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Washington educators and their students have experienced significant change in schooling over the last several years. Some familiar examples include adoption of Common Core standards, revision to teacher and principal evaluation, and judicial decisions for funding basic education. The ebb and flow of positive trends have likewise had an impact, such as increased collaboration modeled after professional learning communities, greater interest in formative assessment for improving achievement, new technologies for analyzing data, and rebalancing accountability schemes with efforts to educate the whole child. Less fondly recollected, but no less significant, were shrinking budgets based on economic instability, youth violence in schools, and loss of federal waivers from provisions of NCLB for failing to link student test scores with teacher evaluation.

Through it all, contributing authors to Curriculum in Context have examined these events and their implications for teaching and learning. To be sure, there has been no shortage of interesting topics and stories. Readers may recall Gene Carter’s doctrine of teaching to the whole child, John Goodlad’s admonishment to policymakers for greater dependence on teacher autonomy, and Charlotte Danielson’s summary of the importance of revising teacher evaluation in Washington and across the United States.

Since the first edition nearly 25 years ago, Curriculum in Context has showcased the dedication, expertise, and commitment of Washington’s educators. The success of the journal has depended on the willingness of others to share their knowledge and experiences. The success of Curriculum in Context has also depended on the service of contributing authors as well as editors. Over the last 3 years, it has been my pleasure to serve as editor and build on the foundation of excellence established by others. It has also been a pleasure to welcome Sue Ann Bube as the next editor of Curriculum in Context by collaborating on this edition with her. Sue Ann’s attitude of service, and dedication to WSASCD, along with exceptional work ethic, are sure to raise Curriculum in Context to new levels of distinction.

Welcome, Sue Ann Bube

It is an honor to be the next editor of the award winning eJournal Curriculum in Context. I am grateful to David Denton for all of his expertise and mentoring as we transition. Not only are we transitioning staff but the journal will also be undergoing a slight transformation. In keeping with the ASCD motto, Curriculum in Context will be introducing three new sections to our readers: Learn, Teach, and Lead. Learn, will feature short book reviews aligned to the journal theme (500 to 750 words). Teach, will include articles by teachers for teachers, and Lead will feature articles by building, district, and state leaders.

Just as the journal is turning a new page, I am also beginning a new chapter on my career. Over the past 20 years, I have taught elementary, middle, and high school math and reading, and worked both in general education and special education classrooms. I completed my National Board Certification in 2008 in the area of Exceptional Needs Specialist, and successfully defended my doctorate dissertation on the Effects of Targeted Professional Development on Transition Services and Teacher Practice completing the requirements for the Educational Leadership program at Seattle University during the Fall of 2014. Working now as an adjunct professor in special education and the director of the Center for Change in Transition Services, I am honored to begin my 3-year appointment as editor of Curriculum in Context.

I am excited to announce that the next issue of Curriculum in Context will focus on Equity, Access, and Achievement for All. Since 1837 with the creation of the Massachusetts Board of Education to provide universal education for elementary students, the educational system has slowly moved from access to education, to equal educational opportunity, to high achievement for all students. More recently, President George W. Bush passed the No Child Left Behind Act and Barack Obama stated, “Nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible—from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career.” To this end, our next issue will be focusing on what is currently happening in schools to ensure equity, access, and achievement for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability.

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Sue Ann Bube, Ed.D. is the director for The Center for Change in Transition Services and adjunct professor at Seattle University. Over the past 20 years, Sue has been a classroom teacher in the areas of mathematics and special education and has successfully started a non-profit for patients with mitochondrial disorders. In 2008, Sue became a National Board Certified Teacher as an Exceptional Needs Specialist.
Our ongoing efforts to improve student achievement compel us to engage in effective professional development. Along with impacting student learning, effective professional development helps meet requirements of accountability measures and evaluation systems. While schools and districts have become increasingly proficient at selecting and implementing effective professional development, growing complexities and expectations around education require constant vigilance. Educational leaders must ensure professional development is timely, effective, and responsive. Although there are different approaches for engaging in valuable professional development, one model familiar to many teachers and administrators is professional development organized around consultation, coaching, and collaboration.

While consultation, coaching, and collaboration provide guideposts for activity, time is a necessary condition of any learning, regardless of the age of learner or content at hand. Leaders in schools must arrange schedules to prioritize peer-to-peer collaboration and application of newly acquired knowledge and skills. Effective professional development is impossible as an add-on activity, disconnected from the day-to-day work of educators. Likewise, high quality professional development systems include structures permitting, even promoting, teacher consultation. From brief moments of interaction in the hallway between instructional segments, to lunchroom conversation, to regular staff meetings, effective teaching derived from ongoing improvement depends on teachers reflecting aloud with each other and on their own.

Thoughtful allocation of resources is another key to success. Effective professional development in schools and districts must include attention to time, training materials, and access to experts in various fields. Each of these variables is needed at the right time and in the right amount to provide practical, in-the-field training to impact student achievement.

The notion of superb coaching is readily grasped by most everyone since coaches are familiar characters from sporting events. Athletic enthusiasts are sure to observe that some professional athletes even have their own performance psychologist, trainer, or nutrition counselor. All of these individuals serve to support competitors to perform at their optimum level. Likewise, coaches in education play a valuable role in professional development to support and encourage teachers to operate at peak performance. While there are many programs that provide effective professional development, follow-up activities and resources for implementing change may be absent. Teachers require time and resources to work with coaches to intentionally put into practice what has been newly learned.

A byproduct of effective coaching is collaboration. Teacher-to-teacher collaboration is another critical component of professional development. Professional Learning Communities is an example model of how teacher collaboration can be done. One of the key characteristics of an effective PLC is imbedded collaboration that naturally results from its design principles. Those seeking to improve teacher-to-teacher collaboration may find it helpful to improve PLC implementation and innovation.

Professional development takes on many forms and occurs across many mediums. Most educators who have been part of professional development programs for any amount of time are sure to agree that few experiences compare to positive collegial relationships, developed around face-to-face interactions. Nevertheless, there are many more opportunities for new types of professional development, whether facilitated through web-based communications, inter-school cooperation, or work with experts offering workshops. Regardless of the kind of activity one chooses, it can often be understood best through principles of consultation, collaboration, and coaching—which ideally translates to professional development worth doing.

As you read this edition of Curriculum in Context, I invite you to imagine creative and inventive ways for organizing and engaging in professional development to support educators in their efforts to help all students reach their full potential.
Effective professional development is an essential part of every school improvement effort. Traditionally, professional development has included workshops, seminars, courses, and conferences. These types of activities have varied in terms of effectiveness, and often fall short of producing desired results. Contemporary notions of professional development, while still including traditional choices, have expanded to include peer coaching, collaborative work teams, study groups, action research teams, mentoring, and other activities linked to teacher leadership. While there is significant variety in the kind of activities educators may choose from for engaging in professional development, there are also common principles applied to professional development efforts that make them effective. For example, the National Staff Development Council (2015) suggests that the following principles are part of effective professional development:

1. Results Driven: School improvement goals are clear and professional learning is linked directly to expected results.

2. Standards-Based: Professional development is tied to student learning standards and standards for the professional growth of teachers and leaders.

3. Job Embedded: Professional development is anchored in the “real” work of teachers and school leaders.

Along with these principles and according to general consensus on the topic, effective professional development centers on clear results and emphasizes teacher and administrator learning. Activities are dependent on standards and integration with on-the-job work, rather than implemented as “extra” activity done outside of regular school hours or on staff development days.

Research by one of the authors of this article supports the claim that effective professional development is unified by common principles. According to Blackburn (2000), analysis of professional development programs, identified as exemplary by the U.S. Department of Education, showed several similarities. Staff development had a clear purpose linked to research, student data, and goals. Teachers were accountable for using newly acquired knowledge and skills in their classrooms to impact student achievement. Activities were relevant and hands-on. There was an emphasis on developing shared language for solving problems and overcoming issues. Decisions about current and future professional development activities were made with teacher input. Effective programs were led by supportive school leaders who fostered positive and collegial school environments.

