

SPOTLIGHT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



RTTT Pilot Project Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 3

April 2012

Seven Levers of Reform

- Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement
- Induction
- Professional Development
- Supervision and Evaluation
- Teacher Leadership
- Organizational Structure
- Adult Professional Culture

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Standards for Professional Development

When selecting the questions that would guide this newsletter, we were inspired by the work of Learning Forward, an international association dedicated to ensuring that “every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.” Learning Forward’s standards for professional learning, listed briefly here and available in expanded form on the organization’s website, are reflected in the activities and goals of the educational stakeholders featured in this newsletter. Brockton’s coherent professional development approach uses **learning designs** based in current research and considers

the strategic use of **resources**. In Springfield, **learning communities** collaborate to learn from readily available student **data**. Experienced educator Kathy Dunne addresses some of the ways in which districts can sustain the **implementation** of professional development over time through shared and supportive **leadership**. Practitioners Phuong Luong and Eugene Roundtree consider the **outcomes** of PD for both teachers and students. In one way or another, all of the districts and individuals whose perspectives are represented in this newsletter are focused on the key questions about lifelong learning reflected in the LF standards.

Learning Forward: Standards for Professional Learning
Learning Communities
Leadership
Resources
Data
Learning Designs
Implementation
Outcomes
<small>(http://www.learningforward.org/standards/standards.cfm)</small>

Brockton Public Schools: Building a Unified Vision Through Focused Professional Development

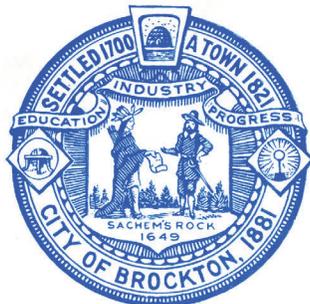
Faced with the challenge of mobilizing a hardworking urban district around increasingly ambitious goals, Brockton superintendent Matt Malone adopted a mantra: less is more. This philosophy is evident in the district’s mission statement, developed early in Dr. Malone’s tenure. Only four words long, it nevertheless speaks volumes: *Learn, Teach, Inspire, Achieve*. In the spirit of that mission statement, Dr. Malone’s leadership in Brockton has been characterized by a focus on the essentials of teaching and learning, reinforced by a targeted approach to professional development.

Brockton’s successes have been

the subject of national attention. Promising trends in student achievement, which began about a decade ago, were bolstered by the exemplary efforts at Brockton High School. Among the district’s growing, increasingly diverse student population, achievement remains strong. Moreover, unlike many other urban districts, the state’s fourth-largest district educates the vast majority of its children in traditional public schools. As a new superintendent, Dr. Malone understood the importance of capitalizing on the district’s existing strengths, including a dedicated and largely local teaching force. “I’ve worked in five school systems,” says the

superintendent, “and from top to bottom I’ve never been in a place that has such talent.”

Dr. Malone’s strategic plan, known as Realigning Resources for Results (R³), is meant to harness and strengthen these existing assets. Now in its second year of implementation, and aligned with the seven levers of the Human Resource Pilot Project, R³ further exemplifies the “less is more” philosophy; originally including 29 strategic initiatives, the plan now consists of a focused eleven, grouped into the categories of Learning and Teaching, Performance Management, Realigning Resources, and **[continued on page 2]**



**Learn, Teach,
Inspire, Achieve**
**-Mission
Statement,
Brockton Public
Schools**

Brockton Public Schools: Building a Unified Vision

[continued from page 1]
Human Capital.

Part of Brockton's plan includes the generation of a uniform set of criteria for professional development, to be applied to external and internal providers alike. The use of professional development criteria is closely aligned with the overall goal of R³: to ensure the effective use of resources. Strong partnerships with Research for Better Teaching, the National Institute for School Leadership, and other organizations have led to targeted professional development opportunities. With many areas of interest and insufficient time to address them all, Brockton administrators will use the criteria to select the most appropriate providers and initiatives.

