matrix**

Criteria	Weight	Notes

less collegial and a culture of isolation and competition exists, teachers may be unwilling to work collaboratively during their planning time and might participate reluctantly if additional time is provided. Past experience with professional development, the school’s culture, trust, and relationships influence teachers’ willingness to work actively to make time for professional learning.

This chapter explores a variety of ways to arrange time for teacher collaboration. It also raises some challenges about the basic assumptions held about time. How willing a school staff is to find time for collaboration is an indication of their commitment to collaborative professional learning.

**Form a task force**

To address the issue of making time for collaborative professional learning, schools might form a task force to study the possibilities and generate recommendations for others to review. Because some options for time will affect students and parents, these task forces might include parents and student representatives, as appropriate. School task force members will also want to examine district and state policy regarding the length of the school day, district, and state policy about time for professional development, and use of current professional development time.

When the principal charters the task force, it is helpful for him or her to clarify the level of authority and expectations. Will the task force make a single recommendation to the principal? Is the task force expected to bring multiple recommendations for the staff to consider? Will the task force make the decision after sharing its recommendations, gathering input, and revising based on the input?

**Explore current beliefs about time**

A beginning point for the discussion about making time is to consider how personal beliefs and culture

influence beliefs about time. One way to explore these issues is to read Kent Peterson’s article, “Time use flows from school culture.” The task force or the whole staff can surface their assumptions about use of time within their school. The article and discussion protocol are included in Tool 7.1.

**Analyze current time use**

Tool 7.2 includes a protocol to use to examine how time is currently used. One of the easiest ways to make time for collaborative professional learning is to use existing time differently. Once current time usage is explored, the task force can form recommendations about how to use current time differently for collaborative professional learning. For example, remodeling faculty meetings is one way to make time for professional collaboration. In some schools, one day is designated for meetings — on that weekday, once a month principals hold faculty meetings, and in all the other weeks that month teachers meet in their collaborative teams. Another version of this model is to save faculty meeting time and use the banked time in a longer block, either bi-weekly or monthly.

**Establish criteria**

Making decisions about adjusting the schedule is a significant one and it may have a broad impact. Establishing criteria for the decision is helpful. Some school staff agree to adjust their schedule if it means instructional time for students is not reduced. Others agree to a change in their schedule if they retain a minimum amount of individual planning time. Others want time during the school day or teachers’ contract day. Whatever the criteria, it is essential to identify them early. Sometimes not every criterion can be met so prioritizing criteria is important as well. The task force may decide to create a weighted criteria matrix to aid in their decision making, such as the one in Figure 7.1.

**TOOL 7.1**

**Time use flows from school culture**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is the author's key point about how time and school culture are connected?
- What evidence or arguments does Peterson provide to support his point?
- What are your beliefs about the connection between time and school culture?
- How does the culture of our school influence how time is used here?
- What evidence is available to demonstrate that connection?
- What are some ways we might want to consider helping others in our school and community understand how our school's culture influences how we use time?

**Tool 7.1**

**TOOL 7.2**

**Analysis of current time usage with time use log**

1. How much time in minutes do staff members have for planning?
2. How much time in minutes are staff members expected to attend staff meetings per week/month?
3. How many professional development days are planned into the current school year? When do these days occur? Add the number of minutes available in professional development days. Remember to subtract lunchtimes.
4. For one week, log how planning time is used using the Time Use Log on the next page.
5. As a team graph how all members of the team or schools-wide used time collectively by adding the total amount of time used in each category across all members' logs.
6. Identify how much of the available time was spent in school based team learning.
7. Complete the Time Use Log on the next page. Identify how much of the total available time was involved in work related to the areas in the first column.
8. Use the graph and personal perceptions to consider the impact of various ways time is used by considering these questions:
  - a. What is the difference between the amount of time spent in individual work versus time spent in collaborative work?
  - b. What kind of time usage is the most satisfying to you?
  - c. What kind of time usage is the least satisfying to you?
  - d. What type of time usage has the greatest impact on achievement of your students?
  - e. What kind of time usage has the greatest impact on your practice as a teacher?
9. Identify the norms/agreements/expectations about time in the school.
10. Consider how to increase the kind of time usage that is most satisfying to you and that has the greatest impact on achievement of your students.

**Tool 7.2**

**Tool 7.3**

**Study other schools' and districts' solutions**

One way to determine how to make time for additional collaboration is to study what other schools and districts have done. Three resources are included to assist school task forces to study possibilities for time. Not all ideas suggested in the three resources are feasible in every school or without some adaptation, however the ideas have been tested and are currently in use in schools. The resources are intended to offer ideas and possibilities to help schools get started.

Tool 7.3 is an issue of *Tools for Schools*, a newsletter of the National Staff Development Council, that includes articles on how schools and districts around the country have made time for professional development.

Tool 7.4 is another resource, *Working Toward Excellence*, Spring 2001, a newsletter of the Alabama Best Practices Center. This newsletter includes articles about how schools across Alabama have created time for professional learning.

A third resource, Tool 7.5, an article from the *Journal of Staff Development* shows how schools and districts built time into the daily schedule for teacher learning. Tool 7.6 is a matrix to help readers summarize how various schools and districts create time for professional learning, how much time they created, and

**Tool 7.4**

whether each strategy meets the criteria established by the task force.

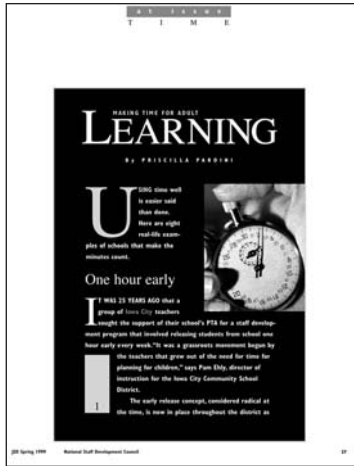
**Form recommendations**

After studying possibilities, the task force forms recommendations for the school. These recommendations can include short-term changes, long-term changes, or both. For example, some schools begin with using existing time differently for a year before moving to a schedule change that permits more frequent time for professional learning. Once the recommendations are developed, each is reviewed by the principal, central office staff, teacher union

leaders, parent group leaders, community leaders, and other key leaders to ensure that the recommendations fall within regulations, contracts, etc. It is essential that final recommendations presented to the staff and community for consideration meet most of the criteria the task force established and comply with regulatory criteria, or are permissible through variances. Tool 7.7 can help a task force include the most essential information in its recommendations to make time for professional development.

**Present recommendations for input**

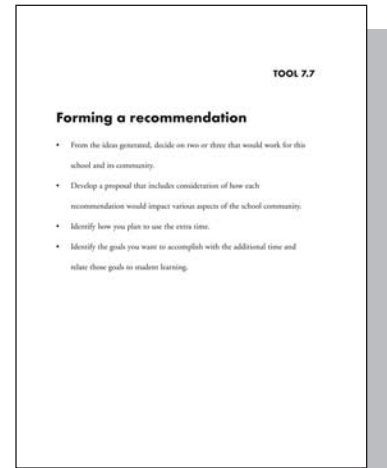
Once the recommendations have been reviewed, they are presented to the school community at large. The task force members take an active role in explain-



**Tool 7.5**



**Tool 7.6**



**Tool 7.7**

ing the recommendations. Task force members receive feedback from staff and community members regarding each recommendation. This feedback is captured and taken back to the task force for consideration in the refinement process.

**Revise recommendations**

The task force considers all the input received and makes revisions to the recommendations. At this time, some recommendations may be deleted, combined, significantly revised, or moderately revised to reflect the input received. The final recommendation(s) are prepared for presentation to the entire school community. The task force may want to archive all recommendations to revisit other options later. Depending on how the task force was chartered, it may make a single recommendation to another body for approval, make the decision, or present multiple recommendations for approval by one or more persons.

**Determine action**

Using the appropriate process within the school or district for making decisions such as this one, the final recommendation(s) is (are) considered and accepted or rejected. Depending on the outcome, the task force creates a plan of action to implement the decision.

Finding time is only part of the story. Once time is made available for teacher collaborative learning, it is necessary to help teachers make the best use of this time. In some school districts across the country where time was made available, school boards have rescinded the time because it was not being used to improve teaching and learning and no evidence was available about its value. Chapters 6, 8, and 9 are designed to help teachers determine the best use of their time for collaborative professional learning.

**TOOL 7.1****Time use flows from school culture****DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is the author's key point about how time and school culture are connected?
- What evidence or arguments does Peterson provide to support his point?
- What are your beliefs about the connection between time and school culture?
- How does the culture of our school influence how time is used here?
- What evidence is available to demonstrate that connection?
- What are some ways we might want to consider helping others in our school and community understand how our school's culture influences how we use time?

TIME USE FLOWS FROM SCHOOL

# CULTURE


By KENT D. PETERSON

**W**HEN educators think about professional development in schools they always worry about time. Where will it come from? How much time will there be? Will we have “enough” time? Will we use our time well?

Often, time for adult learning is viewed as a structural or administrative issue: How will we get time? When will it be? How much will we have? Who pays for it?

It’s true that time is a measurable, definable resource that teachers, principals, and staff developers think about and use in

*River of values and traditions can nurture or poison staff development hours*



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concrete, systematic ways. But time is also much more. As Schein (1992) points out: “Time imposes a social order, and how things are handled in time conveys status and intention.

The pacing of events, the rhythms of life, the sequence in which things are done, and the duration of events all become subject to symbolic interpretation” (pp. 114-115).

How educators think about time, and how they use it, is woven into the cultures of their schools. School leaders must learn how to read a school’s culture, and how to focus staff development on the cultural issues that affect how people use their time. Thus they can spend their time building a culture that uses time well.

**CULTURES THAT NURTURE, CULTURES THAT WOUND**

Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that builds up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (Deal and Peterson, 1998).

Educators have recently developed a much deeper understanding of school culture, and a deeper appreciation for its importance in effective schools (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). Culture plays a major role in school restructuring (Newmann and Associates, 1996) and school improvement efforts (Fullan, 1998). Culture influences the actions and the spirit of school life. It shapes a school’s motivation, commitment, effort, and focus.

In some schools, the culture inspires educators to learn and grow, to take risks, and to work collegially. Teachers feel supported when they want to assume

■  
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**CULTURE ZONE:**

**GANADO PRIMARY SCHOOL  
GANADO, ARIZONA**

**G**anado Primary School is a prime example of a school that uses time to build a culture that uses time well. At Ganado, students succeed despite few economic resources, and social problems that teachers in a toxic school culture would probably call insurmountable: About half the families in the school district, which serves a Navajo community, have no running water in their homes, and a third of them have no electricity.

The principal and teachers carefully recruit and hire people willing to spend time on continuous adult learning. New staff members understand from the outset that in this school culture, they’ll be expected to spend time on adult learning.

Some examples of how staff members at Ganado spend their time:

- On many Tuesdays, the principal meets with teachers from one of the school’s four major “units.” They talk about curriculum, discuss what teachers are doing in their classrooms,

perhaps share a planned activity.

- Ganado has developed an extensive professional development library, because external resources are all but nonexistent locally, and teachers regularly watch training videos, read professional literature and talk with colleagues about improving teaching. The school makes sure teachers get the time they need for these activities. The principal or a substitute may cover a teacher’s class, freeing up that teacher for meetings with colleagues, for example.

- Four times a year the school hosts a “Once Upon a Time Breakfast.” Students, parents, and staff members bring their favorite books to school and share them over food.

- Every year, the school conducts an “early childhood academy” for classroom aides, a full week of training on important concepts and techniques.

**For more information,** contact principal Sigmund Boloz  
Ganado Primary School  
P.O. Box 1757  
Ganado, AZ 86505  
Phone: (520) 755-1020  
Fax: (520) 755-1085

leadership roles, reflect on practice and do other work to improve their teaching. These nurturing school cultures are more likely to invest in professional development, to spend time learning new skills and knowledge, and to enthusiastically engage in their own learning.

Other schools, however, are mired in beliefs about time that inhibit adult learning and student achievement. Staff members see staff development, or any effort to improve teaching, as a “waste of time,” to be avoided if possible.

Negative attitudes and beliefs can spring from many sources: Perhaps staff development activities were poorly conceived in the past and didn’t address

teacher needs. Or the school has struggled academically for a long time and staff members have given up, telling each other that “nobody could teach these kids.” Someone who feels their students can’t learn would see no point investing time in improving teaching practice.

Some schools develop “toxic” cultures, which actively discourage efforts to improve teaching or student achievement. In these schools the spirit and focus is fractured and often hostile, the value of serving students is replaced by the goal of serving self, a sense of helplessness and despair predominates, and professional growth is not a prized activity (Deal and Peterson, 1998). Staff members resist

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### What to listen for

**These statements indicate positive and negative views of time. Which of these do you hear at your school?**

NEGATIVE:	POSITIVE:
● “Staff development takes time that I don’t have.”	● “We use a lot of time for our own learning, but it’s important.”
● “We’re doing too much already.”	● “We can do a couple more sessions on this technique this semester.”
● “I don’t want to waste my time in that session! It won’t help me at all.”	● “Let’s try this out. I think it might help me a lot in the classroom.”
● “I need to get this week’s plans done. I don’t have time to think about next year.”	● “If we fit this workshop in, it will help us for next year.”
● “This didn’t work when they tried it in 19__, and it won’t work today.”	● “It didn’t work the last time they tried it, but times have changed and we can learn from their mistakes.”
● “You’re wasting your time. It won’t help these kids learn.”	● “This is important to the school’s improvement efforts. Let’s put our time into it.”
● “I’m already changing my curriculum/instruction/assessment/etc. I don’t want one more thing to do.”	● “This work will support the new curriculum/instruction/assessment I want to try.”

reform, publicly ridiculing those who want to try new things. A toxic culture can destroy motivation, dampen commitment, depress effort, and change the focus of the school. It can decrease learning, frustrate growth, stymie risk taking, and foster radical individualism rather than collegiality.

**SHAPING SCHOOL CULTURE**

To shape a more nurturing culture, a school’s principal, staff developers, and teacher leaders need to examine their school with an eye for time issues. Suggested steps include:

**Read the school’s culture.** Leaders need to first understand the deeper norms, values, and beliefs of the school. Compile a history: Information sources could include present and former staff members, other district personnel, yearbooks, newspaper clippings, parents, and community leaders. Seek out the informal networks that touch the school. Look at how the school’s values have developed over time. Examine the symbols and stories that permeate the culture. Listen to how people talk about time they spend in the

**FOR FURTHER READING**

- *The leadership paradox: Balancing logic and artistry in schools* by Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- “Student learning grows in professional cultures,” by Joan Richardson. *Tools for Schools*, August/September, 1998. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

school. Look for rituals of time use.

**Assess views of time.** Does the school’s culture include ideas about time that support adult learning? For example, do teachers want to spend time conferring with colleagues and improving their teaching? Do they feel that time spent on staff development is worthwhile? What common conceptions about time do staff members share? Are there specific attitudes about time that need to be changed

before teaching can improve?

**Reinforce the positive.** Through symbolic actions and model behaviors, leaders need to support positive and energizing views of the time spent learning and growing. Some examples:

- Look for teachers or activities in the school that make good use of time and single them out for public praise.
- Make a point of being a model by using time to do important work: If the principal makes regular time for conversations with teachers about curriculum, for example, that sends a powerful message that curriculum development is important.
- Provide positive examples. Make contact with other schools that succeed academically despite similar challenges, so teachers can see for themselves that it can be done.
- Select staff members who share positive values of time, who will be assets to a nurturing school culture.

At the same time, the school must address any negative, pessimistic views of time in the culture. Be candid and forthright: Toxic cultures are so unpleasant that

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## Beliefs about time

**N**orms, values, and beliefs about time differ across schools.

**Some important concepts to consider when examining your school's culture:**

- **Amount of time:** How much time is a lot of time? In some schools, two days of inservice is considered too much, while in other schools this is seen as a bare minimum for learning new ideas.
- **Time as investment:** Is professional learning viewed as a waste of time or an important investment in students?
- **Rate or speed of change over time** (Schein, 1992): How fast should new ideas and techniques be incorporated into the school? Should the school focus on one reform approach during the next three or four years, or should the school try to adopt two or more approaches at once?
- **Time on/time off:** When can staff members relax, disengage, or rest? In some school cultures, professional development sessions are time for a respite or breather, a time to doze – perhaps not physically, but psychologically. In other schools, staff development time is a period of heightened attention, energy, and focus.
- **Sequence of events over time** (Schein, 1992): What should be done first, second, or never? In some schools, everything but professional learning occurs first. Workshops, faculty study groups, discussions of practice, etc., take last place to other activities.
- **Ownership of time:** Whose time is this? In some schools, the culture decrees that time is the sole property of individual teachers. In other schools, time is understood as shared for the good of the whole organization.

no one wants to admit being in one. This reluctance can stall serious discussion of how negative values can be turned around.

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**Newmann, F.M. and Associates (1996).** *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Schein, E. H. (1992).** *Organizational culture and leadership.* (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ■

**TOOL 7.2****Analysis of current time usage  
with time use log**

1. How much time in minutes do staff members have for planning?
2. How much time in minutes are staff members expected to attend staff meetings per week/month?
3. How many professional development days are planned into the current school year? When do those days occur? Add the number of minutes available in professional development days. Remember to subtract lunchtime.
4. For one week, log how planning time is used using the Time Use Log on the next page.
5. As a team, graph how all members of the team or schoolwide used time collectively by adding the total amount of time used in each category across all members' logs.
6. Identify how much of the available time was spent in school-based team learning.
7. Complete the Time Use Log on the next page. Identify how much of the total available time was invested in work related to the areas in the first column.
8. Use the graph and personal perceptions to consider the impact of various ways time is used by considering these questions:
  - a. What is the difference between the amounts of time spent in individual work versus time spent in collaborative work?
  - b. What kind of time usage is the most satisfying to you?
  - c. What kind of time usage is the least satisfying to you?
  - d. What type of time usage has the greatest impact on achievement of your students?
  - e. What kind of time usage has the greatest impact on your practice as a teacher?
9. Identify the norms/agreements/expectations about time in the school.
10. Consider how to increase the kind of time usage that is most satisfying to you and that has the greatest impact on achievement of your students.

# Time use log

Use the log to identify how non-instructional time is spent on various tasks and indicate if that time is spent alone or in collaboration with one or more colleagues.

**A = alone      C = collaboration with one or more colleagues**

AREAS	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		Total min.
	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	
Management/clerical (attendance, non-academic reports, business transaction, copying, getting supplies, etc.)											
Assessment (analyzing student work, grading student work, designing assessments, etc.)											
School-focused work (committee work, etc.)											
District-focused work (committee work, etc.)											
Non-school related (personal phone calls, errands, etc.)											
Other											
Other											
Other											
<b>Total daily time</b>											
<b>Total alone</b>											
<b>Total collaborative</b>											

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# Think outside the clock

Create time for professional learning

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

T

eachers at Addison Elementary School in Marietta, Ga., work in a school district that provides substantial opportunities for staff development. But Addison teachers wanted more: They wanted to work together in study groups every week, an activity not covered by the district staff development plan. Because they were saddled with the traditional school schedule, the study groups would have to meet after school unless teachers had another plan.

Principal Carolyn Jurick and the Addison staff approached the school's PTA about supporting cultural arts activities that would involve students but not teachers for one hour every other week. That worked fine for awhile but parents soon tired of the substantial commitment required in that effort and Jurick moved on to Plan B.

In Plan B, Jurick hired subs to cover classrooms for an entire day every other week. The subs worked all day but rotated from classroom to classroom. A study group of six to eight teachers could meet for one hour while subs covered their classrooms.

"At first, teachers thought that was a god-

send. But that wore thin after awhile. Even though they were out of their classrooms, they still had to plan for the subs, and they still had to worry about covering lunch," Jurick said.

On to Plan C. In Plan C, Jurick and her staff concocted a plan to have students begin school 10 minutes earlier than other elementary schools and end 10 minutes later — in exchange for releasing students from school at 1:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Teachers would continue to work until at least 3 p.m. and use that time to meet in their study groups.

Four years later, this plan is still working. "It costs us nothing, and we love it. But we couldn't have done this if we hadn't been able to show that the other ways wouldn't work," Jurick said.

The Addison staff's experience in trying to find time for professional learning offers several significant lessons about the conundrum facing virtually all schools that struggle with this issue:

- Teachers must be flexible and even creative in how they think about their schedules.
- Teachers must be willing to make trade-offs

Continued on Page 2

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## Think outside the clock

*Continued from Page One*

in order to gain what they really want.

- Teachers must be clear about the connection between their own learning and improvements in student learning.
- Teachers must come prepared with Plan B in case Plan A doesn't work.

Although educators are increasingly realizing the value of having teachers work together every day and every week, schools are still burdened with outdated ideas about teachers' and principals' work day and work year. And shaking up that status quo impacts not only teachers but families that have come to expect schools to operate at certain times and in certain ways.

NSDC is clear in its beliefs about this: 25% of an educator's work time should be devoted to professional learning and collaboration with colleagues. But a survey of members in 2000 revealed that no districts had yet reached that level of commitment. Excluding daily planning time, 81% of the respondents to that survey said less than 5% of a teacher's work week was devoted to professional learning.

Even preparation time for teachers is limited, according to Stanford University professor Linda Darling-Hammond. She estimates that most U.S. elementary teachers have three or fewer hours for preparation each week (only 8.3 minutes for every hour in the classroom) and that secondary teachers generally have five prep periods per week (13 minutes per hour of classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond, *JSD* Spring 1999, p. 33).

Acknowledging the difficulty of the task, NSDC Executive Director Dennis

Sparks recommends that schools begin by identifying three to four hours a week — or about 10% of a teacher's work time — for learning and working with peers on improving instruction. "Then schools can begin to experiment with ways to extend that time over the next two or three years to 25% of teachers' work time," he said.

James Madison University professor Michael Rettig, who consults with numerous school districts on scheduling issues, said no district has ever invited him in specifically to find more time for staff development. Typically, districts contact him because they want to find larger blocks of instructional time. If that creates opportunities for staff development, it's a great side benefit, but not the primary focus, he said.

But Rettig said the challenge of finding more time for professional learning is the same as finding larger blocks of instructional time. "The problem is that they're not willing to trade away something in order to get that," Rettig said.

In elementary schools, for example, he said finding common planning time for all teachers in a grade-level is relatively simple. "I can easily create a schedule that would achieve that. But it would mean that teachers might have to lose their individual planning periods on certain days. That's a trade-off that many teachers don't want to make," he said.

When schools do find a schedule they believe will work for them, Rettig urges them to pilot the new plan for a year and, if possible to pilot several different ideas in the same district before committing.

Mikii Bendotti, who has worked with several Arizona schools to find more professional learning time, cautions that freeing teachers to work together is insufficient. "Once the time is there, teachers need guidance and preparation for how to use it. If it just becomes time for them to sit by themselves and grade papers, then an opportunity for learning has been lost," said Bendotti, executive director of the Arizona Teacher Advancement Program, which is funded by the Milken Foundation.

Teachers need preparation in how to run a meeting, how to set norms for those meetings, how to lead decision making and more. In other words, teachers need staff development in order to prepare for staff development. "That's especially the case when teachers have only experienced a sit-and-get model of staff development," she said.

Bendotti has also learned that it's better to make sacrifices to carve out larger chunks of time that occur less frequently than to have short but more frequent meetings. For example, arranging to have teachers meet for 30 minutes every day is probably less effective than meeting for 45 minutes three times a week.

Like many districts, the Hoover City Schools in suburban Birmingham, Ala., is still searching for the answer to its time puzzle. "We're still struggling to find that perfect model, that perfect solution. But it's not there. You have to think creatively. How do you develop your teachers and safeguard the instructional time for your children? That's the rub," said Deborah Camp, curriculum instruction technology specialist for has been part of discussions where teachers and administrators have been grappling with this issue.

"Here's my dream: Have all teachers work on a 12-month calendar, compensate teachers for that time, and build staff development days right into their work year. If we lengthened the school day for teachers and increased the number of days that teachers work, your time issue would disappear. Doing it any other way, it's always going to be a struggle," Camp said.

*"Once the time is there, teachers need guidance and preparation for how to use it. If it just becomes time for them to sit by themselves and grade papers, then an opportunity for learning has been lost," says Mikii Bendotti, executive director of the Arizona Teacher Advancement Program.*

## How To Find Time

*Schools and districts that have carved out more time for professional learning have typically relied on one of the following strategies. Most of these strategies were initially identified in "The time dilemma in school restructuring," by Gary Watts and Shari Castle, *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1), December 1993.*

### Bank time

- Lengthen the regular school day. "Save" the extra minutes to create larger blocks of time when teachers can plan or learn together.
- Create regularly scheduled early dismissal/late start days.

### Buy time

- Hire more teachers, clerks, and support staff to create smaller classes and/or expand or add planning or learning times for teachers.
- Hire substitute teachers to fill-in for regular classroom teachers to enable those teachers to plan or learn together.
- Add an extra teaching position in the school for a rotating substitute teacher who would regularly fill in for teachers in order to free them for planning or learning time.
- Create a substitute bank of "staff development substitute teachers" which regular classroom teachers can tap in order to participate in various forms of professional learning.

### Common time

- Use common planning time to enable teachers working with the same students, the same grade level, or the same subject to share information, collaborate on projects, or learn more about their shared interest.
- Organize "specials" into blocks of time to create common time for teachers with similar interests.
- Link planning periods to other non-instructional times, such as lunch periods, giving teachers the option to use their personal time for shared learning time.

### Free teachers from instructional time

- Enlist administrators to teach classes.
- Authorize teaching assistants and/or college interns to teach classes at regular intervals, always under the direction of a teacher.
- Team teachers so one teaches while the other plans or learns independently.
- Plan day-long, off-site field experiences for students in order to create a large block of time when teachers can learn.

### Add professional days to the school year

- Create multi-day summer learning institutes for teachers in order to ensure that they receive the necessary depth in areas of strategic importance for the district.
- Create a mid-year break for students and use those days for teacher learning.

### Use existing time more effectively

- Provide professional learning time during staff meetings. (For ideas on better ways to use staff meetings, see the Oct./Nov. 1999 *Tools for Schools*.)
- Spread time from multi-school planning days across the calendar to provide more frequent, shorter school-based learning opportunities.

### HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS NEED?

In a survey of 178 principals in urban high schools undertaking major change efforts, lack of time, energy, and money were identified as the key implementation problems. On average, teachers devoted 70 days of time to implementing a project, while "the more successful schools used 50 days a year of external assistance for training, coaching, and capacity building."

**Source:** "Using time well: Schedules in Essential schools," by Kathleen Cushman, *Horace* 12 (2), Nov. 1995.  
[www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/15](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/15).

## Schools That Have Found Time

*To those who say it can't be done, the answer is "it has already been done." These are just a few examples of schools and districts that have found ways to provide regular time within the workday for professional learning.*

### **Ridge Meadows Elementary School, Ellisville, Mo.** **Early-release days to focus on improving writing**

One day each month, the Rockwood School District releases students in elementary, middle, and high schools in the same quadrants of the district. That allows the entire staff of a school to have an afternoon to work together on a topic of its choosing.

Three times a year, the Ridge Meadows staff uses these early dismissal days to score student writing. All students in grades 1-5 write in response to the same non-fiction prompt. Grade-level teachers design a rubric to score the prompt. Tables are set up in the school gym by grade-level and teachers work together to score the writing samples. When the scoring is ended, teachers then reflect upon what they've learned and how they will change their instruction to improve student writing.

### **Brandon High School, Ortonville, Mich.** **Late starts provide consistent learning time for teachers**

Every Wednesday morning at Brandon High School is devoted to professional development and teacher collaboration. Teachers begin work at 7:30 a.m. but students don't begin classes until 11 a.m. The high school has a traditional six-period day.

A steering committee composed of staff who volunteer for the assignment design the learning for each Wednesday. That time could be devoted to learning more about technology, interpreting student test data, designing the state-mandated career pathways for students, or doing leadership development activities. Departmental staff frequently use this time to learn more about changes in curriculum or assessments.

Although students are allowed to arrive late, many clubs meet during this time and students have access to computer labs and the school library.

### **Ball High School, Galveston, Texas** **Run staff development sessions inside prep periods**

An alternating 90-minute block schedule provides teachers with a 90-minute conference or prep period each day. Twice a month, Galveston Ball runs two 45-minute staff development sessions inside each of those conference periods.

The staff development offered during this time is mandatory and interdisciplinary and taught eight times in order to reach the entire staff of 170 teachers.

The school has used this time to teach staff how to write benchmark testing and how to electronically access data on the same testing. Recently, for example, the school did a lengthy workshop of a new writing method. Follow-up meetings occurred during these conference periods after teachers had implemented the new method with students and could talk about the challenges they faced when doing that. Curriculum specialists from the district also have used this time to meet with language arts and math teachers to explore issues.

Teachers can use their regular conference period to meet with colleagues, although entire departments do not share the same conference period.

### **Madison Park School, Phoenix, Ariz.** **Permanent subs on staff relieve teachers for collaborative time**

Two fulltime substitute teachers provide released time for teachers for professional development during the workday. Teachers sign up for one of the substitute teachers in order to do professional learning on their own, to work with another teacher, or to work with one of the building's master teachers. (Master teachers have only half-day classroom responsibilities and devote the remainder of their time to on-site professional development.) Teachers are allowed to use such released time two to three times each month.

In addition, teachers in this grade 3-8 school agreed to exchange two prep periods a week in order to gain a block of time for collaboration with their grade-level colleagues.

## Schools That Have Found Time

### **International High School, Long Island, N.Y.**

#### **Organize teachers into interdisciplinary teams**

The school's 29 teachers and 450 students are organized into six interdisciplinary teams. Teachers have 70 minutes of daily planning time and a half day each week for staff-planned professional development. This amounts to nearly nine hours of shared time each week. The team also has the discretion to decide how to use 500 hours of professional learning time each year.

Team members observe and coach each other; share best practices; develop, evaluate, and revise curricula; and jointly devise interventions for students who need extra support.

Each staff member also leads a small advisory group that meets weekly to discuss issues related to students' personal, academic, and social growth.

### **Spring Woods High School, Houston, Texas**

#### **Create staff rally days**

Texas' football traditions inspired Spring Woods High School to find a way to adapt the well-identified pep rally schedule for professional time for teachers.

Between 15 and 20 times a year, Spring Woods uses the same bell schedule that governs a pep rally day and creates a "staff rally" day when students are dismissed 30 minutes early to allow teachers time to meet together until their normal work day ends. The faculty of 125 is broken into about a dozen interdisciplinary groups. A member of the Schoolwide Leadership Cadre guides each group and plans how the time will be used. For example, twice a year the cadre selects books that the staff will read and discuss during these meetings.

Spring Woods operates on a four-period block schedule in which teachers teach three periods a day and have one instruction-free conference or prep period. Once a month, that conference period becomes a staff development period. Teachers are required to use half of those conference periods to attend a mandatory discussion or workshop that may focus on topics ranging from a new reading initiative to improving their understanding of the state's standardized testing program.

### **Addison Elementary School, Marietta, Ga.**

#### **Weekly meeting time for study groups**

Students begin school 10 minutes earlier and end 10 minutes later than other elementary schools in the Cobb County School District. But, on Wednesday afternoons, students leave schools at 1:30 p.m. and teachers assemble in their study groups. Teachers are required to work until 3 p.m., but most of them meet in study groups until about 4 p.m. each Wednesday.

Using district-allocated staff development dollars, teachers are still able to hire subs to enable them to attend meetings and visit other schools for observations. They also participate in district-sponsored staff development activities.

## Districts That Have Found Time

### Montgomery County, Md.

#### Knowledgeable substitutes in the classroom

Each of the 193 schools in Montgomery County, Md. has a fulltime staff development teacher whose role is to provide instructional support for teachers in that building. In the elementary schools, this teacher may be involved in team teaching, presenting model lessons, relieving teachers so they can observe other teachers teach, or helping teachers locate needed resource materials. In the secondary schools, the staff development teacher may work with entire departments as a resource teacher or relieve the department chairs to do related work.

In addition, each Montgomery County school has an allocation for a staff development substitute teacher. This teacher, who earns a higher rate of pay than a traditional substitute, is only available to relieve teachers for professional growth. The staff development teacher schedules this substitute teacher's time based on requests from classroom teachers. For example, a teacher might request relief by the staff development substitute in order to spend an afternoon on an action research project or to observe another classroom. Teachers who call in sick or take personal days are replaced by substitutes drawn from the districtwide substitute pool.

### Iowa City, Iowa

#### Early-release days for all schools

For 25 years, students at all Iowa City public schools have been released from school an hour early every Thursday in order to provide time for professional development. Elementary school students end their day at 2 p.m. and secondary students at 2:20 p.m. Teachers work until 4 p.m.

Half of those Thursdays are designated for building-level staff development; the other half for districtwide staff development. The school and district improvement plans guide most of the professional learning. For example, grade-level teachers might meet on the building-level days to work on common issues. On the district days, teachers from across all schools might meet by subjects or grade-levels or the district may provide its own workshop on a topic (such as using data to design instruction) that would be valuable for all teachers.

In addition, Iowa City uses outside grant money to buy substitute teacher time to enable groups of teachers to work together or attend conferences.

### Jefferson County, Ky.

#### Learning time for principals

Teachers aren't the only school employees who need time for professional learning. In Jefferson County, Ky., middle school principals meet for three days each summer with teacher leaders from their schools to focus on standards for key academic areas. Together, they examine data on student learning and develop school improvement plans. During the school year, the principals have monthly staff development days of their own. For half of those days, the principals focus on specific learning within a content area, such as learning more about writing standards. During the other half of those days, the principals break into special interest cohorts, such as integrating technology into instruction, developing leadership skills, or learning more about "knowledge work."

#### HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS NEED?

The staff of the Effective Schools Network reports that it takes 10 to 20 teacher days to develop and implement improvement plans.

**Source:** "Using time well: Schedules in Essential schools," by Kathleen Cushman, *Horace 12* (2), Nov. 1995.

[www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/15](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/15).

To learn a "moderately difficult teaching strategy could require that teachers receive 20 to 30 hours of instruction in its theory, 15 to 20 classroom demonstrations, and 10 to 15 coaching sessions before mastering the technique and incorporating it into routine classroom practice."

**Source:** *Time for reform*, by Susanna Purnell and Paul Hill (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).

## Time for professional learning

*Resources to help you learn more about it*

### “Finding Time for Collaboration”

Mary Anne Raywid, *Educational Leadership*, 51(1), September 1993.

Offers 10 strategies schools are using to create time. Order from ASCD, (800) 933-2723.

### “Making Time for Teacher Professional Development”

Ismat Abdal-Haqq, *ERIC Clearinghouse*, October 1996.

Answers seven frequently asked questions regarding creating time for professional development. Order Digest # 95-4 from ERIC, (202) 293-2450 or order online at [www.eric.org/pages/digests/making\\_time\\_teacher\\_pro\\_dev\\_95-4.html](http://www.eric.org/pages/digests/making_time_teacher_pro_dev_95-4.html). Price: \$4.

### Prisoners of Time

National Commission on Time and Learning. Washington, DC: Author, 1994.

Key national report on time in schools. Order from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Supt. of Documents, Mail Stop, SSOP, Washington DC, 20402-9328; (202) 783-3238; Stock No. 065-000-00640-5. Price: \$5.50.

### “Scheduling Time to Maximize Staff Development Opportunities”

Brenda Tanner, Robert Canady, and Michael Rettig, *Journal of Staff Development*, 16(4), Fall 1995.

Provides examples of how high schools can structure time to improve instruction and professional learning. Available online at [www.nsd.org/library/jstd/tanner164.html](http://www.nsd.org/library/jstd/tanner164.html).

### “Smart Use of Time and Money”

Joan Richardson, *Journal of Staff Development*, 18(1), Winter 1997.

Explores the issue of resources for professional learning. Available online at [www.nsd.org/library/jstd/richardson181.html](http://www.nsd.org/library/jstd/richardson181.html).

### Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success

National Foundation for Innovation in Education (now the NEA Foundation for Innovation in Education). Washington, DC: Author, 1996.

Addresses rationale for teacher development work and the relationship between teacher learning and student learning. Order from NFIE Publications, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT, 06516. Price: \$15.

### “The Time Dilemma in School Restructuring”

Gary D. Watts and Shari Castle, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(1), December 1993.

Identifies five primary ways that innovative schools “found” time for professional learning. Order from PDK, (812) 339-1156.

### Time for Reform

Susanna Purnell and Paul Hill. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992.

Identifies six strategies schools use to provide time for reform. Order online at [www.rand.org/education/pubs/reform.prior.html](http://www.rand.org/education/pubs/reform.prior.html). Price: \$7.

### “Time: Squeeze, Carve, Apply, Target, Use, Arrange, for Adult Learning”

*Journal of Staff Development*, 20(2), Spring 1999.

The entire issue of the Spring 1999 *JSD* is devoted to exploring various issues related to use of time in schools. Order from NSDC Business Office,

(800) 727-7288 or through NSDC Online Bookstore, [www.nsd.org/bookstore.htm](http://www.nsd.org/bookstore.htm).

### NSDC Online Library

See [www.nsd.org/library/time.html](http://www.nsd.org/library/time.html) for an extensive listing of articles, reports, and other web sites with information about time for professional learning.



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# Working Toward EXCELLENCE

A NEWSLETTER OF  
THE ALABAMA  
BEST PRACTICES CENTER

SPRING 2001

VOLUME 1 ~ NUMBER 3

## Time Enough For Teaching And Learning

The stories in this issue of *Working Toward Excellence* explore two critical needs that all schools share:

- Time enough for teachers to work effectively with students; and
- Time enough for teachers to work together “student-free” as they plan instruction, improve curriculum, and sharpen their own teaching.