Collaborative Professional Development Activities

Although effective programs are similar according to general principles, the specific activities applied to assist teachers and administrators in adopting new knowledge and skills vary according to the specific context of each school. Nevertheless, there are some strategies frequently used by programs for organizing professional development activities. These strategies tend to be collaborative in comparison to many other approaches and they value results based on participation. Like most things, each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages. Selecting among the strategies requires consideration of district goals and also matching strategies to available resources for thorough implementation. Five strategies based on collaboration, rather than independent effort, worth considering for any professional development program include book study, analysis of student work samples, learning walks, lesson study, and charrette.

Book Study

An effective way to engage educators in their own professional growth is to organize a book study. At some schools, every teacher is asked to read the same book and work in small groups to discuss the book and its implications for practice. At other schools, teachers may choose from several books and join colleagues who selected the same book for their discussion. The protocol below contains general guidelines for conducting a book study.
Book Study Protocol

- Membership should be voluntary, but inclusive.
- Decide a meeting schedule, meeting place, length of book to be read, and what will happen after the book is read. It is recommended that meetings last no more than one hour and be held at a consistent time and place.
- Select a responsible facilitator to keep the group on task and help manage meetings.
- Select a book with a clear objective in mind. For example, use Rigor is not a Four Letter Word with teachers to launch the conversation about rigor or use Rigorous Schools and Classrooms: Leading the Way with school leaders or your school improvement team.
- Conversation is important in a book study. Members of the group share insights, ask questions about the text, and learn from others. It is important to talk about how the ideas can be applied directly in the classroom and how to overcome any potential obstacles.
- Journaling is a useful way for members to think about their reading and reflect on how they might apply new knowledge and skills in the classroom.

Analysis of Student Work Samples

A powerful way to improve the instructional program at any school is to analyze student work. In many schools, teams of teachers, either at the departmental, course, or grade level, examine student work as a way to clarify their own standards of achievement, to strengthen common expectations for students, or to align curriculum across faculty.

Because looking at student work significantly alters the norms of a school, it is most effective when the faculty is comfortable sharing samples from their own classrooms, especially when those samples reveal features of effective or ineffective practice. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform suggests several preliminary steps for organizing groups of educators to analyze student work:

 Looking at Student Work Protocol

- Talk together about the process and how to ensure it is not evaluative.
- Identify ways to gather relevant contextual information (e.g., copy of assignments, along with scoring guides or rubrics).
- Select guidelines for the conversation to promote discussion and interaction (see www.law.org for several different approaches).
- Agree on how to select work samples.
- Establish a system for providing and receiving feedback that is constructive.

Learning Walks

A learning walk is a form of instructional walkthrough, but one that is typically organized and led by teachers. Similar to analyzing student work samples, learning walks are not evaluations of teacher practice. Likewise, they are not designed for individual feedback. Rather, learning walks are intended to help participants learn about instruction and identify areas of strength and weakness.

Learning walks provide a “snapshot” of the instructional program at a school. Since participants are in classrooms for short periods of time, they should avoid drawing conclusions about individual teachers or classes. An example of effective use of learning walks may be observed by one school in Los Angeles, which held learning walks each month. Groups of teachers conducted the walks looking for evidence of research-based instructional practices, specifically those described by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001). The following list suggests steps for initiating learning walks:

 Learning Walks

1. Work with staff to identify the purpose of the learning walk.
2. Determine the process including length of classroom visits as well as what will occur during the visits. Develop and use consistent tools for participants to record observations and collect data.
3. Inform staff when the learning walks will occur.
4. Conduct a pre-walk orientation for those participating.
5. Conduct the learning walk and spend no more than 5 minutes in each classroom. Depending on the lesson, talk with the teacher and students, look at student work, and examine the organization of the classroom.
6. Immediately after the walk, ask participants to meet and talk about the information they gathered and how to share it with faculty. Participants may develop questions that they would ask to learn more about activities and events observed during the walk.
7. Develop a plan for sharing results to guide school improvement efforts.

Additional information about conducting learning walks is available at www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk

Lesson Study

Originally used by Japanese teachers, lesson study emphasizes working in small groups to plan, teach, observe, and critique a lesson. Lesson study involves groups of teachers in a collaborative process designed to systematically examine practice with the goal of becoming more effective.

Lesson Study Protocol

- Participants should be volunteers but the invitation to participate should be inclusive.
- Teachers collaborate to develop a detailed lesson plan.
- One member of the group teaches the lesson to students while other members observe.
- The group comes together to discuss observations about the lesson and student learning.
- The group works together to revise the lesson.
- Another teacher deploys the revised lesson while group members observe.
- The group reconvenes to discuss results.
- The revision process continues as long as necessary, until lesson objectives are achieved.
- Group members share insights about what they have learned from the process. The group may prepare a report to share with other colleagues.
Additional information about conducting a lesson study is available from Teachers College at Columbia University www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy. The site includes tools for conducting a lesson study and for lesson design www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/tools.html.

Charrette
A “charrette” is a set of agreed upon guidelines for talking with colleagues about a problem or issue. The conversation tends to be more trusting and more substantive because everyone knows the guidelines in advance. Charrettes are often used to improve work, while work is in progress, though guidelines are not useful as evaluative criteria. The following protocol describes steps for using Charrettes.

Charrette Protocol
1. A group, or individual, requests a charrette when they want others to help them overcome a problem or resolve an issue.
2. Another group is invited to look at the work and a facilitator is used to moderate the discussion.
3. The requesting group presents solutions they have tried, and a description of the desired outcome is clarified.
4. The group invited as observers discusses the issue while the requesting group listens and records notes. The emphasis is on improving the work, which now belongs to the entire group. A sense of “we’re in this together” characterizes discussion.
5. Once the requesting group is presented with potential solutions, it concludes the process and summarizes what was learned (Charrette Protocol adapted from Juarez, n.d.).

Concluding Thoughts
The most effective schools are those where faculty and staff believe in the power of professional development to improve student learning. When adults work together to learn, grow, and improve practice, it not only impacts student achievement, it positively impacts school culture and relationships between adults.

This article has presented five strategies for professional development that support positive outcomes, along with recognizing the power of teachers and leaders, working together, to improve schools.

References

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How do we improve teacher practice by actually changing teacher practice? As a Director of Professional Development, I ask this question all the time. The current state of educational reform is like drinking from a fire hose—too many changes too fast—and teachers cannot keep up. The implications of recent reforms, such as the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment, are not limited to establishing and assessing higher standards for student learning; they also include a demand for new instructional practices and instructional materials for teachers. District leaders are expected to change teacher practice within existing and limited resources. The sense of urgency to have professional learning manifest itself in improved teaching and learning is paramount. To achieve this end, we must work strategically to close the knowing-doing gap with professional learning.

Strategy 1: Know the Core Elements of Professional Learning

In 2011, Learning Forward revised their Standards for Professional Learning, the only professional learning standards designed to achieve the desired outcome of improved student learning. Their standards establish that we must engage teachers in professional learning that is ongoing, job-embedded, and has a narrow focus.

Professional learning that is job-embedded supports collaborative and collegial learning in their own context. It honors teachers’ experiences and prior knowledge, which aligns with best practices of teaching and learning. It also increases accountability for improved levels of implementation.

Ongoing professional learning includes sustaining the same narrow focus for 3 to 5 years. A minimum of 3 years is required because it takes approximately 50 hours of practice before a new strategy will be fully integrated into practice (Andree, Darling-Hammond, Richardson, & Wei, 2009). Limited resources, changes in standards and assessments, and competing initiatives make this a challenge. Regardless, this has to be a priority. Any less commitment will result in low fidelity of implementation.

In a school district, many initiatives simultaneously exist; yet we must maintain a narrow focus. Teachers can only change approximately 10% of their pedagogy in any given school year; therefore, expecting them to concurrently change standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment will potentially result in no change.

Strategy 2: Understand the Modes of Professional Learning

To change teacher practice we must engage all teachers in three modes of professional learning: (a) whole group, (b) small group, and (c) individual. Each mode has a different purpose and works best when the modes are connected and aligned to a narrow focus.