External professional development providers are used to great effect in Brockton, but in Dr. Malone's view the resources for meaningful professional development are already present within Brockton's capable workforce. Currently, selected Brockton practitioners deliver citywide trainings for elementary school teachers in writing, reading, and math. Dr. Malone also sees the widely-praised Brockton High School as a viable model of success for the entire district, and has been exploring ways in which its strategies and keen pedagogical focus can be extended downward to K-8 classrooms. Noting that the district has only to look in its own backyard for exemplary practices, Dr. Malone has been encouraging visitors from other schools within the system. In his view, the entire district must work as a team to sustain Brockton's upward movement.

This collective mentality also

fuels another initiative, the development of non-negotiable PD experiences common to all Brockton teachers. Numerous systems that Dr. Malone and his team have redesigned, from classroom walk-through protocols to whole-school improvement plans, are all aligned with the district goals and used throughout the district. One successful initiative has been a K-12 writing effort, drawn from practices at the high school and extended throughout the system. Faculty members have been communicating across grade levels to share ideas and successes. Dr. Malone draws upon his military background for an analogy: just as every Marine is a rifleman, every teacher is a teacher of writing. The comparison has power, and aptly describes a vision in which each member of the school community, from physical education teachers to guidance counselors to Dr. Malone himself, is united by a common goal.

Despite his belief in the power of alignment, Dr. Malone is committed to striking a balance between systemic values and individual school autonomy. Citing Richard Elmore, he speaks of a combination of "tight and loose coupling" in which district-wide core values are well-defined, but individual schools—"the unit of change"—make decisions about how they will operate within that core. Professional development within an individual school should support both the school goals and the district goals. A well-defined core allows for what Dr. Malone calls "top-down, bottom-up pressure," a guiding administrative structure in Brockton: the district establishes criteria, lets individual schools decide upon the model, and then supports

and monitors their efforts.

No matter how sound its purposes, Dr. Malone maintains that professional development is only effective if it influences teaching practice. The district's plan calls for expanded assessment of professional development through participant feedback, classroom observation, and student data as appropriate. Each building in Brockton has a data team, and these teams are already involved in evaluating the impact of professional development. Again, the R³ philosophy rings clear: if teachers aren't learning something that will influence their practice, professional development adds little value.

"What you need to know about Brockton," says Dr. Malone, "is that people grew up here and want to work here." The significant number of Brockton alumni currently employed by the district engenders a sense of pride and continuity, with positive effects that are evident in the district's success. Brockton's core values carry a sense of Brockton's history, challenges, and promising future: learning, respect, community, ideas, hard work, and accountability. "The coolest thing," says Dr. Malone, "is the alignment between those values and who we really are." With professional learning opportunities that support both a district vision and the needs of each school community, these values will continue to define a Brockton education.

For more on Brockton's professional development strategies, see page 4.

Two Practitioners Discuss Effective Professional Development

Effective professional development is crucial for any practitioner who wants to grow in his or her field. Eugene Roundtree is a high school Biology teacher with Boston Public Schools and Phuong Luong works as a special educator with Cambridge Public Schools. We recently had a conversation about our experiences with PD. We also discussed the impacts of PD on our teaching practice, how PD impacts should be measured, and how teachers can get involved with their school or district's planning of PD.

What types of PD have been most helpful?

ER: The most helpful professional development activities for me have been the ones that have involved collaborative work with colleagues, opportunities to watch and reflect on good practice, and to have others watch my practice and give me constructive feedback. These are the components of Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model, which allows teachers in subject area teams to decide on a course of study, what they would like to learn or improve about their

practice, and meet to discuss best practices. CCL includes a protocol-driven observation cycle where teachers discuss issues in their practice, are observed by peers, and then receive feedback about their practice and steps they can take to improve.

PL: I've had similar experiences as Gene in that some of the most effective PD for me had built-in collaboration with colleagues. The most valuable PD for me was a shared experience - every special educator in my school district was required to complete the same course within the first year of employment. This gave us a common language base with which to collaborate, to use with our students, and to use as a foundation to help improve each other's teaching during formal or informal consultations.

