EDUCATION WEEK
SPOTLIGHT

On Professional Development

Editor's Note: Professional learning has turned teachers into coaches and redefined certification and training programs for staff. And now many teachers face new curriculum and assessment challenges as they prepare for the common-core standards. This Spotlight asks – what does effective professional development look like for today's teachers?

Jessica Kourkounas for education Week

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Turning Teachers into Coaches

The Literacy Collaborative's coaching-based program offers lessons on reading instruction and professional development design.

By Anthony Rebora

The literature on teacher professional development stresses a number of the same points time and again. To be effective, experts say, teacher learning should be closely integrated with curriculum and educators' actual work in the classroom. It should be continuous and sustained over long periods. It should focus on evidence of student progress. And it should foster collaboration among faculty members and incorporate teachers' own expertise.

Literacy coach Brook Challender, third from right, takes notes as she observes 4th grade teacher Kristin Hyland, back to camera, give a lesson at Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary School in Atlantic City, N.J. The school has been using the Literacy Collaborative for seven years.

Whether most real-life school PD programs meet those criteria is questionable at best, as the research also makes clear. But a number of initiatives have gained recognition for moving in the prescribed direction and illustrating some of the payoffs and challenges that can entail for schools. One viable example is the Literacy Collaborative, a coaching-based school-improvement model jointly run by the Ohio State and Lesley universities.

The Literacy Collaborative was started in 1993 by literacy-education scholars—and former teachers—Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. It currently operates in some 300 schools nationwide, offering separate instructional programs for primary, elementary, and middle school levels.

Pedagogically, the program has its roots in the work of Marie Clay, the founder of the Reading Recovery intervention program. Clay, a New Zealand-born developmental psychologist and education researcher, stressed the importance of closely analyzing and documenting students' individual progress in reading. In building on her approach, the Literacy Collaborative aims to give schools the expertise needed "to turn teachers into systematic observers of reading and writing behaviors," says Fountas, now the director of the Center for Reading Recovery & Literacy Collaborative at Lesley University. The program fosters "precision teaching," she adds.

Framework-Driven

In recent years, the Literacy Collaborative has acquired an impressive research profile. Most prominently, a recently published longitudinal study by researchers at Stanford University found that the program boosted primary-grade students' reading skills by an average of 32 percent over three years. Other studies have tied the Literacy Collaborative to standardized test score gains (including among English-language learners), advances in student writing skills, improvements in instructional quality, and positive changes in both teachers' and students' perspectives on literacy instruction. (Despite its record, the program is not included in the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse. According to Fountas, that's because it has not had the required number of randomized control-group studies.)

As an instructional program, the Literacy Collaborative is oriented around intensive lessons and purposeful teacher-student interactions. Its framework requires schools to schedule daily 2½ hour literacy blocks, with the time divided between word-study instruction and reading and writing workshops. Employing both whole-class and small-group instruction, teachers engage students in a selection of specified activities, including interactive read-alouds, shared-reading experiences, targeted vocabulary and phonics lessons, guided reading and writing exercises, and independent work.

The program also places a strong emphasis on ongoing in-class assessment. To monitor students' progress in reading, Literacy Collaborative teachers regularly—as often as daily—take "running records," in which they listen to students read short passages and document where they need improvement. In addition, teachers use a leveled-text system to benchmark students' development against expectations and norms. Both methods are "directly linked to instruction," Fountas emphasizes.

Building In-School Capacity

But where the Literacy Collaborative really differs from other school-improvement programs—and where it harbors lessons on PD design—is in its coaching model. All schools using the Literacy Collaborative are required to have an in-school literacy coach—and the title is not just ceremonial. Coaches, who are generally given reduced teaching loads, receive more than a year of graduate-level training from the Literacy Collaborative staff before the program is even implemented in their schools. That includes a four-week summer institute and some 300 hours of blended face-to-face and online learning. Once the program is in place in classrooms, coaches continue to receive ongoing support from Literacy Collaborative liaisons, including regularly scheduled site visits and training sessions.

The coaches, in turn, provide continuous training on the Literacy Collaborative framework to their fellow classroom teachers. They facilitate twice-monthly PD sessions, observe classroom lessons, and meet with teachers one-on-one to refine their practice. According to the Literacy Collaborative's documentation, teachers are required to receive a total of 60 hours of outside-of-class professional development from their coaches during the first two years of implementation and 10 hours in each year thereafter.

Most PD in schools is based on the visiting "consultant model," Fountas observes. "We do the opposite. We try to build high-level capacity within the school itself."

Educators involved in the Literacy Collaborative program say that emphasis on developing in-school expertise helps foster instructional coherence and focus.

"Before we'd just have someone come in and do a workshop and then leave," says Karen Rood, the literacy coordinator at Caryl E. Adams Primary School in Whitney Point,

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N.Y, which has been using the Literacy Collaborative model for three years. "Now I support our teachers in the classroom, so there's follow-up."

"People have become more purposeful about teaching reading and writing. Before, we were all over the board," she says.

Jodi Burroughs, the principal of Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary School in Atlantic City, N.J., says that the Literacy Collaborative's strength is that it facilitates "embedded PD"—that is, training that is integrated into teachers' daily instructional practice.

Burroughs' school has been using the Literacy Collaborative since 2004, and she herself was trained as a coach in a previous position. Most teachers, she notes, are distrustful of new programs, because they see so many come and go. But by fostering interaction and a sense of ownership among teachers, the Literacy Collaborative becomes part of a school's instructional culture. Teachers see that "this is not just a program—it's about working on best practices for teaching," she says.

'Contextual' Challenges

But if the Literacy Collaborative's interwoven training structure offers instructional rewards, it also poses unique implementation challenges.

For one thing, the program is highly demanding on teachers. "During the first year, teachers tended to be overwhelmed by all the new information, as we [coaches] were during the training," Rood recalls. Teachers and coaches, she suggests, need to be prepared to devote significant time and attention to re-

organizing their classroom routines around the new framework.

Kate Rodriguez, who is in her second year as a literacy coach at Monhagen Middle School in Middletown, N.Y., notes that the program can also give rise to interpersonal challenges for coaches, who have to learn "to walk the fine line" between instructor and peer. Especially at the outset, she says, coaches can feel as though they are caught "in the middle" between being a supporter and an evaluator.

Burroughs, the Atlantic City principal, cautions that the Literacy Collaborative's approach may also clash with school cultural norms, particularly in places where decision-making is typically hierarchical. "This is the kind of change that is created from the bottom up," she emphasizes. "Teachers and coaches need to be supported. Principals need to create a culture where coaches' voices are heard."