Because *WTE* focuses on promising educational practices, most of the news here is good. Readers will find encouraging examples of schools and districts where resourceful educators are “making time.” Some have strong financial support; others scramble to make ends meet. But they have this in common: they are creative thinkers who put the needs of their students and teachers first. *They find the time.*

But they are not the norm. In the majority of Alabama schools, and in many schools across the nation, students, parents, teachers, administrators and staff continue to be “captives of the clock and calendar.” We begin with two brief tales.

### The 50-minute dash

In an Alabama middle school

not far from Birmingham, a class of seventh grade language arts students are deep into *Maniac McGee*, the 1991 Newbery Award-winning story about a very excitable orphan boy who confronts racism in a small town.

Author Jerry Spinelli has described his seriocomic folk story as “the history of a kid.” Picking up on that theme, the teacher in this well-run classroom has asked her students to write short essays recollecting something important in their own brief personal histories.

Glancing at the sweeping hands of the large clock mounted over the wipeboard, the teacher — let’s call her Ms. Tempus — begins the class by having students read from their essays. After a few students volunteer to read aloud she cuts her eyes to the clock again. Other students are waving their hands, also anxious to share their personal stories. But Ms. Tempus must move on. Time’s a-wasting.

Next, Ms. Tempus divides her students into four groups. “Read chapters 16 through 18,” she instructs, “and look for questions that you can bring back to our literary discussion.” She passes out each student’s “writer’s

notebook” as the kids bunch up in small groups on the carpeted floor. Some set up beach chairs; others grab soft pillows and plop down.

Ms. Tempus moves from group to group, modeling the “text analysis” process. “Why is the word ‘is’ in italics?” “How is Maniac feeling?” “Have you ever been in a group of people where you know you are not wanted?” After 15 minutes, perhaps two-thirds of the students have completed the “read-aloud.” But once again, it’s time to pick up the pace.

The class gathers to discuss the unfolding story. Ms. Tempus allots 10 minutes for an exchange of ideas — barely enough time to rev up the mental engines of her adolescent audience. She checks the classroom clock and grimaces. The 50-minute instructional period is almost over.

“For the next seven minutes,” she says, “pretend that you are Maniac writing in your diary or on scratch paper to get your feelings out. I want to see what you’ve written before you leave class today. That’s your ticket out of here.”

The students jump to the writing task. A few pencil-draggers receive the teacher’s personal attention. The first student to finish reads her entry aloud, as others scribble rapidly. The bell rings. Few students have completed the task. Ms. Tempus shouts over the scraping desk and exit chatter: “The first thing we’ll do tomorrow is finish your writing and read these entries. So be ready!” As the kids file out, another group is already queuing up at the door. Ms. Tempus rushes about the room, trying to reorganize. A few ticks later, the 50-minute dash begins again.

AT ANOTHER MIDDLE SCHOOL, a few dozen miles away in a neighboring school district, teachers gather for a 30-minute, twice-weekly group planning period. During this time, the team

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	TC’s low-cost idea: teacher study groups . . . . . page 8	Anne Jolly dreams of time . . . . . page 11

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# Homewood Middle's Daily Schedule Creates Time to Improve Teaching

*A four-block schedule gives teachers the opportunity to teach differently — and the time it takes to learn how to do that.*

*Working Toward Excellence* is a quarterly publication of the Alabama Best Practices Center. The Best Practices Center, located in Montgomery, works to identify and promote promising education practices, with an emphasis on staff development for teachers and administrators. It collaborates with existing organizations such as the State Department of Education, higher education, local school systems and schools, the regional inservice centers and others. It is facilitated by the A+ Education Foundation, with the generous support of the BellSouth Foundation and the State of Alabama. For more information, call (334) 279-1886.

John Norton, *Editor*  
Braden Phillips-Welborn,  
*Senior Writer*

CINDY CASON DESPISES school bells. In fact, she says they drive her crazy.

A strange aversion, you might think, for one whose profession places her in the principal's office of Homewood Middle School, a school of 740 students serving a predominantly upper middle class suburb of Birmingham. But Dr. Cason insists that teaching and learning can be most effective when you take away the bells and muffle the ticking clocks.

At Homewood Middle, a four-block schedule allows teams of teachers to work with three classes for ninety minutes each day — a generous portion of instructional time that requires new teaching strategies. The fourth daily block is “student free” and provides teachers with time to develop new techniques, learn about technology integration, look at student work, and meet with parents. The block schedule gives HMS teachers the opportunity to teach differently — and the time it takes to learn how to do that.

“Our middle school has made a huge effort to really protect instructional time,” says seventh grade social studies teacher Amelia Gamble. “And part of that protecting instructional time has given us the benefit of having common planning time — time off with all of the other same-grade teachers.”

Each grade level is composed of several four-teacher teams who are responsible for teaching core groups of students. Math and lan-

guage arts teachers work with the same core group on a daily basis, while science and social studies teachers alternate, teaching 9-week courses to two different core groups. Schedules are arranged so that all same-grade teachers have a common planning block each day.

Extensive research and planning led HMS administrators to begin the four-block schedule with sixth grade teachers five years ago. One grade at a time eased into the new schedule from a traditional seven-period day. This year, eighth grade teachers made the leap.

## More time for student learning

Five years ago, the Homewood school system began its effort to provide all teachers with more embedded professional development time while protecting (and in some cases, increasing) instructional time for students. Homewood assistant superintendent Dr. Betty Winches points to the middle school's progress as evidence that the investment of time and money have paid off.

“The relationship between time on task and test scores bowled us over,” says Winches. “We knew there was a relationship there, and expected to see some gains in language and math, but we did not expect them to be so rapid and pronounced.

“These were the same teachers, the same kids, and the same buildings,” notes Winches, who was a member of the HMS staff when the

changes began. “We just extended time and provided staff development to create a more project-based atmosphere, and we saw phenomenal gains. Some classes jumped six to ten percentile points in one year.”

A side effect of the block schedule has been a dramatic decrease in discipline referrals, since students are spending less time in the hallways and more time on task in classrooms.

## Escaping the clock

In a traditional 50-minute class, Cason says, teachers and students live by the clock. “They're getting information, they're looking at homework from the night before, you're letting them practice for about ten minutes, and you're sending them out the door.”

Educators at Homewood Middle supported the shift to block scheduling “because we know that kids need time to problem solve. Now they have the opportunity to get down in the middle of the floor, and solve the problems on their own with the teacher there.”

If a creative project takes longer than expected, teachers can manipulate the schedule to provide even more time. “It's more of a flexible block schedule than it is a true block schedule because teacher teams can move their kids and change their schedule during the day. The only thing I tell them they have to do is get to lunch on time, and PE,” Cason explains.

*Working Toward Excellence*

The longer periods brought about changes in teaching as well. “You just can’t do the traditional method of teaching in a ninety-minute block, especially with thirteen year olds,” Cason notes. Teachers have gravitated toward constructivist methods that engage kids in learning through hands-on activities, problem solving, and cooperative learning.

Cason expected math teachers to have the most difficulty in adapting to the block — but she was wrong. She relates the experience of a veteran math teacher with nearly 30 years of experience. “She says that this is the best thing that’s ever happened to her classroom...She sees them working and she knows where it is that they’re having a problem, so she can address it with them.”

#### What teachers say

Eighth grade math teacher Stephanie Fuhrman is halfway through her first year of the block schedule. “It is so much more work because there is no way to have direct instruction for ninety minutes — so I am having to create, research, and find applications that I would not have had time for last year — finding innovative ways to engage them.”

Yet Fuhrman enjoys the hard-won evolution of her teaching practice and sees the impact on her students. “I give them real world problems. They have to work together and contribute to the group. I’ve never had time to do that before, and that’s been just great!”

Amelia Gamble has taught at Homewood Middle for six years. “When we went to the block schedule, there was a huge need for a change in how we’d been doing things. When I had to teach in fifty minutes, I felt like I had to hand out information. But now, I want students to struggle a little bit. What’s the problem here? What’s our essential learning? And let them kind of struggle along, learning through the process.”

*Spring 2001*

Gamble’s social studies students do more writing and reading — and more thinking — in the classroom now. “It used to be that we didn’t have time to say, ‘Let’s look at this section together,’ or ‘let’s pull out the main points together.’ That’s something they had to do at home. And when they took their textbooks home, they were scanning over those quiz words and that was it.”

Gamble also says that struggling readers gain from the extra attention they receive in longer classes. “I have some low readers, and that big block of time is really beneficial for them. If they didn’t get it on their own, there’s that opportunity to sit down and work with that kid. And they can’t hide. They can’t just sit at their desk and ‘get by’ for ninety-five minutes.”

#### More time for teacher learning

What’s a surefire recipe for disaster? Tell teachers that the whole school is going to the block schedule next year, and then ignore the need for professional development to support the change.

Luckily, Homewood didn’t have to learn the hard way. An intense year of planning and staff development preceded the sixth grade teachers’ initiation — and then-assistant principal Winches made sure that teachers “bought in” to the block idea before committing them to it.

Homewood Middle teachers continue to sharpen their teaching skills during the daily 90-minute planning block. Half of this time can be used for individual planning, reflection, and research. The other half is spent with colleagues, and a schoolwide schedule determines the professional development focus for each day.

On *Mondays*, teachers meet

*Continued on page 4.*

### “INVESTING IN TEACHER TIME PAYS OFF IN PERFORMANCE,” SAYS HOMEWOOD SUPERINTENDENT

When Homewood City Schools first sought to create more time for teacher learning during the day, they weren’t sure how to describe their efforts. “Then the National Staff Development Council released a publication that mentioned embedded professional development,” recalls superintendent Dr. Jodi Newton. “And we said, ‘Look at that — we have a name for it now!’”

Every teacher in the Homewood system has at least thirty minutes of personal planning time per day, along with at least two additional 40-minute planning periods per week. Most have more. (See the stories on pages 2 and 4 for information about middle and elementary schools. High school teachers have two planning periods during each seven-period day.)

To provide extra time for embedded staff development without reducing students’ instructional time or inflating class sizes, Homewood’s leaders made a substantial investment in additional teacher units. Newton and assistant superintendent Dr. Betty Winches say the investment pays off in performance.

Teachers participate in ongoing, sustained professional development that is research-based and collaborative in nature. Newton says the extra time comes with higher expectations and a structured, systemwide approach to professional development. The presence of an assistant principal for instruction at every school helps to ensure that embedded time is being used wisely.

In recent years, Homewood faculties have focused attention on annual themes related to the system’s needs: differentiated instruction, instructional technology, and assessment. Several of the schools are Alabama Reading Initiative Literacy Demonstration Sites, as well.

Each year, the system earmarks about \$200,000 for professional development. Administrators place top priority on opportunities that will train teachers to train others in the system. “It’s much more rewarding to send that second grade teacher to that conference about instructional strategies, because I know that we now have the mechanism for her to share with others,” says Winches.

Newton and Winches believe that the additional time for reflection, study, and collaboration has helped teachers view themselves as professionals who have expertise to share. “Our schools need teacher leaders,” Newton says. “I see our teachers, principals, and Dr. Winches growing in instructional leadership all the time, and it’s very rewarding when you see the growth in knowledge. Our teachers are sharing ideas with principals, and the principals are sharing them with us...It is a circular thing.”



HOMewood MIDDLE'S SCHEDULE...  
Continued from page 3.

with others who teach their subject area at the same grade level. "You know that on Monday, you're going to have to sit down with the other people teaching seventh grade social studies and they're going to say, "What are you doing in your room?," explains Amelia Gamble. "You know that somebody's going to hold you accountable. They're keeping up with your pacing, and your scope, and all of that."

During *Monday* sessions, teachers often compare project ideas, assignments, grading rubrics, and instructional plans as "critical friends." "We usually look at what the next two weeks hold," says Gamble. "We talk about ideas.... "How are you going to teach that, how are you going to assess that, what do you mean by that? Is this fluff stuff, or is there content here?"

The Monday discussions sometimes help teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of what they've already done, Gamble adds. "We'll say to each other, "What did the work look like? There's a lot of that back-end fixing." This process is particularly helpful to new teachers, she says, who are soon offering ideas of their own. "It's effective. It increases my sense of purpose, when you really

*Don't give up scarce hours to "one-shot workshops."*

have another professional just helping you along."

Cason refers to *Tuesday* as "Leadership Day," mostly because the teachers are meeting with school leaders during half of their planning periods on that day. Tuesday often includes state- or federally-mandated training facilitated by Cason. That's also a time for faculty members to share information from conferences

they've attended individually.

On *Wednesdays*, technology coordinator Pam White leads sessions on instructional technology. *Thursdays* are, as Gamble puts it, "team time." That's when teams sharing a core group of students come together to do interdisciplinary planning and to discuss individual students' progress and behavior.

*Thursday* discussions often resemble case work. "We start pulling records, and we look at student work," Cason says. "We ask, "What is it that's going right in this class that could help in this other class?"

*Fridays* are reserved for parent conferences. Homewood teachers have found that setting aside this time each week makes it easier for them to connect with parents of students who are having difficulties.

Gamble and Fuhrman believe that the new schedule, including the additional embedded professional development time, both motivates and supports them. "Because of the atmosphere, I feel that I should be on the ball, all the time," says Fuhrman. "If you love the kids, and you want the best for them, then you're not comfortable just getting by."

**Funding the block schedule**

Thanks to a strong base of local financial support, Cason can operate on a schedule of four substantial blocks while still complying with Alabama class size laws. More than a third of her 55 teacher units are funded by local revenues, supplementing the state monies that many Alabama systems depend upon.

"It is an expensive model," she says. "And people say all the time, you can't throw money at education to make it better. But this is a prime example of it. It takes more staff, and that takes money."

Amelia Gamble says that teacher buy-in is an important part of making an innovative schedule work. "I do think that there are some

ways to do it without the extra teacher units," she says. " (But) you've got to have a faculty who believe that it's the most beneficial way to teach kids. Once the focus is on the best way to teach kids, and when you see that it's working, then you're much more likely to put in that extra time."

Winches and Homewood Superintendent Jodi Newton say that it might be more difficult to provide embedded professional development time without extra teacher units, either from local or federal funds. They do point out, however, that being focused can help principals to make the best possible use of the time that they do have.

For example, Winches notes, "When extra time isn't there, you can decide on the pressing issue for your system or school. If it's reading, and you can't afford to be part of the Alabama Reading Initiative, can you afford to bring in a speaker or trainer from the initiative? You can start by trying to build the culture around one issue."

Winches and Newton also suggest that schools avoid giving up scarce professional development hours to "one-shot wonders." Instead, they recommend staff development programs that include a formal or informal "follow-through" component. Newton gives thumbs up to ARI and other programs with a strong emphasis on continuing staff development, because they allow teacher learning to permeate the school environment.

"That's what moves our culture along," Winches says. "When it becomes normal to have expertise." ❖

**FIND MORE**

For more information about the Homewood school system's creative approaches to scheduling and embedded professional development time, contact Dr. Betty Winches at (205) 870-4203.

*Working Toward Excellence*

**TIME ENOUGH FOR TEACHING...***Continued from page 1.*

of teachers is expected to coordinate lessons, discuss individual student progress, deal with a constant stream of school “administrivia,” and — if they can find a few moments — share ideas about effective teaching strategies.

One teacher passes around photocopies of a journal article describing how a group of teachers in another school are using a process called “Looking at Student Work.” The process calls for teachers to bring to the table a lesson plan and examples of student work based on the lesson. Teachers then discuss the work together, acting as “critical friends” as they reflect on the lesson’s effectiveness and how it might be improved.

“We’ve been talking about doing something very similar to this!” the teacher says excitedly as she reviews the article with her colleagues. “This could lead us into some really good discussions about how well we’re linking our curriculum to state standards and what strategies might work for our kids.”

“It could,” another teacher agrees. “But how much could we do in a few minutes once or twice a week? We’d just be going through the motions.” Several other teachers nod. Out of a speaker in the corner of the room, they hear a “tap-tap-tap” coming from the public address system. The principal is calling one of their group to the office. As the summoned teacher gathers her papers, a bell rings. Chairs bang together as the meeting ends, like so many others, with a long list of “To Do’s” carried forward to another day.

**Prisoners of time**

In 1994, the National Commission on Time and Learning offered this blunt assessment of school reform efforts already underway in Alabama and many other states: “We cannot get there from here with the amount

of time now available and the way we now use it. Limited time will frustrate our aspirations. Misuse of time will undermine our best efforts.”

Looking back today on their groundbreaking report, *Prisoners of Time*, we might easily conclude that the commissioners were soothsayers. They warned that if rigorous state standards were introduced without changing “our current time-bound system,” they could cause “great mischief.” Holding all students to the same high standards, they wrote, “means that some students will need more time.”

Higher standards would also require more of teachers — more time to work with students and more time to develop their professional skills. “Adding school reform to the list of things schools must accomplish, without recognizing that time in the current calendar is a limited resource, trivializes the effort,” the commissioners concluded. “It sends a powerful message to teachers: don’t take this reform business too seriously. Squeeze it in on your own time.”

Nearly a decade later, many school watchers would agree that the issue of time is still missing from the school reform agenda. And many educators would add that the Commission’s warning of “great mischief” could indeed come true.

**Squeezing time**

News stories from across the United States tell us that the pressure to meet state standards is squeezing the life out of some schools. In many schools, a decade after the National Commission began its research, time is still the constant. Most schools still operate in 50-minute capsules, six hours a day, 175 days a year. As the pressure increases to meet state standards in a small core of subjects, there is less time for arts, music, and foreign language. Less time for engaging lessons that allow students to explore new concepts and ideas.

Less time for students who need more time to learn. (See p. 11.)

But a scan of the news and education literature also offers some hope. A decade ago, the National Commission had to search the entire nation to find the reforming urban elementary school in Kansas City where school is in session almost 11 months a year, with students attending school for 205 days, and teachers on duty for 226. In this school, student sessions ran for ten weeks, followed by a week of teacher training and planning. “You don’t get well-developed professionals with two inservice days a year,” the principal said.

Today, schools like this one — though still rare — are easier to find. And — on a less ambitious scale — other schools are breaking the shackles of time. In almost every case, these schools are using public dollars or dollars raised by caring communities to implement their time-making strategies. As any school leader will tell you, time is money.

Here are some of the strategies schools are using to capture time. (For details, read the stories in this issue, explore our web resources on page 12, or go to our website for an extended list of helpful articles.)

**Time for students**

Students spend large amounts of time waiting, being “managed,” or working at non-academic activities. Various studies suggest that students spend as little as 25 percent of their time actively engaged in studying academic subjects and rarely more than 50 percent. Schools could:

- Change staffing patterns to allocate more positions to classroom teaching, rather than to other kinds of supplementary staffing roles;
- Redesign schedules to create longer blocks of class time, so that students spend more time with fewer teachers each day;
- Organize schools and grades into teams that allow teachers to serve a

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common group of students and to make decisions about time allocation within those teams.

- Use “looping” to keep students together with the same teachers for more than one year, saving many weeks of “getting acquainted” time at the beginning of the year.
- Eliminate the bell system, PA announcements, and class changes. (See page 2.)
- Establish an “academic day”, in contrast to a “school day.” At least 5.5 hours of core academic instruction daily will double the time in some schools. Lengthen the school day to accommodate clubs, sports and other extra-curricular activities.
- Team with community organizations to offer before- and after-school programs. High schools can use “early-” and “late-bird” classes. (See page 10.)
- Schools with year-round schedules can use the breaks between sessions to offer enrichment and “catch-up” programs for students, and professional development time for teachers.
- Use new technologies. Well-used, they can “buy” time through self-guided instruction and reductions in record keeping.

**Time for teachers**

A RAND study (*Time for Reform*, 1992) found that new teaching strategies can require as much as 50 hours of instruction, practice and coaching before teachers become comfortable with them. It also found that more successful schools in urban areas “used 50 days a year of external assistance for training, coaching, and capacity building.” Other studies show that the best professional development time is “embedded” in the school day. Schools could:

- Arrange regular common planning time for teachers working with the same children or teaching the same grade or subject.
- Add or reassign professional staff to create more electives, allowing

more flexible scheduling and common release time. (See p. 4.)

- Provide for the widespread and systematic use of a cadre of well-prepared, full-time, substitute teachers.
- Extend the contract year to pay teachers for professional development or use a longer day for the same purpose.
- Employ a grant writer to help secure funds for summer and/or Saturday programs where teachers receive stipends to focus on priority professional development needs.
- Use currently scheduled meetings more effectively. Some schools have eliminated most traditional faculty meetings by relying more on team leaders and department chairs and used the extra time for schoolwide planning and professional development.
- Use technology and ideas like “study tubs” (see p. 8) to create opportunities for teachers to use “time as available.” Make videotapes of model lessons for colleagues to share. Create on-line professional communities where teachers can discuss ideas and issues through listserv e-mail.

Finally, researchers who have spent time “thinking about time” urge school leaders to have community discussions before making major structural changes. Parents, community leaders, and even school boards, must be convinced that more time with students — and more time for teachers to work together — will increase the likelihood of success for all.

Ultimately, time is a leadership issue. Districts and schools must decide how to use the time productively. Spending more time on “what we have always done” will truly be a waste of time. *Carpe diem.* ❖



**CREATING MORE TIME:  
IT'S A THREE-PART PROCESS  
IN DECATUR**

How can you carve time out of the school day for more individualized student instruction? In Decatur, finding time is a Three-Part Process that emerged three years ago as administrators and teachers discussed ways to improve students’ reading and writing skills.

“We knew that students needed more opportunities to meet with teachers and aides in smaller groups, but we wanted the children who weren’t involved in that process to be actively engaged. No one could be neglected,” says Jeanne Payne, supervisor of curriculum and staff development.

How does the Three-Part Process work? At Decatur elementary schools, students in a classroom are divided into three different groups for thirty minutes or more each day. One group goes to the literacy lab to write and publish books or stories and learn keyboarding skills. Another group heads to the library to work with the media specialist, select books or conduct research. The third group remains in the classroom to work with the teacher.

Benjamin Davis Elementary principal Pam Asmann is an enthusiastic supporter of this plan. “Our teachers are so excited about having uninterrupted time with small groups of students. This is sacred time. I don’t interrupt it.”

Asmann describes a scene that helps explain teachers’ enthusiasm. “I saw one of our kindergarten teachers walking down the hall with four of her students. The rest of her class was either in the literacy lab or the library. The teacher and students were looking at the word walls to identify words that the students could recognize. When one of the students found a word that they knew, they wrote it down in their journal. You could sense their excitement and enthusiasm.”

Such a “field trip” would not be possible with a class of 18 kindergartners. “The Three-Part Process gives students some independence and helps build up their confidence. During this half-hour time, every student is getting individual attention,” says Asmann.

The Three-Part Process is also flexible. At Benjamin Davis, some teachers decide to keep students in the same group for a week at a time. Others choose to rotate it every day. Asmann said this flexibility enables teachers, the media specialist and literacy lab aide to integrate and personalize instruction.

The results? Asmann reports that the school’s STAR test scores continue to climb every year from August to May, and library circulation “has gone through the roof.”

“I know that time is an issue for everyone in education,” she says. “Finding time for everything we have to do *and* to meet the needs of every child is very difficult. But, if you can look outside the box, you can often find an answer. We think we’ve found an answer here, and it is working!”

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## Schools Find Teacher Study Groups Are Powerful – And Inexpensive

*In the Talladega City Schools, enthusiastic educators are staying after school to talk about teaching — without pay.*

IMAGINE YOU TEACH in Talladega City Schools. You've requested to leave school a half-hour early to go to a study group with other teachers in your system, and you've been told that someone will supervise your students while you're gone. You look at your watch. Someone steps through the classroom door. It's the...superintendent?

Last fall, Supt. Larry Thacker, principals, and central office staff began watching over final classes several Wednesdays each month so that interested faculty members could join voluntary book study groups at nearby schools. The groups convene at 2:45, when most Talladega schools send pupils home, but bus schedules dictate that a few schools end instruction at 3:15.

"When we showed up to watch teachers' classes so that they could go, the principals realized that we were very sincere about how important we felt this was," recalls curriculum coordinator Vicki Dick.

The off-campus study groups offer teachers the opportunity to read and discuss the latest research on teaching, and to observe administrators modeling the techniques with students from the system. Involvement is not required, and teachers do not receive stipends — yet a growing number of educators

are staying late on Wednesdays to participate.

Teachers also meet several times a month in their own schools to talk about a book they've selected. Past reads include *Strategies That Work*, *Other People's Children*, *I Read It But I Didn't Get It*, *Dream Keepers*, and *Mosaic of Thought*. A designated teacher leads the discussion. Teachers from other schools may join in if the scheduled book sparks their interest. Although schools often focus on different texts, Dick finds many similar issues as she monitors teachers' discussions weekly via e-mail and adjusts systemwide meetings to address common threads.

The systemwide discussions began first, but they soon spurred questions among teachers about instructional issues back in their own schools. "That's exactly what we wanted," Dick said. And that's when the in-school study groups began. One side benefit: the in-school talks are helping teachers grow as instructional leaders, because most principals have chosen to cheer from the sidelines rather than taking control of the group.

### Low-cost staff development

Talladega City Schools serve 3100 students, over 60% of whom are eligible for free and reduced

price meals. Talladega cannot afford to pay teachers for their Wednesday afternoon time, but Dick is optimistic about the future of the program. "The number of books they've read, the number of teachers involved... it's phenomenal," she says.

The system does provide books for the study groups. Copies are owned by the central office, but teachers are encouraged to highlight and write in them. At the end of the study group, two copies are placed in the school's home library and the rest are circulated to other schools.

Teachers and administrators are finding other ways to build on excitement generated in the after-school meetings. At Graham Elementary, reading specialist Becky McKay has created "study tubs" that contain excerpts from teachers' professional readings, overheads describing the readings, and student reading materials that would work well with the strategies described. The tubs are available for checkout, and other schools are picking up on the idea.

"There are some remarkable conversations going on," Dick says. "Teachers talk about how learning about strategies and research has helped them reach students they've never been able to reach before." ❖

## FIND MORE

(Study groups) Vicki Dick at [vlDick@aol.com](mailto:vlDick@aol.com);

(study tubs) Becky McKay at [rbmckay49@aol.com](mailto:rbmckay49@aol.com).

## Finding Time to Develop a Professional Learning Community

*At West Blocton Elementary, high morale produces extra time for teacher learning, even when funds are in short supply.*

“PEER PRESSURE IS such a strong thing — it’s just as strong for teachers as it is for our kids,” West Blocton Elementary School principal Carol Belcher says. She should know — she’s seen positive peer pressure in action.

Almost all of West Blocton’s 35 faculty members regularly dedicate their after-school time to a voluntary book study group that puts them in touch with the latest research on how kids learn. At each meeting, two of the teachers lead a lively discussion of the book the group is reading.

“Usually, you see people standing around talking about the latest novel. Around here, they’re talking about professional literature. ‘Did you read this? Have you tried that?’ It amazes me, this change in attitude,” Belcher says.

Belcher believes that high morale produces extra time for teacher learning, and vice versa.

“When we went to the Alabama Reading Initiative, we found that camaraderie, teambuilding, and working together to talk about common issues are very important and necessary.”

Belcher says teachers’ excitement encourages them to volunteer their personal time “to be part of a good discussion and to learn from each other.” Last summer, over half of the teachers attended some or all of the ARI’s intensive training — for the second time. Belcher said they insisted on going, even though she could offer them no compensation.

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### Careful stewardship buys time for teachers

“I am so fortunate to have such a self-motivated faculty,” Belcher reflects, “but I don’t like for them to have to do that every time.” So she plans the schedule carefully, invests in substitutes when she can, pays close attention to teachers’ requests and needs, and is always on the prowl for supplementary funds.

Belcher tries to schedule an hour of common planning time for grade-level teachers each day. When that won’t work, she finds other ways to provide time for them to work together. “I feel like it’s important enough that I either hire subs or call upon parent volunteers. Many of our certified substitutes are parents,” she says, “and several of them are willing to give time once or twice a month.”

Teachers also have time to work together across grade levels at the end of the year, when they work on curriculum mapping issues and talk with teachers in adjacent grades about their outgoing students’ mastery of Alabama’s academic standards.

Belcher uses some of West Blocton’s Title I money to hire substitutes for teacher observation days. Each year, every teacher at the school may spend two days observing in effective teachers’ classrooms, and most take advantage of the opportunity. “In some cases, I may suggest visiting a certain classroom, if a teacher is struggling with something,” Belcher says.

### “Make that custard, please!”

Belcher does what she can to meet teachers’ individual needs, because that helps to keep morale high. “I tell them to give me a wish list, and if it’s something directly related to instruction, I’ll try to find that money, some way, some how.” And they take her up on that offer, submitting requests for professional books and conferences. That’s when Carol Belcher’s fundraising energies kick into high gear.

She made an unforgettable promise last fall. “Parents came to me and told me, ‘The kids want to have a penny drive for the school. If they raise \$500 in pennies, will you take a pie in the face?’ I told them I would. By the time of our fall festival, they’d raised \$1600 in pennies.”

In all, this school of 300 kids raised \$17,000 at the festival. Belcher says the success typifies the supportiveness of West Blocton, a small timber and mining community in Bibb County. Though many families have modest means, parents and community members pitch in to meet school needs.

That grassroots support helps to ensure teachers have some time each month to plan and work together. It also goes toward professional literature for teachers who volunteer their time for additional collaborative learning. Belcher says that if she received more substantial per-pupil funding, she would invest it in her teachers’ needs. ♦



**FIND  
MORE**

Contact Carol Belcher  
at (205) 938-9005.

9

## A High School Block Schedule Focused on Everyone's Needs

*Auburn High School's four-block schedule creates more time for student and teacher learning.*

WHEN AUBURN HIGH School offered an early bird shift to teachers many years ago, Cathy Long jumped at the chance to work a 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. schedule. "I'm a morning person," she admits. "No doubt about it." While being able to work during her peak time was an advantage, the greatest advantage of the shift was being able to give more learning time to students who needed it by adding an optional extra period to the day.

Dr. Long, a 25-year employee of the Auburn City Schools, now serves as principal at Auburn High. Five years ago, she played a critical role in the move from a traditional schedule to a four-block schedule that focuses on students' and teachers' learning needs. It was not a quick sell.

"We involved the entire community," she recalls. "Teachers, parents, students, even PTA members from our feeder schools. We looked at every possibility, trying to figure out what would work best."

The end product defies easy description, but Long calls it a "four-block, partially semesterized schedule." Chorus, band, Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate courses, and some core courses are taught year-round on alternating days. These are courses that require ongoing practice or are connected to intensive tests scheduled in late spring. Most core courses and electives are taught for one semester, with a 90-minute class period each day.

"My registrar and I create the master schedule together," Long says.

"It's not easy. It doesn't need to be the most convenient and easy thing, as long as it's working for kids."

The most problematic aspect of the schedule is that teachers with alternating day classes may have a larger student load each week, which can make final exam- and paper-grading time more stressful. Over the course of the year, however, these teachers will still see the same total number of different students as other teachers.

All teachers have a free period that, when combined with the breaks preceding and following it, amounts to 96 minutes. They also have a lunch period. For teachers, the extended planning period is the greatest advantage of the block schedule. "It's the overwhelming reason I wouldn't want to go back to the regular schedule," Long says.

For the most part, Long leaves the planning period under individual teachers' control. They can use it to meet with parents, work on block-length lesson plans, grade papers, do research or readings, or work with other teachers. "I occasionally schedule professional development activities during that time, but I give them advance notice," Long says.

"Teachers have to think about how we're reaching these kids. In a 90-minute class, you can't just sit and lecture them — you have to engage them. There are plenty of ways to do that, but it takes time to plan."

When Auburn High first began operating on the block, all teachers

were paid during the summer to work on planning for the shift. "We asked everyone to sit down and look at their curriculum in vertical planning teams, and if they needed outside help we got it for them," Long recalls. This period of intensive curriculum mapping proved to be critical to making the block work. As an outgrowth of this process, all of Auburn's K-12 schools work more closely with one another to make sure they are addressing academic standards in a sensible and systematic way.

Long believes that communities without Auburn's levels of local funding can still do innovative things with scheduling. A school could offer teachers three shifts in order to make more learning time available: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.. A six-period day could be extended to an eight-period day for students who needed to make up courses they had failed, or for those who just wanted to take more classes.

"When you tell kids they can take eight courses a year, it's going to cost you more money," Long explains. "If you tell them they can take six courses a year on a six-period schedule, and if you offer early and late bird classes for those who really want extra courses, then it will cost you less. At most schools, less than a third of the student body will take you up on it." ❖

### FIND MORE

Contact Cathy Long at (334) 887-2110.

10

*Working Toward Excellence*

# Dreaming of Time

BY ANNE JOLLY

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*“My successful school is a place where teachers can concentrate on their teaching practice.”*

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PERPLEXED, I WATCH Jacques saunter down the hall — his lazy, apathetic slouch broadcasting his disinterest in school. He performs brilliantly on lab work and problem-solving activities. Yet he steadfastly refuses to do assignments or make an effort on tests.

A contrast in types, Genise passes him on her way to class. She'll listen intently, try to understand, and try to do well. She methodically turns in every assignment, but the basic science concepts just aren't getting through. She's “faking” it.

Alarm bells clang noisily in my brain. So many kids with so many different abilities and individual needs — and the school day is structured so that I teach them as if they are assembly line, cookie-cutter copies of each other. They whirl by me in groups of 32, one period after another, all day long.

I briefly close my eyes to suppress a surge of anger at a school arrangement that doesn't give me time to do my job. Doesn't give me time to reflect, analyze my students' needs, and design my teaching practices for them. Doesn't give me time to meet regularly with other teachers and have the focused, ongoing conversations we need to craft instructional strategies that will enable these kids to reach substantially higher performance levels. Don't these kids deserve that from us?

Of course, I do have that one 50-minute “planning” period. Today I'll get a monthly attendance report

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ready for the office, list my students' lost textbooks on the proper form, write a recommendation for Chris to attend Space Camp, and return four phone calls to parents. I'll try to grab the bid catalogue and fill out order forms for classroom supplies.

The last bell rings and soon lockers slam noisily. As I wave goodbye to the last of my students, I allow myself to pretend that I'm waving a magic wand — one that will change schools into places that really support high-quality teaching.

I mentally flick a page in my brain and recall a program I watched on PBS. Teachers in Germany, Japan, and China spend 15 to 20 hours a week working with colleagues, developing lessons, and studying their students and their own teaching. These teachers say they could not succeed if forced to work under the conditions American teachers face.

Another mental page flip. Research conclusively shows that teachers are the most important influence on what students know and can do. Student achievement improves when teachers collaborate and change their teaching styles — when teachers have time to focus on preparing to do their job well.

## My successful school

My successful school is a place where teachers can concentrate on their teaching practice. How would we make this model work? What if we paid teachers for 11 months instead of nine months and let them

have an additional 8 weeks during the year to meet together, reflect, study, plan and prepare for instruction? What if we hired more teachers to free up time for collaboration and preparation? What if every person in the school, including administrators, shouldered teaching responsibilities?

Why not free teachers from lunchroom duty, hall duty, before-and-after school duty, and homeroom duty? Turn faculty meetings into team planning times. Use subs or volunteers to relieve teachers of clerical responsibilities. What if PE and electives were blocked and teachers had longer time blocks for collaborating? Any of those would be a start.

I wave distractedly to Mrs. Williams as she shoulders a bag stuffed with English essays and heads for her car. This will be her last year. She's hanging it up at the age of 42. She's a great teacher. She loves her kids. But she's too tired to continue — tired of not being able to do the job she needs to do for her students. Would Mrs. Williams stay on at the school I designed, encouraged by time for peer collaboration and “on the job” learning?

I give a quiet chuckle. I haven't designed anything new. This school model has been around for awhile. Some schools in Alabama are trying to make my dream come true. But not many — not nearly enough. ❖

*Anne Jolly was Alabama's 1994 state teacher of the year.*

<h1 style="margin: 0;">ON THE WEB</h1>	<h2 style="margin: 0;"><i>Resources About Finding Time</i></h2>
<p><b>Find links to all these resources and many more at: <a href="http://www.aplusala.org">www.aplusala.org</a></b></p>	
<p><i>Prisoners of Time</i>, Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (April 1994).</p> <p><i>A truly seminal study of the issues of time and learning, the seven-year old Prisoners of Time report remains, for many schools, up-to-date in its conclusion that "Time is learning's warden." (Complete report on-line with downloadable text file.)</i></p> <p>Available on the Web at: <a href="http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/">http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/</a></p>	<p>"It's About Time." Special issue of <i>School Administrator</i> (March 1999). American Association of School Administrators.</p> <p><i>Includes articles on the effects of block scheduling and "12 findings about block use," a three-semester high school schedule; a four-day school week; and a story about how some secondary schools are modifying their start times based on new research on adolescent sleep needs.</i></p> <p>Available on the Web at: <a href="http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/1999_03/contents.htm">http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/1999_03/contents.htm</a></p>
<p><i>Prisoners of Time: Research</i>, National Education Commission on Time and Learning (September 1994).</p> <p><i>In some ways, this research supplement to the Prisoners of Time report may be more useful to school leaders. It provides detailed information about the research upon which the report is based and includes sound recommendations for breaking the chains of "the clock and calendar" and reinventing schools "around learning, not time."</i></p> <p>Available on the Web at: <a href="http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/PoTResearch/">http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/PoTResearch/</a></p>	<p>"Block Scheduling: The Key To Quality Learning Time," <i>Principal Magazine</i>, January 2001, National Association of Elementary School Principals.</p> <p><i>Research conducted by Robert Lynn Canady and Michael D. Rettig indicates that block schedules can help elementary school principals increase quality learning time and reduce class size. The article includes examples of an effective block schedule and a sidebar, "Six Ways to Improve an Elementary School Schedule." Part of a special issue on "Time and Learning."</i></p> <p>Available on the Web at: <a href="http://www.naesp.org/comm/p0101c.htm">http://www.naesp.org/comm/p0101c.htm</a></p>
<p>"The Power of Innovative Scheduling," <i>Educational Leadership</i>, November 1995.</p> <p><i>Alternative schedules may or may not add hours to the school day, but they can vastly improve the quality of the time students spend at school, says scheduling expert Robert Lynn Canady in this much-discussed and cited article.</i></p> <p>Available on the Web at: <a href="http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9511/canady.html">http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9511/canady.html</a></p>	<p>"Time," a special issue of the <i>Journal of Staff Development</i> (Spring 1999), National Staff Development Council.</p> <p><i>"Squeeze, carve, apply, target, use, and arrange Time for adult learning" reads the headline on this issue of JSD, devoted entirely to issues of time and professional development. The issue includes these articles:</i></p>
<p>"Finding Time To Learn," <i>Educational Leadership</i>, November 1995.</p> <p><i>Researcher John O'Neil describes how a number of high schools seeking better instruction and improved student outcomes are exploring alternatives to the traditional schedule. Another article from an important issue of Educational Leadership, "Productive Use of Time and Space."</i></p> <p>Available on the Web at: <a href="http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9511/oneil.html">http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9511/oneil.html</a></p>	<p>"Target Time Toward Teachers," by Linda Darling-Hammond <a href="http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/darling202.html">http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/darling202.html</a></p> <p>"Time Use Flows from School Culture," by Kent D. Peterson <a href="http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/peterson202.html">http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/peterson202.html</a></p> <p>"Apply Time with Wisdom," by Thomas R. Guskey <a href="http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/guskey202.html">http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/guskey202.html</a></p> <p>"Making Time for Adult Learning," by Priscilla Pardini <a href="http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/pardini202.html">http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/pardini202.html</a></p>

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a t i s s u e  
T I M E


MAKING TIME FOR ADULT  
**LEARNING**  
By PRISCILLA PARDINI

**U**SING time well is easier said than done. Here are eight real-life examples of schools that make the minutes count.

**One hour early**

**I**T WAS 25 YEARS AGO that a group of Iowa City teachers sought the support of their school's PTA for a staff development program that involved releasing students from school one hour early every week. "It was a grassroots movement begun by the teachers that grew out of the need for time for planning for children," says Pam Ehly, director of instruction for the Iowa City Community School District.