ER: I also took a graduate course designed to increase content area knowledge for teachers. It combined subject-specific learning and lesson observation with the opportunity to create new lessons and receive feedback.

PL: Building content area knowledge was very important to me as well. One excellent

PD course required me to engage with the material of the course throughout the school year. I utilized what I learned in the course as well as the course materials on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis in my work with students, teachers, and parents. Not coincidentally, the content and design of this PD course were based on extensively research-based teaching approaches.

How has PD impacted your practice?

ER: I've used professional development to deepen my content area knowledge and my ability to teach specific curricula. However, these impacts have only been measured through surveys about my attitudes about the PD and teaching it; they haven't been linked to student performance or my professional evaluations.

PL: Some PD experiences have been more valuable than others. As a special educator, a big part of my work is assessment, data collection, and evaluation report writing in order to communicate with each student's educational team, often involving general educators, [continued on page 8]



“[Shared professional development] gave us a common language base with which to collaborate, to use with our students, and... to help improve each other's teaching”
-Phuong Luong,
Cambridge Public Schools

Designing Sustainable Professional Development: An Interview with Kathy Dunne

What are the characteristics of effective professional development?

In describing effective professional development, there are what I would call key drivers as well as key characteristics. Key drivers of effective professional development include that it is: standards-based, results-oriented, and focused on student learning and achievement. *Learning Forward* is a premier national and international organization that has led the way in defining seven research-

based standards for effective professional development [see p. 1]. In the 2011 revision of those standards, *Learning Forward* also made the shift from the term “professional development” to “professional learning,” citing the rationale for this shift as signaling the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous improvement with an emphasis on learning. For purposes of our interview, let's continue to use the term professional development and I would invite

our readers to consider making the shift to using the term professional learning as they create and implement their programs. As an increasingly shared common vision of effective student learning has emerged, principles or characteristics of effective professional development have been identified. A resource I often use is *Designing Professional Development for Teachers of Science and Mathematics, 3rd ED. (2010)* by Susan Loucks-Horsley, et al. The text [continued on p. 6]

Using Citywide Trainings to Support Alignment in Brockton

Citywide trainings—half-day professional development sessions designed and led by staff members from within the district—bring together all Brockton teachers from a specific grade level around specific goals and strategies derived from student assessment data. Elizabeth Barry, Brockton’s Executive Director of Teaching and Learning (K-8), shared several of the ways in which these trainings have lent coherence to the district’s work:

- Citywide professional development is tied to specific practices that support broad aims. Far-reaching goals at the elementary, middle school, and high school level, which are taken from the Superintendent’s R3 Plan for Learning and Teaching, have been broken down so that ownership of the goals is felt at each grade level. These grade-level goals are supported by formative and summative assessment data, through which the district has identified specific skills in need of intervention, and further translated to concrete instructional requirements in the core instructional blocks. Citywide trainings focus on the implementation of those instructional requirements, specifically at the elementary level, which was identified as a priority based on assessment data, so that teachers at each grade actively support their students’ work toward an ambitious proficiency goal.
- In order to enhance building-level support for implementation, professional development is delivered from a leadership perspective as well as an instructional perspective. If all third grade teachers are learning a particular strategy, elementary school administrators also discuss the strategy in their monthly meetings. Monitoring and implementation of the new strategy are supported by this consistent message; administrators know what to look for when visiting classrooms and how to support teachers in the implementation phase. There is a direct relationship between instructional practice and instructional leadership.
- The implementation of strategies learned in professional development is supported and monitored on two levels: at a building level through administrator observations, and at a district level through periodic reports and common formative assessments. Principals are required to discuss these observations and assessments during their monthly principal cohort meetings. Rather than waiting for MCAS results to measure the success of professional development, the district measures progress by focusing on the data derived from observation of instructional practice and formative student assessment data.
- Citywide professional development is planned by the Office of Learning and Teaching, including the district’s Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies coordinators. However, many professional development activities are developed in collaboration with the Bilingual and Special Education Departments. This collaboration, according to Barry, ensures that “everyone hears a common message, common language, and common expectations... When we design professional development, we want to make sure that it’s relevant to all who participate, resulting in an immediate application to enhance the learning in their classroom.” Not all teachers can attend all professional development sessions, yet Brockton wants the content of its professional development to be consistent across the district. Therefore, the Professional Development committee is exploring various formats for the delivery of professional development, beyond traditional face-to-face sessions. By spreading common expectations and common language to a larger variety of adult learners, the district hopes to more effectively sustain change over time.
- As mentioned on page 2, Brockton is in the process of identifying non-negotiable professional development experiences—things that every Brockton teacher should know and be able to do. To ensure that this initiative reaches all Brockton teachers, the Professional Development committee will be working with the Comprehensive Induction committee to embed the non-negotiable experiences within the new teacher induction program.
- To ensure that half-day trainings would be minimally disruptive to students, the district made an effort to hire and support a core group of substitute teachers who provide assistance on designated professional development days. It is important to note that schools also develop their own professional development based on their school assessment data and student populations. Professional development at the site level is ongoing during the year, and is documented within each school’s School Improvement Plan. Efforts are monitored and supported by the district walkthrough process. The combination of district-developed training and tailored opportunities ensures a professional development system that is both cohesive and responsive.

Evaluating and Assessing PD

Guskey (2005/2006) contextualized a common evaluation model (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick) to the realm of education, coming up with the following levels (summarized by Zepeda, 2012):

Level	Sample Questions
Level 1: Participants’ Reactions	Did participants find the experiences enjoyable and useful?
Level 2: Participants’ Learning	Did they increase their knowledge or skill?
Level 3: Organizational Support and change	With a shift from the individual learner toward larger organizational issues, were participants supported in order to implement their new
Level 4: Participants’ Use of New Knowledge and Skills	Are participants implementing new skills and knowledge?
Level 5: Student Learning Outcomes	Did the learning have an impact on or affect student achievement?

“Informative to Transformative”: Responsive Professional Development as a Labor/Management Initiative in Springfield

A recent Rennie Center report details the renewed collaboration between the Springfield Public Schools and its labor union, the Springfield Education Association. The district’s move toward shared decision-making, informed by data, has helped a large system to respond to the specific and varied needs of its schools and students.

Professional development has been an area of labor-management collaboration since the early 1990s, but has undergone significant maturation in recent years, according to Chief Schools Redesign Officer Kate Fenton. In 1993, faced with the need to relicensure 2,600 teachers, SEA President Melanie Kasparian negotiated seven full days of professional development into the teachers’ contract. At that time, says Fenton, the seven days were seen as an “equally beneficial opportunity” in which teachers received the PDPs needed for relicensure, and the district had access to their teachers for thirty-five hours of district-determined professional development each year. A dramatic cultural shift occurred a decade later, when, over a four-year contract negotiation, the district lost hundreds of experienced teachers, many of them with teaching experience in the 9-15 year range. Recognizing the dire effects of a lack of collaboration with the state-appointed control board, the district worked with the Rennie Center to repair the deep divide between SPS and the SEA. Together, the groups created two new positions: instructional leadership specialist and teacher leader. These valued coaches and content specialists, present in every school, have become the cornerstone of a responsive new professional

development approach. The effectiveness of Springfield’s formerly centralized professional development was limited by the disconnect between teachers’ ability to take in information and their ability to enact it. With the appointment of the instructional leadership specialists, who have the capacity to deliver professional development in context and in real time, teachers have found new value in professional development. “The powerful missing piece,” says Fenton, “was that bridge between getting information and actually using it and receiving feedback.” Once “informative,” she says, professional development has become “transformative.” Two of the seven professional development days are still district days, devoted to deepening teachers’ knowledge base in their content area. For the other five days, decision-making power has been given to school-based instructional leadership teams. There is direction from the district—for example, a current initiative involves using a robust benchmark data system to reteach and reassess, and the five on-site professional development days are strategically scheduled to follow benchmark assessments—but each ILT then uses its own school improvement plan to design targeted professional development. The results have been promising. Because