That observation is not merely anecdotal. The Stanford evaluation of the Literacy Collaborative found that fidelity to the program's coaching model—and the resulting impact on student progress—varied widely among participating schools. The researchers attributed the variances to, among other "contextual conditions," differing levels of teacher and school commitment and "perceived leadership support." They also found that "more coaching occurred in schools where teachers reported greater control over school-wide decisions affecting their work."

Lastly, there is the issue of cost. The Literacy Collaborative exemplifies the reality that, despite the proliferation of free resources on the Internet, intensive PD isn't necessarily cheap. Schools pay approximately $25,000 over three years to implement the Literacy Collaborative, with most of that amount going toward the coach's training. Fountas notes, however, that the organization tries to find funders to provide scholarships for resource-strapped schools.

For Burroughs, whose school found grant funding to pay for the program, the price is worth it because students have shown solid improvement and it "is ultimately an investment in teaching."

Teachers seem to agree.

"I've been teaching reading for nine years," says Rodriguez. "This is the happiest I've been."

Rood is even more emphatic. "It literally changed my life," she says. Before her school started with the Literacy Collaborative and tapped her as a coach, she explains, she was on the verge of retiring from teaching. "But now I'm not looking at that any time soon.

Many Teachers Not Ready for the Common Core

By Stephen Sawchuk

A quiet, sub-rosa fear is brewing among supporters of the Common Core State Standards Initiative: that the standards will die the slow death of poor implementation in K-12 classrooms.

"I predict the common-core standards will fail, unless we can do massive professional development for teachers," said Hung-Hsi Wu, a professor emeritus of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley, who has written extensively about the common-core math standards. "There's no fast track to this."

It's a Herculean task, given the size of the public school teaching force and the difficulty educators face in creating the sustained, intensive training that research indicates is necessary to change teachers' practices. *(See Education Week, Nov. 10, 2010.)*

"It is a capacity-building process, without question," said Jim Rollins, the superintendent of the Springdale, Ark., school district. "We're not at square one, but we're not at the end of the path, either. And we don't want to just bring superficial understanding of these standards, but to deepen the understanding, so we have an opportunity to deliver instruction in a way we haven't before."

In Springdale, which is fully implementing the literacy and math standards for grades K-2 this year, kindergartners in the 20,000-student district are studying fairy tales and learning about those stories' countries of origin. Their teachers have scrambled to find nonfiction texts that introduce students to the scientific method. They've discarded some of their old teaching practices, like focusing on the calendar to build initial numeracy skills.

The Durand, Mich., district is another early adopter. Gretchen Highfield, a 3rd grade teacher, has knit together core aspects of the standards—less rote learning, more vocabulary-building—to create an experience that continually builds pupils' knowledge. A story on pigs becomes an opportunity, later in the day, to introduce the vocabulary word "corral," which becomes an opportunity, still later in the day, for students to work on a math problem involving four corrals of five pigs.

"I'm always thinking about how what we talked about in social studies can be emphasized in reading," Ms. Highfield said. "And it's like that throughout the week. I'm looking across the board where I can tie in this, and this, and this."

Such pioneers of the standards can probably be found the country over. But data show that there is still much more work to be done, especially in those districts that have yet to tackle the professional-development challenge. A nationally representative survey of school districts issued last fall by the Washington-based Center on Education Policy found that fewer than half of districts had planned professional development aligned to the standards this school year.

Cognitive Demand

By any accounting, the challenge of getting the nation's 3.2 million K-12 public school teachers ready to teach to the standards is enormous.

With new assessments aligned to the standards rapidly coming online by 2014-15, the implementation timeline is compressed. Teachers are wrestling with an absence of truly aligned curricula and lessons. Added to those factors are concerns that the standards are pitched at a level that may require teachers themselves to function on a higher cognitive plane.

When standards are more challenging for the students, "then you also raise the possibility that the content is more challenging for the teacher," said Daniel T. Willingham,

a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville. "Of course, it's going to interact with what support teachers receive."

Anecdotal evidence from a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation study suggests that teachers already struggle to help students engage in the higher-order, cognitively demanding tasks emphasized by the standards, such as the ability to synthesize, analyze, and apply information. (The Gates Foundation also provides support for coverage of K-12 business and innovation in *Education Week*.)

As part of the foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching project, trained observers scored lessons taught by some 3,000 teachers against a variety of teaching frameworks. No matter which framework was used, teachers received relatively low scores on their ability to engage students in "analysis and problem-solving," to use "investigation/problem-based approaches," to create "relevance to history, current events," or to foster "student participation in making meaning and reasoning," according to a report from the foundation.

Supporters of the common standards say the standards encourage a focus on only the most important topics at each grade level and subject, thus allowing teachers to build those skills.

"It could make things simpler and allow teachers and schools to focus on teaching fewer, coherent things very well. That's the best hope for teachers to build in-depth content knowledge," said David Coleman, one of the writers of the English/language arts standards and a founder of the New York City-based Student Achievement Partners, a nonprofit working to support implementation of the standards.

"That said, the standards are necessary but not sufficient for improving professional development," he added.

Each of the two content areas in the standards poses a unique set of challenges for teacher training.

Mr. Wu, the UC-Berkeley professor, contends that current math teachers and curricula focus almost exclusively on procedures and algorithms, an approach he refers to as "textbook mathematics."

But the common core emphasizes understanding of the logical, structural concepts underpinning mathematics—the idea being that understanding how and why algorithms work is as important as crunching numbers.

Many teachers, Mr. Wu contends, will themselves need more mathematics-content preparation. But training focused at least initially on content could be especially difficult for classroom veterans to accept, he concedes.

"After 26 years of doing things only one way, the common core comes along and says, 'Let's try to do a little bit better at this,' " Mr. Wu said. "Well, suppose you've been smoking for that long, and someone says, 'Just stop raising a cigarette to your mouth.' It's difficult—it's 26 years of habit."

Some teacher educators believe that conversation will need to begin at the preservice level, especially for elementary teachers, who tend to enter with a weaker initial grasp of mathematics, said Jonathan N. Thomas, an assistant professor of mathematics education at Northern Kentucky University, in Highland Heights, Ky.

"It's a great opportunity to say, 'Let's just take some time to think about the mathematics and set the teaching strategies aside for a moment,' " Mr. Thomas said. "It's imperative we don't send people out the door with just strategies, tips, and tricks to teach fractions. We have to make sure they understand fractions deeply."

Teacher Gaps

Meanwhile, the English/language arts standards demand a focus on the "close reading" of texts, a literary-analysis skill that has been thus far mainly reserved for college English classes. And they call for expansion of nonfiction materials into even the earliest grades.

"We haven't worked deeply or strategically with informational text, and as the teachers are learning about the standards, they are finding their own instructional gaps there," said Sydnee Dixon, the director of teaching and learning for Utah's state office of education. "That's a huge area for us."