Whole group professional learning allows teachers to hear a common message, have a common experience, and establish common expectations. This usually occurs during in-service training and is great for launching a new initiative. A shortcoming of this mode is that implementation is low and misunderstandings or misconceptions may occur. However, if the topic of the whole group professional learning is narrow and ongoing, then it may be revisited during other modes of professional learning (small group and individual), which will improve the likelihood of changing teacher practice and implementation.

Small group professional learning allows teachers to connect their learning to their own context and provides an opportunity to differentiate and scaffold the learning for teachers. This increases the probability that we may change teacher practice.

Individual professional learning may occur in many ways, such as a feedback session with an instructional coach or after a Learning Walk with a principal. It allows for professional learning to be personalized and closely connected to the needs of the individual teacher; therefore, it is most effective in changing teacher practice.

It is important to have all three modes of professional learning aligned to the same and narrow focus. We know that whole group professional learning has low implementation; therefore, if we use that mode in isolation we should expect to create a knowing-doing gap.
Strategy 3: Teachers and Principals Engage in Professional Learning

The core elements and modes of professional learning create the parameters for district-level professional learning. Within that context, we must support approximately 50 hours of learning while sustaining a narrow focus. What does this mean and what does it look like?

The most effective strategy, and commonly overlooked, is the involvement of principals in the professional learning with teachers. Hord and Summers (2008) report that “the role of principal is paramount in any endeavor to change pedagogical practice, adopt new curricula, reshape the school’s culture and climate, or take on other improvement targets” (p. 6). Nevertheless, it is common practice for school districts to gather only teachers (in either whole or small groups) to learn together. The problem is teachers return to their classrooms and shut the door. Once the door is shut, the new learning becomes a variable that may or may not be implemented.

Needless to say, most teachers do implement new strategies for a while and they often like them. The problem is not about believing in the strategy or understanding it—conversely, it is that it takes time, energy, and effort to do things a new way. Although the new way may be better, and the teacher knows it, slowly energy and effort wanes to be regained by tried and true practices. This scenario may include all of the core elements and modes of professional learning and yet the knowing-doing gap prevailed.

It doesn’t surprise me because I see it every day and everywhere. The issue is that without ongoing feedback and support, the need to conserve time, energy, and effort becomes an issue of survival for the teacher. Therefore, we need teachers and principals to engage in learning together. Since principals are the instructional leaders, it makes sense that their participation will enhance professional learning for teachers. Then, staff meetings, Learning Walks, observation debriefs, PLC meetings, and more can support and align with the narrow focus of professional learning. Furthermore, principals can mitigate and manage district-level initiatives to meaningfully and intentionally connect with small group and individual professional learning at the building-level.

In many districts, the issue becomes how to include principals in professional learning with teachers. If the school district honors a narrow focus, then time is no longer a competing interest for principals. In fact, if we sustain our narrow focus for 3 to 5 years, then principals will actually recover time lost to learning a new focus each year. Once a school district truly commits to the core elements and modes of professional learning, we stop perpetuating the PD du jour phenomenon that plagues public education. In contrast, we deliver on the promise of improving principals as instructional leaders and teacher practice. In addition, principals may collaborate with their colleagues to overcome barriers or obstacles to achieve implementation with fidelity. Finally, the knowing and doing of teachers may become the same and not a gap perpetuated by professional learning.

REFERENCES

Christine Avery, Ed. D., is currently the Director of Curriculum and Professional Development for Mukilteo School District and an adjunct professor in the Seattle University Educational Administration Program. Christine began her 20-year career in education as a high school science teacher before spending 9 years as a middle and high school administrator in the Edmonds School District.
Peter Miller: Building a Districtwide PLC Vision through Repeated Story

“What is the ‘Peter Miller’ vision . . . I’m not familiar with that” (Nathan, personal communication, 2011). Two months earlier, we had hired Nathan as our new high school principal. Several days after the board of education approved his contract, he asked if I, the district’s curriculum director, could send him information about our professional development themes from the past year. I was thrilled to receive the request and sent him some context surrounding the Google Site we had been using to capture all of the agendas, resources, and videos for the past year’s professional learning (goo.gl/SONFce). Little did Nathan know through inquiring about Peter Miller, he was asking a question encapsulating not only where we had been, but also where we hoped to go as a district.

Early Vision

The Solon Community School district started its professional learning community maiden voyage during the 2007-2008 school year. At the recommendation of the principal, a group of elementary teachers read Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). During the 2008-2009 school year, a change in elementary administration took place. However, the quest of developing a collaborative culture continued through the establishment of elementary grade-level team meetings. In 2009-2010, an intermediate educational service agency consultant helped these elementary teacher teams begin tracking student data in shared, color-coded spreadsheets.

We began to intensify our professional learning community journey during the summer of 2010 in the midst of hiring a new superintendent and in my personal transition from high school math teacher to curriculum director. For the first time, the state of Iowa was adopting common content standards in math, literacy, social studies, science, and 21st century skills. Change was all around us, yet our district vision was only beginning to ramp up. A leadership team comprised of two teachers from each building as well as all building and district administrators read Learning by Doing (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). Through reading this book, a grassroots movement started to develop a philosophy of fewer independent contractors and a more collaborative community of adult learners.

Several months later in October 2010, all teachers read a chapter from Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work entitled, “A Tale of Excellence in Assessment” (DuFour et al., 2008). After reading the chapter, we realized it was from the same book many elementary teachers had read 3 years prior. The chapter shares the fable of a middle school social studies teacher, Peter Miller, who transitions from teaching in an autonomous school to one that values collaboration through a professional learning community model. Readers observed Peter’s increased dependency on his co-workers to improve his instruction as well as his transformation in assessment literacy. Through this story, staff started to visualize a culture of teacher collaboration around four important questions:

1. What is it we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students don’t learn it?
4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

During the remainder of the 2010-2011 school year, elementary grade-level and secondary content teacher teams we call our “collaborative learning teams,” began sharing digital agendas, minutes, norms and SMART goals via shared electronic documents. “What is it we want all students to learn?” was viewed as a question supporting the professional learning community culture in the context of digging into the state’s newly adopted standards. In order to begin spreading this vision throughout the community, the school board also read about Peter Miller as did the school improvement advisory committee, comprised of parents from each building. The “Peter Miller” vision was
beginning to disseminate. End-of-year staff survey data indicated teams were strongly entrenched in norm and goal setting; however our collective assessment literacy and understanding of the state standards were mediocre at best, especially among our secondary teams.

New Principal and New Standards

During the summer of 2011, a team of 12 staff members drove over 250 miles each way to attend a professional learning community institute. Along the way, the district van picked up Nathan, the newly hired high school principal near his home. This didactic dozen learned about building a solid collaborative foundation, the value of common formative assessments and establishing more meaningful team norms. Following the institute, I captured this group's collective response to three key questions:

1. What are some things we are doing well already?
2. What are some things we need to start doing?
3. What are some things we need to stop doing?

One takeaway was the group's desire to stay focused on the vision previously described in the Peter Miller chapter. Another area to improve upon was identifying power standards to drive common formative assessments. The attendees indicated they wanted to stop thinking about students as “my kids” and instead view them as “all of our kids.” The conversations were simultaneously rich, contextual, and challenging. Although we had read about Peter Miller, we soon realized we had a large list of to-dos in order to truly realize this vision. Nathan benefitted immensely from these conversations and time at the institute interacting with teachers. He had previously been exposed to the district’s vision in writing and was now experiencing previously been exposed to the district’s system of interventions. Solon Middle School created “Spartan Time,” in which students are identified by recent assessment data to receive additional reading instruction. In addition, students who have already demonstrated high levels of learning in reading work with teachers to extend their knowledge and skills.