teachers were not merely trained to use the district’s new data system, but given the time, space, and support to act upon it in ways that fit their students’ needs, collaboration around data is now a valued activity in all district schools. According to Fenton, the district’s next major professional development initiative involves the establishment of demonstration sites within schools. This step is meant to enrich the existing professional development process: teachers learn new techniques during the district professional development days, enact them with the guidance of the coach, and now will be able to see them in action. The district is currently looking into incentives for designated “Effective Educator Coaches,” who will not only open their classrooms as demonstration sites but also serve as mentors to new teachers—an essential role in a district that continues to rebuild after the loss of so many experienced faculty members. As the district and union collaborate to establish and incentivize this position, they continue Springfield’s trend of using innovative professional development to respond to the district’s complex and ever-changing needs.



“The powerful missing piece... was that bridge between getting information and actually using it.”

-Kate Fenton, Chief Schools Redesign Officer, Springfield

From Springfield’s Definition of a Successful School:

The successful school’s professional learning community is based on a commitment to achieving high standards of learning for each and every child. Administrators and faculty are committed to a process of continuously collaborating to strengthen their own skills and knowledge so as to better serve the students. Professionals are attentive to the whole child, including his/her social and emotional needs. The school has induction and mentoring programs for new teachers. Leadership roles are shared among members and the professional development work is based on data on student performance and needs. There is adequate time for genuine, collaborative professional work and learning. There is an open, respectful dialogue between all parties and a high level of trust. In the end, the professional community is focused on meeting the personal learning needs of all of the students. (Rennie Center, 2012, p. 20)

An Interview With Kathy Dunne, Continued

[continued from page 3]

identifies eight principles that build on the knowledge base of what constitutes effective student learning and professional development. Even though these principles come from the context of science and mathematics, they are applicable across all subject areas starting with an image of what effective classroom learning and teaching look like. Whether we are thinking about key drivers, standards or characteristics of effective professional development, an important takeaway is that “one size does not fit all.” Therefore, effective professional development responds to building and district goals as well as the unique learning needs of individual adult learners.

How can we plan this kind of differentiated instruction for individuals?

In the work we do within WestEd, one of the key ways we differentiate PD is by considering the concerns people have in response to innovations and designing accordingly. This is not easy to do and requires being vigilant about continuing to check the pulse of where people are in the process. It means that it is vital to continually gather and analyze data about teacher learning just as we do in support of student learning.

The *Concerns-based Adoption Model (C-BAM)* is particularly helpful in this regard. C-BAM was developed in 1970 at the University of Texas, Austin and has been validated and used in national and international circles for several decades to identify stages of con-

cern and levels of use around a given innovation. There are seven stages of concern that we all experience as we take on new ideas or innovations. At each stage of concern or level of use, people have predictable questions that range from personal to task to impact-level concerns. Paying attention to the questions people have at various points in time as they take on a new idea is essential in effectively differentiating the professional development provided. All too often we see examples of PD designs that respond to the “how to” or “how this will affect student learning” questions before adequately responding to personal-level questions (e.g., What is this idea? What does this look like in practice? How will this affect me?).

There is also a Stages of Concerns Questionnaire (SoCQ) that can be customized based on the implementation of a specific innovation. The data generated from the SoCQ questionnaire provides PD designers with great information about “where a particular group is” at a given point in time so that PD can be differentiated to meet specific needs within a given group.