In the Springdale Ark., district, instructional coach Kaci L. Phipps said those changes are also requiring teachers to pay more attention to teaching the varied purposes behind writing—something not as emphasized when most reading materials are fictional and students are asked merely for their responses.

"We keep having to say to these kids, 'Remember, it's not what you think, it's what's in the text,' " she said. "'What is the author doing? What is his or her purpose in writing? How can you support that conclusion with details from the text?' "

Pedagogical Shifts

Pedagogical challenges lurk, too, because teachers need updated skills to teach in ways that emphasize the standards' focus on problem-solving, according to professional-development scholars.

"Teachers will teach as they were taught, and if they are going to incorporate these ideas in their teaching, they need to experience them as students," said Thomas R. Guskey, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Kentucky's college of education, in Lexington. "The PD will have to model very clearly the kinds of activities we want teachers to carry forward and use in their classrooms."

Moreover, Mr. Guskey warned, many teachers won't be inclined to actually change what they are doing until they become familiar with the assessments aligned to the new standards.

Some districts don't want to wait that long, and have found other ways to help teachers begin working with the practices outlined in the standards. In the 1,700-student Durand district, Superintendent Cindy Weber has used a state-required overhaul of teacher evaluations as a springboard.

The Michigan district's new professional growth and evaluation system, which is being implemented this spring, draws key indicators of teacher practice directly from the common core—in essence closing the often-wide gap between expectations for student and teachers.

Principals observing teachers are trained to look, for example, at whether a teacher "uses multiple sources of information" when teaching new content, and "challenges students to present and defend ideas" in the strand on applying learning.

To gauge changes in student growth across the year, as part of the new evaluation system, the district has settled on growth in academic vocabulary as an indicator. In every grade and content area, teams of teachers have come up with those words and related concepts all students must master by the end of the year.

Ms. Weber's reasoning is that teachers will feel new standards really matter if instructing to them is part of their professional expectations.

"You look back over the course of education, and there are so many things tried, yet somehow many classrooms still look the same across the country," Ms. Weber said. "I felt that with our evaluation process, we needed to look at teacher commitment to this model and type of delivery—or teachers may give us lip service and go back to doing what they've done in the past."

State Role

States, the first stop on the professional-development train, are themselves having to change their delivery systems in preparation for the standards.

"Many states are moving away from the 'train the trainer' model and trying to have more direct communications with teachers,

because the message either gets diluted or changed otherwise," said Carrie Heath Phillips, the program director for the Council of Chief State School Officers' common-standards efforts.

Delaware has reached every teacher in the state directly through online lessons that lay out the core shifts in the standards from the state's previous content expectations—a process it tracked through its education data system.

Now, state officials are hard at work building an infrastructure for deeper, more intensive work.

The state has organized two separate "cadres" of specialists, one in reading and one in math, who are fleshing out the core expectations at each grade level, outlining how each standard is "vertically linked" to what will be taught in the next grade, and crafting model lessons in those subjects. They're also each constructing five professional-development "modules" for high-demand topics, such as text complexity.

"We've had other standards, but different interpretations of what they meant," said Marian Wolak, the director of curriculum, instruction, and professional development for the state. "We want this to be very clear and distinct about how the standard applies at that grade level and what the expectations are for that standard."

Based on the cadres' work, every district will have a clearinghouse of resources for professional development and be able to tap a local specialist for additional training, Ms. Wolak said.

Utah doesn't have the benefits of Delaware's limited geography. Its strategy has been building the capacity of a critical mass of trained educators in each district, and then gradually shifting professional-development responsibilities to the local level.

In summer 2011, the state trained about 120 facilitators—teachers nominated from the field with a track record of high student achievement in their subject—in pedagogical content knowledge and adult-learning theory. Then, those teachers facilitated "academies" in ELA and in 6th and 9th grade math for their colleagues, which were given at 14 locations in the state, according to Ms. Dixon, the state's director of teaching and learning.

All teachers attending the sessions come voluntarily and are expected to have read the standards beforehand. Afterwards, "the expectation is that both the facilitators and the attendees are back in their classrooms, using the standards, working with the standards, sharing student work, and studying it in [staff meetings], so their colleagues are getting second-hand experience," Ms. Dixon said.

Additional academies are now being set up; the state estimates about 20 percent of its teachers have attended one so far.

District Pioneers

For districts, the professional-development challenge is in finding the place to begin. Those districts apparently the furthest along in the process are integrating the training with successful efforts already in place.

In Springdale, the district has focused on providing teachers with enough time to sort through the standards and observe some of them in practice. It's given teachers up to four days off to develop units aligned to the common core and encouraged teams to discuss student work samples, or "anchors," to help inform their understanding of expectations aligned to the standards.

This year, the district is working to train teachers in grades 3-8 in math. It has spent five years using a problem-solving approach to mathematics known as Cognitively Guided Instruction that district officials say aligns well with the common standards' math expectations. With a handful of teachers now well-versed in the curriculum, it's creating opportunities for teachers new to the district to observe those "demonstration classrooms" at work.

The Durand district's new teacher-evaluation system has helped to make the common standards real, said Ms. Highfield. And while teachers are understandably a bit nervous about the system, it's also causing them to rethink long-standing practices.

"How do I show [an evaluator] that students are thinking and analyzing without a project or experiment? It's a big challenge, and I think it will take a little time to get there," she said. "Before, with the rote learning, you could create a handout, put it in your file and just use it again next year. You can't do that when you're looking at students to apply these skills."

Nevertheless, Ms. Highfield said, she's starting to see the benefits for her students.

"Durand is a fairly poor district; a lot of students don't have a lot of experiences," she said. "We ask them, 'What do you want to do in your life, with your learning? Can you imagine it? How would you get there?'

"I've seen a change in my students, and I think that is a good thing."

"

We want this to be very clear and distinct about how the standard applies at that grade level and what the expectations are for that standard."

MARIAN WOLAK

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development, Delaware Department of Education

Common Core Raises PD Opportunities, Questions

By Katie Ash

With all but five states having adopted the Common Core State Standards in math and language arts, education leaders are expecting to see a surge of online professional development resources to help guide teachers through the transition.

"We've always had the ability to share resources, but now those resources are aligned with the same student expectations," notes Greta Bornemann, the project director for the implementation of the common standards for the office of public instruction in Washington state. "Especially during the fiscal crisis that we're in, we can really tap into the power of working together [as a nation] around professional development."

Many districts have yet to take the essential steps toward integration of the Common Core State Standards Initiative into classroom instruction, including providing face-to-face or online professional development for teachers, according to a survey released this fall by the Washington-based Center on Education Policy.

In fact, more than half of the 315 districts surveyed indicated they had not provided professional development for teachers of mathematics or English/language arts—the two common-core subject areas—and were not planning to provide such PD for those teachers during the 2011-12 school year.