**1** The early release concept, considered radical at the time, is now in place throughout the district as



a t i s s u e  
T I M E

## Deposits and withdrawals

**S**o why wasn't the student at Milwaukee's Rufus King High School doing her homework on a recent Sunday night? "Tomorrow's a banking day," she replied happily. "I'll do it then."

That's "banking" as in "banking time," a Milwaukee Public Schools initiative designed to provide staff development and planning time for teachers and support staff. School officials say the program is an important element of the district's school reform effort. "If we're seriously going to talk about restructuring, we have to have time to talk about it," says Steven Huffman, leadership specialist for Milwaukee Public Schools. "And we need big blocks of time when teachers are fresh."

The district's Banking Time program, negotiated with the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, is a way of capturing that time. Huffman says the program was

pioneered in the early 1990s by 10 or 15 schools. By 1994, a total of 90 schools were participating. All but a handful of the district's 160 schools have opted to take part this year.

The program allows schools to add a few minutes to the school day, "bank" the time, and release students a total of five full days a year. At Rufus King, that means starting school at 7:30 a.m., five minutes earlier, and dismissing classes at 2:40 p.m., five minutes later. Schools participating in the program release students on the same five days, which are spread out over the course of the year. The dates are well publicized as part of the school calendar, and Huffman says officials have heard few complaints from parents.

According to the agreement between the teachers' union and school district, teachers at each participating school have input into how half of the day is spent. At some schools, part of the day is used to write lesson plans or grade papers,



Huffman says, but at many schools the entire day is spent on staff development. Typically, teachers use the time to take part in study groups on pedagogical issues, develop curriculum, take classes in technology, develop assessment tools, or familiarize themselves with new textbooks.

Huffman calls the Banking Time program very helpful. "Schools have very limited options when it comes to staff development," he says. "You have after school or on Saturdays, which is an expensive proposition. This gives us some time within the auspices of the normal day."

**For more information,** contact Steven Huffman, Leadership Specialist, Milwaukee Public Schools, P.O. Drawer 10K, Milwaukee, WI 53201-8210. Phone: (414) 475-8480. Fax: (414) 475-8470. E-mail: HUFFFSB@mail.milwaukee.k12.wi.us

well as in a growing number of other school systems nationwide. In Iowa City, students are released one hour early – they leave school between 2 p.m. and 2:20 p.m. – every Thursday. That gives teachers a block of time that runs until 4 p.m. for staff development. Twice a month the agenda focuses on building-level concerns. One school's staff might choose, for example, to hire a consultant to lead a seminar on classroom management. At another school, the discussion might focus on how best to meet the requirements of the federal Individual

■  
**Priscilla Pardini** is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Disability Education Act. On the other two Thursdays each month, the staff development sessions are organized around districtwide issues. All fourth grade social studies teachers, for instance, might meet to discuss developmentally appropriate strategies for teaching a unit on elections.

Ehly says care is taken to make sure the staff development time is well used. District curriculum coordinators plan city-wide inservices, and principals are asked to report back on what is happening at their schools. Ehly says a new individual reading inventory designed to assess pupils' elementary language arts progress was successfully introduced thanks in

large part to the availability of time to train teachers on how to administer the instrument.

The early-release program has become "part of our system" and is well accepted by parents, Ehly says, and the program was acceptable to state officials as long as the district met requirements governing the length of the school day.

**For more information,** contact Pam Ehly, Director of Instruction, Iowa City Community School District, 509 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, IA 52240. Phone: (319) 339-6800. Fax: (319) 339-6890. E-mail: ehly@iowa-city.k12.ia.us ■

a t i s s u e  
T I M E

## Meet me on Wednesdays

**W**hen staff members at Wells Junior High School in Wells, Maine, began looking for time to devote to departmental planning, they had to look no further than their Wednesday faculty meetings.

“We looked hard at how we were spending that time,” says Principal Jeff Rodman. Although nominally a junior high school serving students in grades 5-8, Wells is organized around the middle school “team” concept. And while teachers had team planning time built into their schedules, there was no opportunity for all the school’s math teachers, for example, to meet as a group.

For the past several years, a revamped meeting schedule has filled

that void. Now the entire faculty meets once rather than twice a month to tackle issues of schoolwide concern. Another Wednesday each month provides time for the school’s building leadership teams – groups of teachers designated as grade-level leaders – to meet together and with school administrators. The third Wednesday is reserved for departmental meetings. “It’s allowed us to work on such things as curriculum, ways to teach in longer blocks of time and portfolio assessment,” Rodman says. “It’s opened up discussion on what each teacher is covering, and how to streamline the curriculum so as not to step on each others’ toes.” Meetings are scheduled on the fourth Wednesday of each month as needed – generally either for building leadership team or departmental meetings.

Rodman says reducing the

number of schoolwide faculty meetings has been difficult: At Wells, those meetings are largely used as opportunities for shared decision making. “But the advantages of having time for teachers to meet across grades about curriculum outweighs the disadvantages,” he says. He speculates that would be the case in many other schools, especially where faculty meetings consist largely of administrative announcements and routine housekeeping tasks that could be handled in other ways.



**For more information,** contact Jeff Rodman, principal Wells Junior High School P.O. Box 310, Wells, ME 04090 Phone: (207) 646-5142 Fax: (207) 646-2899 E-mail: jrodman@wocsd.maine.org ■

## “They don’t correct papers”

**S**taff at New York City’s Central Park East Secondary School have found a way to link two issues considered vital to its program: student community service and staff development. “We want kids to be able to get to know their community and to provide service to agencies that need it” says Anne Purdy, the school’s service learning internship coordinator. “We can see the learning that comes from this kind of experience.”

Equally valuable is the staff time freed up when the school’s eighth, ninth, and tenth graders are out of the school building a half day each week working at nonprofit agencies such as museums,



hospitals, and nursing homes. “We also know that one of the things that’s absolutely crucial is time for teachers to meet and speak with their colleagues,” Purdy

says. Teachers use the time for true staff development, often for department meetings to develop curriculum or attend workshops taught by staff members or outside experts. Teachers also work in groups to evaluate student work according to state and New York City standards, or collaborate on strategies designed to meet the needs of individual students.

“They don’t correct papers,” Purdy says.

Central Park East’s method for

finding staff development time could be replicated at no cost by virtually any school where students are involved in community service. The major cost of setting up community service programs comes in personnel. At Central Park East that includes Purdy – who finds the student placements, provides ongoing evaluation and troubleshoots – as well as a paraprofessional and an aide.

**For more information,** contact Anne Purdy, Service Learning Internship Coordinator Central Park East Secondary School 1573 Madison Ave. New York, NY 10029 Phone: (212) 860-5808 Fax: (212) 876-3494 E-mail: anne\_purdy@cce.org ■

a t i s s u e  
T I M E

## Fridays for 90 minutes

**O**n almost every Friday during the school year, teachers at Fremont High School in Sunnyvale, Calif., arrive at school to spend the first 90 minutes of their day not with their students, but with each other. From 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., they talk about school redesign, “the way we can meet the goals we’ve set for our school,” says Assistant Principal Larry Vilaubi. He says Late Start Fridays provide the regular, ongoing time teachers need to focus on such issues as assessment, standards, literacy, and community involvement. Evidence of progress in those areas has helped Fremont qualify for \$250,000 in grants from the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative, a project funded with part of the \$500 million donated by

philanthropist Walter H. Annenberg in 1993 for school reform.

Vilaubi says finding time for staff development at Fremont during the regular school day has become even more critical given two recent, local developments. The first is a reduction in the number of state-allowed preservice days for teachers. “The state wanted teachers spending more time in the classroom with kids instead of with each other,” Vilaubi says of the mandated change in the school calendar. The second is a substitute teacher shortage that makes it much more difficult to use grant money to hire subs to fill in for teachers involved in staff development programs. In the past, Vilaubi says, 10 to 15 teachers at a time would be pulled out of their classrooms to work together. “But given the



general teacher shortage in California and the mandate to reduce class size, we often can’t find 15 subs,” he says. Vilaubi described Late Start Fridays as a relatively easy, no-cost way to provide staff development, which he describes as “a high priority” at Fremont. Because the school day is sufficiently long Monday through Friday (7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.), the school easily meets the state’s minimum instructional time requirements. The concept has also met with approval from the staff, students and community, Vilaubi says.

**For more information,** contact Larry Vilaubi, Assistant Principal Fremont High School 1279 Sunnyvale-Saratoga Rd. Sunnyvale, CA 94087 Phone: (408) 522-2411 Fax: (408) 732-2256 E-mail: Lvilaubi@fuhisd.org ■

## Innovative mornings

**E**ight or nine years ago, teachers at Holt High School in Holt, Mich. began looking for ways to find the time they needed to launch innovative projects. “They were asking,



‘How can we make time available at little or no cost to the district?’” says Superintendent Tom Davis. In the end, teachers recommended combining the before- and after-school preparation time called for in their contracts into one four-hour block of time. Teachers got that time back on

Wednesday mornings, when the start of classes was delayed until 11:30 a.m. On each of the other four days of the week, instructional time was added to make up for the late start on Wednesday.

“We thought parents might object” Davis says, “but we held forums on what we’d do with the time and why it was necessary for teachers to collaborate, and there was no resistance at all.”

Today, Wednesday mornings at Holt High School generally are divided into three blocks of time, with one set aside for a general faculty meeting. The remaining 2½ hours is devoted to adult learning. “The only rule we’ve had over the years is that you can’t spend the time on business as usual,” Davis says. “It’s for collaborative teams of teachers to talk about innovative ideas.”

Davis credits the staff development program with giving teachers time to develop several of the school’s more unique endeavors, including a three-year, sequentially integrated science curriculum that combines chemistry, biology, and physics into one class, and a geometry course taught with the help of computer-aided drawing software.

Other evidence the time is being well spent: \$2 million in grants applied for by and awarded to teachers for projects the district cannot afford.

**For more information,** contact Tom Davis, Assistant Superintendent Holt Public Schools 4610 Spahr Ave., Holt, MI 48842 Phone: (517) 694-0401 Fax: (517) 694-1335 E-mail: tdavis@holt.k12.mi.us ■

**TOOL 7.6**

## **Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning**

As you read the newsletters and study the schedules provided, determine the strategy each school used for making time, how much time they created, and whether this approach meets your criteria. Write in your criteria at the top and place a check if the strategy meets the criteria established.

**TOOL 7.6**

## Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning

As you read the newsletters and study the schedules provided, determine the strategy each school used for making time, how much time they created, and whether this approach meets your criteria. Write in your criteria at the top and place a check if the strategy meets the criteria established.

<b>My criterion #1:</b>	<b>My criterion #2:</b>	<b>My criterion #3:</b>	<b>My criterion #4:</b>	<b>My criterion #5:</b>	<b>My criterion #6:</b>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

District	Strategy	How much time?	Check if #1 is met	Check if #2 is met	Check if #3 is met	Check if #4 is met	Check if #5 is met	Check if #6 is met

**TOOL 7.7****Forming a recommendation**

- From the ideas generated, decide on two or three that would work for this school and its community.
- Develop a proposal that includes consideration of how each recommendation would impact various aspects of the school community.
- Identify how you plan to use the extra time.
- Identify the goals you want to accomplish with the additional time and relate those goals to student learning.

Recommendation	R E C O M M E N D A T I O N ' S E F F E C T O N :					
	Other schools	Budget	Transportation	Parents	Before- and after-school care programs	Other
1						
2						
3						

**THIS IS HOW MY SCHOOL WILL USE THE EXTRA TIME:**

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Goals to accomplish with the extra time	Relationship of goal to student learning
1	
2	
3	
4	

## Chapter 8

# USING DATA

### TOOLS

- Tool 8.1** Types of data available. 1 page
- Tool 8.2** Student data checklist. 1 page
- Tool 8.3** Data analysis protocol (informal). 1 page
- Tool 8.4** Data analysis protocol (formal). 1 page
- Tool 8.5** Crafting data summary statements. 2 pages
- Tool 8.6** Fishbone diagram. 2 pages
- Tool 8.7** Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet. 1 page

Where are we?

**In our school, data drive decisions at the school and classroom level.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Data management systems make data easily accessible to teachers.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**The culture of our school does not support open discussion about student academic performance.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**B**efore teams begin their work, it is important that they determine what their work is. Examining data about their students' learning is the initial step in identifying the focus of the team's work. In *Using Data/Getting Results: A Practical Guide for School Improvement in Mathematics and Science*, Nancy Love identifies 10 reasons for engaging in data analysis. Data, she says, can:

- Uncover problems that might otherwise remain invisible;
- Convince people of the need for change;
- Confirm or discredit assumptions about students and school practices;
- Get to the root cause of problems, pinpoint areas where change is most needed, and guide resource allocation;
- Help schools evaluate program effectiveness and keep the focus on student learning results;
- Provide the feedback teachers and administrators need to keep going and stay on course;
- Prevent over-reliance on standardized tests;
- Prevent one-size-fits-all, quick-fix solutions;
- Give schools the ability to respond to accountability questions; and

We in education have a history of adopting one innovation after another as they are introduced. Very few of us take the time to understand the needs of the children we serve, the impact that our current processes have on children, the root cause of recurring problems, the solutions to alleviate the problems in the long run, and how to measure and analyze impacts after implementing new approaches.

– Victoria Bernhardt,  
*Data Analysis for  
Comprehensive Schoolwide  
Improvement*, 1998, p. 2.

- Help build a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement (2002, pp. 28-30).

#### **Various types of data**

Because teams work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning, they identify the specific area of student learning they want to work on. Letting data drive the decision about the focus of the team's efforts allows that work to be more focused on the specific needs of their students.

Teachers have access to a variety of data to use as they identify the main focus for their collaborative work. Victoria Bernhardt identifies four categories of data that provide a unique and valuable piece

of information that helps school teams develop a complete and full understanding of student learners and the school context:

- **Perception data** help develop an understanding of “what students, parents, teachers, and others think about the learning environment;”

- **Demographic data** “provide descriptive information about the school community — enrollment, attendance, grade level, ethnicity, gender, native language;”



**TOOL 8.4**

**Data analysis protocol (formal)**

What are you 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?

**Tool 8.4**

**TOOL 8.5**

**EXAMPLE**

**Crafting data summary statements**

**Data summary statement:**  
Fourth-grade Vietnamese immigrant boys are underachieving in science.

**Evidence:**  
Assessment scores, teacher observations, and teacher (student) interviews.

**Why question:**  
Q. Why do 4<sup>th</sup> 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 teacher report.)

Q. Why do 4<sup>th</sup> 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 science?  
A. There is a misalignment between what is taught and what is being assessed. (Supporting data or facts: comparison of 1985 and 1995 frameworks.) (Given further examination, all students are having equal difficulty in science.)

**Comments to facilitate:** This activity will assist the team in focusing on what has learned from the data it has collected about the school. As the team compares this data to the 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 7) for each of your data sources. Be as complete as possible. Think about other possible causes that might also be relevant. For example, after completing the sample data summary sheet, you may realize that girls do as through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are underachieving in mathematics. You could create another data summary table to 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, zones 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 the assertion. If the data state, 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 Board Strategies to Advance High Standards in Public Schools (Washington, DC: 2002). See Page 7 for the original information.

**Tool 8.5**

**TOOL 8.6**

**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 points.

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. Yes, 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, availability of reading materials, teachers might use 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 hypothesis until they find one or two that hold up. It is these two 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.

**Tool 8.6**

Teachers decide what data to analyze. The results of Tool 8.1 can guide their decisions about what data they want to examine. Tool 8.2 is a student data checklist that might be helpful to teams as they consider what types of data to examine. After they decide what data to examine, they determine who will take responsibility to gather and bring what data to their meeting. By planning in advance what data to examine, team members can prepare for the next meeting at which they will use one of the protocols to conduct their analysis. The more data a team has access to, the easier the data analysis process will be. To prepare for analysis of the data, it might be helpful if a team has more than three members to duplicate copies of the data so that each team member can easily see the data.

### • Analyze data

Modern and sophisticated data management systems have made data more easily available within schools. However, data have little meaning without analysis. When the data are analyzed, they become valuable information that can be used to improve practice and results. Data analysis can take many forms. Tools 8.3 and 8.4 are protocols to use for data analysis. When teachers use these tools, they turn data into information that leads to results for their students.

Data analysis is a process of reviewing, studying, examining, and probing the data in order to find patterns, anomalies, and trends. This occurs by using a process or protocol that offers some structure for looking at the data. The end result of data analysis is the discovery of both strengths and areas for improvement. When analysis is done in a collaborative team, teachers

bring multiple perspectives into the conversations that enrich the discoveries.

Using the protocols offered in Tools 8.3 and 8.4 guides teachers through the process of examining their data. Each offers a set of questions that become a vehicle for this work. When done with structure, the analysis is more likely to be thorough and complete. The data analysis process results in knowing or identifying:

- Specific areas of deficit;
- Specific knowledge and skills students need in order to overcome the deficit;
- Specific students or groups of students for whom the deficit is most prevalent or pronounced; and
- Possible root causes of identified problems.

After the data are analyzed, it is helpful to display the data in a way that will make it easy to explain to others and so that progress can be monitored. For example, teachers may want to create charts, tables, or other forms of data displays that can provide quick and easy overviews of the data. These data displays can be posted and used as reference for ongoing decision making.

### • Summarize data analysis

Once teams complete their data analysis, they often want to present their discoveries to other teams. Summarizing data analysis into clear, concise statements is one way to communicate the findings across teams. Tool 8.5 will help teams summarize and share their findings.

### • Brainstorm for causes

Finding the patterns, anomalies, and trends within

the data is only one part of the process of turning data into action. Simply knowing the patterns, anomalies, or trends is insufficient to determine what actions to take to address the target issue. It is through consideration of causes of the data that teams begin to generate possible actions. Therefore, teams will next search for possible causes of the findings and eventually select from all of the possibilities the one finding that will be the target of selected interventions.

Causes can fall into several areas. These areas include curriculum, instruction, resources, assessment, or external factors. Since the team cannot control most external factors, it is not appropriate to address them in the goal-setting process. It is very important at this point in the process to categorize the causes and concentrate only on the possible causes that teachers and schools can change or address. This is where teachers can make a difference. If they focus on the decisions they routinely make, teachers will be empowered to act rather than victimized by circumstances beyond their sphere of control (e.g. parental involvement).

#### • Collect additional data

The process of determining root cause is a hypothesis forming and testing process. If teachers think excessive absence is a reason for student failure, they will want to gather any additional data they need to prove or disprove their hypothesis. If there are students with excessive absences who are performing well, then the hypothesis about absenteeism is false. Teachers continue this process until they believe they understand what the possible root causes are that fall within their sphere of actions and design a plan to address those.

Maintaining a log of their hypotheses, the data they use to verify the hypotheses, and the conclusion they draw can be helpful to teams if they are doing extensive data analysis. Tool 8.7 offers one version of a recordkeeping template to help teams with this work.

#### • Analyze and summarize data

When teams determine that additional data are necessary before confirming or disproving their hypotheses, they will repeat the analysis and summary

The image shows a 'Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet' (Tool 8.7). The title is 'Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet' with 'TOOL 8.7' in the top right corner. Below the title is a small instruction: 'Use this form to record hypotheses about root causes, other data sources to check to confirm or disprove each hypothesis, and to indicate if this hypothesis is confirmed or disproved.' The sheet is a table with four columns: 'Hypotheses about root causes', 'Other data sources to check', 'Confirm', and 'Disprove'. There are 10 rows for recording data.

**Tool 8.7**

of these new data. They may find it useful to use Tools 8.3, 8.4, and 8.5 to accomplish these processes before determining with certainty what they believe is the likely root cause. Tool 8.6 is one guide for making decisions about possible causes. This common quality management tool is useful for brainstorming, categorizing, and deciding about possible causes. With confidence that they have discovered the root cause, they can move to the next step.

#### • Identify a goal

Once possible causes are identified, the team sets a measurable goal for improvement. Goals that are measurable, set within a specific timeframe, and focused on the results desired are helpful to focus action planning. Many educators are familiar with a tool called SMART goals. Another quality management tool, SMART goals, help team members set precise targets for their work.

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Results-driven

T = Timebound

Sample SMART goals for teams are below:

- Reading scores of 11th grade males will improve a minimum of two grade levels on the Gates-McGinitie test as a result of participating in the reading lab program during the 2006-07 school year.
- Students scoring below basic on the 2006 math problem-solving items of the state assessment will move to proficient by 2007.
- The number of students enrolled in advanced level core academic courses in 11th and 12th grades will increase by 15% each year for the next three years. The percentage of female, underrepresented, and high-poverty students will increase by 20% each year for the next three years.

#### • Repeat the process

The eight-step data analysis process will be repeated several times during a single school year. It will be done once as a schoolwide process when data from state, norm-referenced, or other forms of high stakes

assessment are returned to each school. Yet this is not the only time data are analyzed. Teachers will use this process when they administer common benchmark assessments. They can adapt the process for use when they give any assessment of student learning. For example, if teachers give end-of-unit or chapter assessments to measure student progress between other more formal assessments, they will analyze data, summarize it, and identify root causes — what students did not know or do correctly that prevented them from being successful on the assessment — before they plan their next unit of instruction so they know exactly what to include.

### **From data to action**

After the data are analyzed, the controllable root cause(s) is (are) identified, and the goal is identified, teams move to the next phase of their work — determining a course of action. Their plan of action outlines how they will learn and work together to accomplish their SMART goal. Action planning includes knowing how best to use available time in teams to accomplish the goal and using appropriate planning templates to guide the decision making. Chapter 9 helps teams iden-

tify possible learning designs for accomplishing their goal, and Chapter 10 includes planning tools to help them record their action plans.

### **References**

**Bernhardt, V. (1998).** *Data analysis for comprehensive schoolwide improvement*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

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**Love, N. (2002).** *Using data/getting results: A practical guide for school improvement in mathematics and science*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

**TOOL 8.1**

## Types of data available

Use the framework below to identify the types of data available in your school.

<b>STUDENT LEARNING DATA</b>	<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DATA</b>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>PERCEPTION DATA</b>	<b>SCHOOL PROCESS DATA</b>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# Student data checklist

STUDENT DATA CHECKLIST	GRADE LEVEL				
<b>ENROLLMENT</b>					
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.					
<b>DAILY ATTENDANCE</b>					
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.					
<b>MOBILITY/STABILITY</b>					
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.					
<b>SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES)</b>					
Percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.					
Average level of parents' education and/or household income.					
Unemployment rates in the attendance area.					
<b>STUDENT BEHAVIOR</b>					
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.					
<b>LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY</b>					
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.

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**TOOL 8.3****Data analysis protocol** (informal)

**What is being measured in these data?**

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**Who is represented in the data pool?**

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**What jumps out in the data on first glance?**

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Surprises

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---

Expected

**What conclusions can we draw at this point?**

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**What other data have we looked at recently that have suggested similar findings?**

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---

---

**What other data might we consider to confirm or disprove these conclusions?**

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**TOOL 8.4****Data analysis protocol** (formal)**What are we looking at here?**


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**What is being measured in each assessment?**


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---

**Which students are assessed?**


---



---

**What areas of student performance are meeting or exceeding expectations?**


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---

**What areas of student performance are below expectations?**


---



---

**Do patterns exist in the data?**


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---

**How did various populations of students perform? (Consider factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status.)**


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**What are other data telling us about student performance?**


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**How are the data similar or different in various grade levels, content areas, and individual classes?**


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---

**What surprises us?**


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**What confirms what we already know?**


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## 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

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# 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 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

# 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
<b>ETHNICITY</b>													
African-American													
Asian/Pacific Islander													
Caucasian													
Hispanic													
Native American													
Other													
<b>GENDER</b>													
Male													
Female													
<b>INCOME</b>													
Low-income													
Not low-income													
<b>LANGUAGE ABILITY</b>													
Fully proficient													
Limited proficient													
Non-proficient													
English only													
<b>SPECIAL POPULATIONS</b>													
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.

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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.

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**TOOL 8.6****Fishbone diagram**

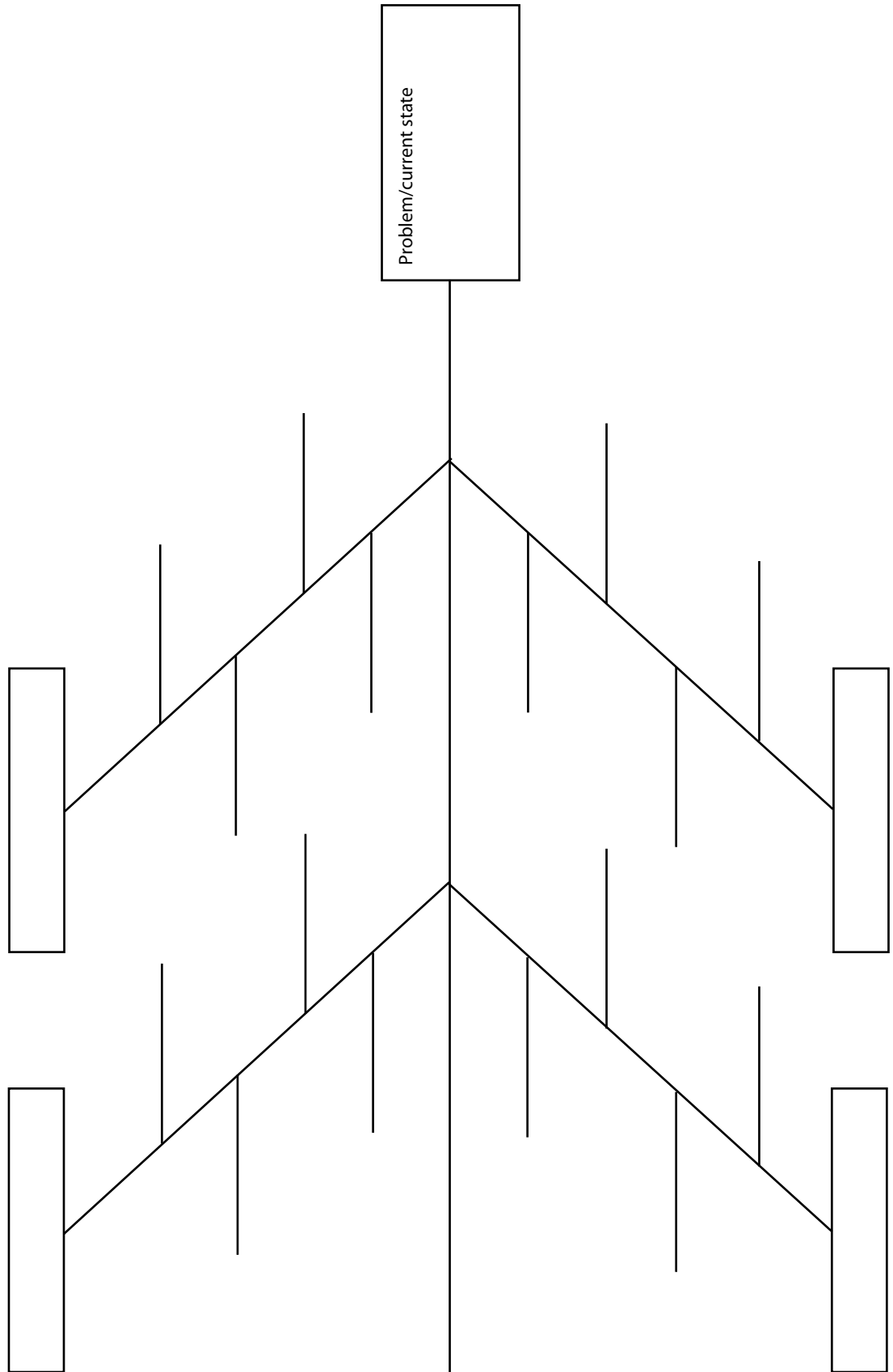
**T**his quality management tool was developed by Kaoru Ishikawa and is sometimes called the Ishikawa Diagram or the Cause-Effect Diagram. It is designed to help take results from data analysis and to identify possible root causes for identified problems. Data identify the problems. They do not identify 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, 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.



**TOOL 8.7**

## Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet

Use this form to record hypotheses about root causes, other data sources to check to confirm or disprove each hypothesis, and to indicate if this hypothesis is confirmed or disproved.

Hypotheses about root causes	Other data sources to check	Confirm	Disprove

## Chapter 9

# WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

### TOOLS:

**Tool 9.1** Peeling a standard. *2 pages*

**Tool 9.2** Common assessment planning tool. *1 page*

**Tool 9.3** Teamwork on assessments creates powerful professional development. *7 pages*

**Tool 9.4** Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together. *2 pages*

**Tool 9.5** Success analysis protocol. *2 pages*

**Tool 9.6** Descriptive review process. *1 page*

**Tool 9.7** Collaborative assessment conference. *3 pages*

**Tool 9.8** Teacher research leads to learning, action. *6 pages*

**Tool 9.9** Lesson study. *8 pages*

**Tool 9.10** Profile of Bill Jackson. *3 pages*

**Tool 9.11** Process: Select the strategy that works for your context and content. *7 pages*

Where are we?

**Teachers in our school prefer to work independently on tasks associated with their classroom.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teachers in our school work collaboratively on most tasks related to teaching and learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**In our school, professional development is typically a whole school experience.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Most teacher professional development occurs outside the school day and year.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**C**ollaborative work among teachers can be rewarding and productive. It can also be messy and challenging. When teachers know about a variety of ways to structure their collaborative time to meet their agreed-upon goals, they are far more likely to use time effectively.

This chapter looks at some of the decisions related to teamwork. Some of these decisions are dependent upon what the team wants to accomplish while others are dependent on the team's preferences. If a team wants to study various ways to teach students to write persuasive text, teachers have several options. They can engage in outside-in or inside-out learning

**Outside-in learning.** With the Outside-In option, someone from outside the school tells teachers how to teach students to write persuasive text. This person typically is the best expert outside the school available, affordable, and willing to help teachers learn how to teach persuasive writing to their students. Usually the expert who arrives provides teachers with some instructional strategies to use in their classrooms and less frequently helps teachers know more about persuasion and students' developmental capacity to engage in persuasive thinking. Most teachers have extensive experience with outside-in professional development. This more traditional and often formal method for teacher learning has been practiced in schools for a long time.

Another version of outside-in learning occurs when a teacher leaves school to gain knowledge and skill about teaching persuasive writing and carries that

knowledge back into the school.

**Inside-out learning.** The Inside-Out option involves teachers coming out of their classrooms to work collaboratively inside schools to learn and grow as professionals. Teachers are less familiar with this form of professional learning because they have less experience with it. Collaborative forms of professional learning are less formal and directed by teachers themselves. This chapter explores three forms of collaborative professional learning and points readers to resources about others.

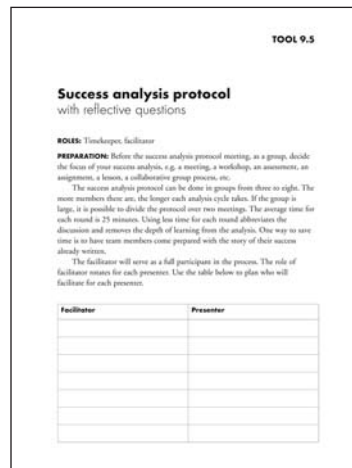
Once teams develop goals for their work, they craft a plan of action to accomplish those goals. These plans define the content of teacher learning. What is it teachers need to know and do if students are to achieve the goals established? This is the key question. The learning content is defined by the goal; teachers themselves determine the learning processes. Yet, many teachers have not had access to self-directed forms of professional learning. They are more familiar with designs for professional learning that are done to them rather than by them.

This chapter outlines several models for professional learning that are designed for teachers learning in teams. They are processes for teachers to deepen their content knowledge and expand their repertoire of content-specific instructional strategies. What is important to note is that this form of professional learning represents a part of a comprehensive professional development program. Albeit learning in teams is the largest portion, collaborative professional learning is, of course, supplemented with learning from experts, participating in conferences, and other forms of more formal profes-





Tool 9.4



Tool 9.5



Tool 9.6

dards, and expand their assessment literacy. However, developing the assessments is only one part of the process of using common assessments. A second part is administering the assessments. Teacher establish some agreements about the window of time in which students will complete the assessments and prepare some general agreements about teachers' role in the assessment and accommodations for students who require them. With these agreements in hand, teachers then engage students in the assessment and move to the third step of common assessments.

The third step is scoring the assessments. This is done individually, in a team meeting, or shared by team members. When teachers are able to score each other's assessments or to score them together, they develop a deeper understanding of their students' learning. A recommended way to score common assessments is to have each team member bring several completed assessments to a team meeting and to score those together using a common rubric or scoring guide. By doing this, teachers can adjust or modify the scoring guide before they score all their students' work, and they can calibrate their scoring to each others' to increase consistency.

The last step — the most important step of the process of using common assessments — is reviewing the results and making instructional and curriculum decisions based on the results. For example, if teachers find that a large percentage of students have missed a key aspect of the assessment, they can plan together how to go back to review and reteach. If teachers find that one teacher's students outperformed another's, they can talk about the instructional processes and resources

used by teachers and identify what contributed to the success and plan for how all teachers will integrate the successful strategies in their classrooms.

Common assessments can be the core function of a collaborative professional learning team in which teachers complete multiple cycles of developing assessments, scoring them, and making instructional decisions based on the results.

### Examining student work

Similar to, yet different from using common assessments, is examining student work. Teachers can learn a tremendous amount by looking at work produced by their students and at assignments teachers used to initiate the work. Examining student work is a process of bringing one or more samples of student work to the table and using a protocol or discussion guide to comment on the work. As teachers examine their own or their students' work, they deepen their understanding of how students learn, how their colleagues structure learning assignments, and which students meet with success. These are only a few of the benefits of examining student work. Tool 9.4, an article in *Tools for Schools* by Joan Richardson, is a brief overview of what is involved in examining student work.

Three protocols are included for examining student work. The Success Analysis Protocol (Tool 9.5) looks at the strengths of student or teacher work. The Descriptive Review Analysis (Tool 9.6) looks more deeply at a piece of work. The Collaborative Assessment Conference (Tool 9.7) takes the Descriptive Review protocol a bit further. For teams with little or no experi-



Tool 9.7



Tool 9.8



Tool 9.9

ence working collaboratively, the three protocols included in this chapter are recommended as a starting point to both build a collaborative culture and to maintain some safety in the process. Other more complex protocols that call for critical feedback can be added after the team has developed a sense of comfort with one another and the process of sharing their own and students' work publicly.

Knowing when to use structures that ensure greater safety in the collaborative process is not a science. Sometimes when collaborative professional learning is new to a school staff, it is advisable to let teachers determine the degree of structure they want initially. In other

Stage of development	Safety level	Structure level
Forming	High	High
Storming/forming	High	Mid
Performing	Low	Low

cases, it is helpful to create structure to help teacher meet with success early on. In this way, teachers do not have to guess about what to do. When schools have a culture that supports col-

laboration and teachers who are more familiar with collaborative work, teachers can determine how they want to learn together.

However, if a team is in the forming stage, it is advisable to use learning strategies that have higher structure to ensure safety and success.

When a team progresses through the stages of team development, it is advisable to let the team make more decisions about how they will work together because making decisions about process as well as the content of

### At the Northern Valley School District

The Northern Valley School District in Demarest, N.J., offers teachers opportunities to engage in alternative professional development as a part of the district's differentiated supervision program. Differentiated supervision gives each staff member an opportunity to develop a plan for professional growth based upon his or her own needs. It is designed to empower staff members to take responsibility for their professional learning and to foster productive intra- and interdepartmental relationships and trust and to allow the supervisor to step into the role of coach, mentor, and resource person.

Models of professional development available to teachers include action research, collegial partnerships for specific projects related to teaching and learning, mentoring, peer coaching, interactive journals, portfolios, and other options. Integrating collaborative professional learning into the traditional professional development and supervision process is one way to embed it into routine systems.

their work are ways a team becomes high-performing.