In year two, 2014-2015, each building is refining its system of interventions. Solon High School repurposed its seminar time, which had been unstructured time for students adjacent to lunch. Now, at the beginning of each week, high school teachers setup appointments with specific students beginning Tuesday for additional instruction. Furthermore, students who are not completing daily practice work schedule

Common Formative Assessments

“One of the most powerful, high-leverage strategies for improving student learning available to schools is the creation of frequent, high-quality, common formative assessments by teachers who are working collaboratively to help a group of students acquire agreed-upon knowledge and skills” (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 75).

Peter Miller’s learning team was dedicated to collaboratively analyzing student work and we wanted our teams to do the same. In the first 2 years of our district’s journey, common formative math and literacy assessments were often a reality for elementary teams while a distant ideal in the eyes of many secondary teams, regardless of the content area. While Peter’s middle school social studies team naturally created and utilized these common assessments, our staff initially struggled due to the constraints of the district's size. We found ourselves feeling more like “singletons” rather than part of a learning team. For example, in a given year, a single teacher may teach eighth grade social studies or high school biology, hence the singleton reference. Mimicking Peter Miller’s team seemed impossible for nearly all of our singleton-filled secondary content teams. This hurdle has been slowly overcome during the past several years through singletons asking their colleagues to co-create assessments and participate in scoring student work samples. Most recently, the K-12 art team looked at the National Visual Arts Standards to identify a learning target from a common, vertically aligned standard. The team collaboratively scored and analyzed data from this learning target to increase consistency in program expectations and refine instructional strategies. A team of three singletons were beginning to realize the Peter Miller vision.

Establishing a Three-Year Vision

In the early years of our district's professional learning community journey, all teachers and administrators read the Peter Miller chapter annually. While the chapter illustrated a common vision, it was clear a multi-year action plan was necessary to provide our staff a roadmap for improving our practices in a manageable timeline. During the middle of the 2012-2013 school year, the same team of teachers and administrators who read *Learning by Doing* nearly 3 years ago, drafted a 3-year collaborative learning team vision. In the first year, 2013-2014, teams of teachers revised their common formative assessments and started to read about response to intervention (RTI) along with considering improved approaches to support students with emergent understanding as well as those having achieved mastery. All teachers and administrators read *Simplifying Response to Intervention* (Mattos, Buffam, & Weber, 2011) to begin collectively identifying "How will we respond when a student is experiencing difficulty or has already demonstrated understanding?" Members of each building leadership team attended a Response to Intervention at Work institute and as a result, each building drafted a system of interventions describing systemic supports for learners. At the end of this school year, our elementary building was recognized as a “Model Professional Learning Community” school for its improved student achievement and emphasis on using data and supporting struggling learners. The board of education also indicated its support of these changes by approving a new academic calendar for the following school year. Students are now dismissed early each Thursday so that collaborative learning teams are provided 90 minutes each week during the contract day to meet and focus on creating, revising, and re-calibrating common formative assessments. Additional activities during collaborative time include analyzing data from common formative assessments, discussing the effectiveness of instructional strategies based on student performance, and identifying students in need of additional time and support.

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appointments with the principal for additional support. An intervention team delivers customized seminar schedules on Monday, to direct students to appointments with teachers or the principal.

Lakeview Elementary continued to use grade-level driven flexible schedules to regroup students in need of additional math and literacy instruction. When supplemental instruction with general education teachers is unsuccessful, three reading strategists and Title I teachers are available to provide more intensive support.

In year three, 2015-2016, teachers will revise their common formative assessments based on Bloom’s Taxonomy and continue to improve the use of data to identify and support struggling students or to provide enrichment.

**Maintaining the Vision**

Prior to reading about Peter Miller, our district was like so many others. In previous years, our professional learning was based on discrete activities, such as one-shot workshops on differentiation or collaboration. At another time, all staff were trained on use of a new writing framework. Yet at other times, the professional learning was disconnected from previous initiatives and efforts, or perhaps even planned 1 day in advance of the training.

Examining professional development at Solon Community Schools indicates 40% of our certified staff have attended a professional learning community summer institute. All professional learning is now selected based on its thematic connection to the story of Peter Miller. Newly hired teachers attend a 2-day induction institute in which they read and debrief the Peter Miller chapter with a panel of experienced teachers. Likewise, all intermediate service agency staff members who are assigned to work in our district are provided an orientation in which they read about Peter Miller. As an example of how educators at Solon think about Peter Miller, one teacher tweeted at the most recent professional development activity, “Peter Miller is here to stay.” She was right. The same leadership team that read *Learning by Doing* and drafted the 3-year vision will be convening again soon to outline future milestones.

Through the story of Peter Miller, educators at Solon have created a consistent and ongoing vision for adult learners. And as for Nathan? Four years later, he and Peter Miller have become close friends.

**References**


Matt Townsley is Director of Instruction and Technology in the Solon Community School District, Iowa. He regularly presents at conferences and leads professional development on secondary assessment and grading shifts. One of his articles, “Redesigning Grading – Districtwide” was published in the December 2013 issue of *Educational Leadership*.
Professional Development Should Make a Difference!

Professional development matters! Teachers deserve opportunities and environments where they are challenged and supported to grow in their content knowledge and pedagogy. Just as we ask classroom teachers how they know their instruction impacted student learning, as professional developers, we should be asking ourselves how we know our professional development events and systems impact teacher practice and ultimately student learning.

Thomas Guskey’s book, Evaluating Professional Development, is a must-have on every professional developer’s bookshelf. I was first exposed to Guskey’s text in 2010 when I was working on my dissertation; I wanted to know if professional learning made a difference, how it made a difference, and why it made a difference. This book is an excellent resource for professional developers to help clarify (a) what we might want to measure, and (b) different methods to measure impact.

First, can we all agree to let go of the fear and trembling that currently surrounds the verb “evaluate” in education? We evaluate in order to know to what degree our planned professional development achieved the intended outcome. When we provide a professional learning experience for teachers, don’t we hope that participants will be somehow different because of the learning and collaboration? Time is precious! There is no room for the outdated, counter-productive teacher attitude “That’s nice! But I’m going to keep doing what I’m doing,” or “I’m just here to get my clock hours or get paid extra hours.” or “You can require that I attend, but you can’t make me like it or use it.” In this text, Guskey provides many suggestions for evaluating different components and outcomes of professional development, which will help us know if the designed learning experience made a difference for teachers.

A quick scan of the Table of Contents should excite anyone involved in providing professional development! The structure of the book is conducive to a front-to-back cover deep read or a selective reading of pertinent, timely chapters. Each chapter begins with a quote by Albert Einstein and concludes with questions for reflection. The subheadings are clear, and each chapter contains insets that summarize key ideas from the reading for quick reference. Guskey’s writing style is conversational, thought-provoking and well-structured.

In the introduction, Guskey briefly describes the purpose of professional development before building an argument for the need to evaluate its impact. Chapters 1 and 2 are titled as questions: What is professional development? and What is evaluation? Together these two chapters provide a solid historical and theoretical foundation for the primary substance of the book.

Chapters 3 through 8 explain Guskey’s model for evaluating professional development and contain practical information and tools for professional developers. Chapter 3 focuses on the general guidelines for evaluating professional development and lists five critical levels for evaluation: (a) participants’ reactions, (b) participants’ learnings, (c) organizational support and change, (d) participants’ use of new knowledge and skills, and (d) student learning outcomes. The subsequent chapters address one of the critical levels of evaluation at a time. Each of these chapters is organized around the following basic questions:

1. Why is it important to evaluate this level?
2. What questions are addressed at this level?
3. How will the information be gathered?
4. What is measured or assessed?
5. How will the information be used?

Table 3.1 found on pages 79-81 provides an at-a-glance view of Chapters 4 through 8.
The final chapter of the book provides suggestions for how to best present the findings so that they may be used to make responsible decisions, and specific recommendations about professional development processes and impact. Collecting the data is one step, but using the data to improve professional development for teachers is the true goal of evaluation. Taking the time to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and use that information to inform change is essential.