But professional development will be critical to the overall success of the common standards, says Timothy Kanold, the past president of the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, a Denver-based leadership network that provides professional development for math teachers.

"To help the stakeholders—teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals—in order for them to be confident in the common core and teaching deeper into the standards, they need meaningful and supportive professional development," he says.

For many teachers, shifting to the common standards will require major changes.

There are as few as 28 standards for math for some grade levels, "which is fewer standards than ever before, but you now have to teach them and drill much deeper into them," Kanold says. "Students are expected to conjecture and reason and problem-solve. That's a new day in math. That's a shift for everyone; therefore, we have real professional development that needs to get done."

Number of states that have adopted the CCSS **47**
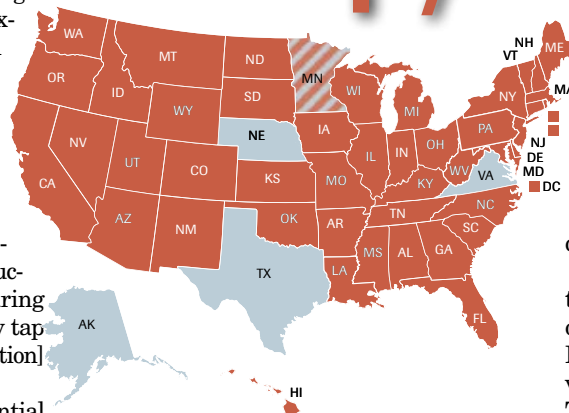
SOURCE: *Education Week*

State adopted standards in only one subject

And PD should not be confined to a one-time conference or class, says Kanold, but rather become an ongoing process for teachers. Online professional development, in particular, may help teachers embed training opportunities into their daily schedules more naturally because it is so easily accessed, he says.

"It's instantaneous," says Kanold. "I don't have to wait for the conference."

Questions of Quality

Tanya Baker, the director of national programs for the National Writing Project, a Berkeley, Calif.-based nonprofit organization with multiple sites throughout the country that provides resources and professional development to writing teachers, says the writing portion of the standards also represents a shift to a richer and more rigorous understanding of writing.

"Teachers with a significant amount of experience might not have very much experience with the kind of teaching that would lead kids to be successful with these standards," she says.

But while acknowledging that the common standards provide an opportunity to share PD resources between states, Baker cautions that teachers may still have varying needs.

"My worry about online professional development around common-core standards is that it'll be one-size-fits-all," she says. "Even as we're thinking nationally, we need to be aware locally" of teachers' specific backgrounds and instructional methods.

Identifying high-quality resources may be another challenge, adds Bornemann of Washington state's office of public instruction.

"One of the challenges is that everybody, at least in their claims, appears to be aligned to the common core with professional development and instructional supports," she says. Looking at those resources with a critical eye and making sure they are high-quality before distributing them to teachers is essential.

The James B. Hunt Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, an affiliate center of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in Durham, N.C., is one of the early providers of online resources on the common core. The organization has created a series of videos, posted on YouTube, that describe various aspects of the common core, such as how the standards were developed, what the key changes are in the subject areas involved, and the reasoning behind those changes.

"This is intended to spark a conversation," says Lucille E. Davy, a senior adviser for the institute. The videos are designed not only for teachers, but also for school board members, policymakers, administrators, and even the PTA.

"Everyone needs to understand this—not just the teacher in the classroom," Davy says.

As schools and educators get a better grasp on what the standards mean for students and teachers, more online and print resources will become available, says Davy. "Right now, I think you're seeing the development of a lot of [curricular] materials," she says, "and then the professional development to actually use those materials and teach the standards is the next frontier."

And while providing much professional development for teachers on the scale that's needed may seem overwhelming, Davy is hopeful that the common core will provide the economies of scale, especially with online professional development, needed to overcome some of the most persistent problems in K-12 education.

"The need to close the achievement gap was already here," she says. "Implementing common core together gives us our best shot for achieving. We can work together, share best practices, and share the burden of doing the work so [states] are not doing it all alone."

Number of varied state adoption plans that expect to fully implement the common core standards in various years.

Out-of-School Field on Hunt for Training

By Nora Fleming

As out-of-school programs—and the expectations for them—grow, the field is struggling to identify the kind of training staff members need to meet those expectations.

A variety of efforts have sprung up across the country to define and improve the quality of after-school staff, some of which bear resemblance to the quest to improve the effectiveness of classroom teachers. But given that many out-of-school programs face limited funding and their staffs tend to be young, part-time workers who rarely commit to the job for long, questions remain over how to provide professional development in a cost-effective way.

"We have a hard enough time creating effective teaching in K-12. It's even harder for after-school programs, whose staff are young people who can connect with kids but have high rates of turnover," said Robert Granger, the president of the William T. Grant Foundation, which has underwritten research and other efforts to improve after-school programs. "After-school work has hours and pay for staff that make it not a career job, but staff still need ongoing coaching while they are working with youth. The best programs and systems are figuring out how to make that happen."

While emerging research points to positive impacts after-school programs have on students' academic performance, many in the out-of-school field believe programs should remain distinct from the classroom environment.

For some, those concerns, on top of staffing challenges, mean members of the after-school community need to be seen by others and, importantly, by themselves, as professionals who require defined core competencies. Though some of those competencies overlap with those expected of classroom teachers, others are unique to after-school.

Core Competencies

Organizations like the National Afterschool Association and School's Out Washington have published core-competency guides to help pro-grams improve staff development, whereas others have seen a credentialing process, offered through higher education institutions, as a solution.

Prime Time Palm Beach, a nonprofit organization in Florida that supports initiatives aimed at improving the quality of local after-school programs, has been a part of endeavors to develop credentialing pathways for after-school workers.

The group produced coursework adopted by Palm Beach State College that students can take to earn a certificate in youth development, an associate degree in human services, or even, down the road, a bachelor's degree in supervision and management. Noncredit coursework is also available.

Since many after-school staff members aren't paid much and might be discouraged from paying for training, the organization is offering both scholarships and incentives to staff members now working in after-school programs to pursue the credentialing pathways at the college through the organization's WAGE$ initiative. After-school employees can earn $300 to $2,000 if they complete coursework; those who qualify must continue to work in their respective programs while taking classes.

Similar opportunities are cropping up elsewhere. In New York City, the City University of New York supports a Youth Studies Consortium, partially financed by the city's youth and community-development department, which provides options for certificates, coursework, and major and minor studies at local four-year and community colleges. And in California, future teachers on a number of California State University campuses teach in after-school programs as a requisite toward completing their degrees.