### Conducting action research

Action research is another collaborative learning process that supports teachers in learning from their own work.

Action research is a systematic research study that teachers design and conduct in their own classrooms and schools about their work. Teachers form questions, gather data, analyze data, and reach conclusions based on their own work. Action research allows teachers to examine the impact of their teaching practices and to understand how context influences the results they achieve.

Tool 9.8, an article from *Tools for Schools*, outlines the action research process and provides some tools teachers might use while doing action research in their classrooms. Action research is especially powerful when a team of teachers gathers data about the same or related questions and combines data to create a cross-classroom research study.

### Engaging in lesson study

Lesson study is yet another powerful form of collaborative learning. In lesson study, a group of teachers come together to design a lesson, observe their jointly designed lesson taught by one of the team members, debrief the lesson, and revise it. Through this process, they develop a deeper understanding of both content and pedagogy. Lesson study makes public the work teachers do each day in isolation. As a result, they gain new understanding about how students learn and about how the instructional decisions they make in planning



Tool 9.10



Tool 9.11

influence students' success. Tool 9.9, Lesson Study, an article by Joan Richardson published in *Tools for Schools*, provides useful resources to assist teachers with conducting lesson studies.

Tool 9.10, an article from *Teachers Teaching Teachers*, highlights the lesson study work Bill Jackson leads in Paterson School District in Paterson, New Jersey.

Tool 9.11 offers an overview of 21 designs for professional learning. Many of the 21 designs are appropriate for collaborative professional learning teams. Teams that know how to structure their time, choose designs appropriate to their goals, and use a variety of designs over time are more satisfied and productive.

### Reference

**DuFour, R. (2005).** What is a professional learning community? In DuFour, R., Eaker, R. & DuFour, R. (Eds.), *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities*, pp. 31–43. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

**TOOL 9.1****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 to understand the reasons for, and the economic, political and social consequences of, human impact on the environment in different areas of the world.

Strands	2nd grade cumulative progress indicators	4th grade cumulative progress indicators	3rd grade essential learnings (content and skills)
<p>A</p> <p><b>World in spatial terms</b></p>	<p>1. Explain the spatial concepts of location, distance and direction, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The location of school, home, neighborhood, community, state, and country</li> <li>• The relative location of the community and places within it</li> <li>• The location of continents and oceans</li> </ul> <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 New Jersey, 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</p> <p><b>Places and regions</b></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 New Jersey 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 New Jersey.</p> <p>4. Discuss factors involved in the development of cities (e.g. transportation, food, marketplace, religion, military protection).</p>	
<p>C</p> <p><b>Physical systems</b></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</p> <p><b>Human systems</b></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 New Jersey and the United States.</p> <p>2. Identify the distribution and characteristics of populations for different regions of New Jersey and the United States.</p>	
<p>E</p> <p><b>Environment and society</b></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>	

**TOOL 9.2**

## Common assessment planning tool

Use this planning tool as you consider the major decisions associated with constructing student assessment.

Content and skills to be assessed	NJCCCS/CPI	Level of understanding to be assessed, e.g. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation or another taxonomy of understanding	Form of demonstration (written, oral, combination, graphic, etc.)	Format of assessment (constructed response; true-false; multiple choice; demonstration, etc.)

theme / ASSESSMENT



BY JAY McTIGHE AND MARCELLA EMBERGER

**T**eacher 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 preset 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

**Ultimately, students benefit when educators work together on assessments.**

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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# Group Wise

*Strategies for examining student work together*

**By Joan Richardson**

**E**xamining 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](http://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](http://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.**

February/March 2001

**TOOL 9.5**

## **Success analysis protocol** with reflective questions

**ROLES:** Timekeeper, facilitator

**PREPARATION:** Before the success analysis protocol meeting, as a group, decide the focus of your success analysis, e.g. a meeting, a workshop, an assessment, an assignment, a lesson, or a collaborative group process.

The success analysis protocol can be done in groups from three to eight. The more members there are, the longer each analysis cycle takes. If the group is large, it is possible to divide the protocol over two meetings. The average time for each round is 25 minutes. Using less time for each round abbreviates the discussion and removes the depth of learning from the analysis. One way to save time is to have team members come prepared with the story of their success already written.

The facilitator will serve as a full participant in the process. The role of facilitator rotates for each presenter. Use the table below to plan who will facilitate for each presenter.

<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Presenter</b>

## STEPS FOR SUCCESS ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

**1. Identify a success.** *Time: 5 minutes.*

Reflect on and write a short description of a success. Note what it is about the practice that makes it so successful. Be sure to write about what made this experience different from others like it.

**2. Describe the success.** *Time: 5 minutes.*

The first presenter shares his or her story of success in as much detail as possible. Others take notes.

**3. Ask clarifying questions.** *Time: 3-5 minutes.*

The group asks clarifying questions about the details of the success to better understand it.

**4. Reflect on the success (Presenter).** *Time: 5 minutes.*

With other team members listening only, the facilitator asks the presenter to discover what made this experience so successful by asking questions designed to stimulate the analysis. Some suggested questions are identified below:

- What was different about this situation?
- What did you contribute to this success?
- What did others contribute to this success?
- What knowledge, skills, past experiences helped you in this situation?
- Some people think things happen for a reason. What do you think was the reason you experienced this success at this time?

**5. Reflect on the success (Team members).** *Time: 10 minutes.*

Team members discuss what they heard the presenter say, offer additional insights, and share what they learned from the success analysis. The presenter remains silent and takes notes if desired.

**6. Reflect on the analysis (Presenter).** *Time: 5 minutes.*

The presenter reflects on what he or she heard the team members say in their discussion and what he or she has learned from the analysis.

**7. Continue the protocol.**

With another team member serving as the presenter and as the facilitator, repeat steps 2-6 for as many other team members as possible.

**8. Debrief the protocol.** *Time: 5-7 minutes.*

After completing all presenters' analyses, the team discusses the use of the protocol. They may use questions such as those below to guide their discussion:

- What worked well for us?
- What caused confusion?
- From a facilitator's perspective, what was challenging for team members?
- From a presenter's perspective, what was challenging?
- How might we improve the protocol or our use of it to deepen our learning?
- Where else might we use this process?
- How can we apply what we learned from this process to other situations?

Adapted from National School Reform Faculty, February 2002.

**TOOL 9.6****Descriptive review process**

## Learning from student work

The Descriptive Review Process asks teachers to look together at pieces of student work, to discuss what they see in the work, and to bring multiple perspectives to an analysis of the work in order to improve the quality of the work designed for and produced by students.

**Step 1. Getting started**

The group chooses a facilitator to keep the group focused. The presenting teacher distributes copies of the selected student work or displays the work. At this point, the teacher says nothing about the work, its context, or the student. Participants read or observe the work in silence, making notes if they choose.

**Step 2. Describing the work**

The facilitator asks, “What do you see?” Participants respond without making judgments about the work.

**Step 3. Raising questions**

The facilitator asks, “What questions does this work raise for you?” The presenting teacher makes notes but does not yet respond.

**Step 4. Speculating about the work**

The facilitator asks, “What do you think the student is working on?” Participants offer ideas.

**Step 5. Presenting teacher responds**

At the facilitator’s invitation, the presenting teacher tells about the work, responds to questions, and comments on unexpected things that he or she heard in the group’s responses and questions.

**Step 6. Discussing implications for designing student work and student learning**

The group and the presenting teacher discuss ways to improve the design of the work.

Adapted from *The Collaborative Assessment Conference*, by Steve Seidel and Harvard University’s Project Zero, 1988.

## TOOL 9.7

## Collaborative assessment conference

### Overview

A piece of student work has the potential to reveal not only the student's mastery of the curriculum's goals, but also a wealth of information about the student him/herself: his/her intellectual interests, his/her strengths, and his/her struggles. The Collaborative Assessment Conference was designed to give teachers a systematic way to mine this richness. It provides a structure by which teachers come together to look at a piece of work, first to determine what it reveals about the student and the issues s/he cares about, and then to consider how the student's issues and concerns relate to the teacher's goals for the student.

The last part of the conversation — the discussion of classroom practice — grows out of these initial considerations.

The structure for the conference evolved from three key ideas:

**First**, students use school assignments, especially open-ended ones, to tackle important problems in which they are personally interested. Sometimes these problems are the same ones that the teacher has assigned them to work on, sometimes not.

**Second**, we can begin to see and understand the serious work that students undertake only if we suspend judgment long enough to look carefully and closely at what is actually in the work rather than what we hope to see in it.

**Third**, we need the perspective of others — especially those who are not intimate with our goals for our students — to help us to see aspects of the student and the work that would otherwise escape us. We also need others to help us generate ideas about how to use this information to shape our daily practice.

Since 1988, when Steve Seidel and his colleagues at Harvard Project Zero developed this process, the Collaborative Assessment Conference has been used in a variety of ways: to give teachers the opportunity to hone their ability to look

This description is excerpted, with adaptations, from Blythe, T., Allen, D., & Powell, B. (1999). *Looking Together at Student Work*. New York: Teachers College Press.

closely at and interpret students' work; to explore the strengths and needs of a particular child; to reflect on the work collected in student portfolios; to foster conversations among faculty about the kind of work students are doing and how faculty can best support that work.

### **Presenting teacher**

In the Collaborative Assessment Conference, the presenting teacher brings a piece of student work to share with a group of five to ten colleagues (usually other teachers and administrators). The process begins with the presenting teacher showing (or distributing copies of) the piece to the group. Throughout the first part of the conference, the presenting teacher says nothing, giving no information about the student, the assignment, or the context in which the student worked.

Through a series of questions asked by the facilitator, the group works to understand the piece by describing it in detail and looking for clues that would suggest the problems or issues or aspects of the work with which the student was most engaged. They do this without judgments about the quality of work or how it suits their personal tastes. The facilitator helps this process by asking participants to point out the evidence on which they based the judgments that inevitably slip out. For example, if someone comments that the work seems very creative, the facilitator might ask him or her to describe the aspect of the work that led him or her to say that.

### **Second part**

In the second part of the conference, the focus broadens. Having concentrated intensively on the piece itself, the group, in conversation with the presenting teacher, now considers the conditions under which the work was created as well as broader issues of teaching and learning. First, the presenting teacher provides any information that s/he thinks is relevant about the context of the work. Relevant information might include:

- Description of the assignment;
- Response to the discussion; answers to questions (though s/he does not have to respond to all the questions raised in the first part of the conference);
- Description of other work by the child; and/or
- Comments about how his/her own reading or observation of the work compares to that of the group.

### **Next**

Next, the facilitator asks the whole group (presenting teacher included) to reflect on the ideas generated by the discussion of the piece. These might be reflections about specific next steps for the child in question, ideas about what the participants might do in their own classes or thoughts about the teaching and learning process in general. Finally, the whole group reflects on the conference itself.

The following steps are a working agenda for a Collaborative Assessment Conference. The time allotted for each step of the conference is not fixed, since the time needed for each step will vary in accordance with the work being considered. At each stage, the facilitator should use his or her judgment in deciding when to move the group on to the next step.

Typically, Collaborative Assessment Conferences take from 45 to 75 minutes.

# Steps

## Collaborative assessment conference protocol

### 1. Get started

- The group chooses a facilitator who will make sure the group stays focused on the particular issue addressed in each step.
- The presenting teacher puts the selected work in a place where everyone can see it or provides copies for the other participants. S/he says nothing about the work, the context in which it was created, or the student, until Step 5.
- The participants observe or read the work in silence, perhaps making brief notes about aspects of it that they particularly notice.

### 2. Describe the work

- The facilitator asks the group, “What do you see?”
- Group members provide answers without making judgments about the quality of the work or their personal preferences.
- If a judgment emerges, the facilitator asks for the evidence on which the judgment is based.

### 3. Ask questions about the work

- The facilitator asks the group, “What questions does this work raise for you?”
- Group members state any questions they have about the work, the child, the assignment, the circumstances under which the work was carried out, and so on.
- The presenting teacher may choose to make notes about these questions, but s/he does not respond to them now – nor is s/he obligated to respond to them in Step 5 during the time when the presenting teacher speaks.

### 4. Speculate about what the student is working on

- The facilitator asks the group, “What do you think the child is working on?”
- Participants, based on their reading or observation of the work, make suggestions about the problems or issues that the student might have been focused on in carrying out the assignment.

### 5. Hear from the presenting teacher

- The facilitator invites the presenting teacher to speak.
- The presenting teacher provides his or her perspective on the student's work, describing what s/he sees in it, responding (if s/he chooses) to one or more of the questions raised, and adding any other information that s/he feels is important to share with the group.
- The presenting teacher also comments on anything surprising or unexpected that s/he heard during the describing, questioning and speculating phases.

### 6. Discuss implications for teaching and learning

- The facilitator invites everyone (the participants and the presenting teacher) to share any thoughts they have about their own teaching, children's learning, or ways to support this particular child in future instruction.

### 7. Reflect on the collaborative assessment conference

*The group reflects on the experiences of or reactions to the conference as a whole or to particular parts of it. Consider these questions:*

- What did you see in the work that was interesting or surprising?
- What did you learn about how this student thinks and learns?
- What in the process helped you to see and learn?
- What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?
- What thoughts about designing and assessing student work did this process raise for you?
- What will you use in your classroom from this session?

*It is helpful to engage in personal reflection about your own thinking after examining student work.*

*Consider these questions:*

- Why do I see student work in this way? What does this tell me about what is important to me? What does this tell me about what the student has learned?
- What patterns occurred in your perceptions or thinking?
- What questions did your colleagues' comments raise for you as a designer of student work?

### 8. Thank the presenting teacher.

*Developed by Steve Seidel and colleagues at Harvard Project Zero*

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# Teacher research leads to learning, action

By Joan Richardson

**A**s 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

*\* 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.*

*Continued on Page 2*

## Tools For Schools

## 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.*

## Tools For Schools

### 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.

<b>Date:</b>
<b>My question at this time is:</b>
<b>My biggest concern is:</b>
<b>One thing I am learning is:</b>
<b>My biggest struggle is:</b>

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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?

## Tools For Schools

### 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** 5<sup>th</sup> 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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# LESSON STUDY

*Teachers learn how to improve instruction*

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

**W**hen 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."

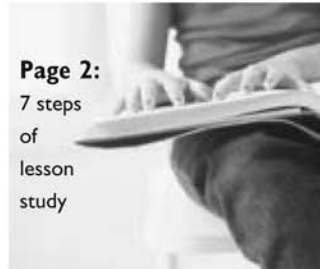
"Lesson study" is different from "lesson planning" because it focuses on what teachers want students to learn rather than on what teachers plan to teach. In lesson study, a group of teachers develops a lesson together and ultimately one of them teaches the lesson while the others observe the student 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 reassemble 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.



### 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.

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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:

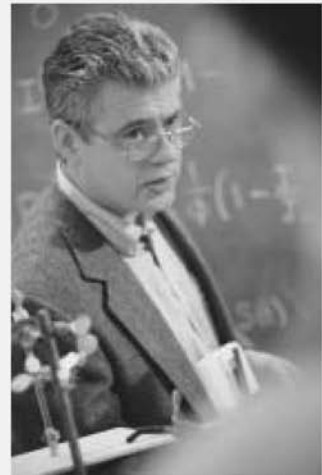
- Determine who will be the videographer.
- Determine where you will station the camera(s) to record both the teacher and students.
- Ensure that you secure permission slips from students in advance. (Familiarize yourself with your district's policy regarding videotaping of students.)

### 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?  


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## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.rbs.org).

### Lesson Study group at Mills College

#### [Lessonresearch.net](http://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](http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/results/res12-00rich.cfm)

### Lesson Study Research Group web site

#### [www.tc.edu/centers/lessonstudy](http://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/](http://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](http://www.rbs.org/currents/0502/index.shtml).

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## Ask Dr. Developer



**Dr. Developer has all the answers to questions that staff developers ask.**

**(At least he thinks he does!)**

## Going online for lesson study

**Q** *There are not enough interested teachers in my school to do lesson study effectively. I'm intrigued by the possibility of doing a lesson study online. What's the best way to structure that?*

**A** Doing lesson study online may not be as easy as face-to-face work but it offers a great deal of potential for motivated educators.

The Rochester, N.Y., group referenced in the main article in this issue worked together for two years and had only a handful of face-to-face meetings. Most group members had participated in a summer Thinking Math institute together. But the "knowledgeable other" who joined the group did not meet the others until the observation lesson.

The Rochester facilitator was Alice Gill, associate director for educational issues at the American Federation of Teachers.

Gill said the optimal number of participants for an online discussion is probably 10 to 12, including the facilitator and the "knowledgeable other."

Using a listserv, Gill sent questions to

the group and set deadlines for each response to keep the discussion moving along.

As with any meeting, the facilitator must be sensitive to the group's needs to keep the conversation going or to pause and assess the group's discussion. Gill said she periodically paused the conversation and assembled ideas into documents that could be shared with all participants. That also made it possible to check that all participants shared the same understanding of the work to that point.

As the lesson plan is created, documents generated by the group can either be posted on a web site or sent to all participants as attachments.

If you decide to pursue an online lesson study, Gill recommends that the group meets face-to-face after the observed lesson. This should work out well since all of the participants will be together to observe the lesson anyway.

After the final debriefing, Gill recommends posting the group's final report on a web site. This provides ready access for group members as well as enabling other educators to view the work.

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Bill Jackson, left to right, meets with Ronna Bachman, Heather Crawford, Sunjoo Kim and Joe Adriulli.

## Lesson study invigorates math coach — and his school

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

**E**ight years ago, curiosity changed the course of Bill Jackson's professional life.

The classroom teacher became transfixed by the Japanese process of lesson study, eventually becoming the facilitator for the process in his home school and one of the most notable proponents for lesson study in the U.S. Much of his value as an advocate for lesson study comes from his ongoing, on-the-

ground experience as a teacher who coaches other teachers in the process in his school, Paterson School No. 2 in Paterson, N.J.

"The point of lesson study is not to teach one great lesson. It's to transfer all of what you've learned about teaching into all of your teaching," Jackson said.

"Lesson study shows me how I can help other teachers in a more powerful way. It reduces the isolation of teachers and fosters collaboration

## TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

PAGE 5

NSDC PROFILE  
BILL JACKSON

between teachers. It provides a common understanding of teaching practice and promotes a consistency of teaching throughout a building. It shows a teacher how to become a high-quality teacher over time," he said.

Jackson's journey into lesson study and teacher leadership began in 1997 when he was a classroom teacher at School 2 and accepted an invitation to join a math study group started by the school's then-principal Lynn Liptak.

The math study group attended workshops on the TIMSS videotapes of math classrooms and Jackson was intrigued by the Japanese style of teaching which he thought was more powerful than his own instruction. Working from what he had observed in the videotapes, Jackson tried to imitate what he saw happening in those classrooms, not really understanding the process that the Japanese teachers had gone through to create the lessons he observed.

Soon, the math study group learned about lesson study, the intensive professional development process that Japanese teachers use to improve classroom lessons. Through researchers at Columbia University's Teachers College in New York City, School 2 teachers were able to connect with teachers from Greenwich (Conn.) Japanese School, a relationship that continues to this day.

Jackson greatly values the relationship with the Greenwich teachers. "That's the best professional development for me. Working with them is how I stay sharp," he said.

When the work with Greenwich began, Jackson was one of 16 teachers who volunteered to spend some time every week developing and refining math lessons. "I was one of the very enthusiastic lesson study participants. When teachers were afraid to teach publicly, I volunteered. I was never shy about that," he said.

By the 1999-2000 school year, the principal had seen enough to convince her to carve out time to enable the volunteer teachers to meet from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. every Monday in lesson study groups. Two years later, all teachers were expected to participate in lesson study groups 80 minutes each week. Jackson became math facilitator with his primary work to guide the lesson study groups.

Jackson continues as the school's math facilitator but, because of a districtwide change in school schedules, School 2's principal was unable to provide time during the workday for teachers to participate in lesson study. A small group of volunteer teachers is continuing the process after school.

Until this year, School 2's goal had been to develop at least one research lesson per year per grade. Teachers worked in grade-level math groups and selected lessons that they'd had difficulty with in the past or which they knew had caused students to struggle. Eventually, one of the teachers volunteered to teach the lesson to students with other teachers observing. The observers followed a precise protocol. Teachers gathered after the lesson to debrief what they had observed. Then, the same teachers refined the lesson. The lesson was re-taught, using the refined lesson. After teaching the lesson a second time, teachers once again met to discuss it. Finally, they wrote a report on what was learned during that lesson study cycle. Teachers presented these reports with PowerPoint at staff meetings. The reports with lesson plans, discussion notes, conclusions and recommendations along with videotapes of the lessons are stored in the library.

In addition to facilitating the lesson study groups, Jackson also provides intensive support for teachers. Rather than observing an occasional lesson here or there, he observes every math lesson taught by one teacher during the school's 90-minute math block over a one- or two-week period. "They teach. I observe. We talk," he said in describing the process.

That process, he said, is ideal because teachers are not teaching special lessons but allowing him to observe their everyday practice. This also allows him to have frequent short but timely debriefings.

In addition, Jackson teaches model lessons while other teachers observe. That also is followed by a debriefing about the strengths and weaknesses of his lesson.

Changes in School 2 and the district have presented Jackson with new challenges this year. Teachers are no longer required to participate in lesson study and teachers who are interested in

### Benefits of lesson study

→ It shows me how I can help other teachers in a more powerful way.

→ It reduces the isolation of teachers and fosters collaboration between teachers.

→ It provides a common understanding of teaching practice and promotes a consistency of teaching throughout a building.

→ It shows a teacher how to become a high-quality teacher over time.

— Bill Jackson

**3** TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

PAGE 6

**WILLIAM JACKSON**

**Position:** Mathematics facilitator/teacher, Paterson School No. 2

**School district:** Paterson (New Jersey) Public Schools

**Professional history:** Before becoming math facilitator at School 2, Jackson had been a classroom teacher for 17 years, teaching grades 3 through 8 as well as bilingual education and adult ESL classes. At School 2, he has been the lead teacher in the school's lesson study work. He has managed the school's lesson study relationship with the Greenwich (Conn.) Japanese School. He also has

co-authored the math curriculum for grades 7 and 8 at his school, based on the findings of the TIMSS study and what Paterson teachers learned about student learning through their work with lesson study.

**Education:** Earned his bachelor's degree in economics from Rutgers University, 1982 and a master's degree in education with a concentration in bilingual/bicultural education, William Paterson University, Wayne, N.J., in 1997.

**Honors/accomplishments:** Awarded Fulbright Memorial Scholarship by the government of Japan to study the Japanese educational system

in Tokyo and Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan, 1999. Member of select group of educators to represent the United States at U.S./Japan Mathematics Seminar in Park City, Utah, July 2002.

**Professional service:** Jackson is an active participant in the lesson study work in the United States. He presents frequently at mathematics conferences regarding lesson study and is a regular participant in the lesson study conference hosted by Greenwich (Conn.) Japanese School.

**To continue** this conversation, e-mail Jackson at [wcjack@optonline.net](mailto:wcjack@optonline.net).



Lesson study is one of the 21 strategies featured in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*. Buy it at [store.nsd.org](http://store.nsd.org)

the process must join a voluntary after-school group led by Jackson, who's also volunteering his time. He believes that lesson study made a profound impact on the culture of the school and was beginning to impact student achievement.

"Conversations have changed. It's real common for teachers to say, 'come look at my blackboard. I want you to see my students' work.' It literally has transformed the feeling in this building," Jackson said.

"At my school, teachers don't have to know everything. We know that we can learn to be good teachers. But, first, we have to let our guard down," he said.

But he worries that these improvements will fade if administrators don't make their support more tangible. "It's very easy to slip back into the same old same old. That's what I'm struggling with right now. Without support, you're a Lone Ranger," he said.

"You need administrators who let the staff know that this is part of the professional lives of

teachers in this school. There was a time when lesson study was 'the way we do business' in this school," he said.

Jackson also worries that the American tendency to favor a quick fix is out of step with a learning process as intensive as lesson study.

"Americans have little patience for anything that doesn't produce immediate results. Lesson study produces slow but steady improvement over time," Jackson said. School 2 made AYP in 3rd and 4th grade but "the test scores didn't jump through the roof."

Without commitment from the district, he wonders how long he'll be able to share his passion for lesson study with other teachers at his school.

"If you're not getting support from the top, I don't see how this can work long-term. You hear a lot about lesson study being teacher-driven. I'm not sure that's true. It's teacher-driven if teachers are allowed to drive it," he said. ♦

**"Americans have little patience for anything that doesn't produce immediate results. Lesson study produces slow but steady improvement over time."**

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 3** Who and when
- 4** What and why
- 6** How

*Select the strategy that works*  
**PROCESS**  
*for your context and content*

BY LOIS BROWN EASTON

**I** imagine a school that has an environment of staff growth and learning. The climate that makes learning possible for adults in this school can always improve, but the school can legitimately call itself a professional learning community. This school has the *context* for adult learning.

Imagine that this school has collected and analyzed data from a variety of sources. Staff members know what they need to learn to do better so students can learn better. Teachers know the *content* they must study.

What they need to know is how: How will they learn what they need? What strategies will help them learn and help them make changes that affect student achievement? What *processes* will they initiate?

Selecting the right process (or strategy or design) is an important consideration for those developing and participating in professional learn-

ing that will make a difference. In fact, it is so important that the National Staff Development Council made it one of three aspects designers of professional development must consider, along with context and content (NSDC, 2001).

Imagine that the staff at our imaginary school has determined that students need to improve their reading skills in the content areas. The staff wants

to learn how to help students understand materials they read in social studies and science, for example. Rather than have administrators decide how they should learn, staff members consult a resource that describes powerful strategies for professional develop-



ment — such as NSDC’s newest book, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004) — and select a variety of processes that could be used. Some of these designs work individually. Some work individually and then suggest that individuals get together in groups. Some work best

*Continued on Page 2*

# Select the strategy that works

*Continued from Page 1*

in groups. Six months into their focus on reading in the content areas, teachers come together, bringing a variety of viewpoints after experiencing a variety of professional development activities — though all focused on reading. Their professional development continues with other processes as they implement the changes they have identified.

Let's be more specific. In the first six months, one teacher decides to **access student voices** by having students talk about reading in focus groups. Other teachers begin **action research** projects, mostly working alone but getting together every other week to share their results. A few individuals keep **journals** about reading in their own classrooms. Some of these individuals create **portfolios** to share with others. Another group conducts **case discussions** on reading, and another looks at curriculum as **curriculum designers**. The principal and associate principals do **classroom walk-throughs** that focus on reading. Another group **analyzes the data** that initiated this professional learning cycle; this group wants to know the details behind the scores that alarmed the staff about reading in the content areas. The last group examines classroom and district **assessments** for levels of questioning about text.

At the end of the first six months, these individuals and groups learn from each through **visual dialogue**, and the staff as a whole creates a plan for action. The action research individuals and groups continue their work, as do the journal writers and portfolio makers. The curriculum designers and the assessment group expand their work, and other groups begin to form. Some staff members begin to meet in **critical friends groups** and do **tuning protocols** around student understanding of text. A small group decides to **shadow students** in another school, known for its focus on critical reading skills.

Later, as implementation continues (and gets tougher), a group forms to do

## 21 strategies

The 21 strategies included in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*:

- Accessing student voices
- Action research
- Assessment as professional development
- Case discussions
- Classroom walk-throughs
- Critical friends groups
- Curriculum design
- Data analysis
- Immersing teachers in practice
- Journaling
- Lesson study
- Mentoring
- Peer coaching
- Portfolios for educators
- School coaching
- Shadowing students
- Standards in practice
- Study groups
- Training the trainer
- Tuning protocols
- Visual dialogue

**lesson study** related to reading in science classes. Another group looks at assignments through the **standards in practice** process. Finally, the staff decides to have a **school coach** help them focus on literacy across the curriculum.

This article and the charts on Pages 3-6 will guide you in choosing the designs that will work for your school.

### WHO?

All of the 21 professional development designs included in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* work well with classroom teachers as well as administrators at the building and district levels. The Page 3 chart identifies designs that will benefit by including college or university staff or community members, par-

ents, and policy makers as partners.

Regardless of who is involved in professional development, always ask, "Who else needs to be here?"

1. Who should be involved?
2. Will people work as individuals or in groups?

### WHAT AND WHY?

Each of the 21 designs has roots in what happens in classrooms, focuses on learners and learning, and is collaborative in some way. All designs honor professionals. All lead to application. All promote inquiry and reflection.

Beyond these standards for powerful professional development, however, are other more specific purposes that can be promoted through certain designs. These more specific purposes take the form of questions listed below. Designs that are especially oriented to these specialized purposes are listed in the charts on Pages 4 and 5.

1. Which designs are most useful for gathering and using information from within the school or district about learning?
2. Which designs are most likely to use outside resources to inform the work?
3. Which designs are especially useful in creating a learning community?
4. Which designs focus most on standards, curriculum, and assessment?
5. Which designs focus most on practice or pedagogy?
6. Which designs are most useful for looking at classrooms?
7. Which designs focus on the whole school and/or beyond?
8. Which designs are particularly reflective?
9. Which designs look at student work or involve students in some way?
10. Which designs are best for bringing others (other than teachers or administrators) into the school improvement effort?

*Continued on Page 7*

POWERFUL DESIGNS: WHO AND WHEN											
POWERFUL DESIGN	WHO? <i>In addition to classroom teachers and administrators, who should be involved?</i>					WHEN? <i>(Assumes no less than 1-year commitment)</i>					
	University or college staff	Community, parents, policy makers	Individuals at first, then groups	Pairs	Large groups/ concurrent small groups	Frequency				Duration	
						3 to 6 times a year	At least monthly	At least weekly	Daily	Each session is 3 hours or more	Each session is 1 to 2 hours
Accessing Student Voices			X			X				X	
Action Research	X		X				X*	X**			X*
Assessment as Professional Development					X	X				X	
Case Discussions					X		X				X
Classroom Walk-Throughs			X						X		X
Critical Friends Groups	X				X		X				X
Curriculum Designers	X				X	X				X	
Data Analysis	X	X			X	X				X	
Immersing Teachers in Practice					X		X				X
Journaling			X						X		X
Lesson Study					X	X				X	
Mentoring	X			X				X			X
Peer Coaching	X			X				X			X
Portfolios for Educators			X					X			X
School Coaching	X	X			X		X				X
Shadowing Students		X	X			X				X	
Standards in Practice					X		X				X
Study Groups	X	X			X	X				X	
Training the Trainer	X			X			X				X
Tuning Protocols	X				X		X				X
Visual Dialogue					X	X				X	

\* = group sharing    \*\* = individual work

Source: *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, by Lois Brown Easton. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004. All rights reserved. Order through NSDC's Online Bookstore, store.nsd.org.

<b>POWERFUL DESIGNS: WHAT AND WHY</b>							
<b>POWERFUL DESIGN</b>	<b>Useful for gathering data in a school</b>	<b>Involves gathering information from external sources</b>	<b>Particularly helpful in creating a learning community</b>	<b>Looks at standards, curriculum, assessment</b>	<b>Focuses on pedagogy and teaching</b>	<b>Involves looking at classrooms</b>	<b>Involves looking at whole school/ beyond</b>
Accessing Student Voices	X						X
Action Research	X	X		X	X	X	X
Assessment as Professional Development		X		X			
Case Discussions		X		X	X		
Classroom Walk-Throughs	X					X	
Critical Friends Groups			X		X		
Curriculum Designers		X		X			X
Data Analysis	X						
Immersing Teachers in Practice				X	X		X
Journaling					X		
Lesson Study		X		X	X	X	X
Mentoring		X	X		X	X	
Peer Coaching		X	X		X	X	
Portfolios for Educators	X				X	X	
School Coaching		X					X
Shadowing Students	X	X				X	
Standards in Practice				X			
Study Groups		X		X			X
Training the Trainer							X
Tuning Protocols			X		X	X	
Visual Dialogue	X	X	X	X			X

Source: *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, by Lois Brown Easton. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004. All rights reserved. Order through NSDC's Online Bookstore, [store.nsd.org](http://store.nsd.org).

<b>POWERFUL DESIGNS: WHAT AND WHY</b>							
<b>POWERFUL DESIGN</b>	<b>Is particularly reflective</b>	<b>Involves looking at student work or students</b>	<b>Good for involving others</b>	<b>Good for problem solving</b>	<b>Results in a concrete product</b>	<b>Is experiential</b>	<b>Involves modeling</b>
Accessing Student Voices		X	X	X			
Action Research		X		X			
Assessment as Professional Development					X		
Case Discussions							
Classroom Walk-Throughs				X		X	
Critical Friends Groups		X		X			
Curriculum Designers					X		
Data Analysis				X			
Immersing Teachers in Practice						X	X
Journaling	X					X	
Lesson Study				X	X	X	X
Mentoring	X	X	X	X		X	X
Peer Coaching	X	X		X		X	X
Portfolios for Educators	X	X		X	X		
School Coaching			X	X			
Shadowing Students		X	X			X	
Standards in Practice		X		X	X	X	X
Study Groups				X			
Training the Trainer	X		X		X	X	
Tuning Protocols		X					
Visual Dialogue			X	X		X	

POWERFUL DESIGNS: HOW									
POWERFUL DESIGN	Facilitator needed?			Administrator involvement?			School in/out?		Cost?*
	No	At first	Yes	Support	Participation essential	Participation helpful	In	Out	
Accessing Student Voices			X	X		X	X		\$
Action Research	X			X		X	X		\$\$
Assessment as Professional Development			X	X	X		X	X	\$\$\$
Case Discussions			X	X		X		X	\$\$
Classroom Walk-Throughs	X			X	X		X		\$
Critical Friends Groups		X		X		X	X		\$\$
Curriculum Designers			X	X	X			X	\$\$\$
Data Analysis			X	X	X			X	\$\$\$
Immersing Teachers in Practice			X	X		X	X	X	\$\$\$
Journaling	X			X	X		X		\$
Lesson Study			X	X		X	X	X	\$\$
Mentoring	X			X	X		X		\$\$
Peer Coaching	X			X	X		X		\$\$
Portfolios for Educators	X			X	X		X		\$
School Coaching			X	X	X		X		\$\$\$
Shadowing Students			X	X	X		X		\$\$
Standards in Practice			X	X		X	X		\$\$
Study Groups		X		X	X		X		\$\$
Training the Trainer			X	X		X	X	X	\$\$\$
Tuning Protocols		X	X	X		X	X		\$\$
Visual Dialogue			X	X	X		X		\$\$\$

\* \$ = low cost    \$\$ = medium cost    \$\$\$ = high cost

Source: *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, by Lois Brown Easton. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004. All rights reserved. Order through NSDC's Online Bookstore, [store.nsdcc.org](http://store.nsdcc.org).

# Select the strategy that works

*Continued from Page 2*

11. Which designs can be used to address specific problems and seek solutions?

12. Which designs result in a concrete product? Which designs are the most experiential?

13. Which designs may involve modeling?

## WHEN?

To be effective, schools should plan to commit to a design for at least a year. No design should be implemented only once a year. They are meant to be continuous over a period of time.

See the chart on Page 3 for guidance in designs that will work well in three to six sessions a year, those that require at least monthly meetings, those that should occur at least weekly, and those that should happen daily.

In addition, the duration of any professional development activity or session can vary enormously. Some strategies that may require less frequent meetings may need three hours or more for each session. Some strategies may require educators to meet together more often but for shorter amounts of time. Individual work that results in later group sharing might require an hour or less.

## HOW?

All 21 designs identified in this article can be used with other designs to explore the same content. In fact, using a variety of adult learning strategies oriented towards the same need can enrich the results considerably.

The chart on Page 6 will help you identify strategies by answering the following questions:

1. Which designs require a facilitator?

2. Which designs require administrators to be involved?

3. Which designs work best when school is in session? Which designs work

## What are NSDC's process standards?

In terms of process, the NSDC Standards for Staff Development agree that 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. (*Data-driven*)
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. (*Evaluation*)
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making. (*Research-based*)
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (*Design*)
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change. (*Learning*)
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (*Collaboration*)

best when school is not in session?

4. Which designs cost the most?

Students will succeed when educators choose the best possible context for professional development, deliberately focus content on student improvement needs, and choose processes that help teachers learn to best address those needs.

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## Chapter 10

# TEAM PLANNING AND REPORTING

### TOOLS:

**Tool 10.1** Sample team plan. 3 pages

**Tool 10.2** Team planning template. 3 pages

**Tool 10.3** Alternative team planning template. 1 page

**Tool 10.4** Team agenda template. 1 page

**Tool 10.5** Team summary report template. 1 page

Where are we?

**We include time in all schoolwide meetings to discuss what collaborative professional learning teams are doing and learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Our school uses well-defined processes to keep everyone informed about what teachers are learning in their collaborative professional learning teams.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Teams of teachers (grade-level, resource, interdisciplinary, department, etc.) develop written plans to guide their collaborative professional learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**The school's use of collaborative professional learning teams is reflected in the district's local professional development plan.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**C**ollaborative professional learning teams plan their work and regularly report what they are doing and learning. Without planning and reporting, this form of professional development may create another form of isolation within a school that Andy Hargreaves (1998) calls “balkanization.” It means that teams work so closely together that they isolate themselves from the rest of the staff within the school. While some might argue that this is better than a school culture of complete isolation, competition, or even jealousy, it does little to foster a school-wide emphasis on improving teaching and learning and a shared responsibility for the success of all students.

When schools move toward collaborative professional learning, they establish planning and reporting processes that will increase cross-team collaboration and learning.

These processes, when they become routine, contribute to building a schoolwide collaborative culture. Both teams and the principal are responsible for making these processes routine.

### Team planning

Once a team has analyzed data, set SMART goals, and identified possible strategies for collaboration, they develop a plan of action that helps them and others know how they plan to accomplish the goal(s) they identified. A team’s plan of action is a roadmap with a timeline that helps them stay the course, make intentional course changes if necessary, and communicate to

their publics about their work.