“The deeper we search, the more we find there is to know, and as long as human life exists I believe that it will always be so.”
– Albert Einstein

Reference

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Washington State ASCD would like to thank the following sponsors for their support in bringing Dr. Pedro Noguera, co-author of Excellence through Equity: Five Principals of Courageous Leadership to Guide Achievement for Every Student, to Washington for a day of data analysis to enhance access for ALL students by closing gaps and eliminating disproportionality in discipline.

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Mentoring as Professional Development: Enhancing Mentor Programs to Impact Student Achievement

Introduction

Several strategies for improving student learning in an era of education reform regularly occupy the time and attention of education leaders. Not the least of these strategies includes new teacher evaluation systems, national math and literacy standards, merit pay, and performance assessments. Professional development (PD) also ranks high with education reformers as a mechanism for creating positive change (Borko, 2004). And yet, effective PD has proven elusive. Some reasons for ineffective PD include irrelevant content, fragmented implementation, and disregard for principles of adult learning (Borko, 2004; Kennedy, 1998). Another reason is the broad definition educators apply to PD, which includes everything from coursework to book studies to informal conversations in the lunch room. As a result, the literature base is broad and somewhat scattered, where some studies focus on increasing content knowledge, while others focus on increasing pedagogical skill, and still others focus on how students learn subject-specific content (Kennedy, 1998).

Researchers have proposed different approaches for unifying literature examining PD. For instance, Ball and Cohen (1996) suggested organizing studies around enacted curricula rather than intended curricula for improving teacher knowledge of students, subject matter, and classroom context. Kennedy (1998) proposed careful examination of program content, with less emphasis on structural features such as length of training and activity format. Alternatively, Borko (2004) suggested designing studies around broad themes like teacher as learner and school context. While Wayne et al. (2008) recommended an empirical emphasis, specifically identifying causal relationships through observational, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs with emphasis on determining how PD programs compare with each other.

Although Ball and Cohen (1996), Kennedy (1998), Borko (2004), and Wayne et al. (2008) propose different approaches for identifying effective PD, one commonality is their call for more sophisticated investigations showing direct links between PD and changes in student learning. Since the early 2000s, studies showing relationships between PD and student achievement have increased in size and complexity, including number of participants, duration, and inclusion of experimental design features. For example, Blank et al. (2005) and Yoon et al. (2006) conducted multi-year empirical investigations with hundreds of teachers across four sites to measure changes in teacher practice and alignment of instruction to math and science standards. Diamond et al. (2014) studied 223 Grade 5 teachers split between control and treatment groups to analyze the effects of science PD on student achievement. Abe et al. (2012) investigated the effects of a 2-year PD program on student reading comprehension with more than 3000 students and 198 teachers. And Heller et al. (2012) used quasi-experimental methodology to compare the effects of three PD programs, involving 270 teachers and 7,000 students.

While these studies differ in their sampling, variables, and instrumentation, their literature reviews are derived from widely agreed upon characteristics of effective PD, which Kennedy (1998) articulated nearly 2 decades ago. According to Kennedy, effective PD is (a) lengthy rather than brief, (b) based on teacher input for deciding content, (c) interspersed with classroom application, and (d) organized around teacher collaboration. Likewise, Desimone et al. (2002) indicated PD is effective when (a) teachers from the same school, department, or grade train together; (b) when teachers are actively involved, such as analyzing student work or receiving feedback through peer observation; (c) when training links to teachers’ prior knowledge; and when (d) the content of training shows teachers how to apply instruction and assessment targeting higher-order thinking. More recently, Blank (2013) and Van den Bergh et al. (2014) confirmed characteristics identified by Kennedy and Desimione et al., indicating effective PD tends to be (a) long rather than short, (b) subject-specific rather than general, (d) active rather than passive, (e) collegial rather than independent, and (f) based on teacher prior knowledge rather than abstract.
Correspondence between PD and Mentoring

Most educators would conclude from their personal experience that PD generally includes at least one characteristic of effectiveness, aligned with descriptions found in research literature. However, not all teachers assign equal value to all PD activities. For example, Smylie (1989) surveyed 1,789 teachers and found they perceived formal performance evaluation, consultation with building-level administrators, and in-service training planned by school districts as least effective. Alternatively, Smylie (1989) found teachers perceived direct experience in the classroom, consultation with other teachers, observation of other teachers, and independent study and research as most effective. The list of preferred PD activities assembled by Smylie reinforces conclusions reached in the literature. Namely, effective PD is predicated on teacher collaboration, active learning, and teacher prior knowledge and experience.

Although most educators are surely able to identify qualities that make PD effective, and preferences for certain PD activities, there is less consensus about comprehensive models that are both effective and preferred. However, some approaches come closer than others, including earning National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification (NBPTS), participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and mentoring.

Mentoring is unique in comparison to other types of PD since most all teachers have one or more mentoring experiences across their careers. Most teacher preparation programs are designed around mentored internships. Many school districts induct new teachers by assigning mentors. Some schools have coaches to support teachers using principles of mentoring. Even NBPTS and PLC models emphasize peer-to-peer collaboration, observation, and feedback, which most agree are principles of mentoring.

Longevity of mentoring is another difference. NBPTS and PLC models of PD are relatively new, each having been established within the last 35 years. Mentoring, on the other hand, emerged as states and districts began requiring formal teacher preparation, as early as 1870 (Ravitch, 2003).

Nevertheless, longevity has not always translated to coherence. Similar to PD, mentoring and mentors are defined differently in the literature (Dawson, 2014). For example, Daloz (1999) suggests

Mentors are guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and point out unexpected delights along the way. (p. 106)

Bozeman and Feeney (2007) define mentoring as

A process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face to face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less. (the protégé, p. 722)

And lastly, Kochan and Pascarelli (2003) simply define mentoring as “having 2 or more individuals willing to form a mutual respectful, trusting relationship focused on the potential growth and development of the mentee” (p. 173).

The literature on mentoring of course includes descriptions of a mentor, sometimes called a supervisor or coordinator, and a mentee, sometimes called a protégé (Dawson, 2014). With the exception of articulating the basic mentor-mentee relationship, the literature varies on most other factors, such as the number of mentors, the strength of relationship, the length of relationship, the way mentors are selected, and the actions mentors and mentees perform (Dawson, 2014). Another consideration is the comparative expertise and status of the mentor and the mentee. In many cases, the mentor may have more experience or seniority in comparison to the mentee. Alternatively, the mentor may possess specific knowledge, and in some way, be a step-ahead of the mentee (Dawson, 2014). And still another approach is peer mentoring, where the mentor and mentee have equal status, though some exclude peers as a model of mentoring (Jacobi, 1991).

Although there is considerable variation in the literature, Dawson (2014) has proposed 16 design elements found across many research studies for categorizing features of mentoring. According to Dawson, these design elements contribute to frameworks, which then comprise specific models. Although there is imperfect correspondence between mentoring design elements and characteristics of effective PD, there are several similarities, as shown in Table 1. Both mentoring and PD emphasize duration and frequency of contact. Both

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Elements of Mentoring</th>
<th>Characteristics of Effective PD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration and frequency of relationship, amount of contact</td>
<td>Duration and frequency of activity, sustainability and intensiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims or intentions sought as a result of participating in the model</td>
<td>Alignment between program and teacher goals, communication of goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating outcomes through observations, feedback, and reports</td>
<td>Application of new knowledge for demonstrating growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor designed resources, such as reference manuals and instruments for peer observation</td>
<td>Active learning, such as conducting observations, and dependence on existing teacher knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for matching mentees with mentors</td>
<td>Selection of training format, such as in-service, coursework, or mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of mentor and mentee relationship</td>
<td>Collective participation by teachers in the same grade or school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of necessary knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Development of specific practices, such as peer observation or testing new instructional techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of technology to the relationship</td>
<td>Use of technology to support student learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Dawson (2014), Desimone et al. (2002), and Van den Bergh et al. (2014).

Table 1.
rely on clearly communicated goals and focus on specific practices and processes for evaluating outcomes. Both depend on preexisting teacher knowledge as a starting place for training and future growth, along with opportunities for making choices. Both mentoring and PD depend on relationships and collective participation, and this is perhaps the most salient link between fields. Less obvious, but no less present in the literature, is the role of technology, whether for improving communication or changing instructional practices.