According to Katherine Gopie, the director of professional development at Prime Time Palm Beach, certification not only can help define the field, but also can help after-school staff members see themselves and the work they do differently. While after-school staff have never been considered at the same level as teachers, their work is no longer being thought of as "babysitting" and is starting to be considered as part of a career, she said.

"By professionalizing the after-school field, we are educating both the after-school practitioners and the community at large that after-school is a profession and a field," Ms. Gopie said. "We provide more than just a safe place for kids to be in the out-of-school hours; we provide learning opportunities that help equip young people with the necessary skills to not only reinforce what was learned in the school day, but to be productive citizens, innovators, and leaders."

Professionalizing after-school work has meant working with professionals in other fields and community partners who may be able to provide guidance. Museums, for instance, have often provided workshops and training for classroom teachers; now, some are reaching into the after-school realm.

The Boston Children's Museum has been offering professional-development workshops to after-school workers since the late 1990s. Museum instructors teach such practitioners how to deliver the curriculum for innovative science and engineering lessons, with such titles as 'raceways and roller coasters' or 'paper bridges,' and how to reach their students better.

While there are similarities to good classroom teaching, after-school instruction needs to be distinct, said Tim Porter, the museum's project director. In short, after-school instruction should delve deeper into subjects and provide a wider context for school day subject-matter content, he said, making the learning in school and out of school complement rather than supplement each other.

"Content learning in after-school likely doesn't mean a whole lot to children when presented out of context. It's knowing how to apply that content, understanding why it matters, and why they're learning it that helps them get it, adopt it, and retain it," Mr. Porter said. "If classrooms focus on content learning, and after-school programs focus on skill-building and contextualized application of that content, then we have a system where they work in concert to make kids' learning matter and make it stick."

While the museum recommends that staff members attend several workshops to truly master the concept of changing instruction in their after-school programs, given tight budgets, paying for multiple workshops is not always feasible. In addition to workshops, the Boston Museum supports the website Beyond the Chalkboard, built on a 480-page multidisciplinary curriculum handbook called "KIDS

Afterschool," described as the first free, online multidisciplinary curriculum created specifically for after-school educators. After-school instructors anywhere in the world have access to lesson plans and resources; the site has had more than 50,000 page views and in excess of 9,100 downloads of the curriculum since 2009.

While digital learning can't truly substitute for face-to-face professional development, Mr. Porter said, it does provide more opportunities for practitioners to access valuable content.

Self-Examination

But because of the challenges of cost and scalability, many think the best way to improve the quality of after-school staff members is by having programs self-evaluate and self-improve.

State after-school networks, like those in Arkansas and New Jersey, have put support behind building self-assessment tools that include sections on staff evaluation and professional development. And most recently, a self-evaluation study found the Youth Program Quality Intervention model, a system of training and assessment for out-of-school programs developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality at the Forum for Youth Investment, a Washington-based nonprofit that supports youth-development initiatives, had positive effects on improving staff instruction and program quality.

According to Nicole Yohalem, the director of special projects at the forum, the model is designed to provide an affordable and scalable means for programs to help themselves become better, particularly through staff development. Around 2,400 active sites use the model, and an estimated 17,000 staff members are served, at a cost of $250 to $2,000 per site.

Future Directions

While increasing the number of networks and sites seeking to improve the quality of their staffs, Ms. Yohalem and others say the only way to sustain and scale up after-school professionalization is for programs to set more requirements to evaluate their employees and provide training.

Although some states, such as Missouri and Washington, include staff evaluations and professional development as part of overall program evaluation mandated to maintain public funding, such measures are not the standard.

"The solution [to improving after-school programs]," said Nancy Peter, the director of the Out-of-School Time Resource Center at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, "is not to put funding solely into the program itself, but on building a sense of professionalism and professional identity among staff."

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Ed-Tech Credential Effort to Start With Online Teachers

Initiative aims to set national certification for school professionals

By Ian Quillen

An initiative that aims to establish national education technology certifications for administrators, classroom instructors, librarians, and professional-development specialists will begin by offering a credential to online teachers.

The Leading Edge Certification program for online teaching, launched last week by founding chairman Mike Lawrence, the executive director of Computer-Using Educators, a statewide advocacy group for educational technology in California, based in Walnut Creek, will be offered by nearly two dozen partners. They include the International Society for Technology in Education, or ISTE, and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, or iNACOL.

Leading Edge appears to be the first such national effort, though a few states have waded into certifying online teachers, and the Washington-based Consortium for School Networking is developing an accreditation program for chief technology officers.

The six- to eight-week Leading Edge Certification program, modeled after iNACOL's online-teaching standards with additional advice from initiative partners, is intended to evolve into the kind of national certification that boosters of online education have long pushed for. And it may be an especially good time for its unveiling, with teacher layoffs appearing to widen the pool of applicants—qualified or not—for jobs in online teaching.

"There's a huge influx of applications to online schools to teach online, but they're coming in with no [online teaching] back-ground," said Allison Powell, the vice president of state and district services for iNACOL, which has its headquarters in Vienna, Va. "We've worked with a lot of other programs that are trying to do a similar type of thing on more of a local level."

The Leading Edge course will be offered in online and blended formats for between $450 and $500 per teacher, depending on which partner is used as a provider.

'Common Understanding'

Ms. Powell hinted that achieving a national identity for the program may take some time, even though iNACOL and its constituents "want [online teachers] to be able to teach across the different borders, and have a kind of common understanding that 'this is what teachers need to know.' "

Other than iNACOL and ISTE, all but two partners are from within California borders. The exceptions: Lesley University, an 8,700-student institution in Cambridge, Mass., that serves mostly graduate students, and the New York State Association for Computing and Technologies in Education, or NYSCATE, New York's rough equivalent of Computer-Using Educators.

Further, the credential won't equate to a certification that can be added to a state-issued teaching license, in California or elsewhere. Georgia and Idaho have been pioneers in creating online-teaching endorsements that will eventually be required for all of a state's online teachers, but only a handful of other states have followed to offer such an award even as an optional endorsement.

And while the Leading Edge course may address the essential issues facing online instructors, those issues are rapidly changing.

That's why the Consortium for School Networking, or CoSN, has taken a differ-

ent tack in its new certification program for chief technology officers, which the Washington-based group announced 10 months ago in New Orleans at its annual convention.

Another Approach

In contrast to the Leading Edge Certification model, which includes coursework and assessment, CoSN's Certified Education Technology Leader, or CETL, program revolves around only a final examination that includes 115 multiple-choice questions and an essay portion.

Recipients of the CETL certification—designed to mirror the credentials bestowed on certified public accountants and project-management professionals—must have a bachelor's degree and have minimum of four years' experience working in education technology, but aspirants are not given a specific course of study preceding the examination. That makes it more likely those who pass the exam possess a broader range of knowledge than they would if they were instructed with the exam in mind, said Gayle Dahlman, CoSN's director of certification and education.