Team action plans include the following components:

- Goal(s)
- Actions (tasks)
- Indicators of accomplishment
- Person(s) responsible (talent)
- Timeline
- Resources requested

Tool 10.1 includes a sample team plan. Tool 10.2 is a blank template for teams to modify or use. Tool 10.3 is an alternative team-planning template.

The principal receives the plans and identifies resources each team has requested and determines how to provide those. In addition, the principal may offer some feedback to the team on its plan and recommend other resources or strategies for the team to consider. Perhaps the most important part of the principal’s work is finding commonalities between and among teams’ plans.

When these commonalities occur, the principal informs each team and encourages them to share ideas, information, and resources so that they can expand the scope of their learning.

Team plans can also be posted in the staff lounge

A team’s plan of action is a roadmap with a timeline that helps them stay the course, make intentional course changes if necessary, and communicate to their publics about their work.

or meeting room so other team members can read and review. Teams can also post their logs and updates in the same location. By studying how other teams plan to accomplish their work and finding connections among their own team and other teams, team members extend their learning, resources, and potentially their results.

**Collaborative team meeting agenda**

Another way to help teams keep organized is to prepare an agenda for each meeting. The team can set the next meeting’s agenda before the end of each meeting. The agenda helps team members know how to prepare for the next meeting. The agenda will be most helpful if it includes the following information:

- Date, time, and location of meeting
- Meeting purpose describing what the team will produce (deliver) by the end of this meeting
- Actions to take or topics to discuss (e.g. report student scores on the math assessment, items to review or the unit assessment, summaries of professional readings, etc.)
- Time assigned to each action or topic

Tool 10.4 is a team meeting agenda for teams to use or adapt.

**Team reporting**

Teams complete brief logs or summary reports at the end of each meeting as a record of their meeting.

These records become public information and help other teams and the school administrator know what progress each team is making, what challenges it is facing, and what resources or support it wants. Team reports are intended to be brief, yet informative. They are best completed in the last few minutes of the team’s meeting by the entire team rather than by a single member.

The essential information included in a team meeting report includes:

- Members present;
- Date and time of meeting;
- Topics addressed;
- Summary comments; and
- Resources or support requested.

Tool 10.5 is a team summary report template for teams to use or adapt.

**TOOL 10.1**

**Sample team plan**  
SAMPLE SCHOOL-BASED TEAM PLANNING FORM

**Team members:**  
TIM BEV ROBERT JAMES BETH JACKIE

**DATA ANALYZED:**  
**Student achievement data:** Benchmark assessments; current grades; performance on SAT/P  
**Process data:** Time spent on instruction in problem solving; resources used; number of problem-solving strategies taught; number of problem-solving strategies reinforced in other content areas  
**Demographics data:** Student mobility; student SES; number of hours employed; attendance  
**Perception data:** Student attitude about school; student attitude about math; student perception of self as successful in school and math

**MAJOR FINDINGS FROM DATA:**

- Students who have a large number of absences perform poorly in problem solving.
- Students who perform poorly in math have low perseverance and a negative self-image.
- Students who perform poorly in problem solving also perform poorly in other areas of the math curriculum, particularly algebraic thinking and measurement.
- All students performing at the non-proficient level have their lowest scores in problem solving.

**GOALS:**  
**Team’s goals for students** (specify timeline, results, and evidence, e.g. by the end of the grading period, students scoring at the non-proficient level in problem solving will move to basic or above on the grade level common assessment.)  
Students scoring not proficient in problem solving on the benchmark assessment will score proficient by the end of the grading period.  
**Team’s goals for teachers** (specify timeline, results, evidence, etc., e.g. Teachers will provide daily practice in using multiple problem-solving strategies.)  
Teachers will deepen their understanding of problem-solving strategies, develop and implement appropriate, differentiated instruction for students performing below expectations, frequently assess student progress, and use data to revise instruction.

**Tool 10.1**

**TOOL 10.2**

**Team planning template**

**Team members:**

**DATA ANALYZED:**  
**Student achievement data:**

**Process data:**

**Demographics data:**

**Perception data:**

**MAJOR FINDINGS FROM DATA:**

**GOALS:**  
**Team’s goals for students** (specify timeline, results, and evidence, e.g. by the end of the grading period, students scoring at the non-proficient level in problem solving will move to basic or above on the grade level common assessment.)

**Team’s goals for teachers** (specify timeline, results, evidence, etc., e.g. Teachers will provide daily practice in using multiple problem-solving strategies.)

**Tool 10.2**

**TOOL 10.3**

**Alternative team planning template**

Goal/standard

Evidence of success

Staff development initiative

When?	What?	How?	What?	How well?

Reflections on action

**Tool 10.3**

**TOOL 10.4**

**Team agenda template**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Team goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting purpose (what will we deliver at the end of this meeting?): \_\_\_\_\_

Essential questions (questions we need to answer at the end of this meeting): \_\_\_\_\_

Item	Time	Person responsible	Notes
1. (document)			
A. (action)			
B. (document)			

Meeting wrap-up

- What did we learn today that will enhance our content knowledge and our teaching practice?
- What items do we want on our next agenda?
- What will we include on our team log about this meeting?

**Tool 10.4**

**TOOL 10.5**

**Team summary report template**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Members present: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda/topics:

Topic	Summary

Outcomes: \_\_\_\_\_

Next steps: \_\_\_\_\_

Resources/support requested: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tool 10.5**

Principals receive and review team reports, send feedback to each team, and address requests for resources or support. By staying informed and involved, the principal helps the team accomplish its work. Team logs can be posted so that members of other teams can review what is occurring in each team. Teams can benchmark their own work against other teams' work by reviewing their meeting reports.

In addition to written reports, principals can make time in faculty meetings for teams to report briefly on their key learnings, discoveries, or challenges. By asking teams to report publicly, the principal increases team accountability, shared responsibility, and cross-team learning. These oral reports are brief (about 3-4 minutes) and focus on what the team is learning as it progresses through its plan.

Cross-team communication and opportunities for teams to report to one another are two essential process-

es to ensure that each team's work is aligned to school and district priorities and goals. The frequency of reporting increases both knowledge sharing and culture building. When team members learn how others are contributing to achieving the school's goals, there is a stronger sense of whole school community in which each person is contributing his or her strengths and expertise to the whole. In addition, teams learn from one another about how to have effective teams if the cross-team report outs include information on structures, processes, and strategies teams are using in addition to the content.

### References

**Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (1998).** *What's worth fighting for out there?* New York: Teachers College Press.

## TOOL 10.1

## Sample team plan

### SAMPLE SCHOOL-BASED TEAM PLANNING FORM

**Team members:**

TIM                      BEV                      ROBERT                      JAMES                      BETH                      JACKIE

**DATA ANALYZED:**

**Student achievement data:** Benchmark assessments; current grades; performance on SAT 9

**Process data:** Time spent on instruction in problem solving; resources used; number of problem-solving strategies taught; number of problem-solving strategies reinforced in other content areas

**Demographics data:** Student mobility; student SES; number of hours employed; attendance

**Perception data:** Student attitude about school; student attitude about math; student perception of self as successful in school and math

**MAJOR FINDINGS FROM DATA:**

- Students who have a large number of absences perform poorly in problem solving.
- Students who perform poorly in math have less perseverance and a negative self-image.
- Students who perform poorly in problem solving also perform poorly in other areas of the math curriculum, particularly algebraic thinking and measurement.
- All students performing at the not-proficient level have their lowest scores in problem solving.

**GOALS:**

**Team's goals for students** (specify timeline, results, and evidence, e.g. by the end of the grading period, students scoring at the not-proficient level in problem solving will move to basic or above on the grade level common assessments.):

Students scoring not proficient in problem solving on the benchmark assessments will score proficient by the end of the grading period.

**Team's goals for teachers** (specify timeline, results, evidence, etc., e.g. Teachers will provide daily practice in using multiple problem-solving strategies.):

Teachers will deepen their understanding of problem-solving strategies, develop and implement appropriate, differentiated instruction for students performing below expectations, frequently assess student progress, and use data to revise instruction.

**ACTIONS PLANNED:**  
MARCH-JUNE 2005

<b>TASK:</b> What are we going to do?	<b>TALENT:</b> Who will be responsible for doing what?	<b>TIME:</b> When will we do it?	<b>RESULTS:</b> What results did we achieve?
Teachers will conduct research, review the curriculum guide, and analyze their texts to determine the four problem-solving strategies they will hold students accountable for in math.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tim will review current journals.</li> <li>• Beth will work with the math specialist to analyze the curriculum.</li> <li>• James will examine the text.</li> <li>• Jackie will gather information from teachers of prerequisite courses.</li> <li>• Robert will gather information from teachers of subsequent courses.</li> <li>• Bev will bring problems for the team to practice with at next meeting. Bev will also visit another high school to learn how they are addressing problem solving for underperforming students.</li> </ul>	March	Identified four common problem-solving strategies, resources to use in teaching the strategies, references within the curriculum and the texts, and practice problems to use in other content areas that reinforce the math processes.
Teachers will practice the problem-solving strategies to ensure their understanding and comfort with them.	Bev facilitates the team in practicing the strategies.	March	Teachers developed a common vocabulary and understanding of the strategies to increase their consistency of instruction.
Teachers will design common lessons on four problem-solving strategies.	Team designs two common lessons on the problem-solving strategies.	March	Lesson plans developed and incorporate differentiation for students of various levels of success with problem solving.
Teachers will design instructional resources for use in their classrooms to reinforce problem-solving application in other content areas.	Team designs resources to display and use in their classrooms.	March	Instructional resources displayed in all classrooms and in the math hallway.
Teachers will share the results of their common lessons and make revisions.	Teams bring their notes to discuss the results of the instruction.	April	Team members identified the common problems students have in applying the problem-solving process and include instruction on these areas in revised lesson plans.
Teachers will design common assessments to assess student progress in problem solving.	Team designs four common assessments to give students.	March and April	Common assessments are designed and administered.
Teachers will analyze data from common assessments and revise instruction.	Team	March, April, May, June	Student results are analyzed across the classrooms.

**Evidence of results**

(What will serve as evidence of our results?):

- All students' performance on the common assessments will increase by at least 5%.
- Students scoring not-proficient will score basic or above by the end of the grading period.
- Students' performance in problem solving on the state assessment will increase by at least 5%.
- Students' performance in other areas of the math curriculum will increase on the state assessment.

**Resources/support requested:**

- Discuss with the math specialist the problem-solving strategies included in the math curriculum and to gather resource materials to use in lesson and instructional materials design.
- Meet with the math specialist to serve as expert support during the April meeting to assist with the development of the assessments so that they align with the state expectations for how students demonstrate their learning.
- Release time for one teacher to visit the other high school for a half day to discuss how they teach problem solving to low performing students.

**Comments:**

- We expect that this will be a temporary solution to a more complex problem of students' perception and ability in math.
- We hope to continue to focus on how we teach all the areas of the math curriculum to increase consistency in instruction, expectations for learning, and assessment strategies.
- We also want to discover how to improve how we differentiate instruction and resources for learners who are underperforming.

## TOOL 10.2

## Team planning template

**Team members:**

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**DATA ANALYZED:**

**Student achievement data:**

---

**Process data:**

---

**Demographics data:**

---

**Perception data:**

---

**MAJOR FINDINGS FROM DATA:**

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**GOALS:**

**Team's goals for students** (specify timeline, results, and evidence, e.g. By the end of the grading period, students scoring at the not-proficient level in problem solving will move to basic or above on the grade-level common assessments.):

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---

**Team's goals for teachers** (specify timeline, results, evidence, etc., e.g. Teachers will provide daily practice in using multiple problem-solving strategies.):

---



---

**ACTIONS PLANNED:**

<b>TASK:</b> What are we going to do?	<b>TALENT:</b> Who will be responsible for doing what?	<b>TIME:</b> When will we do it?	<b>RESULTS:</b> What results did we achieve?



**TOOL 10.3**

## Alternative team planning template

<b>Goal/standard</b>
<b>Evidence of success</b>
<b>Staff development initiative</b>

<b>When?</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>How well?</b>

<b>Reflections on action</b>
------------------------------

**TOOL 10.4**

## Team agenda template

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Team goal(s):**

---

---

**Meeting purpose** (what will we deliver at the end of this meeting?):

---

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**Essential questions** (questions we want to answer at the end of this meeting):

---

---

<b>Item</b> I (information) A (action) D (decision)	<b>Time</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Notes</b>

### Meeting wrap-up

- **What did we learn today that will enhance our content knowledge and our teaching practice?**
- 
- **What items do we want on our next agenda?**
- 
- **What will we include on our team log about this meeting?**
-

**TOOL 10.5****Team summary report template****Date:****Time:****Members present:**


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**Agenda/topics:**

Topic	Summary

**Outcomes:**


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**Next steps:**


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**Resources/support requested:**


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## Chapter 11

# ROLE OF PRINCIPAL

### TOOLS:

**Tool 11.1** Essays by Dennis Sparks. *8 pages*

**Tool 11.2** Benefits of collaborative professional learning. *1 page*

**Tool 11.3** Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams. *1 page*

**Tool 11.4** Principals' strategies for increasing staff capacities for continuous learning. *1 page*

**Tool 11.5** In the right context. *4 pages*

**Tool 11.6** Culture shift doesn't occur overnight — or without conflict. *2 pages*

**Tool 11.7** How to launch a community. *2 pages*

**Tool 11.8** Getting everyone to buy in. *2 pages*

Where are we?

**Our principal demonstrates his or her support for collaborative professional learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**In our school, when teams of teachers meet, the principal trusts them to accomplish their work.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Our principal provides feedback to teams about their learning plan and progress on a regular basis.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Our principal provides the resources and support requested.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

To say that the success of collaborative professional learning rests in the hands of the principal may be an overgeneralization; however, to a large degree, it is true. Principals' commitment, investment, and involvement in collaborative professional learning is essential to its success within a school. To create, organize, and sustain collaborative professional development within their schools, principals have several essential responsibilities. They are responsible to:

- Set clear expectations and expected results;
- Create time for collaborative professional learning in the schedule;
- Provide training and development;
- Receive and review plans;
- Accept that change is a process, not an event;
- Monitor actions and results;
- Encourage “out-of-the-box” thinking; and
- Handle resistance.

#### **Set clear expectations and define results**

Principals have a responsibility to establish clear expectations about teacher collaborative professional development. Often working in partnership with teacher leaders, principals clarify whether collaborative professional development is a responsibility of every staff, some staff, or those who volunteer to participate. Further, they clarify whether teachers are expected to collaborate with one or more teams within the school, across schools, in the district, or across districts. Some

schools set an expectation that teachers meet with one collaborative learning team related to their content area or level and another that is focused on a schoolwide area of interest. For example, a middle school music teacher may meet with other teachers across the district for her content-focused team.

This team works to analyze curriculum, develop common assessments, examine student work, and to develop common units of instruction. This same teacher meets with a school team on infusing critical thinking into all classes. In this second team, the music teacher works with colleagues from other disciplines to identify the critical thinking skills they will stress at each grade level, develop their own understanding about how to integrate these skills into their classroom activities, and develop recommendations for other colleagues about how to integrate these skills into their classes.

Principals also set clear expectations for results. Working with each team and using the data analysis process as background, the principal helps each team understand how its actions can influence student suc-

We found clear evidence that the administrator is key to the existence of a professional learning community.

– *Learning together, leading together*, by Shirley Hord. New York: Teachers College Press, and Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004



to make good choices about how to use their time, etc., principals have an important role to provide training, support, and coaching to teams. Principals remind teams that nothing is perfect immediately, that teams will feel uncomfortable and even be unsuccessful initially, and that they will improve both their effectiveness and efficiency over time. This means principals' standards for teamwork change as teams mature and their work becomes more focused. The principal is ready to step in to facilitate, guide, teach, and/or provide resources, support, or resource personnel to help all teams reach an acceptable level of productivity.

**Give feedback actions and results**

Principals actively monitor team actions and results. They do this primarily by reviewing team-meeting logs. However, principals may meet with team leaders or with teams to learn about their work, observe their interactions, and to provide feedback on their work, their results, and their interactions. Principals can expect to receive periodic reports that include student data from benchmark or common assessments. By giving feedback regularly, principals and teams clarify expectations, improve their work as a team, and are more likely to focus their work on what will improve teaching and learning.

**Encourage “out-of-the-box” thinking**

Principals encourage teams to look beyond their own knowledge, skill, and practice by connecting them with print, human, or electronic resources that will move them beyond their current understanding. Principals look for resources that will introduce teams to new ideas, approaches, and strategies. When principals take an active role to ensure teams have access to resources, they stimulate learning and demonstrate their confidence in teams to accomplish their goals. Principals also have an important role in creating a safe environment that encourages risk taking, experimentation, and learning from each trial. It is important for principals to hold the view that experiences that do not produce intended results might be more powerful learning experiences than those that do.



**Tool 11.5**



**Tool 11.6**

**Handle resistance**

Resistance is inevitable. Some teachers will be uncomfortable working collaboratively. Some will initially believe that working collaboratively is additional work. Others simply prefer to work in isolation because it is what they have always done. Principals, when establishing expectations, clearly communicate each teacher's responsibilities so that no confusion exists. If teachers are unwilling to work in collaborative learning teams, principals want to be prepared to handle such resistance. Most teachers, once they work through the challenges of shifting from outside-in to inside-out professional learning, value collaborative learning, especially if the focus of their learning is directly related to their own classes and students.

Principals may use the series of essays by Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, to help them consider the benefit and their role in creating a culture for collaborative professional learning within their schools. These essays appear in Tool 11.1.

Tool 11.2 includes a list of benefits of collaborative professional learning drawn from the research of Shirley Hord on professional learning communities.

A third resource, Tool 11.3, is a list of essential skills and knowledge for principals to consider in designing the training and development for teams and/or team leaders.

Tool 11.4 lists principals' strategies for increasing staff capacity for continuous learning.

Tool 11.5 describes how principals establish the

structures to support collaborative professional learning.

Tool 11.6 describes ways the principal shifts the school culture and some of the roadblocks he or she may face in the process.

Tools 11.7 and 11.8 describe two principals who launched collaborative learning within their school. They share lessons learned to help other principals meet with success.

Douglas Reeves in his new book, *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results* (2006), describes particular leadership actions that show demonstrable links to student achievement. These actions are not dependent on a principal's style or personality, but rather are what a principal does. They include inquiring, using data to determine not only problems but also underlying causes (see Chapter 10); implementing, the degree to which aspects of a specific effort are correctly implemented at the school and classroom level; and monitoring, the way in which feedback to continuously support improvement and equity. This form of monitoring, as Reeves reminds his readers, is not evaluating or measuring.

No success in a school, no matter what it is, lies exclusively on the shoulders of principals. Teachers and teacher leaders are integral to every success and share responsibility for leadership. Principals work to distribute and share leadership throughout the system so that there are many leaders working hand-in-hand to meet the school's goals. Collaborative professional learning is

**How to launch a community**

**E**ducators seldom expect the concept of a professional learning community that all, who would be against the idea of a school in which the staff shares a sense of purpose, a vision of the school they're trying to create, and a willingness to commit to achieving that vision?

Who wouldn't want a school where teachers collaborate to find ways to help students achieve more? Typically, education are not against creating a professional learning community. They just don't know where to begin given all the demands on them.

Four principals who have faced that question have made amazing progress in less than one school year. Rick DuFour and Mica O'Brien are each new to their schools this year, but their schools are in strikingly different settings. DuFour is principal of an established elementary school in rural Franklin County, Va. O'Brien is principal of a new urban middle school serving one of the poorest sections of Buffalo, N.Y. Both are featured in the following article.

**Rick DuFour** is a superintendent of Adlai Stevenson High School (Deerfield, Ill.). You can contact him at Rick.DuFour@adstev.org or call (815) 399-1811. Mica O'Brien is a principal of Franklin County, Va. You can contact her at Mica.O'Brien@fcps.edu or call (540) 424-4444. You can also contact her at Mica.O'Brien@fcps.edu.

**Mica O'Brien** is a principal of a new urban middle school serving one of the poorest sections of Buffalo, N.Y. Both are featured in the following article.

**Journal of Education** has a backmatter issue on effective school leadership available in spring 2005. These reflections on their experiences offer valuable insights for those trying to initiate a professional learning community in their schools. DuFour's observations are featured here; O'Brien's will be featured in the next column.

**DuFour:** How did you introduce the topic of a professional learning community to your staff's consideration?

**O'Brien:** Before the start of the school year, I met with the entire staff in grade-level teams. We discussed their perceptions of the school and what would be done to improve it. While each team cited the competence and commitment of the staff as one of the school's strengths, they also shared a common frustration over insufficient time to work together. I followed up with a discussion by sending each a summary of the conversation and an article on professional learning communities. In that article, I made a commitment to work with them to build a master schedule that would provide time for teams to work together each week and to begin exploring instructional time for students on individual preparation time. I met with each team again in the opening week of school, presented them with a draft of a master schedule, and worked with them to fine-tune it until they were enthusiastic about their schedule.

**To get a professional learning community off the ground, just do it!**

Tool 11.7

**Getting everyone to buy in**

**N**ew beginnings give principal opportunity to shape his team.

**I**n my last column, Mica O'Brien, a principal of a small elementary school in rural Virginia, described her efforts to introduce the concept of a professional learning community in her school.

This column presents Mica O'Brien, who faced the same challenge in a different context—the opening of a new middle school serving one of the poorest sections of Buffalo, N.Y.

**DuFour:** How did you introduce the topic of a professional learning community to your staff's consideration?

**O'Brien:** I was in the unique position of receiving a new staff for a new building, and I decided to take full advantage of the opportunity. I made several informational presentations throughout the district for potential candidates interested in working at the school. From the onset, I described the school as a professional learning community. I used compelling research to support the model. I emphasized that every teacher would function as a member of a grade-level team or curriculum revision team. I told potential candidates that they would be required to attend nearly 120 hours of professional development during the year.

**DuFour:** What has been your biggest challenge in promoting a professional learning community, and how have you responded to that challenge?

**O'Brien:** Providing time for teachers to meet in teams is critical. I carefully designed the master schedule so all members of a teaching team had their common preparation period at the same time. This meant scheduling their students in a curriculum revision during the same period. Additionally, I made provisions in the schedule so each team could meet with me online to discuss their issues prior to the next day.

**Building teams to function as effective teams, or teams that impact student achievement in a positive manner, is another challenge. Our teams have established group norms and achievable goals. Most importantly, we continued to provide before and after the district summit.**

**Rick DuFour** is a superintendent of Adlai Stevenson High School (Deerfield, Ill.). You can contact him at Rick.DuFour@adstev.org or call (815) 399-1811. Mica O'Brien is a principal of FCPS, Virginia. You can contact her at Mica.O'Brien@fcps.edu or call (540) 424-4444. You can also contact her at Mica.O'Brien@fcps.edu.

Tool 11.8

one way principals can share leadership for professional development and offer viable teacher leadership opportunities to teachers ready to accept leadership responsibilities.

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## The principal's essential role as a learning leader



*Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council*

*Quality teaching in every classroom requires skillful leadership on the part of principals. There are no substitutes.*

**S**killful teaching in every classroom requires skillful leadership by principals. This reality is too often ignored when schools and districts make professional development decisions. And that is why I am devoting my columns this school year to the principal's essential role as a professional development leader.

I am convinced that high-quality teaching in every classroom depends on principals who make the success of all students their highest priority, nurture continuous improvement in teaching, and create energizing, interdependent relationships among all members of the school community. While effective principals delegate responsibility and distribute leadership, the ultimate responsibility for quality teaching in all classrooms falls squarely on their shoulders.

Across this school year, the columns in this series will examine what I believe are the essential ingredients in leadership for adult and student learning. My October column will argue that significant change in schools begins with significant change in leaders. What principals understand, believe, say, and do has a profound consequence on those around them. Different results, therefore, require new understandings, beliefs, words, and actions. In other words, if nothing changes, nothing changes.

In November, I will propose that successful principals possess richly-detailed visions of the student learning and teaching they desire in their schools. They can see in their mind's eye and describe in detail to others the quality of student thought and work the school desires and the type of teaching that will produce it. Likewise, they are crystal clear about the kind of professional learning that is aligned with their vision of student learning and high-quality teaching.

My December/January column will discuss how successful principals affect the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals who are both

above and below them on the organizational chart. These principals skillfully and persistently advocate for the policies, resources, and support that are essential in their schools. They also develop the leadership talents of teachers by delegating increasingly more complex responsibilities and nurturing the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully fulfill them.

In February, I will describe how skillful principals use various sources of information to create urgency for change, to establish plans, and to track progress toward important goals. Principals

guide teachers, parents, and other community members in understanding and using various types of data and other forms of evidence. They also embed the study of professional literature in faculty, department, and grade-level meetings.

My March column will discuss ways in which principals who make staff and student learning a priority create relationships within schools that build a sense of common purpose, generate energy, and are mutually respectful and trusting. Such relationships speak to the heart as well as inform the mind, foster teamwork, create community, and develop a collective responsibility for the learning of all students.

In April, I will address how successful principals embed professional learning within the core day-to-day tasks of teaching and learning. Instead of leaving their classrooms and schools to be "inserviced," teams of teachers learn as they analyze data, plan lessons, and reflect on the effectiveness of their work.

My May column will describe ways in which skillful principals strengthen subject matter understanding and instructional practice by drawing on the talents of teachers within their schools as well as on external sources of expertise.

Taken together, these columns will underscore my view that quality teaching in every classroom requires skillful leadership on the part of principals. There are no substitutes.

**PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS OF LEARNING**

*#1 in a series*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

# Principals first change themselves



Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council

**W**hat principals think, say, and do profoundly affects the quality of teaching and learning in their schools, the satisfaction they and the teachers with whom they interact derive from their work, and their ability to remain deeply engaged over many years in the demanding tasks of continuous improvement. Therefore, principals who desire significant changes in teaching, learning, and relationships within their schools begin by making significant changes in what they think, say, and do. As Gandhi expressed it, “We must become the change we seek in the world.”

Principals have the capacity to make a tremendous difference in their organizations through the values they embody, the beliefs they hold, the intentions they express, the depth of their understanding of critical issues, the clarity of their thought and speech, and the ways in which they interact with others. Such attributes can have a substantial affect — for good or for ill — on the moods and performance of countless individuals within the school community.

Some values, beliefs, intentions, understandings, and actions establish trust and respect, focus and energize staff members, tap and develop talents, and stimulate creativity. Others can have the opposite effect. This subject is addressed by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwarz in *the Power of Full Engagement* (Free Press, 2003). “Every one of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors has an energy consequence, for better or for worse,” they note. Jane Dutton adds another dimension in *Energize Your Workplace* (Jossey-Bass, 2003). “[L]eaders can make a profound difference in activating and renewing energy by building and sustaining high-quality connections ... ,” she writes. “High-quality

connections contribute substantially to individuals’ well-being and work performance. They also contribute significantly to an organization’s capacity for collaboration, coordination, learning, and adaptation, as well as its ability to keep people committed and loyal.”

Energy is created and performance improved when principals think, speak, and act in ways that connect the school community to larger, compelling purposes and strengthen relationships among teachers and between teachers and students and the families of those students. Energy is dissipated when principals and teacher leaders hold beliefs and act in ways that express resignation (“There’s nothing we can do” or “They won’t let us”) and dependency (“Tell us what to do”). Resignation and dependency undermine genuine collaboration, professional learning, and a school’s ability to find innovative solutions to pressing problems.

I recommend that principals and teachers develop a detailed vision of the school which they wish to create that is consistent with their values and then adopt beliefs, intentions, understandings, speech forms, and behaviors that are consistent with that result. In that way, the creation of schools with higher levels of purpose, energy, and performance begins with principals first changing themselves.

By beginning with the end in mind and first changing themselves. Principals are far less likely to be interested in blaming or “fixing” others. Because they have experienced profound change themselves, they are far more likely to see possibility and opportunity in situations in which others may only see limitations. As they empower themselves, they empower everyone with whom they interact.

**PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS OF LEARNING**

#2 in a series

**“Others will choose to change more readily from the example set by our own transformation than by any demand we make of them.”**

— Peter Block

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Principals possess a vision of quality professional learning



*Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council*

*"Life is never more rich, more full, or more rewarding than when you are moving faithfully and persistently toward a compelling vision. When you are purposefully creating, you become fully alive."*

— *David McNally  
& Karl Speak*

Successful principals possess richly detailed visions of the type of student learning and teaching they desire in their schools. They can see in their mind's eye and describe in detail to others the nature of teaching and the quality of student thought and work it produces. Likewise, they are crystal clear about the types of professional learning that will make that vision a reality. They can see, hear, and feel the kind of learning experiences and interactions that provide meaningful and sustaining bonds between members of the school community and produce increasingly sophisticated professional judgment and complex, intelligent behavior on the part of all teachers and leaders.

Successful principals, therefore, devote time and energy to creating clarity and consensus within the school community regarding the most powerful forms of professional learning. To that end they engage the school community in the study of resources such as the *National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development*, *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations*, and *Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals*. (All three publications are available at [www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org).)

As a result of study, reflection, and successive iteration of their collective vision, successful principals and the school communities they lead understand that high-quality professional development improves the learning of all students by continuously improving the day-to-day practices of teachers and educational leaders. It does so by promoting deep understanding of subject matter content, expanding teachers' repertoires of research-based strategies, affecting educators' beliefs about teaching and learning through dialogue and other methods, and stimulating a steady stream of goal-focused actions. Such learning is

part of teachers' daily work, not separate from it.

Successful principals and their school communities also understand that the most powerful forms of professional learning are based on sustained study of professional literature and candid, dialogue-based exchanges of views regarding the schools they wish to create; data-based assessment of current reality; and selection and successful implementation of the most effective strategies for bridging that gap. As part of their daily work, teachers engage in reading and discussion of research and other professional literature. Teachers brainstorm, examine data and student work, and give and receive feedback in the use of new practices.

The school community's vision for professional learning also includes the kinds of topics discussed by faculty members, the manner in which they are discussed, and an appreciation of the energy generated by connections to a worthy purpose and to respected colleagues. Community members' collective vision sees teachers and administrators speaking with one another in candid and respectful ways, cultivating trust by acting with integrity and interpersonal accountability, and developing school norms that support individual and collective responsibility for quality teaching and the learning of all students.

A clear, compelling, and richly detailed vision of leadership, teaching, student learning, and professional development is essential to the continuous improvement of instruction and achievement. Successful principals can succinctly and powerfully describe the alignment between the attributes of teachers' professional learning, changes in teachers' instructional practice, and improvements in student learning. Without such clarity and alignment most professional development and culture-shaping efforts will be of little consequence. High levels of learning and performance on the part of all students and teachers begin with such clarity of vision.

**PRINCIPALS  
AS LEADERS  
OF LEARNING**

*#3 in a series*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Principals partner with supervisors, teacher leaders



Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council

Leadership of the complex social organization of the modern school is far too demanding to be the work of just one individual. Therefore, successful principals invest energy in developing both their supervisors and teacher leaders through dialogue and other means to continuously improve teaching and learning.

Successful principals “develop up” on the organizational chart by skillfully and persistently educating district leaders about high-quality professional learning and advocating for the policies, data, tools, resources, and other forms of support that are essential in their schools. They ask their supervisors to evaluate them based on the quality of professional learning and the culture of their schools as well as on more traditional areas. They request regularly-scheduled meetings to discuss goals and assess

progress using various sources of evidence. These principals tap supervisors’ thinking about educational issues and enlist district administrators as allies and partners in the continuous improvement of their schools.

Successful principals develop the leadership talents of teachers by delegating increasingly more complex responsibilities to them and nurturing the knowledge and skills to successfully fulfill those responsibilities. They do so by arranging formal learning experiences for teacher leaders and aspiring administrators and by engaging teachers in more sophisticated and demanding leadership tasks. They also provide generous amounts of one-on-one time with teacher leaders that enables them to reflect on and extract lessons from their experiences and to create plans for future learning and work.

*“Everyone in the organization is expected to be constantly in a teaching and learning mode. ... [T]rue learning takes place only when the leader/teacher invests the time and emotional energy to engage those around him or her in a dialogue that produces mutual understanding.”*

—Noel Tichy

An important way in which principals distribute leadership within schools is to recruit, develop, and support teachers to serve in special assignments within their schools. These individuals may function as team leaders or committee chairs, as full- or part-time instructional coaches, or as mentors for beginning teachers or veteran teachers who are struggling with their assignments. As a result of principals’ efforts, teacher leaders feel well trained for their new roles and perceive that they and their principals are functioning as a team to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and job satisfaction in their schools.

Developing and distributing leadership within the school requires that principals be well grounded in instruction, curriculum, assessment, and professional development. While they do not have to know as much as

teachers do about the fine-grained details of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, it is important that principals know enough to engage in deep and extended growth-promoting conversations with teachers about issues of teaching and learning.

Expanding the leadership capacity of others in the organization also requires sophisticated interpersonal skills. Successful principals are clear about their values and intentions, know how to succinctly and powerfully express their views, engage in dialogue to penetrate more deeply into the heart of issues, make requests for what they want, and act with integrity. They also know how to listen deeply and to honor the perspectives of others, even though they may not agree with them.

Principals who successfully promote high levels of learning in their schools know that they cannot do it by themselves. They understand the value of strong partnerships with their supervisors and teacher leaders. Most importantly, they know such partnerships are too important to be left to chance.

**PRINCIPALS  
AS LEADERS  
OF LEARNING**

#4 in a series

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Information provides direction, inspires continuous improvement



*Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council*

**PRINCIPALS  
AS LEADERS  
OF LEARNING**

#5 in a series

“[L]eadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about and generate ideas together, to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership.”

— Linda Lambert

Skillful principals use various sources of information to create a compelling common purpose for a school, to ignite a strong desire for improvement, and to inspire urgency for change. With teachers, they employ information to determine school improvement goals, select professional learning that supports those goals, track improvements in teaching and learning over time, and create internal accountability for results. They also know that traditional forms of information and analysis are often insufficient to motivate and sustain progress toward goals.

Successful principals use information to make decisions based on evidence rather than opinion. Information from multiple sources is disaggregated whenever possible and examined for its usefulness in improving teaching and learning. It shapes planning decisions, informs mid-course corrections, and determines the effectiveness of improvement efforts to achieve goals.

Effective principals know that simply giving teachers student performance data and research on improvement strategies is usually insufficient. They know information does not speak the same “truth” to everyone and that individuals and groups experience “objective” information in unique ways based on prior learning and experience. Because they know that school faculties represent a spectrum of “perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions,” successful principals know the importance of melding these disparate views into a unifying force for improvements in teaching and learning without losing the intellectual vitality of

such diversity. Consequently, through dialogue and various data-management and formatting tools, they guide teachers, parents, and others to understand and use information to empower them and support their individual and collective purposes.

Skillful leaders also understand the power of particularly potent forms of information — for instance, stories and images — to persuade and motivate. In *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Harvard Business School Press, 2002), John Kotter and Dan Cohen argue: “People change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their *thinking* than because they are shown a truth that influences their *feelings*.” Emotion underlies lasting change, Kotter and Cohen believe, and that emotion is generated more by vivid stories and images than by a list of logical reasons for change. Emotion provides the passion and commitment that overcomes complacency and inertia and that enables individuals to alter habits.

When employed by skillful principals to improve student and staff learning, information can provide purpose, inspire change, and promote accountability. These principals know the value of information that speaks to the heart as well as the head. They also know that data rarely speak their “truth” to everyone in the same way and use that diversity of perspective to vitalize and strengthen the school community. Few tasks are more important to these leaders than helping the school community make sense of and effectively use information to benefit all students.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Principals establish relationships that energize and foster teamwork



*Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council*

**“The single factor common to successful change is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, schools get better. If relationships remain the same or get worse, ground is lost.”**  
—Michael Fullan

Principals who make staff and student learning a priority establish relationships within schools that are trusting, mutually respectful, and generate energy through commitment to a common and compelling purpose. Such relationships motivate the heart as well as inform the intellect, foster teamwork and the synergy it offers, and develop a shared responsibility for the learning of all students. High-quality connections among members of the school community are at the core of a productive school culture and promote the long-term retention of valued teachers.

The quality of relationships among adults in schools is a predictor of student learning, particularly in schools that are most challenged by the social ills of poverty and racism. High levels of trust, respectful and honest exchanges of views, and a shared commitment to worthwhile goals are some of the most important characteristics of these relationships. Without such relationships, few schools will take full advantage of available professional development resources.

Leaders' language has a powerful affect on relationships and performance, and principals, whether they recognize it or not, are leaders of language communities. “Some language forms concentrate more individual and social energy than others do; they provide more focus, increase direction, and enhance capacity,” Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey contend in *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* (Jossey-Bass, 2001). They add, “Though every person, in any setting, has some opportunity to influence the nature of the language, leaders have exponentially greater access and opportunity to shape, alter, or ratify the existing language rules.”

For instance, the language of complaint, dependency, and resignation when regularly used by leaders can deaden the human spirit, infect others, and lead to organizational atrophy. Conversely, language that expresses commitment, integrity,

and accountability energizes and sustains productive actions.

High-quality connections are built upon clarity and directness of expression, candor, and integrity. These qualities energize relationships and produce individual and collective results. Principals who are clear and direct are able to succinctly and in simple language communicate in various ways to the school community their values, intentions, assumptions, and requests.

“Communicate” does not mean impose; rather it recognizes the principal's essential role in formulating the “conversation agenda” of the school, engaging in dialogue-based conversations, and listening with empathy to the views of others.

Candor means forthrightly discussing “non-discussables” that are barriers to effective teaching and student success in many school communities, even when that discussion may generate conflict and tension. It also means talking about issues directly with everyone involved in decision making rather than with some people in “parking lot conversations.” Candor is not to be confused with demeaning, coercive, or otherwise disrespectful forms of communication offered under the guise of “honesty.”