Types of Mentoring

While mentoring and PD show clear correspondence to each other when design elements and effective characteristics are analyzed, their relationship becomes less clear when different types of mentoring are considered. For example, Dawson (2014) associates mentoring and PD within the context of peers coaching each other, or veterans coaching novices, but not specifically new teacher training or induction. However, the research on mentoring of course includes coaching, but it also includes new teacher induction and mentoring student teachers.

Costa and Garmston (2002) define coaching as mentors paraphrasing and inquiring to help mentees identify solutions to problems based on prior knowledge and context. Coaching also includes collaborative evaluation of solutions dependent on evidence, such as student work samples, assessment data, and reflection on one’s own performance. For example, a classroom teacher may contact a district coach and request support with a particular challenge, such as improving reading fluency in a leveled reading block. The pair analyze student reading data together, and the teacher provides context information relating to both students and classroom. The coach poses questions prompting reflection along with paraphrasing the teacher’s responses and drawing out possible solutions. In summary, the coach guides the inquiry without dictating the final result, enabling the mentee to integrate and apply new knowledge and skills.

Another category of mentoring is new teacher induction, which Moir, Barlin, Gless, and Miles (2009) have suggested is most effective when it focuses on student achievement, effective practice, and professional norms of inquiry and development. One model of new teacher induction that includes these features is the New Teacher Center (NTC). NTC designs curricula for mentors inducing novices with special attention to recursive questions around teaching in high-poverty schools, issues of equity and academic success for all, and mentor and mentee responsibility for serving as agents of change.

Although the literature base is somewhat developed, many studies examining the effects of coaching and new teacher induction programs show mixed results with regard to improving student achievement and retaining new teachers (Garet et al., 2008; Glazerman et al., 2010; Glazerman & Seifullah, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The literature examining the effects of mentoring student teachers suffers from a different problem. Most research in this area only address outcomes related to mentees (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). This is perhaps one reason mentoring student teachers is less often associated with PD. Another reason for the narrow focus is successful mentor and mentee relationships are idiosyncratic, unpredictable, and defy structure and formality (Tauer, 1998).

Mentoring student teachers also differs from other types of mentoring in significant ways, not the least of which include cost, design, and objectives. While coaching and induction programs are usually designed and funded by school districts, models of mentoring student teachers are guided by teacher preparation programs, and funded by tuition. The goals of coaching and induction include retaining novices, recognizing and rewarding accomplished teachers, implementing curricula or other innovations, and positively influencing student achievement (Eisenberg & Medrich, 2013; Little, 1990). Alternatively, neither mentoring student teachers is an activity implemented by districts nor has it been extensively linked to improvements in student learning. For most educators, mentoring student teachers is seen as a professional courtesy. The goal is teacher preparation. Nevertheless, most agree a proficient student teacher is an asset, able to assist with planning, instruction, and assessment, or at the very least, serve as another competent adult to support students (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

While studies in the area of mentoring student teachers focus on outcomes for mentees, the benefits for mentors as a PD activity have not been altogether neglected. For example, Hudson (2013) conducted a mixed-method study of the effects of collaboration between mentors and student interns by collecting survey (n = 101) and interview data (n = 10). Hudson found evidence mentors were becoming more conscious of their instruction, feedback to students, and communicating lesson goals, along with increased awareness of gaps in their knowledge of curricula. Russell and Russell (2011) conducted a qualitative study with nine mentors and found they were motivated to work with interns to gain new understanding of trends in teaching and to collaborate with beginning teachers. Likewise, Kyle, Moore, and Sanders (1999) found similar results in a case study of several mentors, who indicated increased awareness of their own instruction, knowledge of current practice, and enthusiasm for teaching as a result of mentoring.

Although these examples omit the kind of wide-scale experimental studies called for in the field of PD, they do indicate mentoring is a viable approach for improving teacher practice. Nevertheless, West (2002) claims that mentoring is underutilized as a PD activity. Reasons for undeveloped or underutilized mentoring programs are complex, though Howey (1998) suggests one source of the problem is teacher assessment. Although models of teacher assessment may employ research findings, they may also depend on intermittent observation and feedback, emphasis on technique and judgment, and dependence on an evaluator’s personally developed craft knowledge. No less significant are mentors and mentees who fail to engage in systematic inquiry and critical reflection. For example, according to Howey, some educators view mentoring as a psychological support activity, where mentors are buddies who provide occasional observation and feedback, which yields interactions void of substance for promoting sustained change. These kinds of implementation issues impede, rather than promote, teacher growth through mentoring models.

Strategies to Improve Mentoring Effectiveness

One approach to overcome challenges hindering the effectiveness of mentoring as an approach to PD is to have mentors and mentees conduct frequent formative evaluations after developing collegial
relationships based on mutual commitment to improve. Resources necessary for effective formative evaluation already exist as a result of revised teacher evaluation criteria and performance rubrics. Frameworks describing exemplary teaching, such as Danielson, Marzano, and CEL 5D, have been widely adopted by school districts, followed by systems for gathering data, conducting observations, and analyzing evidence to improve teaching. Coaches and mentors can increasingly depend on novices and student teachers who are familiar with principles of self-assessment, goal setting, reflective practice, gathering evidence over time, and conferencing.

Strategies for enhancing mentor and mentee relationships are also widely available. One of the most common is co-teaching, defined as “two or more teachers working together in the same classroom sharing responsibility for student learning” (Badiali & Titus, 2010, p. 74). Co-teaching was conceived as a set of strategies for promoting cooperation between general and special education teachers (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989) though it is often used by teacher preparation programs for guiding new teacher training. The most important activities unifying mentor and mentee within co-teaching is shared responsibility for planning, instruction, and assessment. Although empirically tested outcomes of co-teaching are still being investigated, experienced teachers report benefits similar to those found in literature relating to mentoring, such as gaining new insights about their own students through observation, learning new instructional techniques from student teachers, and validating their own knowledge and skill by working with novices (Badiali & Titus, 2010). Likewise, co-teaching depends on many of the same dimensions of collegial relationships found in effective PD, such as (a) committing to frequent and open communication, (b) scheduling weekly appointments for conferencing, (c) planning lessons cooperatively during meeting time, (d) examining student assessment data as the basis for discussion, and (e) cultivating a relationship that encourage conflict resolution.

Conclusion
Reexamining mentoring as a form of PD, within the context of revised teacher evaluation and models for enhancing relationships, such as co-teaching, is an inventive and practical approach to improving instruction and student achievement. All of these activities are familiar to educators across levels and unlike many other reform efforts, mentoring and PD have substantial collections of research for guiding experiments and innovation. The longevity of PD and mentoring and the importance of teacher evaluation are significant enough to assume schools and districts have already included them as part of education change, suggesting some capacity for improved implementation and integration without much additional investment. Finally, thoughtful linking of PD and mentoring—especially mentoring student teachers—interwoven with improved approaches to teacher evaluation, builds on existing district assets and success, which is at the very least a refreshing departure from the critical tone characteristic of much education reform over the last few decades.

References


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Articles written by and for Washington educators

To contribute a topic, contact Kathy Clayton at kclaytonascd@gmail.com
In the last several years, expectations for teachers and students have drastically changed leaving educators to simultaneously manage multiple reforms related to teacher effectiveness and student learning. They are implementing new standards for teaching based on the instructional frameworks (i.e., CEL 5D, Danielson, Marzano), a new evaluation system which holds educators accountable for student growth, as well as new standards for learning.

For many, these changes have signified the end of classrooms with closed doors. This new era of increased accountability for teachers and student learning has created a need for teachers to become increasingly dependent on one another. Common language and expectations have opened the door for global collaboration. Technology sharing platforms allow for endless opportunities to share resources and professional learning at our fingertips, anytime, and almost anywhere. This shared sense of collaboration has created an opportunity for teachers to take ownership and invest in their own professional learning.