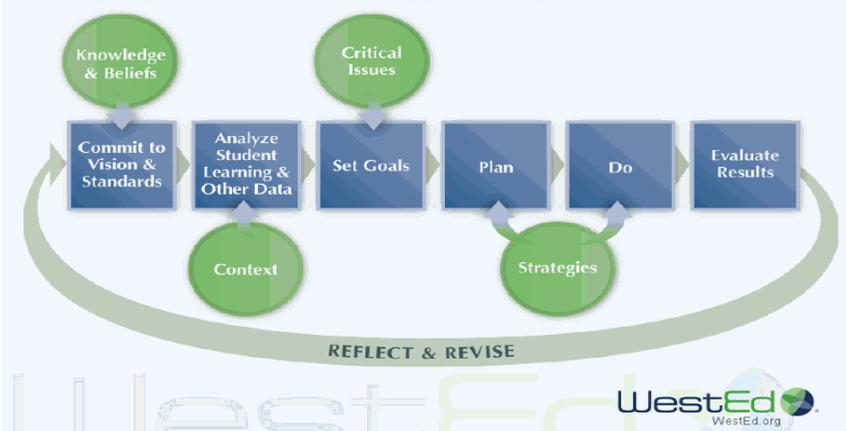
How can professional development be designed to have a maximum impact on instruction and student learning?

Your question gets right to the heart of the matter. Effective professional development is a design task with student learning in the center. It requires an intentional

process of identifying key inputs of knowledge and beliefs, examining the context, critical issues and related data, and identifying and strategically implementing a variety of professional development strategies to meet the specific learning needs of educators. Effective PD design is not about developing a menu of professional learning opportunities, but is about orchestrating an integrated set of learning experiences driven by student and teacher learning data. We are seeing less of the menu approach as professional learning communities and other such structures are being implemented in schools and districts, and we still have work to do.

There is a professional development design framework [see inset] that we use that considers the key inputs I just mentioned in conjunction with an action planning process to allow for a systemic, data-driven design. Used well, this framework allows any school or district to create a sustainable professional development model that provides differentiation within the system and for individual educators. When you first look at it, the framework may appear linear. However, it is intended to be an iterative process of data analysis and use, planning, implementation, assessment and revision. The group designing the PD (including teachers, administrators, and external support people) examines its knowledge and beliefs about learners and learning, teachers and teaching, the nature of the content, PD, and the change process. Context refers to the unique features of the district: who are the students, and what are their learning needs? Similarly, who are their teachers and what are their learning needs? What are the assessment practices? What’s the organizational culture? This is where we consider data about leadership, policy, available resources, and the families and communities that those schools serve. The third input is critical issues, including building capacity for sustainability, finding and making time for professional learning, developing the leadership, ensuring equity, building a professional learning culture, garnering support, and then scaling it up. The last input is strategies. These are organized into four categories: Immersion in content strategies and research, examining teaching and learning, aligning and implementing cur-

Professional Development Design Framework



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[continued from previous page]

riculum, and then professional development structures. You mine the data around these four inputs, and use it in the planning process represented by the six boxes in the diagram. Once we've determined which strategies will make sense, PD can be differentiated based on levels of experience. I don't just mean years of experience, but also levels of expertise and related concerns in implementing particular curriculum, or teaching in a new structure, or working with a particular grade level.

Could you say more about the characteristics of effective PLCs?

The characteristics of professional learning communities (PLCs) as defined by Richard and Becky DuFour and Shirley Hord and Bill Sommers provide a great foundation. In their collective work, we see a lot of parallels to the PD drivers, standards and characteristics I talked about earlier. According to the DuFour's, PLCs should articulate a shared mission, provide a focus on learning in collaborative teams, engage educators in collective inquiry, have an action orientation that welcomes experimentation, and commit to continuous improvement and the exploration of results. Hord and Sommers would add to that list: shared beliefs and values, shared and supportive leadership, collective learning and an application of the learning, supportive conditions, and their shared personal practice. Effective PLCs are about having professionals serving each other in the classroom, collaboratively designing lessons, trying them on, changing them, and constantly learning.

What does shared and supportive leadership look like?