"The people of CoSN, with the exception of myself and one other person, have not seen the exam," said Ms. Dahlman, who has worked with an assessment specialist company, Prometric, based in Baltimore, to develop the test. "CoSN creates a lot of preparation materials, and you can use these preparation materials to study for the exam. But there is nothing out there that teaches to the test purposefully."

Those who pass the CETL exam will have to retake an updated version every three years to keep their certification, Ms. Dahlman said.

The creator of the Leading Edge Certification program, Mr. Lawrence, said what should speak for the quality of his certification program for online teachers is not necessarily its format, but the nature of the partners that have signed on. While ISTE and iNACOL carry significant heft in that regard, he added that it's equally important to note that all partner organizations come without commercial motives.

"There's been no involvement by for-profit companies in this project at all," he said. "It's not something that is bent toward a particular platform or tool or device."

> "
> There's a huge influx of applications to online schools to teach online, but they're coming in with no [online teaching] background"
>
> **ALLISON POWELL**
> Vice President, State and District Services, iNACOL

Setting the Standard

Leading Edge Certification, a group with roots in the education technology community of California, recently launched a certification program for online teachers that it hopes will become a national standard. Some specifics follow.

KEY PARTNERS:
Computer-Using Educators, International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), Lesley University, New York State Association for Computing and Technologies in Education (NYSCATE)

FORMAT:
Six- to eight-week online or blended course

DISTRIBUTION:
Initiative partner organizations will offer the course for $450 to $500 per student

AVAILABLE MID-2012:
Ed-tech certification for school administrators

AVAILABLE TBD:
Ed-tech certification for librarians, teachers in brick-and-mortar schools, professional-development coaches

SOURCE: Leading Edge Certification

Great Books Programs and the Common Core State Standards
for English Language Arts

GreatBooks
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The Great Books Foundation 800-222-5870 www.greatbooks.org

Introduction

The Great Books Foundation provides strong, inquiry-based language arts programs for grades K–12 that improve students' achievement in reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, and speaking and listening. Great Books programs combine classroom materials and the Shared Inquiry™ method of learning to provide the essential elements students need to meet and surpass the goals of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

The common standards grew out of an extended effort to develop national standards that would ensure that all students are "college and career ready" in literacy when they complete high school. The grade-specific standards are based on these broad "anchor standards." The following chart compares the anchor standards for English language arts with the characteristics of Great Books programs. For the complete common core standards, visit www.corestandards.org.

Both Great Books programs and the common standards share the goal of helping students master the skills and capacities of the literate individual. As articulated in the introduction to the common language arts standards, such students:

- Demonstrate independence as readers, thinkers, writers, speakers, and listeners
- Build strong content knowledge
- Respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique
- Value evidence
- Understand other perspectives and cultures

Reading

Common Standards

Key Ideas and Details

Students should be able to:
- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas

Great Books Programs

Great Books programs use thematically rich, diverse literature from renowned authors. Interpretive activities accompany each reading selection to build strong reading and analytic skills that can reach across all disciplines. Students learn to:
- Strategically read and annotate a text
- Generate ideas about the meaning of a text
- Infer, evaluate, and revise ideas
- Support and summarize arguments with reasoning and evidence

For more information about Great Books programs, contact the sales representative for your state at 800.222.5870 or visit www.greatbooks.org.

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Reading, continued

Common Standards

Great Books Programs

Craft and Structure

Students should be able to:

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text; determine technical, connotative, and figurative meanings; and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone
- Analyze the structure of a text and understand how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole

Through multiple readings, students analyze a text to examine how key words, phrases, and passages affect meaning. The combination of high-quality literature, Shared Inquiry discussion, and interpretive activities helps students discover how parts of a text relate to the whole to create a deeper understanding of the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Students should be able to:

- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or compare the approaches the authors take

Through Shared Inquiry students:

- Interpret the meaning of a text, taking into consideration the ideas of others to gain deeper insight
- Develop, articulate, and support their own ideas stating them clearly and fully
- Agree and disagree constructively

Cross-text activities provide students with opportunities to compare and contrast multiple texts, both thematically and stylistically.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Students should be able to read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Great Books Programs use high-quality, age-appropriate fiction and nonfiction, selected to challenge the reader and spark rigorous discussion. Great Books literary selections require multiple readings to uncover layers of meaning. These complex texts stimulate thought-provoking interpretive questions to sustain Shared Inquiry discussion.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

Students should be able to:

- Write arguments to support claims and analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content

Great Books programs integrate writing with reading and discussion. Instructional activities and materials focus on how to write well-organized expository, creative, and interpretive essays. Writing is integrated throughout the program as a tool for thinking. Activities include:

- Writing notes, responses, and questions to spark original thinking
- Taking guided notes to develop a personal response to literature
- Stating, supporting, and modifying a thesis in writing

Writing, continued

Common Standards	Great Books Programs
Production and Distribution of Writing	
Students should be able to: • Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience • Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach	Great Books writing activities focus on the development, organization, and clear articulation of ideas consistent with purpose and audience. Writing activities rely on modeling, guided practice, and use of templates to organize thinking. Students edit and revise their writing with the help of peer reviews and rubrics.
Research to Build and Present Knowledge	
Students should be able to: • Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation • Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism	Students have opportunities to research background questions related to readings. Suggestions for related projects encourage students to use a range of print and digital sources to investigate topics and themes.
Range of Writing	
Students should be able to write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.	Writing is integrated throughout each Great Books unit as students write questions, make notes on interpretive issues, respond to interpretive questions before and after Shared Inquiry, and write expository, creative, or evaluative essays. Writing activities take place over a range of time frames.

Speaking and Listening

Common Standards	Great Books Programs
Comprehension and Collaboration	
Students should be able to: • Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively • Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric	Conversation and collaboration is integral to all interpretive activities in the Great Books program. In Shared Inquiry discussion students experience the power of language to communicate complex ideas, persuade others, and provoke thought. Students learn to work confidently in a group as they: • Develop, articulate, and support interpretations • Explain and defend concepts and ideas • Listen attentively • Agree and disagree with others constructively • Synthesize and build on others' ideas

Speaking and Listening, continued

Common Standards

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Students should be able to present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Great Books Programs

In Shared Inquiry discussion and in other Great Books activities students learn to organize, explain, and support their ideas. The text selections and interpretive activities engage students in thoughtful exploration and exchange of complex ideas. A variety of rubrics provide criteria for personal, peer, and teacher assessments.

Language

Conventions of Standard English

Students should be able to demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Great Books programs provide students with opportunities to demonstrate command of English grammar and usage as they analyze, discuss, and write about challenging literature.