For large-scale systemic reforms in education to be effective, they must lead to changes in classroom practice that positively affect student learning. As a system, we must move beyond approaching the host of reforms including Common Core, Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPs), and the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) as separate and discrete initiatives and understand how they are interrelated components in a larger system that have the potential to elevate the teaching profession and ensure all students are college and career ready. Teacher leaders are important opinion leaders and are a crucial voice in articulating the coherence among these multiple initiatives. The success or failure of these reforms is directly connected to the practitioners embracing the work by creating their own meaningful learning opportunities.

With this theory of action, in 2014 the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) selected a cadre of accomplished teachers to blog and tweet about how they were making sense of the English Language Arts Common Core Standards. The teacher leaders were selected because they are effective communicators, well respected across their professional learning network, interested in impacting classrooms beyond their own, and passionate about providing rigorous and engaging learning opportunities based on new learning standards for students of all backgrounds. Equally as important, these teachers are seen as thought leaders and other teachers followed their lead.

Initially, the group was known as Social Media Teacher Leaders. However, it became apparent that the name was not representative of the scope of their work. The teachers were addressing so many aspects of the profession that the conversation organically widened to include topics such as Common Core, connections to the instructional frameworks, and student growth to name a few. Social media was a means for collaboration and sharing and not the end itself. Tools such as Twitter and the CORElaborate blog amplified the voices of teacher leaders well beyond the region. The most powerful aspect of the work was in meaningful job-embedded, teacher-led professional learning which was based on an inquiry approach that affords opportunities for reflection and collaboration around authentic problems of practice.

As the result of the momentum created during the first year, PSESD hired 15 additional teacher leaders to join the 10 returning teacher leaders. The job title now is simply, Puget Sound Teacher Leader, to reflect the expansive nature of the work. Puget Sound Teacher Leaders blog and tweet about their practice related to Common Core Standards in both math and ELA, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards and teacher growth and effectiveness. In addition to monthly blog posts, teachers host and participate in two Twitter chats around these topics each month.

The cadre includes teacher leaders working in 14 school districts in King and Pierce counties, and who serve students from kindergarten to twelfth grade. They represent content areas such as English Language Arts, social studies, special education, STEM, arts integration, and science. The group includes classroom teachers, Teachers On Special Assignment, Instructional Coaches, Mentors, and Library Media Specialists. The diversity of backgrounds within this cadre leads to rich discourse on implementation successes and challenges.

Lindsey Stevens, a high school teacher from the Sumner School District and

**Empowering Teacher Leaders**

by Michelle Lewis and Lindsey Stevens
PSESD blogger, says, As a teacher leader, I hope that the dialogue will help teachers feel supported and start to make sense of so much new information all at once. Through our stories, we draw lines from evaluation to standards, from standards to student assessment. Hopefully, educators will see the new reforms as something positive. I’m excited to share with other teachers about the growth my students are making as a result of these changes. But I am also realistic. You can’t ignore the struggles and challenges. I hope my blog posts and the comments from our readers offer solutions and helpful anecdotes to help teachers move forward in their practice. This work can only be accomplished by doing the work ourselves and by being responsive and reflective.

Not only do the Puget Sound Teacher Leaders engage in reflective dialogue through blogging and tweeting, but through in face-to-face and virtual professional learning opportunities to support implementation of the standards. For instance, the teacher leaders have the opportunity to participate in sessions that help teachers use Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) tools, an open source planning framework aligned to the English Language Arts Common Core. LDC online tools facilitate the creation and sharing of literacy-rich classrooms across disciplines. This is especially significant since textbooks are not yet fully aligned to new standards. Through their social media platforms, Puget Sound Teacher Leaders share about their struggles and successes in creating text-rich experiences for students with their learning needs and began preparing a second work samples in order to identify student-work samples in order to identify student-teacher leadership is essential for effective large-scale systemic changes in education. PSESD looks forward to engaging more educators like Hallie in conversations across the region and beyond.

We cannot underestimate the power of teacher-to-teacher dialogue that is taking place in teacher-led learning communities. In the following vignette about Hallie Mills, a fourth grade teacher, the power of informal, teacher-led learning networks that utilizes inquiry to impact practice is illustrated.

Hallie Mills follows Kjell Rowe on Twitter. They both work in Kent School District. Kjell is a Puget Sound Teacher Leader.

Hallie (@halliemills) noticed on her Twitter feed that Kjell (@Teachem2Reachem) was moderating at Twitter chat as a part of her teacher leader role at PSESD.

@Teachem2Reachem
Are u ready for the #WAteachLead Twitter chat? I know I am! Join us tonight at 7pm PST. All r welcome. Topic: Year end reflections on #CCSS.

Hallie decided to join in one Sunday night in June, shortly before the last day of school.

Kjell prepared eight questions that she posed during the hour-long #WAteachLead chat. About 30 educators from Washington and beyond participated in the chat that night.

The fourth question of the evening was

@Teachem2Reachem
Q4: What were some of the biggest #CCSS related challenges? #WAteachLead

@Kellypruitt
A4: Greatest challenge? Knowing the we have holes in instruction & materials but overwhelmed to begin changing. #WAteachLead

Hallie favorites this tweet.

Later in the chat, Kjell asked the Twitterverse this question . . .

@Teachem2Reachem
Q5: What were some of the most effective #CommonCore resources you discovered this year? #WAteachLead

Here were some of the responses:

@heatherfellsch
A5: My colleagues are the best resource. Sharing success and failures are what help us move forward together. #WAteachLead

@kellypruitt
A5: So many tools, Newela, Tulare County question stems, LDC. And my next blog is about ReadWorks. #WAteachLead

@Jeremybballer
A5: Jim Burke’s #CCSS companion book is great. #WAteachLead

@MarienJohnson
A5: I love Core Tools for creating Literacy Design Collaborative Modules. Very helpful. And addresses #NGSS #WAteachLead

Hallie and other chat participants were curious about LDC. Could it be a way to help out with the “holes in the instructional materials” @kellypruitt is tweeting about?

@OretenzoScience
Tell me more re: Literacy Design Collaborative please.

Hallie favorites this tweet as well. PSESD Project Director, Michelle Lewis, shares a tweet with a link to Literacy Design Collaborative and then Tweets about an upcoming face-to-face session at PSESD.

@mlewiswa
Puget Sound area teachers: Join us for the Literacy Design Collaborative training in June. Here is a link to register. (link) #WAteachLead

@halliemills
@mlewiswa Registering now! #WAteachLead

Hallie didn’t waste any time getting registered for the next LDC cohort (which started the first day of her summer break!) She arrived at PSESD bright and early on the first day of the LDC session with informational text she planned to use the first few weeks of school, ready to learn all about LDC. Here is what she had to say.

@Halliemills
Excited about LDC workshop today. Practical info & I’ll come away with a module ready to go for fall. Thanks @PSESLiteracy! #WAteachLead

After day two of the LDC session, Hallie had almost completed a LDC module (multi-day unit plan) for the fall. She returned in October ready to reflect on the implementation of her module. Along with other teachers, Hallie analyzed student work samples in order to identify student-learning needs and began preparing a second module. Since then, she has composed several blog posts reflecting on the science standards and disciplinary literacy.

Teacher leadership is essential for successful large-scale systemic changes in education. PSESD looks forward to engaging more educators like Hallie in conversations across the region and beyond. There are many ways to participate. Visit the CORElab blog to read and comment on the latest posts from the Puget Sound Teachers Leaders. Or join the monthly Twitter chats. The Puget Sound Teacher Leaders host the #WAteachLead chat on the second Sunday and #TPEPchat on fourth Sunday of each month at 7pm PST.

Hallie decided to join in one Sunday night in June, shortly before the last day of school.
Michelle Lewis is the Director of Professional Growth & Evaluation at Puget Sound ESD. She leads the agency’s work on educator effectiveness and Common Core. She is also the project director for the Puget Sound Teacher Leader Network. Her professional interests include innovative professional learning, teacher leadership, personalized learning and literacy.