Integrity has at its core doing what one says he or she will do. When principals make promises, they signal their commitment to action, and, when they fulfill their promises, they establish norms of interpersonal accountability within their schools.

When educators speak with clarity, possibility, and accountability, and when they interact with others in respectful and mutually satisfying ways, they empower themselves and those with whom they work to produce extraordinary results. Such interactions add purpose, joy, and energy to school communities, motivate staff members to sustain their collective effort over time, and increase the organization's capacity to achieve stretching and worthwhile goals.

**PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS OF LEARNING**

#6 in a series

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Principals serve schools as leaders of professional learning



Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council

*“Today, people believe that professional development should be targeted and directly related to teachers’ practice. It should be site-based and long-term. It should be ongoing — part of a teacher’s work week, not something that’s tacked on. And it should be curriculum-based, to the extent possible, so that it helps teachers help their students master the curriculum at a higher level.”*

—James Stigler

The welfare of our children and the future of our nation depends on all students having quality teaching and supportive relationships with peers and adults. Principals of such schools have a clear vision of quality professional development and are able to communicate it in clear, compelling language to various audiences. They know the most powerful forms of professional learning are team-based and embedded in the core day-to-day tasks of teaching and learning — planning lessons, analyzing data, reviewing student work, and through honest conversations reflecting on the effectiveness of their efforts. Rather than leaving their jobs to learn, teachers learn as they do their day-to-day work. In these schools, professional learning is seamless with teaching rather than an added burden, and it continuously and incrementally improves the teaching of every teacher for the benefit of all students

Successful principals know high-quality professional development deepens teachers’ understanding of what they teach, expands their repertoire of teaching strategies, affects educators’ beliefs about teaching and learning, creates a culture that supports teamwork, and produces a coherent stream of actions that continuously improve teaching, learning, and relationships within the school community. In these schools, teachers’ acquisition of content knowledge and new teaching methods is aided when they consider how students

learn particular subject matter such as mathematics or science.

Successful principals also know the most powerful forms of professional development make cognitive demands on teachers and administrators and require the use of increasingly sophisticated professional judgment. Such professional learning skillfully blends the abstract and theoretical with the concrete and immediately useful. It asks teachers to stand back to gain a broader perspective, to carefully consider cause-and-effect relationships in their teaching, and to unceasingly search for ways to make an even greater difference in the lives of their students.

Because learning has a strong social component and because the synergy that comes from group problem solving often leads to innovative solutions, skillful principals use intact teams within schools as centers of professional learning. Team meetings occur for the most part during the school day because they are an important part of teachers’ responsibilities and benefit from the participation of all teachers. For various reasons, such sustained collaborative work is difficult to achieve after school and during summer months. When appropriate, teachers pursue professional learning outside their schools through courses, institutes, conferences, and cross-school or cross-district networks whenever such external resources are important for the achievement of school goals.

If a school so desires, it can significantly improve professional learning for its teachers within a year. It is critically important, I believe, that principals make the type of professional learning described here a high priority and set about realizing it with the sense of urgency it deserves. Students pass through our schools only once and are the ultimate beneficiaries of the quality teaching and supportive relationships such professional learning can produce in every classroom and throughout the school community.

**PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS OF LEARNING**  
#7 in a series

*Successful principals know the most powerful professional development is team-based and part of the work of daily teaching.*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Principals amplify teachers' outstanding practices



Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council

*"Members of the local school community are made to believe, or have internalized the belief, that educational change is the province of others. ... External programs, materials, consultants, and research can and should be considered and possibly used when a school makes its own decisions, but a school should look first for resources within."*

— Carl Glickman

Successful principals understand that schools that systematically identify, deeply appreciate, and spread the outstanding practices that already exist within them are also more effective in tapping external sources of expertise. Likewise, they understand that schools whose cultures are contrary to such appreciative and collaborative methods will derive few lasting benefits from most external resources because they lack the means through which more effective teaching methods become part of a school's routine practice.

Successful principals know the quality of teaching and student learning in their schools can be significantly improved with the professional expertise that is already present within them. They also know that unleashing that expertise requires creating cultures where effective methods are appreciated and regularly shared.

In a May 2004 *Educational Leadership* article, Martin Haberman uses the term "star teachers" to describe individuals "who are so effective that the adverse conditions of working in failing schools or school districts do not prevent them from being successful teachers." He estimates that 8% of teachers in such schools are "star teachers."

In a Winter 2004 *JSD* interview ([www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/sternin251.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/sternin251.cfm)), Jerry Sternin told me he believes there are individuals in virtually every school — he calls them "positive deviants" — who get better than average results and who offer pathways to success for other teach-

ers. "Positive deviants," Sternin told me, "are people whose behavior and practices produce solutions to problems that others in the group who have access to exactly the same resources have not been able to solve. We want to identify these people because they provide demonstrable evidence that solutions to the problem already exist within the community." Effective principals create school cultures that "amplify positive deviance" as a way to continuously improve teaching and learning and retain competent teachers.

The physical presence of the positive deviant in the community is important. In our *JSD* interview, Sternin said, "It's natural for people to resist when someone tells them what to do. That's part of human nature. It's like the human immune system's rejection of anything it senses as foreign. It's the same thing at the psychological and emotional levels when an external solution is imposed on us. When the solution comes from within the system, the immune response isn't activated."

At the same time that they are "amplifying positive deviance," successful principals ensure that teachers experience the benefits of interacting with teachers from other schools and with research or other sources of outside knowledge and skills. Teachers study the professional literature related to their goals, attend appropriate workshops and conferences, participate in networks, and invite consultants to their schools to help solve tenacious problems.

Successful principals demonstrate a deep appreciation of the talents that already reside in their schools and initiate cultural changes that spread effective practices. They understand that when their schools honor and effectively use internal expertise, teachers will more actively reach out to various sources of external guidance and motivation. Schools in which both adults and students thrive consistently draw on the talents that reside within them and pull toward them the sources of support that surround them.

**PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS OF LEARNING**  
#8 in a series

Effective principals create school cultures that continuously improve teaching and learning.

**TOOL 11.2**

## **Benefits of collaborative professional learning**

### **STUDENT BENEFITS**

- Decreased dropout rate
- Lower absenteeism
- Greater academic achievement in comparison to traditional schools
- Smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds

### **STAFF BENEFITS**

- Reduced teacher isolation
- Collective responsibility for student success
- Increased understanding of roles teachers play in helping all students achieve
- More satisfaction, higher morale, and lower absenteeism
- High-quality solutions to problems
- Increase confidence among all school community members

SOURCE: *Learning together, leading together*, by Shirley Hord, New York: Teachers College Press and Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004.

**TOOL 11.3****Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding what collaborative professional learning is and how it differs from other forms of professional development</li> <li>• Benefits of collaborative professional learning</li> <li>• Purpose of collaborative professional learning in the school</li> <li>• How collaborative professional learning fits within a comprehensive professional development program</li> <li>• How collaborative professional development helps teachers meet the New Jersey requirements for professional development</li> <li>• Expectations for collaborative professional learning within the school</li> <li>• Strategies for team learning</li> <li>• Processes for establishing teams, communicating about the team's work, demonstrating the team's work and results</li> <li>• Stages of team development</li> <li>• Knowing and teaching core content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting agreement</li> <li>• Taking various roles</li> <li>• Making decisions</li> <li>• Resolving disagreements</li> <li>• Building trust</li> <li>• Working collaboratively</li> <li>• Communicating clearly</li> <li>• Setting goals</li> <li>• Developing action plans</li> <li>• Analyzing data</li> <li>• Developing and reviewing curriculum, assessment, instruction, and student learning</li> <li>• Evaluating work products and processes</li> </ul>

**TOOL 11.4**

## **Principals' strategies for increasing staff capacities for continuous learning**

### **Examine own beliefs about collaboration and continuous improvement**

#### **Develop collective values and vision**

- Be student-focused
- Use vision to recruit and develop quality staff

#### **Share decision making**

- Establish structures and process for shared decision making
- Promote shared decision making on substantive issues
- Increase decision-making quality

#### **Promote continuous learning**

- Create opportunities for teachers to learn
- Connect professional development to school improvement goals

#### **Encourage collaboration**

- Provide time for collaboration
- Identify outcomes of collaboration

#### **Provide support**

- Establish clear expectations
- Develop relationships
- Create structures for communication
- Acknowledge human capacity for change

SOURCE: *Learning together, leading together*, by Shirley Hord, New York: Teachers College Press and Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004.

a t i s s u e  
THE PRINCIPAL

# In the right context

*The effective leader concentrates on a foundation of programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and habits*

By RICK DUFOUR

**A**n old story says Ralph Waldo Emerson often began conversations with acquaintances he had not seen in some time by posing the question: “What has become more clear to you since last we met?”

The *Journal of Staff Development* presented me with a similar challenge when it asked that I reflect upon an article I co-authored five years ago titled, “The Principal as Staff Developer” (Berkey & DuFour, 1995).

While I am relieved to conclude the ideas in that article have held up well, some things principals must do to fulfill their responsibilities as staff development leaders have become much clearer to me.

## IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

Shortly after my article was published, the National Staff Development Council identified professional development standards to help schools and districts assess their programs. Content standards articulated the *what* of professional development — the knowledge and skills staff members should have. Process standards addressed how professional development should be delivered.

Although both the content and process of professional development are significant issues worthy of a principal’s attention, I have come to understand the most significant contribution a principal can make to developing others is creating an appropriate context for adult learning. It is context — the programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for a given school — that plays the largest role in determining whether professional development efforts will have an

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impact on that school.

In the right school context, even flawed professional development activities (such as the much-maligned single-session workshop) can serve as a catalyst for professional growth. Conversely, in the wrong school context, even programs with solid content and powerful training strategies are unlikely to be effective (DuFour, 1998).

When principals recognize how critical school context is to the effectiveness of professional development, important shifts begin. The primary arena for professional development moves from workshops to the workplace. Emphasis shifts from finding the right trainers or speakers to creating opportunities for staff to work together, engage in collective inquiry, and learn from one another. The artificial distinction between teacher work and teacher learning that exists in most schools is eliminated. Opportunities for learning and growth are structured into routine practices. I am convinced the



single most effective way in which principals can function as staff development leaders is providing a school context that fosters job-embedded professional development.

I have also come to understand that the context principals should strive to create in their schools is the collaborative culture of a professional learning community. Creating a collaborative culture has been described as “the single most important factor” for successful school improvement initiatives, “the first order of business” for those seeking to enhance their schools’ effectiveness, an essential requirement of improving schools, the critical element in reform efforts, and the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement (Eastwood and Louis, 1992; Fullan, 1993; Newmann and Wehlage, 1995; and McLaughlin, 1995).

But if principals are to create this context of a collaborative culture in their schools, they must do more than encourage

teachers to work together. The tradition of teacher isolation is too deep to be uprooted simply by offering opportunities for collegial endeavors. Collaboration by invitation never works. Principals who function as staff development leaders embed collaboration in the structure and culture of their schools. Teachers’ work is specifically designed to ensure that every staff member is a contributing member of a collaborative team. Creating an appropriate structure for teacher collaboration is vitally important, but also insufficient. Principals must do more than organize teacher teams and hope for the best. They must provide the focus, parameters, and support to help teams function effectively. More specifically, principals who are staff development leaders must:

1. Provide time for collaboration in the school day and school year. Providing time for teachers to work together does not require keeping students at home and/or an infusion of new resources.

Principals as staff development leaders work with staff to identify no-cost strategies that enable teachers to work together on a regular basis while students are on campus.

2. Identify critical questions to guide the work of collaborative teams. The impact of providing time for teachers to engage in collective inquiry will be determined to a great extent by the nature of the questions teachers are considering. Principals must help

teams frame questions that focus on critical issues of teaching and learning.

3. Ask teams to create products as a result of their collaboration. The best way to help teachers use their collaborative time productively is to ask them to produce and present artifacts in response to the critical questions they are considering. Examples might

**The context principals should strive to create in their schools is the collaborative culture of a professional learning community.**

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include statements of student outcomes by units of instruction, development of new units to address gaps between state standards and local curriculum, creation of common assessments and rubrics, articulation of team protocols or norms to guide the interactions of team members, or formulation of improvement plans based on analysis of student achievement data.

**4.** Insist that teams identify and pursue specific student achievement goals. The driving force behind the effort to create a collaborative culture must be improved results. Principals foster improved results when they ask teaching teams to identify and pursue specific, measurable student achievement goals.

**5.** Provide teams with relevant data and information. When every teacher has access to information on his or her students' performance in meeting agreed upon standards, on valid assessments, in comparison to other students trying to achieve the same standards, both individual teachers and teams improve their effectiveness.

Simply put, when teachers operate within the context of a learning community, they are more likely to develop professional competence. And it is principals who play the critical role in forging conditions that give rise to the growth of professional communities in schools (Louis, Kruse, and Raywid, 1996).

#### RESULTS-DRIVEN LEARNING

Some principals continue to cling to the notion that they function as staff development leaders when they offer a potpourri of professional development opportunities for staff. These peripatetic principals strive to expose their staff to every new educational fad in order to keep their schools on the "cutting edge." This eagerness to pursue change and embrace every "new thing" results in what has been referred to as the "Christmas tree" school. Programs, training, and initiatives are simply hung on the existing structure and culture of the school like the ornaments on a Christmas tree. Like ornaments, they never become

**B**uilding the group's collective capacity to achieve schoolwide goals must become a higher priority than the individual's independent learning.

truly organic or part of the tree. They dangle fragily without ever being absorbed into the school's culture.

Principals who function as staff development leaders recognize that professional development is a means to an end — improved student achievement. They work with faculty to identify the specific competencies that are most critical in helping staff achieve that end; they design purposeful, goal-oriented strategies and programs to develop those competencies; and they sustain the commitment to those strategies and programs until staff acquire and use the intended knowledge and skills. They assess the impact of professional development not on the basis of the number of offerings or initial enthusiasm for the offerings, but on the basis of improved results.

The emphasis on results also means that building the group's collective capacity to achieve schoolwide goals must become a higher priority than the individual's independent learning. The traditional structure of schools has emphasized developing individual knowledge and skills. Each staff member has been provided incentives to take courses from a myriad of universities or to attend random conferences and workshops based upon personal interests. But it is time for a profession that has been fiercely protective of individual autonomy to acknowledge that individual development does not ensure organizational development. The random learnings of staff members may contribute little to a school's ability to solve its problems.

A famous symphony conductor once commented that while he wanted each violin player in the orchestra to work at becoming a better violin player, developing individual skills did not result in a great orchestra. He also had to help each section of the orchestra develop its ability to work together as a section. Finally, he had to ensure that each member and each section heard the music the same way, that they had a common sense of what they were trying to accomplish. Principals who function as staff development leaders function in much the same way. They want each 3rd grade teacher to work at becoming a better teacher, but they realize a focus on individual development will not create a great school. They must also help the 3rd grade team learn to function in ways that strengthen the entire 3rd grade. Most importantly, they must keep everyone in the school committed to a shared vision of improved learning for all.

#### MODELING

Principals who hope to encourage others to continue to grow and learn professionally must remember the words of Albert Schweitzer: "Example isn't the best way to influence others — it's the only way." When principals model a commitment to their own ongoing professional development, when they demonstrate openness to new experiences and ideas, when they are willing to pose questions and engage in action research, they increase the likelihood that others on the staff will make a similar commitment.

No principal could ever hope to know enough to be a resource in every content area for everyone in the school. Therefore, principals must identify areas for their own professional development that offer the most powerful leverage points for advancing the school toward its goals.

Because the fundamental purpose of school is learning, principals must become students of the teaching-learning process. Because learning communities require shared vision and collective commitments, principals must become

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skilled in building consensus and resolving conflict.

Because clarity of communication helps signal priorities and focus improvement efforts, principals must develop powerful strategies for communicating effectively. Because learning communities are results-oriented and committed to continuous improvement, principals must become proficient in gathering and reporting data in ways that are meaningful to teachers. Because the transformation of traditional school cultures into professional learning communities is a difficult task replete with obstacles, frustrations, and setbacks, principals must learn how to encourage the hearts of those with whom they work. This is by no means an exhaustive list. It is, however, representative of the kind of professional development principals could pursue to help those within a school accomplish their collective goals.

How can principals develop these skills? Read voraciously, secure a mentor, participate in a principal network, create a guiding coalition within the school to help generate, assess, and refine improvement strategies. Most importantly, look continuously for experiences that offer an opportunity for professional growth. There is much wisdom in the adage, "Leadership cannot be taught, but it can be learned."

There are those who contend that

school improvement initiatives have suffered because schools are too dependent upon their principals, that the influence of the principal must be lessened in order for schools to function as learning communities. I do not subscribe to that theory. In fact, I believe schools need strong, effective leadership from principals more than ever. But the nature of that leadership is not the autocratic "my-way-or-the-highway" model of the past. Principals who embrace their role as staff development leaders act in accordance with the tenets of servant-leadership. As Robert Greenleaf (1990) described this model of leadership:

*The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead... The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (p. 7).*

When principals focus on creating an environment in which people are working toward a shared vision and honoring collective commitments to one another, an environment in which all staff are provided with structures and supports that foster collaborative efforts and continuous professional growth, an environment in which each teacher has

someone to turn to and talk to when confronted with challenges, they address one of the deepest yearnings in the hearts of most teachers: To make a positive difference in the lives of their students. And in helping teachers address that fundamental need, they increase the likelihood that teachers will themselves become servant-leaders to their students. And that is what the principal as staff development leader is all about.

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## Culture shift doesn't occur overnight — or without conflict

Staff members of every school face an inevitable question each year: What happens in our school when, despite our best efforts in the classroom, a student does not learn?

In traditional schools, the answer is left to the discretion of the individual classroom teacher, who is free to respond in different ways. The support a student will (or will not) receive depends on his or her teacher's practices, rather than a collective effort and a coordinated response. In truth, most schools play a form of educational lottery with children.

In professional learning communities, however, schools create a systematic response — processes to monitor each student's learning and to ensure that a student who struggles is provided additional time and support for learning according to a schoolwide plan. Furthermore, the response is timely. Students are identified as soon as they experience difficulty, allowing the school to focus on intervention rather than remediation. The response is directive. Students are not invited to seek extra help; they are required to receive the additional assistance and devote the extra time necessary to master the learning.

This coordinated system of support for students never occurs by chance. It can only occur when school leaders work with staff to develop a plan of intervention, carefully monitor the implementation of that plan, and confront those who disregard it. Furthermore, an effective system of intervention is not merely an add-on to existing school structures and assumptions, but represents a natural outgrowth of strong school cultures dominated by certain unifying concepts.

Boones Mill Elementary School in Franklin County, Va.; Los Penasquitos Elementary School in Rancho Penasquitos, Calif.; Freeport Intermediate School in Freeport, Texas, and Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Ill., illustrate this systematic approach to responding when students do not learn (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). The schools could not be more

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dissimilar in terms of size, geographic location, accessibility to resources, and the students and the communities they serve. Yet these schools share common themes.

One of the most evident commonalities is that the staff in each school is emphatic about and fixated on the fundamental purpose of the school — high levels of learning for all students. There is no ambiguity and no hedging about their goal. No one suggests that all kids will learn if they are conscientious, responsible, attentive, developmentally ready, fluent in English, and come from homes with concerned parents who take an interest in their education. There is no hint that staff members believe they can help all kids learn if class sizes are reduced, more resources are made available, new textbooks are purchased, or more support staff are hired. In these four schools, staff members embraced the premise that the very reason their schools exist is to help all their students — every one of the flawed, imperfect boys and girls who come to them each day — acquire essential knowledge and skills using the resources available to the school.

The collective commitment to high levels of learning for every student led these schools to assess the impact of their efforts and decisions based on tangible results. When teachers in a school are truly focused on student learning as their primary mission, they inevitably seek valid methods to assess the extent and depth of that learning. The teachers in these four schools all found that frequent common assessments, developed collaboratively and scored by every teacher of a grade level or course, were a vital resource in their efforts to monitor student learning. Doug Reeves (2004, p. 114-115) describes this process as “the gold standard in educational accountability” because these assessments are used to “improve teaching and learning, not merely to evaluate students and schools.”

The teachers in the four schools embrace data and information from their common assessments because the assessments provide timely and powerful insights into their students' learning. They do not denigrate data that suggest all is not well, nor do they blindly worship means, modes, and medians. They have a healthy respect for the results of their common assessments because those assessments help them monitor the effectiveness of their teaching and identify individual students who are experiencing difficulty. Once those students are identified, the schoolwide system



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

of intervention ensures that the students immediately receive additional time and support for learning.

**HOW LEADERS CREATE A CULTURE COMMITTED TO LEARNING**

A critical element in creating these powerful school cultures is the principal's leadership. Each is clearly committed to empowering staff, delegating authority, and developing collaborative decision-making processes, but none is unwilling to confront a staff member who violates the fundamental concepts of the school's culture. Leadership is widely distributed in each school, with clearly delineated guiding coalitions overseeing the improvement process. The collaborative team structures in place in each school also encourage fluid situational leadership throughout the school. When a team discovers that one of its members has special expertise in a particular content area, in teaching a concept, in developing effective assessments, or in meeting the needs of a particular kind of learner, that member naturally assumes temporary leadership based on that expertise when the team focuses on that topic. The principals delegate authority and serve as leaders of leaders rather than the central problem solver of the school.

Nevertheless, in the early stages of implementing the changes that helped the school become a professional learning community, each principal faced challenges from one or more staff members who either aggressively or passively resisted the school's new direction. The consistent way the principals dealt with staff challenges offers important insights into leading the professional learning community process. In every case, the principal met with the teacher privately, stated concerns very directly, and identified the specific steps the teacher needed to take to remedy the situation. Finally, the principal asked how he or she might help the teacher make the necessary changes.

The teachers did not always respond positively to these discussions. Some became quite emotional and defensive. The principals, however, did not hedge. They made it clear that the teacher's behavior was unacceptable and that the need for change was imperative. They did so without rancor, but they left no doubt about their expectations.

Perhaps there are schools that have made the transition to a professional learning community without conflict or anxiety, but I am unaware of any. Disagreements and tension are to be expected. The question schools must face is not, "How can we eliminate all potential for conflict as we

go through this process?," but rather, "How will we react when we are immersed in the conflict that accompanies significant change?" In *Crucial Conversations* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2002), the authors contrast how teams respond when faced with conflict. Ineffective teams will ignore the problem, letting it fester and build until resentment and frustration lead to an explosion of accusations and recrimination. Good teams will take the matter to the boss and ask that he or she deal with the problem and find a satisfactory solution. Great teams will deal with the issue themselves, engaging in open dialogue and applying positive peer pressure to bring about the desired change.

The problem in schools is that teams almost never start out as great teams. Before they get to the point where team members can work together to resolve the matter, they likely will need the principal to help remedy the situation. A critical factor in creating the learning-centered culture of these four schools was the principal's willingness to confront obvious violations of the concepts upon which those cultures were built.

Culture has been defined as "the way we do things around here." Leaders shape the norms of behavior (and thus the culture) of their organizations in a number of ways. When principals work with staff to build processes to monitor each student's learning and to develop systems of intervention that give students additional time and support when they experience difficulty, they create the structures that support the concept of learning for all. When they give staff clear parameters to guide their work but considerable autonomy in implementation, they increase the likelihood that staff members will embrace that concept. But when principals are unwilling to tolerate actions that violate the underlying values of the culture, they use a powerful strategy for shaping the norms of behavior within their school.

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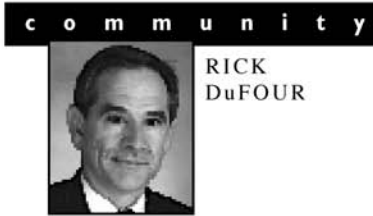
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**The principals delegate authority and serve as leaders of leaders rather than the central problem solver of the school.**





# How to launch a community

**E**ducators seldom oppose the concept of a professional learning community. After all, who would be against the idea of a school in which the staff shares a sense of purpose, a vision of the school they're trying to create, and a willingness to commit to achieving that vision?

Who wouldn't want a school where teachers collaborate to find ways to help students achieve more?

Typically, educators are not against creating a professional learning community. They just don't know where to begin given all the demands on them.

Two principals who have faced that question have made amazing progress in less than one school year. Becky Burnette and Mike O'Brien are each new to their schools this year, but their schools are in strikingly different settings. Burnette is principal of an established elementary school in rural Franklin County, Va. O'Brien is principal of a new urban middle school serving one of the poorest sections of Buffalo, N.Y. Both are featured in the *Video*

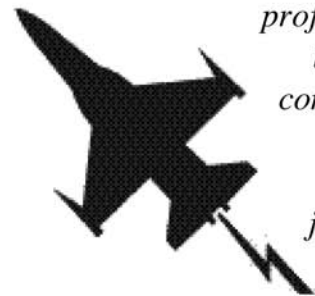
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*Journal of Education* ([www.teachstream.com](http://www.teachstream.com)) on effective school leadership available in spring 2001. Their reflections on their experiences offer valuable insights for those hoping to initiate a professional learning community in their schools. Burnette's observations are featured here; O'Brien's will be featured in the next column.

**DuFour:** How did you introduce the topic of a professional learning community for your staff's consideration?

**Burnette:** Before the start of the school year, I met with the entire staff in grade-level teams. We discussed their perceptions of the school and what could be done to improve it. While each team cited the competence and commitment of the staff among the school's strengths, they also shared a common frustration over insufficient time to work together. I followed up these discussions by sending staff a summary of the conversations and an article on professional learning communities. In that letter, I made a commitment to work with them to build a master schedule that would provide time for teams to work together each week without impacting instructional time for students or individual preparation time. I met with each team again in the opening week of school, presented them with a draft of a team schedule, and worked with them to fine-tune it until they were enthusiastic about their schedule. In October, I took the entire School



*To get a professional learning community off the ground, just do it*

## c o m m u n i t y

Improvement Committee to a conference on professional learning communities, and they became the champions of the concept to the rest of the faculty. They led the process that helped the faculty identify the shared vision, collective commitments, and specific goals of the school. The vision, commitments, and goals were, in turn, written into the annual School Improvement Plan.

**DuFour:** What has been your biggest challenge in promoting a professional learning community, and how have you responded to that challenge?

**Burnette:** The biggest challenge was to ensure that teams used their collaborative time in ways that focused upon and enhanced student achievement. To meet that challenge, I facilitated each team in establishing operational norms or protocols that would guide their work. I also helped each team identify their specific student achievement goals. We worked together as a staff to ensure that each team's goals were connected to and would advance our schoolwide goals in student achievement. Finally, I created weekly feedback sheets so teams could keep me informed of their activities and give me timely notice of any problems they were encountering. I respond in writing to each team's feedback sheet each week.

Teachers were very responsive to this process. Problems arose when individuals did not fulfill the commitments of

**P**rin cip als must be willing to take action.

their team norms. At that point, I had to confront some staff members regarding their behavior, and work with some teams to resolve disputes and redirect their focus back to students. I have found that while confronting a colleague may not be pleasant, it can be absolutely necessary to reinforce the tenets of a professional learning community.

**DuFour:** What insights or advice could you offer a principal interested in creating a professional learning community in his or her school?

**Burnette:** First, principals must become knowledgeable about the characteristics and challenges of a professional learning community. They need to read, attend workshops, network with others, and receive training on professional learning communities. They must model the personal professional development they will ask of teachers.

Second, they must build a guiding coalition of key teacher leaders to assist with the effort. The initiative cannot and should not depend solely upon the principal.

Third, principals must present the concept of a professional learning community within the context of the school's current improvement initiative. Teachers must come to regard the professional learning community not as one more thing, or a radical departure, but as an evolutionary step in their efforts to improve their school. Our teachers were very conversant with the Effective Schools and Basic Schools models. We made sure to present the professional learning community model as congruent with and an extension of those earlier initiatives.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, principals must be willing to take action. In an earlier principalship, I was reluctant to initiate the professional learning community concept in my school because I was not sufficiently confident in my own understanding and competence. I procrastinated, feeling I needed to read more, study more, attend another conference, etc. I have discovered the best way to learn about professional learning communities is to work through the concept in my school. I now appreciate the adage that "understanding follows action." So my best advice to a colleague interested in helping a school get started in building a professional learning community is to resist the temptation to procrastinate. As Nike would say, "Just do it." ■

c o m m u n i t y



RICK  
DuFOUR

# Getting everyone to buy in

*New beginnings give principal opportunity to shape his team*

**I**n my last column, Becky Burnette, a principal of a small elementary school in rural Virginia, described her efforts to introduce the concept of a professional learning community in her school.

This column presents Mike O'Brien, who faced the same challenge in a different context — the opening of an urban middle school serving one of the poorest sections of Buffalo, N.Y.

**DuFour:** How did you introduce the topic of a professional learning community for your staff's consideration?

**O'Brien:** I was in the unique position of recruiting a new staff for a new building, and I decided to take full advantage of the opportunity. I made several informational presentations throughout the district for potential candidates interested in working at the school. From the outset, I described the school as a professional learning community. I cited compelling research to support the model. I emphasized that every teacher would function as a member of a grade-level team or curriculum extension team. I told interested candidates that they would be required to attend nearly 120 hours of professional devel-

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opment during the spring and summer preceding the opening of school.

These informational sessions were followed by interviews of interested candidates. I designed the interview to ascertain which candidates were willing both to accept responsibility for student learning and to function effectively as members of teams.

Once the staff was selected, we conducted intensive professional development sessions to develop awareness of current research and best practices in education. We began to speak a common language and, ultimately, developed the common mission, shared vision, collective commitments, and specific goals that were to serve as the foundation of our professional learning community.

**DuFour:** What has been your biggest challenge in promoting a professional learning community, and how have you responded to that challenge?

**O'Brien:** Providing time for teachers to meet as teams is critical. I carefully designed the master schedule so all members of a teaching team had their contractual preparation period at the same time. This meant scheduling their students to a curriculum extension during the same period. Additionally, I made provisions in the schedule so each team could meet with me and/or my designee three times per six-day rotation.

Assisting teams to function as effective teams, or teams that impact student achievement in a positive manner, is another challenge. Our teams have established group norms and achievable goals. Most importantly, my continued presence helps ensure that the teams remain focused on key issues pertaining to learning. In this early phase of development as a professional

## c o m m u n i t y

learning community, I think it is critical not to abandon teams, but to be present and offer strong focus and support.

**DuFour:** What insights or advice could you offer?

**O'Brien:** Approach teachers as professionals with a strong work ethic. Introduce professional learning communities as the best hope we have for student success and suggest: "If we are going to labor so hard, let's not labor in vain. If we're going to dig for gold, let's at least dig where the map says we can expect to find gold!" I have found teachers to be more responsive when they feel assured their work ethic isn't being questioned and everything is more a matter of redirecting our effort, energy, and resources.

Also, begin with the end in mind. Articulate a vision statement that assures success for all students. There is absolutely no sense in soliciting collective commitment statements to a vision that would do anything less. The vision statement should reflect current research and best practice. Most importantly, resist the temptation to sell your vision as the principal, and genuinely allow the vision to be a shared vision. If the staff's fingerprint is not on the design of the vision, they will not commit to it in a substantial way.

Finally, reference the vision to the point of risking redundancy. References to our vision are made in morning

announcements, memorandums, and at every faculty meeting.

**COMMON THEMES**

Although Becky Burnette and Mike O'Brien work in two very different environments, common themes emerge from their experience in initiating the professional learning community process in their schools.

**1. Honor the history and acknowledge the strengths.**

Burnette made a point to meet with the entire staff in teams to probe the school's history and what made it special. O'Brien made certain to recognize the work ethic and expertise of each person on his staff as he opened a new school. Both made it clear that they were honoring, not denigrating, the past efforts of their staff.

**2. Solicit shared hopes.**

Burnette asked a veteran staff member what might be done to make a good school even better. O'Brien offered a picture of the school that was to be created and asked for those who were stirred by the image to join him in making it happen. Both spoke to the hearts of their colleagues.

**3. Build a shared vision.**

Both principals used the information and feedback from staff to offer a vision of what the school might become. More importantly, they took the time to work with staff to develop ownership for that

vision.

**4. Provide a conceptual framework for improvement.**

Both used the professional learning community model as a conceptual framework for advancing improvement. They built a common vocabulary about school improvement and presented staff with comprehensive research affirming the direction their schools were taking. In short, they were staff developers.

**5. Align school structures to support a professional learning community.**

Both Burnette and O'Brien stressed the importance of building a schedule that gave teachers time to work together in meaningful ways. They also created structures to give students additional time and support if they were having difficulty.

**6. Keep the focus on learning.**

Both principals created systems to monitor teaching teams to ensure team time remained focused on student learning. They called on teams to analyze student achievement data and develop and implement strategies to improve the results.

**7. Communicate priorities.**

O'Brien and Burnette both stressed the need for consistent communication about the school's commitment to the professional learning community model.

The reflections of these two wonderful principals offer valuable insights to all of us interested in improving schools. ■

## Chapter 12

# ROLE OF CENTRAL OFFICE

### TOOLS:

**Tool 12.1** Backmapping model. *6 pages*

**Tool 12.2** If not a workshop, then what? *1 page*

**Tool 12.3** Break the inservice habit. *3 pages*

**Tool 12.4** School professional development plan synthesis. *1 page*

Where are we?

**Central office staff members determine what professional development is available to teachers within the district.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Local professional development plans reflect schools' use of collaborative professional learning.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Central office staff shares knowledge, research, and best practices about professional development broadly and widely throughout the district with both principals and teachers.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Central office staff understands how they serve as a support to schools in the area of professional development.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**W**hen 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 increases. 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 moves from the district office to the school and becomes more collaborative, the control central office has exerted over decisions 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 Tool 12.1, the Backmapping Model (Killion, 2002a, 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. The Backmapping Model presents a process to ensure that professional development is aligned with the goals for student achievement within a school. While some teachers may opt to learn outside the school because

their collaborative team exists elsewhere, their primary emphasis 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 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. Many districts already have such training programs.

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 staff 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 learning moves to the school, central office staff members play a significant role in providing research and modeling best practices. When school staff experience powerful forms of professional learning 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. Tool 12.2, "If Not a Workshop, Then What?" which was created by the National Staff Development Council, can be used to familiarize school staff with various approaches to professional learning. Central office staff may also want to refer to Tool 9.9 for another resource to use in helping school staff understand alternative designs for adult learning.

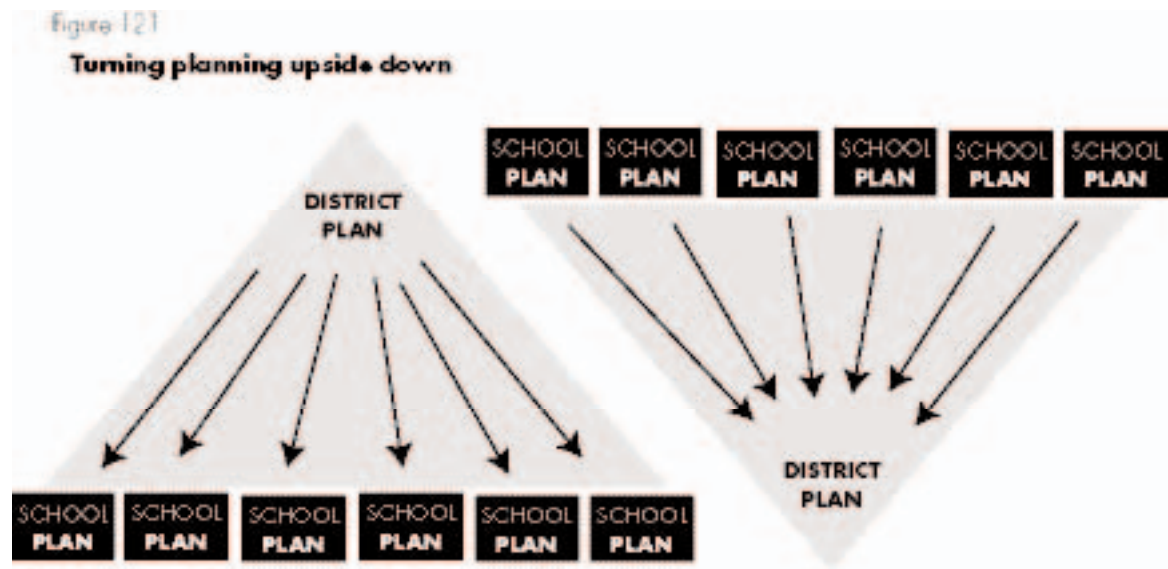
Compiling and disseminating research and resources about professional development to teacher leaders and principals at schools are other ways central office staff can significantly impact the quality of school-based decisions about professional development. Summarizing or sending articles, policy papers, 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:

1. Access a statewide listing of professional development resources at [www.state.nj.us/njded/educators/pd.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/educators/pd.htm).
2. Use the NJPEP web site ([www.NJPEP.org](http://www.NJPEP.org)), and send print copies of syntheses in newsletters, e-mails, or via other technologies.
3. Access the core curriculum content standards and find content-specific web pages with resources at [www.state.nj.us/njded/aps/cccs/](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/aps/cccs/)

### **Allocating resources**

Districts can help schools be successful with collaborative professional learning if they advocate for the time and fiscal resources to support this form of adult learning. One of these resources is time. Time is an invaluable resource and the subject of an entire chapter in this tool kit.



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 requires the continuous development of teachers. Tool 12.3, “Break the Inservice Habit,” by Joan Richardson in *Tools for Schools*, suggests how districts and schools 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 Local Professional Development Committee as it creates a district Local Professional Development Plan (LPDP) that reflects how the district will support individual school’s professional development plans. The district’s LPDP looks like an inverted triangle (see Figure 12.1 above) demonstrating how it emerges from the plans for individual schools rather than dictating the professional develop-

ment 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 sound 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 needs of each school and its students, staff, and community and responds to those differences. The work of the Local Professional Development Committee 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.