Knowledge of Language

Students should be able to apply knowledge of language to understand how it functions in different contexts, so that they can make effective choices for meaning or style and comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Students analyze texts, examining the subtleties of how language affects meaning or style. Students learn the impact of specific words and details and focus on specific sentences and passages to comprehend more fully.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Students should be able to determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Vocabulary is acquired and used throughout the interpretive activities; specific vocabulary activities teach students to:

- Comprehend through context clues
- Understand word parts and multiple-meaning words
- Understand figures of speech
- Consult reference materials

Great Books Program of Professional Development

The Great Books Program of Professional Development offers concrete, step-by-step instruction in how to use the Shared Inquiry method with Great Books materials. Teachers develop skills to help students become critical readers, thinkers, and writers. Course participants discover how and why students learn through the Shared Inquiry method. Course participants also learn to:

Recognized as effective by the National Staff Development Coucil

- Implement the Shared Inquiry method to improve reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills
- Practice the facilitative stance of the leader in Shared Inquiry discussion
- Use questioning strategies and interpretive activities to support deeper thinking and comprehension
- Integrate writing into the reading process
- Use Shared Inquiry strategies with a variety of challenging texts across the curriculum

The Great Books Foundation also offers a variety of customized courses and consultation services.

Shared Inquiry™ is a trademark of the Great Books Foundation.

AL-CCSS 1/11

TEACHINGAHEAD:
A Roundtable

COMMENTARY

Teachers as 'Lead Learners'

By Sarah Brown Wessling

I like to tell my students that in our classroom, we're working to flatten the hierarchies that separate teacher from student. I remind them that anyone who comes into our classroom—students, administrators, community members—gets elevated to the status of learner because there isn't more crucial work we do. Yet, living this *elevated* learner culture is a tall order when it comes to leveraging that philosophy across an entire school, district or state. In my inaugural year as a hybrid teacher (½ the day in the classroom and the other ½ as professional development coordinator for our district) I've learned a lot about what it means to use professional learning to impact not only student achievement, but also learning culture. Here are five snapshots from my learning this year.

Presenting vs. Teaching

So many times I've heard teachers say, "Please don't stand up and talk to me about inquiry, teach that way too!" I agree. Professional learning undermines itself when we don't *teach* it. If we're extolling the virtues of productive group work, then our learners need to be learning by doing productive group work and not just sitting and passively hearing about it. If we want teachers to be learners first then we need to help them feel that same struggle, nurturing, and excitement they will recreate in their own classrooms.

When Teachers Do the Teaching

When teachers are put in positions to lead their peers, to share their own struggles and successes, colleagues listen. When teachers can close that gap between research and reality, between the vision and how to get there, we're offering our learners a peek into the metacognition of *teaching*. When teachers can "think aloud," when they can make what's intrinsic, suddenly extrinsic to each other, we can shift that culture.

Systems Thinking

Rather than having the mindset that we're aiming to develop stronger teachers, we must think about cultivating better teaching throughout a system. When I work with administrators, I've often asked them to consider what their "teaching moments" are during a day. Part of our professional learning plans must address the ways in which we all teach everyday, how we all *live learning every day*.

As a system sees itself comprised, not of isolated parts that work best on a linear path, but as a flattened hierarchy with a compass towards teaching and learning, we'll not only see the impact of curious pursuit, we'll also see that teacher-leader or leader-teacher really means *lead learner.*

Sarah Brown Wessling is a high school English teacher at Johnston High School in Johnston, Iowa. She is also serving as TCHr Laureate for the Teaching Channel and was the 2010 National Teacher of the Year.

COMMENTARY

PD That's Mine to Keep

By Jessica Hahn

When I first began teaching, I had one measure for the quality of any professional development experience: Did I walk away with something I could implement the next day in my specific grade?

I loved sessions where a teacher of my same grade would tell me a bunch of math games to play or how to set up centers during guided reading. Better yet were those sessions I walked away from with a packet. It could be a packet outlining books for certain writing skills, listing songs for morning meeting, or containing actual pre-made centers ready to cut out. No matter what was inside, I had information that was mine to keep.

Recently I've noticed a trend around coaching teachers. Coaches will come in your classroom and either whisper to you the exact words to say in that moment, or interrupt you and model what you should say and how in the moment. I see the value in modeling and in giving teachers specific

Jessica Hahn has taught elementary grade children for six years in Phoenix and New York City.

TEACHINGAHEAD: A Roundtable

language. We do that with our students. We model for them. We give some of them sentence stems to get them started. I've even whispered into a child's ear the exact question I wanted her to ask her partner right then and there.

But something in this coaching doesn't sit right with me. Underlying this style of development seems to be the belief that teacher learning is about a transference of skills. I believe that professional development, no matter how it's done, must be about teachers developing a deep understanding rather than just a set of skills. I hold myself to that same expectation when teaching my own students. For example, I don't just model writing a realistic fiction story and expect

them to do it. We talk about why and when you write one. We discuss our mistakes and why our really good ideas are really good. That way my students can write independently in different contexts.

Now, after six years of teaching, I still love a session when I walk out with a handout or an idea I can use the next day. But it's not my only measure, and it's certainly not my most important one. I want a session or a coach that explores problems in student learning with me or guides me to deepen my understanding and practice. Now that is truly information that is all mine to keep.

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COMMENTARY

Thoughts From a PD Connoisseur

By Delonna Halliday

Call me a PD connoisseur. A class on how to use a new online math program that assesses and offers remediation? I'm there. A workshop on brain theory and how to implement new strategies? I'll pay for the three-day retreat. Fortunately, I have a husband who juggles childcare and his own job to support my passion for (addiction to?) professional development.

That said, I do have some PD pet peeves:

1) Classes I'm forced to take. Arbitrary decisions about my professional learning rub me the wrong way. It is like saying, "So, Del, I've never seen you teach, and your students' test scores are fine … but since two-thirds of the other 4th grade teachers need help with reading instruction, you must attend this class." That's when my inner strong-willed child comes out. I'm already loathing the course, even as I click on the "register" button.

2) False advertising. Once, a "math education" workshop wound up being a two-hour discussion about an article I can summarize in one sentence: "People with a math degree teach math more effectively." That's it. No helpful strategies for those of us who were theater majors.

Enough whining. All in all, I appreciate PD—and I've sampled enough to have some solid advice for administrators:

■ Separate training and PD. If there is a new

math curriculum or technology initiative, the time and cost of training must be included in the implementation costs—not borrowed from PD budgets.

■ Open up the definition of "PD" and invite teachers to make decisions about it. Does PD have to be a district workshop or a college course? What if PD funds could pay for a substitute so we could view other classes, or so we could set aside time for action research? If effective evaluation systems are in place, teachers should have a sense of the areas in which they need to grow. From there, they can build individual learning plans.