Lindsey Stevens teaches social studies at Bonney Lake High School in the Sumner District where she is also a Learning Support Leader and works on the district Literacy Planning Committee. She is a blogger for PSESD in her Puget Sound Teacher Leader role. Her professional interests include teacher leadership, literacy across disciplines, and mentoring.

Have you ever wanted to connect with fellow leaders around Washington State from the comfort of your living room? Now’s your chance!

**What**
Twitter chat using the hashtag #WaEdChat

**When**
1st Sunday of the month at 7 pm

**Where**
Twitter.com

**Why**
By participating in a Twitter Chat, users can follow a discussion around a single theme and learn from others, while sharing their own experiences.

**How do I get started?**
- The extent to which you’re involved in the chat is up to you. If you don’t have a Twitter account, you can still follow the chat by searching #WaEdChat at search.twitter.com and refreshing the screen every few minutes.
- To learn how hashtags organize and connect Tweets, watch these instructions https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGbLWQYj6iM
- If you think you might want to participate in the chat, set up a Twitter account ahead of time. Keep in mind that a Twitter account is public and anything you Tweet can be viewed by the others. Your Tweets, retweets, and favourites are available to whoever might want to read them.
- Do you feel overwhelmed by the thought of setting up a Twitter account? Go to YouTube and search for a “Twitter tutorial.” You’ll find numerous videos to help.

**What should I know when participating in a Twitter chat?**
- Twitter chats involve a moderator who will ask several questions within an hour. The moderator’s Tweet will likely start with a “Q” and a number. For example, “Q1- How does your school or district support the use of new and emerging technology? #WaEdChat”
- Your answer to the question should start with an “A” and the number of the question you’re answering. For example, “A1- Our school is taking a STEM approach to support Ss with technology. #WaEdChat”
- Most Twitter chats have six to eight questions, so it’s important to include the number of the question you’re responding to. All responses must include the hashtag #WaEdChat so other participants can view them.
- Common shorthand for educational Twitter chats include “Ss” for students and “Ts” for teachers. Your Tweet can have a maximum of 140 characters, including the chat’s hashtag #WaEdChat.
- If someone else’s answer resonates with you, use the star to “favourite” the Tweet. You can also retweet what others have written.

Come Learn at #WaEdChat

Come and learn with WSASCD and AWSP the 1st Sunday of the month at 7 pm by visiting search.twitter.com and searching for #WaEdChat.
A message from the executive director

Executive Directions

Consultant – expert from out-of-town carrying a briefcase
Collaboration – working with the enemy during the war
Coach – important person in football, basketball or other sport

I poke fun at these images but there is a vestige of negativity as we think about these terms and their relationship to our work in schools and classrooms. It may be as simple as the long history of “one and done” professional development we have all experienced. It may be due to the lack of relevance we have often seen in “you get what we got whether you need it or not” approach by speakers and presenters. Whatever the source, there is reticence when the terms are used in the context of professional development.

Other issues contribute directly to familiar challenges and complexities. Some are very pragmatic and persistent, such as that of time. When and how do teachers find time to collaborate? How can districts provide more time for staff given limited financial resources? Who pays for the coaches and consultants to be available without taking resources out of classroom? How do principals find time to be instructional leaders while managing beehives of activity?

Additional challenges come from a different source. Emphasis on accountability as defined by a legacy of federal policy blunders continues to taint coaching as “remedial” rather than as a highly professional growth activity. Data used as a stick to drive change causes resentment instead of providing insights to complex problems that require comprehensive solutions.

In truth, we have entered a new era of professional development that is exciting to witness. We are seeing the change occur at the classroom level. Teachers have opened themselves and their classrooms to peer collaboration as never before. A school culture is emerging in which collaboration between peers is regular and evident. Some of our finest teachers lead PLC’s and coach in their schools. Concepts emerging from best practice and classroom success are readily seen being discussed daily.

In other industries the concept of research and development is vital to sustainability and success. We must realize that our R&D is in our classrooms and out staff. Best practice can be found every single day but we are still grappling with the manner in which it can be shared. I would suggest that policy makers and leaders clearly embrace the belief that teachers and teacher leaders are the answer to solving complex problems and challenges.

Our task is to create systems and structures to provide time and expertise for true staff professional development. We can and must support our teachers in their search for solutions, innovations, tools, and best practices. We must develop our coaches from within the ranks of our finest practitioners. We must recognize that basic education includes professional growth. We must continue to find ways to place data at the fingertips of staff in a manner that assists and enables – without threats or blame.

Collaboration, consultation, and coaching can provide the bridges, the pathways, and the avenues for our ultimate success with all children. We hope this issue of Curriculum in Context helps advance that goal.
This conference is designed to infuse differentiated instruction designed to meet the rigor of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through school, grade level, department and classroom practice. Strands relate to Assessment, Curriculum, Early Learning, Full Day Kindergarten, Instruction, Special Programs, Technology, and TPEP.

Keynote Speakers

**MONDAY Evening: Jamie Vollmer**  
Champion of Education and Author  
‘Building Public Support for Schools’

**TUESDAY: Jeff Utecht**  
Educational Technology Consultant, Educator and Author  
‘The New Learning Experience: Taking Advantage of the Information Age’

**WEDNESDAY: Pete Hall**  
Educational Consultant, Educator and Author  
‘Any Bird Can Sing!’

Pre-Conference Event
Join us Monday evening for a lively panel discussion about CCSS and SBAC, followed by a Keynote presentation from Jamie Vollmer, award-winning champion of public education and the author of the highly acclaimed book, *Schools Cannot Do It Alone*.  

Conference Schedule

**Monday Pre-Conference Event**
6:30-8:30  
CCSS SBAC Panel Discussion  
Keynote: Jamie Vollmer

**Tuesday Program**
7:30-8:00  
Registration, Coffee & Pastries  
8:00-8:45  
Team Time  
9:00-9:10  
Welcome and Introductions  
9:10-10:10  
Opening General Session  
Keynote: Jeff Utecht  
10:20-11:30  
Concurrent Session One  
11:30-12:30  
Lunch  
12:30-1:40  
Concurrent Session Two  
1:50-3:00  
Concurrent Session Three

**Wednesday Program**
7:30-8:00  
Registration, Coffee & Pastries  
8:00-8:45  
Team Time  
9:00-9:10  
Welcome and Introductions  
9:10-10:10  
Opening General Session  
Keynote: Pete Hall  
10:20-11:30  
Concurrent Session Four  
11:30-12:30  
Lunch  
12:30-1:40  
Concurrent Session Five  
1:50-3:00  
Concurrent Session Six

Registration information available at [www.wsascd.org](http://www.wsascd.org)
Equity, Access, and Achievement for ALL

After decades of reform, educators have yet to achieve equity, access, and achievement for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability. Research shows that schools cannot do it alone, but must work in concert with parents, families, and the community. The next theme of Curriculum in Context is Equity, Access, and Achievement for All. How do you use data to make decisions in your classroom, school, or district to close the achievement gap and provide equity and access to high standards for all students? What tools and strategies has your school or district implemented to engage families and communities in the support of all students and to make them feel welcome in the school? What procedures do you have in place to ensure the successful transition of students from one level to the next including the successful transition into elementary school and postsecondary education? How do you ensure access to career and college ready standards for all students, including those with significant disabilities? What conditions do you create in your school to ensure equity, access, and achievement for all students? How is equity made visible (e.g., the use of data, discipline procedures, hiring policies, board policies, and mission statements)? How are institutions of higher education preparing pre-service educators for their role in closing the gap? These are just some of the questions that you might consider when submitting an article or book review for consideration.

The editorial staff invites you to submit a manuscript on this topic to Sue Ann Bube (sbube@seattleu.edu) by September 14th. Manuscripts will be published in one of the three new sections of Curriculum in Context: Learn, Teach, or Lead. Potential articles submitted for the Learn section should be a current book review between 500 and 750 words and should include the APA reference for the book. Manuscripts for the new Teach and Lead sections should be between 850 and 2500 words, focus on either the classroom (i.e., teacher) perspective or the leadership perspective, and include citations written in APA format.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
September 14, 2015