#### Coordinating efforts between and among schools

An essential central office function for supporting collaborative 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



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 focuses on student success, core curriculum content standards, assessment, and instruction.

### 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.

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 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 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.

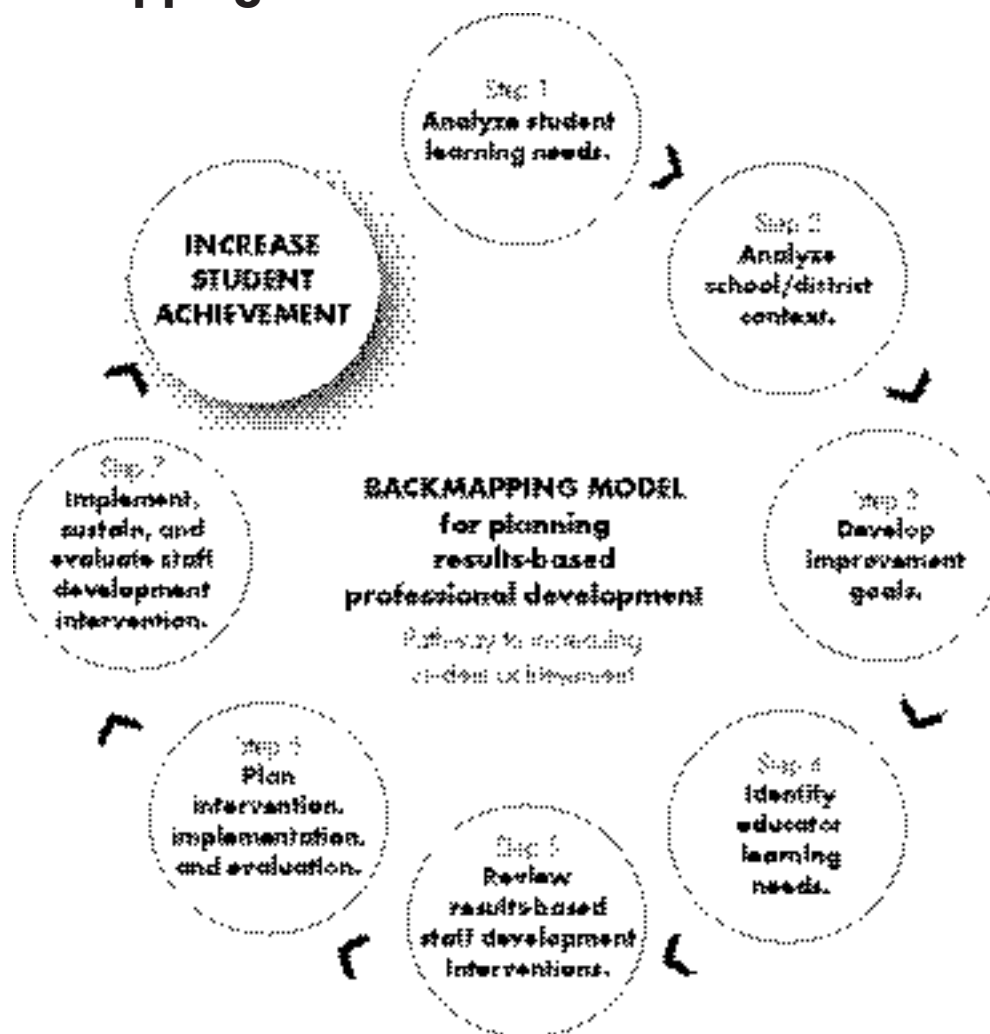
### Reference

**Killion, J. (2002).** *What works in the elementary school: Results-based staff development.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

**Killion, J. (2002).** *What works in the high school: Results-based staff development.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

## TOOL 12.1

## Backmapping model



The backmapping model guides the planning of results-based staff development that targets an increase in student achievement.

**Step 1** is identifying areas of student learning needs.

**Step 2** is analyzing the school and/or district context.

**Step 3** is developing the school improvement goal that specifies increasing student achievement as the end result and educator learning as an activity to accomplish the goals.

**Step 4** is identifying educator learning needs, a step that replaces the traditional needs assessment process.

**Step 5** is reviewing possible staff development interventions.

**Step 6** is selecting the intervention and planning for its implementation and evaluation.

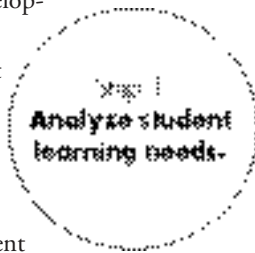
**Step 7** is implementing, sustaining, and evaluating the intervention.

# Understanding the steps

## STEP 1.

### Review student achievement data.

To produce results, staff development must be directly tied to student achievement needs. Before selecting or designing staff development, a careful and thorough analysis of student achievement data occurs. This analysis will help identify specific student achievement strengths and areas of need and will guide decisions about staff development programs. During data analysis, it is helpful to examine multiple types of data about student learning such as high-stakes test results, results from common benchmark assessments, classroom assessments including projects and performances, grades, student self-assessment, etc.



*Key questions to answer during this step include:*

- What assessment data are available?
- What is being measured in each assessment?
- Which students are assessed?
- What areas of student performance are meeting or exceeding 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?

The data analysis process results in knowing or identifying:

- Specific areas of deficit.
- Specific knowledge and skills students need in order to overcome the deficit.
- Specific students or groups of students for whom the deficit is most prevalent or pronounced.

For example, assume a school's scores on a state test are below the expected or desired level in reading. These scores are insufficient by themselves to use for planning a staff development intervention. Now assume that the English department analyzes subtest scores and subgroup scores. Perhaps they find a deficiency in reading vocabulary for a particular group of students. This analysis may include a review of the curriculum to determine which standards or benchmarks are most essential for students to achieve and what fundamental knowledge and skills serve as the prerequisites to these standards. This type of information can be used to establish schoolwide and/or department improvement goals, identify specific actions necessary to achieve those goals, and guide the selection and/or design of a staff development intervention to address the need by increasing the vocabulary skills of the identified student group.

In the example above, to simply identify reading as the area of focus provides insufficient information to guide the design and/or selection of a staff development

program. The latter information, in contrast, is actionable — that is, it is specific enough to identify what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to improve student performance in reading vocabulary.

**STEP 2.**  
**Identify unique characteristics of community, school, department, staff, and district.**

When school leaders and teachers understand the unique characteristics of the students, they can use this information to make appropriate instructional and program decisions. The parallel is true for staff development leaders. Knowing the unique characteristics of the adults who will participate in the staff development program will influence the design of the learning experience and the nature of follow-up support provided.



Understanding the conditions under which the staff development program will be implemented also helps inform the selection and/or design of a staff development initiative. For example, a staff development program for experienced teachers may be different than one for novice teachers.

Likewise, a staff development program design to enable staff to meet the needs of urban, disadvantaged students may be different than one for rural schools. Additionally, a program provided in a district or school setting where there are limited resource and/or time for staff development will be different than in settings where time and resources are budgeted.

Districts, schools, and/or departments complete a profile to provide information about the environment and conditions of the school where the need exists. Detailing the context helps staff development leaders make informed decisions about staff development programs.

*Key questions to answer in this area are:*

- What are the characteristics of our students?

*Some characteristics to consider are:*

- Ethnicity/race
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Mobility
- Family support
- Motivation

- Attitude about school
- Experience in school
- Academic performance
- Retention rate
- Parents' education level
- Sibling data

- **What are the characteristics of the staff?**

*Some characteristics to consider are:*

- Years of experience
- Years at a grade level
- Years in the school
- Past experience with staff development
- Motivation
- Performance/ability
- Attitude
- Sense of efficacy
- Response to change
- Collegiality
- Extent to which teachers' preparation aligns with teaching assignments
- Level of education

- **What are some characteristics of our formal and informal leadership for both teacher and administrators?**

*Some characteristics to consider are:*

- Leadership style
- Roles of formal and informal leaders
- Level of participation in leadership activities
- Opportunities to be involved in leadership roles/activities
- Trust in leadership
- Support by leadership
- Support for leadership
- Level of communication

- **What are some characteristics of our community?**

*Some characteristics to consider are:*

- Support for education
- Support for the school
- Involvement in school activities
- Support for students
- Support for staff development

- **What resources are available to support the staff development program?**

*Some considerations are:*

- Budget
- Time

- Support personnel in the building
- Support personnel outside the building
- Union contract
- Incentives

**STEP 3.**  
**Establish clear, measurable outcomes for the staff development program.**

Teams must understand what they hope to accomplish in terms of both student and teacher learning as a result of their staff development efforts. Without a clear goal and specific target, it is easy to miss the mark. Key questions about outcomes are: (1)



What results do we seek for students? (2) What results do we expect for staff? (3) What practices, procedures, and policies will affect the achievement of these goals?

Intended results are stated in terms of student achievement. Actions or changes that occur for teachers and principals are means to achieve the goal of increased student achievement and are best as objectives rather than outcomes or goals. In other words, expected outcomes are stated in terms that allow the district, school, and/or department to know if it has or has not achieved the intended results. Too often, results are stated in terms of the means to the end rather than results themselves.

For example, a goal that states, “One hundred percent of the staff will participate in training in brain-based learning” does not say what will happen for students as a result of this training. This is an action to accomplish the desired results — increasing student achievement. A preferable goal is one that states, “In three years, 90% of students will read on grade level as a result of teachers learning and implementing new instructional strategies.” The latter goal is focused on the end result of the staff development, rather than on what occurs in the process.

**STEP 4.**  
**Assess teacher and principal learning needs.**

Many staff development programs begin with needs assessments that ask adult learners to identify what they want to learn. This common practice often leaves a gap between what educators want to learn and what they may need to learn to address the identified goals. For example, teachers are often eager to learn

about new educational innovations, and principals may want to learn how to shortcut nagging managerial tasks. However, if the goal is to increase students’ reading performance, and comprehending and interpreting nonfiction text were identified as the areas of greatest deficit, both teachers and principals have a specific need to develop their skills and knowledge in this area to teach and support classroom instruction in reading nonfiction text. Staff development on topics other than these areas may deflect staff development time and resources from the established school goals.



After educators’ learning needs are identified, staff development leaders consider specific actions for meeting the identified learning needs. The scope and content of the necessary staff development program will be clearer when the district, school, or department team has a clear understanding of student learning needs, the context and conditions of the school or district, the specific goal, and the learning needs of educators.

**STEP 5.**  
**Study the staff development programs described in the guide.**

Before determining how to accomplish the goal, the district, school, and/or department team will examine proven staff development programs, those that have evidence of their impact on student learning. Too often this important step is overlooked.

District, school, and/or department staffs often fail to conduct a critical review of what is available and what has proven successful. In their urgency and enthusiasm to improve student performance, school staffs may pass



over this step and select or adapt programs with which they are unfamiliar. This guide is particularly useful for this review because it describes programs that have proven success in increasing student achievement. It also identifies the content of those programs so that a district, school, and/or department can determine the degree to which the content aligns with all identified educator learning needs determined in Step 4.

*In examining programs, consider the following questions:*

- Which programs address the skills and knowledge we have identified as educator learning needs?
- What programs are being used in schools with similar demographics?
- If our school’s characteristics do not match those of schools in which the program was successfully implemented, what are the key differences? How likely are those differences to interfere with the program’s success?
- What changes could be implemented to increase the likelihood of success?
- What aspects of the program (if any) might need to be modified to accommodate the unique features of our school?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
- What school, district, and community support was required to make the program successful?

After examining successful programs, the district, school, and/or department team determines if it will adopt or adapt an existing program or create its own program. This is a significant decision that is made with careful thought. When making this decision, members are deciding where to place their energy and resources for the long run. Too often schools fail to achieve success because they use a “revolving door approach” to innovations — that is, a series of experts “pop in” to prescribe the best treatment for the problem. Sometimes staff development or improvement efforts are viewed as temporary intrusions that staff can “wait out.” In fact, any staff development intervention adopted requires a new way of doing business, one that the district, school, and/or department staff will fully commit to and one that they fully expect to become a routine part of their everyday practice. Without this level of commitment, no staff development intervention holds a promise of improving student and teacher learning.

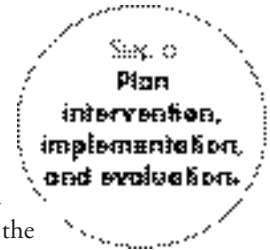
**STEP 6.**  
**Plan for implementation, institutionalization, and evaluation.**

As new programs begin in schools, few leaders or participants look beyond the immediate school year. However, if an intervention is carefully selected, it will become a new way of doing business. To make the transition between new ideas and routine practice, a plan to support implementation and institutionalization is important. Teams must plan for a variety of long-range processes: dealing with the challenges of beginning a

new program; sustaining the focus, energy, and resources to ensure success; and adopting procedures to provide ongoing formative — and eventually summative — evaluations of the program.

*After a staff development program has been selected, adapted, or designed and before implementing a program, answer these questions:*

- How will we assess the initiation, implementation, and institutionalization of the program?
- How will we support the program?  
How will we support the individuals involved?
- What are we equipped to do ourselves to support and implement the program, and what outside resources will we need?
- What resources are we dedicating to the program?
- What is our timeline for full implementation?
- What benchmarks along the way will help us know if we are being successful?
- Are we willing to commit time, energy, and financial resources to this effort for the long term?
- How will we align this new initiative with existing ones? What might we need to eliminate to make resources available for this program?
- How closely do the goals of this program align with our school’s improvement goals and the district’s strategic goals?



When planning the evaluation of a staff development program, staff development leaders will

1. Assess the design of the staff development program to determine if it is thorough, well-conceived, and able to be implemented;
2. Identify the key questions they hope to answer; and
3. Design the evaluation framework, which is the plan for conducting the evaluation.

Such plans include data collection methodology, data sources, personnel to conduct the evaluation, and a timeline (Killion, 2002). Also, plans for both formative and summative evaluation are necessary. A formative assessment allows staff development leaders to know how well the program is being implemented and answers questions such as:

- Are the program activities being implemented as planned?
- Are resources adequate to implement the program

- as planned?
- To what degree are differences occurring in implementation that may influence the program's results?  
*A summative evaluation allows staff development leaders to know what impact the program has had and answers questions such as:*

- Have the intended results been achieved?
- What changes have occurred as a result of the program?
- What changes has the program influenced for students?
- What changes has the program influenced for staff?

Planning the evaluation, while planning the program and its implementation, provides greater options for evaluation. It helps identify important baseline data to collect that may be necessary for determining what impact the program has had. It gives both the staff development leaders and evaluator greater clarity about how the program is intended to work, thus increasing the likelihood that the program will be implemented as designed and that the intended results will be realized.

### STEP 7.

#### Implement, sustain, and evaluate the staff development program.

To be fully implemented, a program requires constant nurturing and support. In order to continuously improve a program, the district, school, and/or department team will use data about the program to make regular adjustments and refinements to strengthen the results. This nurturing is the primary responsibility of the staff development leaders including the principal and teacher leaders. With a long-term commitment, a focus on results for students, and clear indicators of success, a school team has the necessary resources to monitor and make adjustments, strengthening the results of the program and ensuring success.



Implementing a program requires that those responsible for implementation have a clear understanding of what implementation means and looks like. One tool for reaching agreement on the acceptable level of implementation is an innovation configuration that describes and defines the essential features of a program (Hall & Hord, 2001). Attention to setting expectations and standards for acceptable implementation will make

a significant difference in the quality of implementation.

Once the program is implemented, attention can turn toward sustaining the program. In other words, "How will district, school, and/or department teams keep the focus on the results, provide the necessary resources to continue the program, and use data about the program to continually improve it?" If a program is fully implemented, sustaining it becomes easier, yet requires constant attention and resources.

Evaluating the program provides information about the program's impact and valuable data to improve its results. Using both formative and summative evaluation processes will provide the best data for district, school, and/or department teams to use to continually improve the program and increase the likelihood that it will achieve the results it strives to achieve (Killion, 2002).

### RESULT.

#### Increase student achievement.

The backmapping model guides the schools and collaborative learning teams. When adults learn, students benefit.



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**TOOL 12.2****If not a workshop, then what?**

1. Conducting action research projects
2. Analyzing teaching cases
3. Attending awareness-level seminars
4. Joining a cadre of in-house trainers
5. Planning lessons with a teaching colleague
6. Consulting an expert
7. Examining student data
8. Being coached by a peer or an expert
9. Leading a book study
10. Making a content-focused field trip
11. Writing assessments with a colleague
12. Participating in a study or support group
13. Doing a classroom walk-through
14. Giving presentations at conferences
15. Researching on the Internet
16. Leading a schoolwide committee or project
17. Developing curriculum-related displays
18. Shadowing students
19. Coaching a colleague
20. Being a mentor — being mentored
21. Joining a professional network
22. Using a tuning protocol to examine student work
23. Attending an in-depth institute in a content area
24. Writing an article about your work
25. Observing model lessons
26. Reading journals, educational magazines, books
27. Participating in a critical friends group
28. Doing a self-assessment
29. Shadowing another teacher or professional in the field
30. Keeping a reflective log or journal
31. Analyzing the expectations of your statewide assessments
32. Enrolling in a university course
33. Viewing educational videos
34. Maintaining a professional portfolio
35. Studying content standards for your state
36. Observing other teachers teach
37. Listening to video/audio recordings
38. Participating in a videoconference or conference calls with experts
39. Visiting model schools/programs
40. Developing curriculum
41. Doing school improvement planning
42. Examining new technological resources to supplement lessons
43. Being observed and receiving feedback from another teacher or principal
44. Participating in lesson study
45. Working on a strategic planning team

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 2** What does your community know and believe about teacher learning?
- 3** What do you know and believe about teacher learning?
- 4** Sharing what you have learned
- 5** Frequently asked questions
- 8** If not a workshop, then what?

# B R E A K

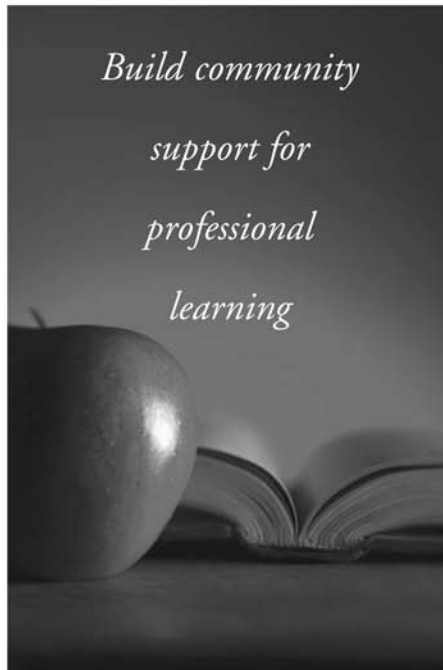
## THE INSERVICE HABIT!

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

About 10 years ago, teachers at my kids' school spent part of a back-to-school night explaining the new math curriculum to parents. My daughter's teacher focused on what the district wanted children to learn and parents listened attentively.

Then a mother asked a simple question: *If that's what you want children to know, then how are you going to teach them that?*

The teacher stood silent for several moments. Then, as if a light



had flashed on in her head, she grabbed handouts on her desk and began passing them out. "This will explain that," she said.

The bell rang and we all wandered out into the hall, grasping our new handout. "What is this?" asked one parent. "This is just insulting," said another.

Most of us just shook our heads in mild amusement as we tried to comprehend what we'd been given: A sketch of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives.

This very talented  
*Continued on Page 6*

## Build support for professional learning

*Continued from Page 1*

veteran teacher had been caught in a vise. She had been through weeks of intensive staff development to prepare her to teach this new math curriculum. She loved the new curriculum and, as the year proved, was very capable of teaching it to her students. What she could not do, however, was explain to parents what she had

**Parents and other community members cannot be expected to support spending money on staff development if they do not understand what it is, why it is necessary, what it looks like, why it looks that way, and what difference it will make for their children.**

learned about how to change her instruction and how those changes would result in the intended learning for her students. She knew what she would be doing but she did not have the words to express what she knew.

When a teacher cannot explain something to parents, parents become very nervous. Parents and other community members cannot be expected to support spending money on staff development if they do not understand what it is, why it is necessary, what it looks like, why it looks that way, and what difference it will make for their children. Building their support begins by building their understanding.

When teachers are unable to describe what they have learned and how they will use it, parents rightly become very skeptical about the value of professional development. In an environment where school budgets are being slashed, that skepticism can lead directly to reduced budgets for teacher learning. Parents believe they understand the value of small classes; they do not understand the value

of professional development.

Parents are tough customers to win over when it comes to support for staff development — particularly for traditional forms of professional development that are based on released time. Parents become personally inconvenienced by half-days, days off, late starts, or early dismissals for staff development. Few newsletters or web sites provide much detail to parents about why children are being deprived of instruction while teachers are away learning. Calendars typically list vague phrases like “institute day” or “staff development.” When parents ask what teachers are learning during this time away from students, they often hear teachers say that “inservices” are a waste of time because they never learn anything new.

Teachers are more likely to see value in the time they have during their workday to meet with colleagues to share ideas and examine student work. But parents — and often teachers themselves — are less likely to view that important time as staff development.

This issue is intended to help you as teachers and principals in your district try to communicate the importance of professional development in all its forms to parents and other community members.

### **Break the inservice habit.**

This is a Very Big Rule #1: Stop using the word inservice. Remove it from school district literature and excise it from your vocabulary. While you’re at it, stop using “institute days,” “released days,” “PLC days,” even “staff development.” Those phrases confuse rather than illuminate.

Replace those phrases with simple, easy-to-understand phrases: teacher learning, professional learning, or staff learning.

Making this transition will be easier if you also minimize your dependence on released-time forms of professional devel-

opment in favor of learning opportunities for teachers during their regular work day.

### **Talk about learning alternatives.**

To many parents, professional development immediately translates into “workshop” and students being sent home from school. So educating parents about the value of professional learning also means educating them about various learning options — and using more of those options for professional development in your community. See Page 8 for a list of the many “powerful designs” that NSDC believes represent good options for professional learning.

### **Showcase your teacher learning.**

Each time your school or district sets aside time for teacher learning, tell parents about it.

Put a message on your web site or include something in your monthly newsletter telling parents exactly why kids are home for the afternoon and teachers are still working. Be specific. For example:

“Roosevelt teachers will spend two hours on Wednesday afternoon focusing on how they evaluate student writing. English teachers will be sharing and explaining their guidelines for grading English papers, known as a rubric. They will be working with teachers in all subjects to help them understand how they can apply the same rubric to student writing in their classes. That will help ensure that all teachers are grading the same way.

“The work that teachers are doing is connected to one of our district goals, which is improving the quality of student writing. Our statewide language arts assessment tests students on their writing ability and, beginning in 2005, the SAT will also test students’ writing ability.”

If your school has provided time for teachers to meet, include something in each newsletter about how teachers are using that time.

*Continued on Page 7*

## Build community support for professional learning

*Continued from Page 6*

### Emphasize the benefits to students.

One of the best arguments that teachers can make about their need for professional development and for spending time with other teachers is that it helps ensure equity for students. That addresses one of parents' greatest fears — that their child will miss something that other children are receiving — said Kris Olson, communications director for Parents for Public Schools.

### Write a brochure.

Create a brochure that describes your district's reading initiative, professional meeting time for teachers, or a new position, such as reading coach or instructional specialist. Explain what the new program or position is intended to do, how it has been funded, and reference some of the research that suggests why it's a good strategy for your district.

Distribute it at back-to-school nights, through your newsletters, and post it on your web site.

### Take a camera into a staff development session.

Introduce parents to an actual staff development session or a team meeting by broadcasting a session on your local cable access channel or by creating a video.

The advantage of a video is that it can be taken to parent meetings, broadcast on your local cable TV channel, and made available at your local library for checkout. Parents who might otherwise be unwilling to read about professional development option might watch a video because they perceive it as entertainment, says Sylvia Soholt, a consultant with KSA-Plus Communications in Virginia.

### Write a column in your school or district newsletter.

In your school or district newsletter, share news about professional learning and answer parents' questions about current ini-

tiatives. We've included FAQs on Page 5 that you can add to your newsletters. However, responding to real questions from parents in your district will make such a column even more readable.

### Prepare teachers for spontaneous talk about staff development.

Teachers will not become better communicators unless principals and staff developers spend time helping them learn how to do that. Teachers are unlikely to have formal meetings with parents to talk about their professional learning. Instead, schools should prepare teachers for answering questions from parents during the kinds of encounters that occur naturally in a community — as they shop in the grocery store, leave a religious service, pick up a video, or attend a sporting event.

Start by introducing a communication component into each staff development session including team meetings. See the tool on Page 4 for an example of a handout that could be used for this purpose.

Introduce the handout on Page 4 at the beginning of the meeting or workshop. This will signal teachers that you are expecting them to prepare for how they will communicate with parents about how they are using staff development time, what they are learning, and how their children will benefit from this. Do a short role play in which the facilitator acts as a parent and the teacher is asked to explain what he or she has learned.

With a slight variation, schools with weekly or regular collaborative time for teachers to meet together can use the same activity. If teachers meet daily, ask them to summarize what they have learned each week, perhaps in a learning log that is shared with the principal. The principal also could use a portion of faculty meetings to have a teacher from each team describe the work of that team and how teachers are implementing new learning in their classrooms.

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**TOOL 12.4**

## 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
_____				
_____				
_____				
_____				
_____				
_____				

## Chapter 13

# EVALUATING COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### TOOLS:

**Tool 13.1** Eight smooth steps. *13 pages*

**Tool 13.2** Team meeting assessment. *1 page*

**Tool 13.3** Rate yourself as a team player. *1 page*

**Tool 13.4** Protocol for discussing survey results about team effectiveness and/or team meetings. *1 page*

**Tool 13.5** Logic model template. *1 page*

**Tool 13.6** Learning team survey. *2 pages*

**Tool 13.7** Summative reflection protocol. *1 page*

**Tool 13.8** Professional learning communities: Getting started. *5 pages*

**Tool 13.9** Professional learning communities II: A focus on common assessments. *5 pages*

Where are we?

**Collaborative professional learning teams in our school receive regular feedback about their work.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Collaborative professional learning teams in our school rarely take time to reflect on how well their team is working.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Ongoing evaluation of the work of collaborative professional learning teams occurs at least bi-monthly.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Members of collaborative professional learning teams assess the productivity and efficiency of their team.**

STRONGLY AGREE      AGREE      NOT SURE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY DISAGREE

To improve, collaborative professional learning teams conduct regular evaluations of their work. Evaluations can focus on three aspects of the team's work — their efficiency, their effectiveness as a team, and their results. Taking time periodically to assess and analyze the results of assessments in each of these areas provides valuable data that teams can use to strengthen their work.

Teams also benefit from external evaluations and feedback. One of the responsibilities of principals discussed in Chapter 11 is providing regular feedback to teams about their work and processes.

Tools in this chapter will help teams and others provide information that will help them refine and improve their practices. For a comprehensive view of evaluating professional development, Tool 13.1 is included.

Schools may find that they want to begin with a less comprehensive approach to evaluation. Tools that follow will help them make evaluation both meaningful and beneficial.

### Formative and summative evaluation

Teams will conduct two kinds of evaluation — formative and summative. Formative evaluation will concentrate on the team's processes for

efficiency and the completion of the actions the team planned and the outcomes of those actions. Summative evaluation will focus on success in accomplishing the team's goals. These goals, stated as SMART goals, are focused on improving student learning.

### Formative evaluation

Formative evaluations will concentrate on how well the team works, completion of its actions, and the outcomes of its actions. Tool 13.2 offers one way to capture a view of the team's efficiency by focusing on the structure of team meetings and whether the typical structures of successful teams are in place.

Tool 13.3 offers a survey that individual members can use to evaluate their own involvement in the collaborative professional learning team. Asking individuals to

rate their own behavior and then aggregating the ratings into a single mean score, identifying the range of scores (highest score and lowest score), and the modal response (score that occurs most frequently for each item) will help team members know how the team is doing overall.

Inviting team members to contribute to a discussion about the overall results from either or both surveys in Tools 13.2 and 13.3 can help the team develop a deeper understanding of its own operations. Team members may want to use the protocol in Tool 13.4 to discuss the



**Tool 13.1**

**Tool 13.2** Team meeting assessment

CHAPTER 13

**Rate Yourself**

**Team meetings**

**COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR**

The tool will assist various teams in assessing how well they are meeting the needs of individual members. In order for this tool to be used, all members of your team should have agreed on a set of shared goals for the meeting. The tool should be used after the meeting has concluded. The tool will be used to assess how well you and your group are meeting your goals.

The tool can be used to assess how well you and your group are meeting your goals. The tool should be used after the meeting has concluded. The tool will be used to assess how well you and your group are meeting your goals.

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. It will assist in determining whether the team is performing well against what you and your group have agreed on for the meeting.

**My start our meetings on time.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My review and develop the meeting's agenda prior to the meeting begins.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My end our goals for the meeting.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My identify a recorder to compile notes of the meeting.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My encourage participation by all members.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My summarize what we have accomplished in each meeting before concluding the meeting.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My briefly evaluate each meeting in terms of efficient, productive use of time and each member's resources.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**My end our meetings on time.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always



**Tool 13.2**

**Rate yourself as a team player**

**COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR**

The facilitator should provide individual copies of the team meeting and completion to team members before distribution. The tool will be used to assess how well you and your group are meeting your goals.

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. It will assist in determining whether the team is performing well against what you and your group have agreed on for the meeting.

**1. I offer facts, opinions, ideas, suggestions, and relevant information during my team's discussions.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**2. I express my willingness to cooperate with other group members and my expectation that they will also cooperate.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**3. I am open and willing to see things from the other group's perspective.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**4. I support team members who are on the spot and struggling to express themselves confidently or comfortably.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**5. I take risks in expressing new ideas and relevant findings during a team discussion.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

**6. I communicate to other team members that I am aware of and appreciates their abilities, talents, capabilities, skills, and resources.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 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 8 9 10 Always

**8. I accept and support the opinions of other team members, supporting them for taking risks and encouraging individuality.**  
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 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 8 9 10 Always

**10. I do things I might do to increase the effectiveness of our team tasks:**  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5

**Tool 13.3**

**TOOL 13.4**

**Protocol for discussing survey results**  
 ABOUT TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AND/OR TEAM MEMBER

- Use the compiled data from the survey to answer the following questions:
- What is the item with the highest mean score?
- What evidence did we each use to support our score in this area?
- What is the item with 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 learning team?
- What actions might we take to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our collaborative professional learning team?

**Tool 13.4**

**TOOL 13.5**

**Logic model template**  
 FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TEAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Inputs	Actions	Initial outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Results
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	

**Tool 13.5**

**Learning Team Survey**

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you met with your learning team? \_\_\_\_\_

How many team members are on your learning team? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the purpose of your learning team? \_\_\_\_\_

What were the positive impacts of this meeting on you personally?

What were the negative impacts on someone you have had with the learning team meeting?

Have the benefits of participating in a learning team? \_\_\_\_\_

What have you learned as a team that will help to improve collaboration with other colleagues?

Of all that we learned this year, what are the highlights that we want to share with other staff members?

**Tool 13.6**

**TOOL 13.7**

**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 seen, 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 to improve collaboration with other colleagues?
- Of all that we learned this year, what are the highlights that we want to share with other staff members?

**Tool 13.7**

results of these surveys. The protocol is general enough to be used for both surveys or each independent of the other.

Teams members might use the innovation configurations for learning communities that appeared in Tool 5.3 as another means of evaluating the effectiveness of their learning teams. The innovation configurations describe the essential behaviors of teachers and principals and can be used like a rubric to assess the current state of a learning team, and the results can be used to assess progress over time if a baseline and subsequent measure are compared. If team members or principals opt to use the innovation configurations, the following process is recommended:

Ask team members to identify where they think their team is individually.

Compile the individual results. Alternately, if there is strong trust among team members or if members are willing to share their results publicly, ask each one to share his or her results and compile the individual results on a wall chart for all team members to see.

Use the protocol in Tool 13.4 to discuss the results.

Another form of formative assessment is to look at the team's actions and the outcomes they produced. For example, if the team read a research summary, then the result of this action would be that team members increased their knowledge, not that the team members read the summary. When looking at actions, determine the outcomes the team wants from each one and measure the success of those actions rather than whether the action has been accomplished. A tool called a logic model drives this form of evaluation (Killion, 2002).

Figure 13.1 **Logic model components**

<b>Inputs/resources</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Initial outcomes</b>	<b>Intermediate outcomes</b>	<b>Results</b>
The school, district, community, or state resources (including people, space, time, equipment, or materials) needed to accomplish the actions.	The sequence of activities the team plans to take to accomplish its goal(s), using the resources identified.	The early results of the actions, e.g. what happens initially when the action is completed; initial outcomes often describe changes in knowledge and skills.	The secondary results of the actions, e.g. what happens after the initial outcomes occur; intermediate outcomes often describe changes in behavior or practice.	The SMART goal(s) the team sets for its professional learning.
→		→		
<b>PLANNED ACTIONS</b>		<b>INTENDED RESULTS</b>		

A logic model has five main components. See Figure 13.1 above. They are:

- Inputs/resources;
- Actions;
- Initial outcomes;
- Intermediate outcomes; and
- Results.

A logic model links inputs (resources) to actions (steps to accomplish the results) and identifies initial outcomes (first changes expected from the actions) and intermediate outcomes (subsequent changes that occur after the initial outcomes) in a logical way to explain how the actions will produce the results.

An application to collaborative professional learning teams is shown in Table 13.

If teams develop and use a logic model, they have a sound way to do two things. One is to plan their actions and identify what they expect to see if their actions are successful. Secondly, they can assess their progress toward their goal(s).

By looking at the outcomes of their actions rather than the completion of their actions, they have a better measure of the potential impact of their actions. In addition, they have the capacity to look at the interaction that occurs between their work and their students' learning. Not all schools will use a logic model in their evaluation efforts. However, if they want to be able to know if professional development impacted student academic success, they will want

some form of formative evaluation. A blank logic model for teams to use is included in Tool 13.5.

**Summative evaluation**

Determining if the team has achieved its goal(s) is the summative evaluation. It is what is expected at the summary or the end of the planned action. Teams define the success of their learning by whether students perform at the expected levels. Sometimes teams will not be able to determine if they met their goal until they receive results from state assessments. Because there is substantial lag time between the administration of some state assessments and the results, collaborative professional learning teams may want to consider using common assessments as one measure of student success. While common assessments may lack the rigor of state assessments, they offer team members some information about their success in a more timely manner.

TOOL 13.8

**Professional learning communities:**  
GETTING STARTED, 2005-2006

PRE / POST-ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE/ROLE/ASSIGNMENT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE/SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_

PRE OR POST \_\_\_\_\_

This assessment survey will provide valuable information to those coordinating the Institute. We appreciate your honest, accurate responses. All responses are confidential and no information will be shared about you personally as a result of your completion of the survey.

**Tool 13.8**

TOOL 13.9

**Professional learning communities II:**  
A FOCUS ON COMMON ASSESSMENTS

PRE / POST-ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE/ROLE/ASSIGNMENT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE/SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_

PRE OR POST \_\_\_\_\_

This pre/post assessment survey will help your team determine its goals and monitor its progress. It will also provide valuable information to those coordinating the Institute. We appreciate your honest, accurate responses. No information will be shared about you personally as a result of your completion of the survey.

**Tool 13.9**

Table 13 **Logic model example for collaborative learning team**

Inputs	Actions	Initial outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching resources for unit development</li> <li>Team meeting time to score baseline-writing assessments, develop units and common assessments, analyze student results, form and reevaluate flexible groupings, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Analyze data from fall writing sample.</p>	<p>Teachers identify students' baseline writing level.</p>	<p>Teachers group students in flexible groupings for instruction in conventions, ideas, and organization.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from district language arts specialist to assist with design of units.</li> </ul>	<p>Design three common instructional units for ideas and organization to use between October and February.</p>	<p>Teachers use units in their classrooms.</p>	<p>Students practice applying ideas and organization in writing assignments in all content areas.</p>	<p>20%</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from the district language arts specialist to assist with the development of common writing assessments.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop and administer two common benchmark assessments of writing one in November and one in February.</p>	<p>Teachers administer and score common assessments.</p>	<p>Teachers analyze data from the assessments to determine which students require reteaching and additional support.</p>	<p>increase in students' scores on the state writing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation of science and social studies teachers to embed the use of ideas, organization, and conventions in their writing scoring tools.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop daily practice activities for language conventions.</p>	<p>Students complete daily activity to practice language conventions.</p>	<p>Students demonstrate accurate use of language conventions increases in both oral and written language.</p>	<p>sample.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from teachers to provide feedback and additional instruction to students on ideas, organization, and conventions.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide students ongoing feedback, reteaching, and additional support, as needed, on ideas, organization, and conventions.</p>	<p>Students' accurate use of ideas, organization, and conventions increases in their classroom work.</p>	<p>Students' accurate use of ideas, organization, and conventions increases on common benchmark assessments.</p>	

In addition to determining if teams collectively attained their goals, a school's leadership or professional development team may want to determine if the school culture has improved since teams are working collaboratively to learn as professionals. Using Tool 5.1, the school culture survey, staff members might complete the survey as a baseline in the fall and again near the end of the school year. By looking at the differences, the school's leadership team can assess if collaborative professional learning teams have influenced the school's culture. Staff members will not be able to draw conclusions that collaborative professional learning has caused the changes in culture, although it will be safe to conclude that collaborative professional learning has contributed to the change. Such a conclusion can be strengthened if teams have demonstrated increased efficiency and effectiveness as a team and if they have used a logic model to determine if their intended outcomes have been achieved.

As a summative measure of team development and success, staff members may want to use Tool 13.6, the Learning Team Survey, to assess how the team is functioning.

At the end of each school year or possibly at the mid-point in a school year, a collaborative professional learning team will benefit from taking time to have a

discussion guided by the Summative Reflection Protocol that appears in Tool 13.7.