■ Provide participants with time, space, and tools to collaborate after a "PD session." Research shows this step is critical to effective PD. After I spend some time thinking about new ideas and how I might implement them, follow-up conversations can help me fine-tune my plans.

■ Set aside time for teachers to share and reflect. I love a good Show and Tell! An annual district-wide PD fair could expose us to how our colleagues have explored new teaching strategies and adjusted their classroom practice. Even when something isn't successful, that's still an opportunity for growth and learning.

And one final question I keep mulling over: If a district adhered to the approach above, how might PD link to an individual teacher's evaluation?

Delonna Halliday is a 4th grade teacher at Grant Center for the Expressive Arts in Tacoma, Wash.

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Where Real PD Comes From: Self-Reflection

By Jessica Shyu

They say love for oneself is the best kind of love of all. And so it's with great pride that I share that my best professional development over the past seven years has been what I've done for myself personally.

Don't get me wrong—I love PD. It isn't just my job, it's my lifestyle. My Friday night happy hours used to be spent debating how to balance skill-building with knowledge-sharing. I hauled my five-pound All Kinds of Minds notebook all the way to rural China. I used to have a thing for Doug Lemov.

But at the end of the day, when I think about the times I've learned and grown the most, it wasn't from an expert teacher trainer, prescribed resources, or even the perfect balance of skill and knowledge.

It usually happened when sitting in my pajamas in bed, on my laptop after a few really crappy weeks in the classroom. It often took a glass or two of wine for me to get honest with myself about all the stress-inducing questions, such as: What do I want for my kids? Where are they now? Why is this happening? What am I doing to cause it? What's keeping me from changing? What do I need specifically now?

Usually, that specific help could be found in nothing fancier than that teacher across the hall, on the Internet, or in one of the million teacher books lying around my apartment. I might have been surrounded by resource-laden Teach For America workshops, trainings led by experts, and individualized observations and feedback from my program director, but until I had initiated my personal reflections on what was needed for me and my students, those experiences weren't moving me forward.

Of course, knowing how to self-reflect takes professional development in itself. But it's just not usually the kind of development that takes place on a Friday afternoon when everyone is forced to pore over mountains of testing data and fill out a next steps template.

Self-reflection is a personal process (duh). It's almost too warm and fuzzy to mandate, but I think it can be encouraged or fostered. As head of teacher training for Teach For China, one of my strategies for the coming year includes small, in-person support groups of teachers and trainers meeting throughout the year to reflect on their experiences and development, setting up their own PD plans, and holding each other accountable. Actual skill-building learning experiences will be based on what people say they need most.

The point is to give teachers some space to figure out what they need. If some teachers reflect better with Excel and templates, that's great. But if others require a meditative hike to ponder what the heck is going wrong and right, that's wonderful as well.

Jessica Shyu is Vice President of Regional Affairs and Training & Support with Teach For China, a part of the Teach For All global network. Prior to joining Teach For China, Jessica was a special education teacher and staff member with Teach For America.

*Published May 15, 2012 in Education Week Teaching Ahead Roundtable*

Bionic PD: Half Live, Half Digital

By Jennie Magiera

Differentiated. Relevant. Engaging. These are all words used to describe quality instruction. Yet how ironic is it that they so rarely describe the professional development of teachers. Most of the time we are talked at for several hours on a Saturday morning, or in the afternoon after a long day in the classroom, with nothing to engage us but a conciliatory bowl of candy. This would not stand in our classrooms, so why does it with teacher PD?

It doesn't have to be this way. If providers of teacher professional learning were to simply adhere to the tenants of good teaching themselves, much could be improved. I've been to extremely engaging PD sessions—all of which have been hands on, driven by participants, and immediately relevant to my practice. In these shining examples of teacher learning, the presenters acted more as resources than as lecturers—allowing us to guide our own learning and drive the content through our questions and curiosities.

After such sessions, I always leave refreshed,
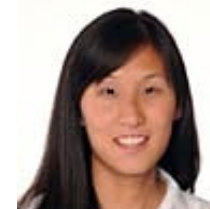
Jennie Magiera is a 4th and 5th grade math teacher and a technology and mathematics curriculum coach in Chicago Public Schools. A Teacher Leaders Network member, she is the 2012 Chicago Public Schools Tech Innovator of the Year and author of the blog Teaching Like It's 2999.

renewed, and excited to learn more. At the same time, I regret that the session was over. My discussions with colleagues are ended and I have to go back to the "grind." How could I continue my learning from the session?

Ah, the Internet. Sites such as Teacher-Tube, The Teaching Channel and social media outlets like Twitter have made self-serve PD as simple as a mouse click or hash tag. There is a simple beauty to being able to access the classrooms and ideas of teachers from around the world while sitting comfortably in your pajamas on a Sunday. So, one may argue, why have live professional development at all? Why not digitize the whole thing?

While online learning has become revolutionary for teacher learning, I believe in-person discussions are what ignites our curiosity and drive to seek out additional knowledge and interaction. I am most excited when fueled by the in-person conversations, questions, and ideas of fellow educators in these workshops. The challenges brought up in discussion push me to think differently and strive to improve my practice. It no longer is about whether I feel like clicking on that link I saw on Twitter or the video on a teaching website. I am engaged by the back-and-forth discourse and then inspired to go home and seek out that video or blog post to further my thinking.

So what I propose is for districts to consider a hybrid approach: a differentiated, relevant, and engaging live PD to whet teachers' curiosities and ignite their passions, then an online platform for teachers to continue to learn and pursue their new thirst for knowledge.

WEB LINKS

EDUCATION WEEK RESOURCES

Resources on Professional Development

NOW FEATURING INTERACTIVE HYPERLINKS.
Just click and go.

Assessing the Value-Added Effects of Literacy Collaborative Professional Development on Student Learning
http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/653468
Gina Biancarosa, Anthony S. Bryk, and Emily R. Dexter
The Elementary School Journal, The University of Chicago, 2010

Beyond the Chalkboard
http://www.beyondthechalkboard.com/

Common Core State Standards: Progress and Challenges in School Districts' Implementation
http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=374
Nancy Kober and Diane Stark Rentner
Center on Education Policy, September 2011

Core-Competencies for Afterschool Trainers
http://www.naaweb.org/default.asp?contentID=694
National Afterschool Association, March 2009

CoSN's Certified Education Technology Leader (CETL) Certification Exam
http://www.cosn.org/Certification/HowtoApply/tabid/9141/Default.aspx

Center for Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative at Lesley University
http://www.lesley.edu/crr/

The Hunt Institute YouTube Channel
http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute

Leading Edge Certification
http://leadingedgecertification.org/

Literacy Collaborative
http://literacycollaborative.org/

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