To assess the use of collaborative teams, Tools 13.8 and 13.9 are included. These tools can be used as a pre- and post-test measure of the team's effectiveness.

The surveys in this chapter are examples. Teams can draw from these examples to create their own survey rather than to use any one in its entirety. As with assessing culture, it is advisable to start with simple surveys, especially if there has not been an assessment of team effectiveness or if the use of collaborative professional learning teams is new. For example, Tool 13.2 is more appropriate for teams in beginning stages while Tool 13.4 is for teams that are more advanced in working collaboratively and are ready to move to the next level and become high-performing teams. Making adjustments in the survey instruments or using part of the samples included is acceptable. What is unacceptable is avoiding evaluation of how collaborative professional learning is influencing teacher collaboration, the school culture, and student learning.

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## theme/ EVALUATION

## READY, ON THE DOWNBEAT

## PLANNING PHASE

**1. Assess evaluability.**

Determine whether the staff development program is ready to be evaluated.

**2. Formulate evaluation questions.**

Design formative and summative evaluation questions.

**3. Construct evaluation framework.**

Determine the evidence needed to answer the evaluation questions, the data sources, the data collection methodology, logistics of data collection, and the data analysis methods.

## CONDUCTING PHASE

**4. Collect data.**

Manage data collection process and collected data.

**5. Organize and analyze data.**

Organize, analyze, and display data.

**6. Interpret data.**

Interpret data to determine merit, worth, and/or impact and to make recommendations for improvement.

## REPORTING PHASE

**7. Disseminate findings.**

Identify audiences to receive findings, the most appropriate format for communicating findings to each, and disseminate findings.

**8. Evaluate the evaluation.**

Reflect on the evaluation process, the knowledge and skills of the evaluation team, the resources and methodologies used, and the findings to improve future evaluations.

**SOURCE:** Killion, J. (2002). *Assessing Impact, Evaluating Staff Development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.



# 8 smooth STEPS



## SOLID FOOTWORK MAKES EVALUATION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS A SONG

BY JOELLEN KILLION

**E**valuating the effectiveness of staff development and demonstrating its impact on student achievement are more important than ever.

The language in staff development policies requires districts to show evidence of professional learning's ability to improve student learning.

The National Staff Development Council, some states' legislation, and the federal No Child Left Behind Act all call for rigorous evaluation of professional learning programs (see "Dancing to the same tune" on the

next page). With more emphasis on accountability, staff developers will want to explore ways to evaluate their programs and to link staff development to student learning. An evaluation also will help providers and leaders improve their programs.

"Evaluation is a systemic, purposeful process of studying, reviewing, and analyzing data gathered from multiple sources in order to make informed decisions about a program" (Killion, 2002, p. 42). A good evaluation of a professional learning program can be accomplished by following eight steps. This eight-step process is drawn from extensive practice and research in program evaluation.

### STEP 1: ASSESS EVALUABILITY

The first step is determining the degree to which a program, as planned, is ready to be evaluated.

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Sometimes staff development leaders and providers want to link an episode of staff development, such as a workshop or single professional development day, to student learning. This is nearly impossible because the workshop or professional development day alone is insufficient to produce results for students or teachers. Evaluations of partial or insufficient staff development programs likely will yield disappointing results.

**When the goals are expressed in terms of student achievement, the program's design is more likely to include sufficient actions to achieve them.**

Most staff development programs are inadequate to produce the results they seek. "We cannot expect results for students from a staff development program that is unlikely to produce them. And we cannot expect an evaluation to produce useful results when the program being evaluated is poorly conceived and constructed. Perhaps Chen (Chen, 1990) said it best:

'Current problems and limitations of program evaluation lie more with a lack of adequate conceptual framework of the program than with methodological weakness' (Killion, 2002).

Before evaluating any staff development program, the evaluator asks whether the program is feasible, clear, sufficiently powerful to produce the intended results, and worth doing. To determine whether a program is ready to be evaluated, an evaluator analyzes the program's goals, its standard of success, indicators of success, theory of change, and logic model.

**GOALS**

A staff development program's goals express its intended results in terms of student achievement. Instead of "provide training to all teachers" as its goal, a results-driven program has as a goal improving student achievement. A sample goal might be to

**Dancing to the same tune**

From NSDC to state and federal legislation, the call for evaluation is loud and clear.

**NSDC**

The National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development state, "Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvements and demonstrate its impact" (Evaluation standard) (NSDC, 2001).

In addition, the organization's Code of Ethics for Staff Development Leaders, Principle III, states, "Staff development leaders continuously improve their work through the ongoing evaluation of staff development's effectiveness in achieving school system and student learning goals." The Code of Ethics for Staff Development Providers, Principle IV, states, "Staff development providers continuously learn and improve their performance" through ongoing evaluation of their work and feedback from clients, participants, and others affected by their work (NSDC, 2000).

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

No Child Left Behind, Title II, Part A, states that professional development programs will be "regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional development." It continues, "Ultimately the program's performance will be measured by changes in student achievement over time as shown through the other NCLB reporting requirements."

**STATES**

States, too, call for evaluating professional development. For example, in Florida, the state legislature enacted Florida Statute 231.600, School Community Professional Development Act, resulting in the Florida Professional Development Evaluation System Protocol. The protocol requires districts, schools, and other state agencies providing professional development to conduct ongoing formal evaluation to determine whether:

- The planned professional development was implemented;
- The new learning is applied in classrooms;
- The professional development contributes to student performance gains, if the effect of training on student achievement is demonstrated on standardized achievement tests or other achievement measures;
- The results of the evaluation serve as part of a needs assessment for determining which programs to offer or discontinue;
- Resources are appropriately allocated for professional development that meets state priorities of content standards, subject area content, instructional methodology, assessment, technology, classroom management, and school safety; and
- Overall school grades increase.

improve student achievement in mathematics by 2005 by 10% as measured on the state assessment. When the goals are expressed in terms of student achievement, the program's design is more likely to include sufficient actions to achieve them.

**STANDARD OF SUCCESS**

A program's standard of success is the benchmark that defines its success. It typically is a number representing the performance increase that, when met, is sufficient to declare the program a success. If the goal does not specify a particular degree of improvement, then any degree of improvement, even 0.002, may indicate success. Most staff development leaders want a specific increase in student performance as a return on their investment. For example, in the goal above, the standard of success is 10%. If the staff development program increases student achievement by 10% in mathematics, it is declared a success. If not, it falls short of its intended results and may be altered to increase effectiveness in subsequent years.

**INDICATOR OF SUCCESS**

An indicator of success is the specific way success will be demonstrated. It is the way an evaluator will know if the standard of success has been achieved. In the example above

of a 10% increase in math test scores, the indicator of success is student performance on the state assessment in mathematics. Certainly other indicators might be used to demonstrate students' increased achievement in math: performance on other assessments, classroom tasks, enrollment of underrepresented populations in advanced level courses, grades, performance on a national standardized test, or a combination of these. Program designers might specify single or multiple indicators of success. Program designers must identify both a standard of success and indicator of success early when planning a staff development program so the program's design can be tailored to achieve the desired results.

**THEORY OF CHANGE**

A theory of change requires program designers to think carefully about how their program will bring about the changes they want. A theory of change (see diagram below) specifies how change is expected to happen, the program's components, their sequence, and the assumptions upon which the program is based (Killion, 2002). An explicit theory of change is a roadmap for program designers, managers, participants, stakeholders, and evaluators showing how the program will work. It is the big picture that serves as a planning

tool, an implementation guide, a monitoring tool, and a tool for evaluating the program's success. It allows the program designers to explain how they see the connection between educator learning and student achievement. Without the theory of change, the connection between the program's components and its results may be unclear.

Any one program can have multiple theories of change. Individual theories are neither right nor wrong, but one may be more appropriate for a specific context and circumstances. Theories can be based on other theories, research, or best practice. For example, the social interaction theory of learning might serve as the basis for designing how adult learning happens in a professional development program. Based on this theory, participants would have multiple, frequent, in-depth opportunities to process their learning with colleagues.

**LOGIC MODEL**

A logic model is a particular kind of action plan that specifies the inputs, activities, initial, intermediate, and intended outcomes that will accomplish the identified goal. Thorough planning increases a program's potential to succeed. Planning

**Without the theory of change, the connection between the program's components and its results may be unclear.**

**THEORY OF CHANGE FOR TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION A SAMPLE**

<b>1.</b> Key leaders hold vision for project.	<b>2.</b> Leaders develop partnerships and plan for project.	<b>3.</b> Technology resources are readily available for teachers and students.	<b>4.</b> Teachers receive professional development that includes training, curriculum development, and support.	<b>5.</b> Teachers change classroom instructional practices.	<b>6.</b> Teachers provide inquiry and exploration-based student learning activities.	<b>7.</b> Students engage in learning.	<b>8.</b> Student achievement increases.
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SOURCE: Killion, Munger, & Psencik, 2002

**This theory of change is based on the following assumptions:**

- Thorough planning contributes to program's success.
- Integrating technology advances student learning.
- To change instructional practice, teachers require opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills and appropriate resources.
- Implementing new teaching practices improves student achievement.
- When students are engaged in learning, they achieve.

Logic model for professional development on technology integration A SAMPLE

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES →	INITIAL OUTCOMES →	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES →	INTENDED RESULTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technology hardware, software, and infrastructure</b></li> <li>• <b>Trainers</b></li> <li>• <b>Planning time for integrating technology into mathematics lessons</b></li> <li>• <b>Time for conferring with coaches</b></li> </ul>	Teachers and principals receive training on technology integration in mathematics.	Teachers and principals develop an understanding of how technology can enhance students' mathematics learning, engage students more actively in learning, differentiate learning and assessment. <b>Knowledge</b>	Teachers integrate technology into their mathematics instruction. <b>Behavior and aspiration</b>	Student achievement in mathematics increases by 10% by the year 2005.
	Technology resources are deployed in mathematics classrooms.	Teachers learn strategies for integrating technology into mathematics instruction. <b>Skill</b>	Teachers integrate technology into their classroom instruction on a regular basis.	
	Teachers are coached on integrating technology into their mathematics curriculum.	Teachers' comfort with integrating technology increases and they design opportunities for students to use technology for learning. <b>Attitude and behavior</b>	Students use technology to gather information, construct understanding, demonstrate understanding, and engage more actively in learning. <b>Behavior and aspiration</b>	
	Principals are trained in how to support teachers as they integrate technology into their classrooms and how to serve as a leader for technology in their schools.	In instructional conferences, principals provide support to teachers in integrating technology into their classrooms. <b>Behavior</b>	Teachers' attitudes about technology improve. <b>Attitude</b>  Students' attitudes about technology improve. <b>Attitude</b>	

ensures that all the program's activities align with the intended outcomes and that initial and intermediate outcomes will lead to the intended results. A logic model provides a framework for conducting the formative program evaluation as well as for the program design. (See sample logic model above.) The logic model identifies the benchmarks of progress toward a goal. The short-term outcomes lead to

medium-term outcomes that lead to long-term outcomes. With this map of the outcomes in place, evaluators are able to determine which outcomes are important to collect evidence about in order to explain the link between staff development and student achievement (Killion, 2002).

A logic model has several components.

- **Inputs:** Resources assigned to a pro-

gram including personnel, facilities, equipment, budget, etc.

- **Activities:** Services the program provides to clients.
- **Initial outcomes:** Changes in clients' knowledge and skill as a result of early activities.
- **Intermediate outcomes:** Changes in clients' attitudes, aspirations, and behavior as a result of the knowledge and skills acquired.

- **Intended results:** Desired results of the program expressed as increases in student achievement.

Building on the program’s theory of change, which identifies the program’s key components, the logic model specifies what will change as a result of each program component. Staff development is most successful in increasing student achievement when it targets changes in knowledge, attitude, skill, aspiration, and behavior (see “Spelling out KASAB” at right). For example, if one component of a staff development program is providing coaching to classroom teachers, the initial outcome of this might be that teachers become more motivated to implement the strategies in their classroom (teachers’ aspirations change). An intermediate outcome might be that teachers use the new strategies regularly (a teacher behavior change). The intended outcome is that student achievement increases (student knowledge, skill, and behavior change) as a result of teachers regularly implementing new instructional strategies in their classrooms.

Knowing the precursors to the goal, program developers can monitor for evidence that the precursors are affecting student and teacher learning and adjust the program design to ensure that the precursors occur. Without monitoring, one cannot expect the intended results.

For the evaluator, the precursors, or initial and intermediate outcomes, typically provide benchmarks for collecting evidence in the formative evaluation. To form a reasonable and supportable claim about the link between staff development and student achievement, the evaluator must know whether teachers received coaching, whether that coaching motivated them to implement the strategies, and whether teachers implemented the strategies.

When developing a theory of

**Spelling out KASAB**

**KNOWLEDGE**

Conceptual understanding of information, theories, principles, and research.

**ATTITUDE**

Beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies.

**SKILL**

Strategies and processes to apply knowledge.

**ASPIRATION**

Desires, or internal motivation, to engage in a particular practice.

**BEHAVIOR**

Consistent application of knowledge and skills.

change and the logic model, program designers specify the types of changes they want to occur. By clearly delineating these changes, designers will be able to design the appropriate actions to accomplish them. Often professional development program planners want teachers to change their behavior, for example, but plan actions that will change only teachers’ knowledge and skills.

**STEP 2: FORMULATE EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

The questions an evaluation attempts to answer shape the evaluation’s design. For example, if a formative evaluation asks whether teachers are integrating new technologies in their classrooms, the evaluation questions might be:

- How frequently are teachers using technology in their mathematics lessons?
- How well are teachers integrating technology into their mathematics instruction?

- How frequently do students use technology to demonstrate their understanding of mathematics?
- For what learning tasks do teachers use technology?
- In what other content areas are teachers integrating technology?
- How do students use technology to learn?

The theory of change and the logic model are used to generate formative evaluation questions. Questions can be formulated from each initial and intermediate outcome in the logic model, from each step of the theory of change, from both, or from steps in either that are pivotal to the program’s success. For example, for the theory of change and logic model above, an evaluator may choose not to measure whether teachers and principals learned about the value of technology, but rather to measure whether teachers are integrating technology in their classrooms and whether principals are providing the appropriate level of support to their teachers. An evaluator may assume that, if a teacher is using technology appropriately, teachers know how technology contributes to student learning.

Summative evaluation questions ask whether the program achieved its goals. If the goals are written as student achievement goals, then the evaluation is able to yield evidence about the staff development’s impact on student achievement. If the goals are not expressed as student achievement goals, then the evaluation will allow claims about merit — the degree to which the program achieved its results — but not its impact on student achievement. The summative evaluation question for the goal expressed earlier is: Does student

**Knowing the precursors to the goal, program developers can monitor for evidence that the precursors are affecting student and teacher learning and adjust the program design to ensure that the precursors occur.**

achievement in mathematics increase by 10% by 2005 as a result of integrating technology into the classroom?

Evaluators craft questions that allow them to know whether the goal is achieved. To know whether technology integration influenced students' achievement in mathematics, evaluators first examine the theory of change and logic model to understand how teacher learning influences student achievement and then design formative and summative evaluation questions that allow them to gather the appropriate evidence to make a claim that teacher learning contributes to student learning. Without first answering the formative questions, evaluators will be unable to claim that teachers' learning contributes to student learning in mathematics.

**STEP 3:  
CONSTRUCT EVALUATION  
FRAMEWORK**

The evaluation framework is the plan for the evaluation. Decisions made in this step determine the evidence needed to answer the formative and summative evaluation questions, decide the appropriate sources of that evidence, determine appropriate and

**Data collection  
requires a systematic  
and thoughtful  
process to ensure  
that data collected  
are accurate and  
have been collected  
as planned.**

feasible data collection methods, the timeline for data collection, person(s) responsible for the data collection, and data analysis method. Knowing what change is expected helps the evaluator determine the best source of evidence and the most appropriate data collection method.

For example, if the evaluator wants to know whether teachers are using technology, teachers themselves are the best source of that information. To triangulate, the evaluator may want to include students, principals,



and documents as other data sources to confirm the accuracy of teachers' judgments. Classroom observations of teachers integrating technology may be the most authentic data collection method for knowing whether teachers are using technology; however, evaluators may select alternative data collection methods that will be less time-consuming or costly. Approximate indicators of teachers' use of technology might include assignments, student work samples, student surveys about technology use, principals' observations, and system administrators' records about student time using particular software programs.

**STEP 4:  
COLLECT DATA**

The evaluator next prepares for and collects the data. Evaluators will want to pilot newly developed or modified data collection instruments to ensure the instruments' accuracy and clarity. Data collectors may require training to ensure consistency and data reliability if more than one individual is collecting data. Data collection processes must be refined for accuracy, and appropriate protocols for collecting data must be developed that give detailed explanations for how to collect data. Once these responsibilities are met, data are collected. This is relatively routine work for most evaluators, although this step

holds the potential for compromising the quality of the evaluation if data are not accurately collected and recorded.

When collecting data, evaluators adhere to standards established by the American Evaluation Association (1995) and the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) on working with human subjects, if applicable. They ensure that they have met all the policy expectations of schools and districts for notification, privacy of records, or other areas, and abide by a code of ethics for evaluators.

Data collection requires a systematic and thoughtful process to ensure that data collected are accurate and have been collected as planned. To ensure accuracy in this step, evaluators often create checks and balances for themselves to ensure that data are recorded accurately, that errors in data entry are found and corrected, and that missing data or outlier data are handled appropriately. Evaluators who attend to details well and who are methodical in their work collect data well.

**STEP 5:  
ORGANIZE AND ANALYZE DATA**

Evaluators must organize and analyze data collected. Evaluators ensure the data's accuracy by checking for any abnormalities in the data set and checking that data are recorded appropriately and records are complete. Once evaluators are confident that the data have integrity, they analyze the data. Many practitioners distrust their own ability to do a statistical analysis. But in most cases, simple analyses such as counting totals, finding patterns and trends, or simple calculations such as determining the mean, median, mode, and range are sufficient. Sometimes it may be appropriate to use more sophisticated comparisons that include factoring, assessing covariance, or creating statis-

tical models. When evaluators want this level of analysis, they might want to get help from someone experienced in inferential statistics.

Once data are analyzed, they are displayed in charts, tables, graphs, or other appropriate formats to allow people with different preferences to find the format that works best for them. Careful titling and labeling helps ensure that readers interpret the data accurately.

#### STEP 6: INTERPRET DATA

While data analysis is the process of counting and comparing, interpreting is making sense of what the analysis tells us. “Interpretation is the ‘meaning-making’ process that comes after the data have been counted, sorted, analyzed, and displayed” (Killion, 2002, p. 109). For example, we can tell that the scores went up if we compare scores over three years (analysis). In the interpretation phase, we ask what that means in terms of our work — what contributed to the increase, what does the increase mean, was the increase consistent across all grades, etc.?

Evaluators seek multiple interpretations and talk with stakeholders about which interpretations are most feasible from their perspective. The evaluators then determine which interpretations are most supported by the analyzed data (Killion, 2002). Interpreting data is best done as a collaborative process with program designers and key stakeholders, including participants. In most evaluations of staff development programs, this means that teachers, principals, and central office staff together study the data and form claims about the program’s effectiveness and impact on student learning, and then recommend improvements.

Evaluators form claims about a program’s merit, the degree to which it achieved its goals, its worth, partici-

pants’ perception of the program’s value, and the program’s contribution to student learning. Claims of contribution, those stating that the program influenced student achievement, are made when the evaluation design is descriptive or quasi-experimental. Claims of attribution, that staff development and nothing else caused the results, require experimental, randomized design not often used in evaluation studies.

#### STEP 7: DISSEMINATE FINDINGS

After they interpret data, evaluators share their findings. Evaluators must decide what audiences will receive results and the most appropriate formats in which to share those results since different audiences require different formats. Formats for sharing evaluation results include technical reports, brief executive summaries, pamphlets, newsletters, news releases to local media, and oral presentations. Evaluations sometimes fail to have an impact on future programs because results are not widely shared with key stakeholders.

#### STEP 8: EVALUATE THE EVALUATION

Evaluations rarely include this step. Evaluating the evaluation involves reflecting on the evaluation process to assess the evaluator’s work, the resources expended for evaluation, and the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process. Evaluating the process is an opportunity to improve future evaluations and strengthen evaluators’ knowledge and skills. “When evaluators seek to improve their work, increase the use of evaluation within an organization, and build the capacity of others to engage in ‘evaluation think,’ they contribute to a greater purpose. Through their work, they convey the importance of evaluation as a process for improvement and ultimately for increasing

the focus on results” (Killion, 2002, p. 124).

#### CONCLUSION

Evaluating staff development requires applying a scientific, systematic process to ensure reliable, valid results. Evaluation not only provides information to determine whether programs are effective, it provides information about how to strengthen a program to increase its effectiveness. With more limited resources available today for professional learning, staff development leaders will face harder decisions about how to use those resources. Evaluations can provide the evidence needed to make these critical decisions.

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TOOL  
SPECIAL

↔ **Keep the whole process in mind**

STEPS 1-8, PAGES 15-21

# STEPS TO YOUR OWN EVALUATION

These tools are structured to help evaluation practitioners apply an eight-step process for planning, conducting, and reporting their impact evaluations. The tools will assist evaluators in making essential decisions for impact evaluations of professional learning programs. We invite you to use these tools to begin your own evaluations.

BY JOELLEN KILLION, NSDC DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

**START BY ASKING:**

- What is the purpose of this evaluation?
- Who are the primary users of the evaluation results?
- What is their intended plan for using the results?

**STEP 1:  
ASSESS EVALUABILITY**

1. What are the program's goals? Are they plausible, student-focused, and results-oriented?
2. What are the program's objectives?
  - Are they measurable?
  - Do they specify the intended change (knowledge, attitude, skill, aspiration, behavior)?
3. Have the standards for acceptable performance been established for all the targeted participants and clients?
4. What are the assumptions upon which the program is based and that make up the program's theory of change? Has the theory of change been created?
5. What is its logic model? In other words, what are the inputs, activities, initial outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and

- intended results of this program? Has the logic model been created?
- 6. Do the program's theory of change and logic model make sense?
- 7. Do key stakeholders understand the program's theory of change?
- 8. Is this evaluation worth doing?

**STEP 2:  
FORMULATE EVALUATION  
QUESTIONS**

1. What are the evaluation questions?
  - Program need
  - Program design
  - Program implementation
  - Program impact
  - Multiple use
2. How well do the evaluation questions reflect the interests of the primary users of the evaluation results?
3. How well do the evaluation questions align with the program's goals and purpose of the evaluation?
4. Are the evaluation questions:
  - Reasonable?
  - Appropriate?
  - Answerable?
  - Specific, regarding measurable

- or observable dimensions of program success or performance?
- Specific, regarding the measure of program performance?

**STEP 3:  
CONSTRUCT THE  
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

1. Determine evaluator.
  - Who will conduct the evaluation?
    - ➔ Internal evaluator
    - ➔ External evaluator
    - ➔ Combination
  - Does the designated evaluator have the knowledge, skills, and resources to conduct the evaluation?
2. Decide how to answer evaluation question(s).
  - What are the key constructs (terms such as student achievement, improvement, increase, professional development) that will be measured? How have they been defined so that they are clear and specific?
  - Does the evaluation question require making a comparison to determine impact? If so,

SOURCE:  
*Assessing  
Impact:  
Evaluating  
Staff  
Development,*  
by Joellen  
Killion  
(Oxford, OH:  
National Staff  
Development  
Council,  
2002).

- what are possible comparison groups? Which is the most appropriate comparison group for this evaluation?
  - Cohort
  - Individual
  - Group
  - Panel
  - Generic
- 3. Create data plan.
  - Who or what is expected to change as a result of this staff development program?
  - What types of changes are expected as a result of this staff development program in the identified target audiences or organizational structures?
    - Knowledge
    - Attitudes
    - Skills
    - Aspirations
    - Behavior
  - What data can provide evidence that the changes intended have occurred?
  - What data collection methodology is most appropriate for the needed data?
  - From whom or what will the data be collected?
  - What are other possible sources of data to provide evidence of the intended change?
  - How essential is it to have multiple data sources for this evaluation?
  - When will the data be collected?
  - Where will the data be collected?
- 4. Determine cost.
  - Are needed resources including time, fiscal resources, and personnel available to conduct this evaluation?
  - If resources are not adequate, what aspects of the evaluation plan can be modified without compromising the integrity of the evaluation?
  - If resources are inadequate, how will the evaluation be affected?
  - Is the evaluation worth doing?

**STEP 4:  
COLLECT DATA**

1. Have the instruments and procedures for data collection been field tested?
2. What revisions are necessary?
3. How will data collectors be trained?
4. After early data collection, do any data seem redundant? What are the advantages and disadvantages of continuing to collect these data? Is it appropriate to continue or to discontinue collecting these data?
5. After early data collection, what data seem to be missing? Is it essential to collect these missing data? How will a new data collection methodology be implemented to collect these data?
6. What processes have been established to manage data collection and transfer?
7. What processes are established to ensure safekeeping and integrity of data?
8. If collecting quantitative data, what kinds of scores are needed to accurately reflect the data and to answer the evaluation questions?

**STEP 5:  
ORGANIZE  
AND ANALYZE DATA**

1. How will data be sorted, grouped, and arranged before analysis?
2. What method of data analysis is needed to answer the evaluation question?
  - Univariate analysis
  - Multivariate analysis
3. How will data be displayed to facilitate interpretation and understanding?
4. How will stakeholders be involved in the data analysis process?

**STEP 6:  
INTERPRET DATA**

1. What do these data mean?
2. What findings (interpretations/claims) can be made from these data?
3. How well supported are the findings?

- Major
    - Strong
    - Weak
  - Minor
    - Strong
    - Weak
4. Does this evaluation support claims of attribution or contribution?
  5. Does this program have merit or worth?
  6. What recommended actions can help the program stakeholders improve their programs and program impact?

**STEP 7:  
DISSEMINATE FINDINGS**

1. Will the evaluation reports be interim or final evaluation reports?
2. Who are the primary users of the evaluation report?
3. What components do the primary users want included in the evaluation report?
4. What format for reporting the results is most appropriate for the primary users of the evaluation report?
5. What other audiences are likely to want some version of the evaluation report?
6. What format for reporting the results is appropriate for other audiences?

**STEP 8:  
EVALUATE THE EVALUATION**

1. How will the effectiveness of the evaluation be assessed?
2. What questions will guide the evaluation of the evaluation?
  - Resources
  - Design
  - Findings
  - Reporting
  - Evaluator
3. What stakeholders will be involved in the evaluation of the evaluation? How will they be involved? ■



**TOOL**  
SPECIAL

SOURCE:  
*Assessing  
Impact:  
Evaluating  
Staff  
Development,*  
by Joellen  
Killian  
(Oxford, OH:  
National Staff  
Development  
Council,  
2002).

↔ **List the planning goals and objectives**

SEE STEP 1, PAGES 15-17, 22



**TOOL**  
SPECIAL

**PLANNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Intended results (stated in terms of student achievement):**

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	<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Principals</b>	<b>Central office</b>	<b>Organization</b> (Policy, practices, structures, systems, etc.)
<b>MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES</b> (specify as appropriate)					
<b>K</b> <b>KNOWLEDGE</b>					
<b>A</b> <b>ATTITUDE</b>					
<b>S</b> <b>SKILL</b>					
<b>A</b> <b>ASPIRATION</b>					
<b>B</b> <b>BEHAVIOR</b>					

SOURCE:  
*Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*,  
by Joellen Killion  
(Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2002).

**Make a logic model planning guide** ↔

SEE STEP 1, PAGES 17-19, 22

**LOGIC MODEL PLANNING GUIDE**

**Intended results/goals (stated in terms of student achievement):**

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INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	INITIAL OUTCOMES	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	INTENDED RESULTS



TOOL  
kit  
SPECIAL

SOURCE:  
*Assessing  
Impact:  
Evaluating  
Staff  
Development,*  
by Joellen  
Killian  
(Oxford, OH:  
National Staff  
Development  
Council,  
2002).



**TOOL**  
SPECIAL

↔ **Create an evaluation framework**

SEE STEP 3, PAGES 20, 22-23

**EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

**Program goal:**

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Measurable objectives/ changes See pages 17-19	Evaluation questions Formative and summative	Data/evidence needed	Data source	Data collection method	Data analysis method	Timeline	Responsible person(s)

**Evaluation framework A SAMPLE**

Evaluation questions	Data/evidence needed	Data source	Data collection method	Data analysis method	Timeline	Responsible person(s)
<b>How frequently are teachers integrating technology into their mathematics lessons?</b>	Teacher behavior	Teacher self-report	Survey	Count	Administer survey in May	Technology coordinator
		Principal observations	Logs	Count with description		Principal observations October through May
		Lesson plans	Artifacts	Quality analysis	Collect artifacts in February and May	Technology coordinator
<b>How do students use technology in mathematics?</b>	Student behavior	Student self-report	Interviews	Patterns	Conduct student interviews in May	Graduate students
		Classroom assignments	Artifacts	Quality analysis	Collect artifacts in February and May	Technology coordinator
		Samples of student work	Artifacts	Quality analysis		
<b>Is student achievement in mathematics increasing as expected?</b> (10% on state tests by 2005)	Student knowledge and skills	State test	Artifacts	Comparing	April	District testing coordinator
		Classroom tests	Artifacts	Comparing	October-June	Teachers
		Student grades	Artifacts	Comparing	June	District testing coordinator

SOURCE:  
*Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*, by Joellen Killion (Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2002).

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



April/May 2001

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.*

**TOOL 13.4**

## **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 13.2 or 13.3 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?

**TOOL 13.5**

**Logic model template**

FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TEAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Inputs	Actions	Initial outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Results
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	
	→	→	→	

# 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

*continued on Page 6*

# Learning Team Survey *continued*

- 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)
- 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.*

	<b>Circle choice</b>				
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

- In your opinion, what percent of your students have benefited from your learning team participation?  
 Less than 25% \_\_\_\_\_ 26-50% \_\_\_\_\_ 51-75% \_\_\_\_\_ 76% + \_\_\_\_\_

- 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).*

<b>I think my participation on the learning team will ...</b>	<b>Circle choice</b>				
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

- Indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. *Scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

	<b>Circle choice</b>				
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.

**TOOL 13.7****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?

**TOOL 13.8****Professional learning communities:**

## GETTING STARTED

**PRE / POST-ASSESSMENT****SCHOOL DISTRICT** \_\_\_\_\_**TITLE/ROLE/ASSIGNMENT** \_\_\_\_\_**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_**SCHOOL** \_\_\_\_\_**GRADE/SUBJECT** \_\_\_\_\_**PRE OR POST** \_\_\_\_\_

This assessment survey will provide valuable information to those coordinating PLCs. We appreciate your honest, accurate responses. All responses are confidential and no information will be shared about you personally as a result of your completion of the survey.

**SECTION I: Essential elements of professional learning communities**

For each of the following statements, please assess the degree of implementation in your school or school district during the past school year by circling or marking the appropriate response.

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning				Full
<b>1.</b> The staff of our school has embraced the idea that the primary purpose of schooling is to ensure high levels of learning for all students.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>2.</b> The staff of our school has developed a shared sense of the school we are trying to create in order to help all students achieve at high levels.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.</b> The staff of our school has clarified the commitments we are willing to make in order to create the school described in our shared vision.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.</b> There are a few big ideas that drive the daily work of the people in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5.</b> The staff of our school has identified specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound goals that serve as indicators of our school's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6.</b> In our school, teachers responsible for the same course content and/or students work together to clarify intended learning, develop common assessments, and identify strategies for improving student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7.</b> The staff in general and the teaching teams in particular make decisions by seeking out best practices rather than by sharing opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8.</b> Our school has created processes that engage our staff in a continuous cycle of improvement, e.g. verifying current levels of student achievement, generating strategies for improvement, implementing the strategies, and collaboratively assessing the impact of the various initiatives on student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9.</b> The staff in our school demonstrates a willingness to consider new strategies for achieving school and team goals.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>10.</b> The school and teacher teams assess the success of improvement initiatives on the basis of the initiative's impact on student achievement results rather than levels of adult satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION II: Key corollary questions**

Three key corollary questions are at the heart of the work of professional learning communities. To what degree has your school or school District implemented actions as a result of attempting to answer these questions? Mark the most appropriate response.

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning				Full
<b>11.</b> Teachers who share the same course content and/or students work together to clarify essential learnings for each class, course, grade level, or unit.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>12.</b> Teachers who share the same course content and/or students agree upon the criteria they will use in assessing the quality of student work.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>13.</b> Teachers who share the same course content and/or students agree upon the criteria they will use in assessing the quality of student work.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>14.</b> Teachers who share the same course content and/or students practice applying agreed-upon criteria for assessing student work until they are consistent in their application.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>15.</b> Students have the opportunity to acquire agreed-upon essential learnings regardless of who is teaching the class, course, grade level, or unit.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>16.</b> Our school has a consistent and systematic response when it becomes clear that students are not learning what we expect them to learn?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>17.</b> Our school has systems in place to monitor each student's attainment of essential learning on a timely basis.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>18.</b> Our school has consistent, schoolwide systems in place that ensure students receive additional time and support when they experience initial difficulty learning.	1	2	3	4	5





**TOOL 13.9****Professional learning communities II:**

## A FOCUS ON COMMON ASSESSMENTS

**PRE / POST-ASSESSMENT****SCHOOL DISTRICT** \_\_\_\_\_**TITLE/ROLE/ASSIGNMENT** \_\_\_\_\_**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_**SCHOOL** \_\_\_\_\_**GRADE/SUBJECT** \_\_\_\_\_**PRE OR POST** \_\_\_\_\_

This pre/post-assessment survey will help your team determine its goals and monitor its progress. It will also provide valuable information to those coordinating PLCs. We appreciate your honest, accurate responses. No information will be shared about you personally as a result of your completion of the survey.

**SECTION I: High-quality assessment design**

For each of the following statements, please assess the degree of implementation in your school or school district during the past school year by marking the appropriate response.

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning			Full	
1. Our team defines key standards of assessment quality in understandable terms.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We distinguish between different purposes for assessment, including assessment for learning (diagnosing, screening, monitoring progress) and assessment of learning (summarizing or evaluating performance).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Our team selects, modifies, or creates assessments to match learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We match our use of existing instruments and assessment data to the purpose of that assessment (diagnostic, screening, progress monitoring, outcome / summative).	1	2	3	4	5
5. We conduct or participate in the step-by-step development of common assessments.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We select or develop high-quality assessments using the format (selected response, constructed response, performance) that best matches the assessment purpose and type of learning being assessed.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Our team conducts a review of assessment quality, checking for accuracy, consistency, fairness, and administration issues.	1	2	3	4	5
8. We describe the sample of student performance and levels of proficiency that will be sufficient to demonstrate that learning goals have been met.	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide evidence that supports your perceptions of your school’s implementation level of high-quality assessment design:

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**SECTION II: Assessment administration**

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning		Full		
<b>9.</b> We administer assessments in such a manner as to eliminate sources of bias or distortion that interfere with the accuracy of results, such as making appropriate modifications and accommodations.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>10.</b> We provide students frequent and varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills, creating a representative sample of student performance (body of evidence) that is sufficient in its scope to permit confident conclusions about achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>11.</b> We implement specific strategies to increase student involvement in assessment e.g., students describe learning goals, self-assess, reflect on learning with others, provide input into assessment design.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>12.</b> Our team ensures that students and their parents have a clear understanding of the criteria by which learning will be assessed.	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide evidence that supports your perceptions of your school’s implementation level of assessment administration:

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**SECTION III: Data analysis**

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning		Full		
<b>13.</b> Our team collects, records, and reports assessment information to accurately reflect student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>14.</b> We collaboratively analyze and interpret the results of assessments for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>15.</b> Time and procedures are in place to enable quality review of our bodies of evidence.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>16.</b> We employ a deliberate system(s) or method(s) to analyze and interpret data.	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide evidence that supports your perceptions of your school’s implementation level of processes for data analysis:

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**SECTION IV: Using data to inform instruction**

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning		Full		
<b>17.</b> Our team makes comprehensive assessment planning a routine part of annual curriculum mapping, unit plan design, and lesson plans.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>18.</b> We use classroom assessment information to plan and adjust instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>19.</b> We collaboratively look at student work and other assessment data to guide instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>20.</b> Our team uses multiple data sources (a body of evidence) to determine learning goals and plans for each student, including students with special learning needs, e.g. ELL, ILP (Individual Literacy Plan), IEP, under-performing.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>21.</b> Our team ensures that both instructional plans and assessment plans clearly address learning goals for students — content knowledge, patterns of reasoning, and the products students are to create.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>22.</b> We use assessment results to involve students in setting learning goals and evaluating their own progress.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>23.</b> We use a variety of methods, e.g. report cards, portfolios, parent-teacher conferences, student involved conferences, to provide feedback to students and their parents.	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide evidence that supports your perceptions of your school’s implementation level of using data to inform instruction:

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**SECTION V: Collaboration**

	DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION				
	Beginning		Full		
<b>24.</b> We use clear processes or protocols to have professional conversations that are efficient, purposeful and related to student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>25.</b> We regularly discuss and reflect on our practice in relationship to student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>26.</b> We share the responsibility for the education of all students in our community.	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide evidence that supports your perceptions of your school’s implementation level of collaboration as a learning community:

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**SECTION VI: “What would it / does it look like?”**

In the space below, please describe how a visitor to your school would know that your faculty (a) works together to design and give common assessments, (b) collaboratively analyzes and interprets data, (c) uses that data to inform instruction and interventions to close achievement gaps.

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**SECTION VII: Team learning expectations and results (PRE)**

In the space below, describe what you hope to gain from participating in PLCs.

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**SECTION VII: Team learning expectations and results (POST)**

In the space below, describe what you have gained from participating in PLCs.

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