Shared leadership refers to looking at leadership broadly, to include teacher leadership. In terms of supportive leadership, effective leaders are advocates who are knowledgeable in terms of effective professional learning.

They figure out how to schedule and provide the necessary time and structure, and then get out of the way. For example, eventually, teachers should be facilitating their own PLCs, but they need to be supported past the mechanical level of use.

What are the most useful methods of evaluating the impacts of professional development?

Tom Guskey has written a widely used book entitled *Evaluating Professional Development*. In it he outlines five levels of evaluation: participant satisfaction, participant learning, organizational structure and support, participant use, and student learning. What is particularly helpful about Guskey's model is that it stages evaluation in a causal way leading toward student learning rather than starting there. So, for example, if participants are not satisfied with the learning or if the organizational structures and supports are not in place or if participants are not implementing the strategy with some level of fidelity, then the desired student learning results will not be realized. Evaluation is critical and yet there is often little if any funding to ensure that ongoing evaluation of PD occurs.

However, there is good news. There is a no-cost tool and process called Collaborative Evaluation Led by Local Educators [www.niertec.org/evaluation] that provides a process and related tools to support local educators in working through their own evaluation process. Through this process, the evaluation of PD becomes part and parcel of ongoing collaborative PD design and implementation, which speaks to the sustainability issue. It helps to have a facilitated experience initially, but by design it can become a stand-alone internally facilitated process. Districts and schools become their own internal

resource in continuing to lead collaborative evaluation, using it as a powerful tool to take stock along the way.

How can districts sustain PD initiatives after an external provider has completed his or her work?

There are several features of sustainability: leadership, policy, resources, practices, and alignment. The shared leadership piece is huge; the tenure of principals and superintendents continues to decrease on average. Having a structure where PD is an absolutely integrated part of the fabric and culture of the school is critical. That requires, from the start, involving teacher leaders, administrators, and other members of the learning community in the design, implementation, revision, and collaborative evaluation of their professional development plans. That way, even if a leader leaves, it's ingrained as part of the school community; people can say, "This is what it looks like to be part of this district." Another piece is the degree to which things can be put in to policy, whether through a bargaining agreement with the union, district or school-level policy, or a budget item. Another way of aligning resources is through the strategic use of entitlement funds so that they're creative, focused, and integrated rather than siloed. Those who write the grants should have an opportunity to be a part of the PD design team to figure out how integrative funding can occur. Time is always an issue, but time resides underneath the answers to some of these other questions about leadership, advocacy, and policy.



"[Integrated professional development] requires, from the start, involving teacher leaders, administrators, and other members of the learning community in the design, implementation, revision, and collaborative evaluation of their professional development plans."
-Kathy Dunne

Two Practitioners Discuss Effective Professional Development

“I chose to take an active role because... I’ve learned how empowering PD is when it is good, and how demoralizing it is when it is bad.”
-Eugene Roundtree, Boston Public Schools

[continued from page 3] specialists in related service positions, administrators, and parents, if the student is making effective progress. I think the most valuable PD has impacted my practice in positive ways. These impacts have been measured indirectly through gains my students have made on standardized or norm-referenced assessments as well as ongoing informal assessment during instructional times.

Should the impacts of PD be measured? If so, how?

PL: It is important to me to continually measure the impacts of my work in terms of student progress through formal testing or informal observation and assessment during instruction. However, how would I isolate the impacts of one of my PD courses on my students’ achievement from all of the other formal or informal PD experiences I’ve had? I’ve taken several PD courses throughout this school year alone and all have had some impact on my work. In addition, several teachers, and sometimes related service specialists as well, work with each student. So it would be difficult to measure the impact of just my teaching on each student’s growth.

ER: PD impacts should definitely be measured, to increase our knowledge of best practices.

PL: Multiple measures would be necessary to fairly assess the effectiveness of PD. I think these measures should include teacher surveys that include questions about how teachers are using the course content with their students, and if not, why not. Questions about the quality of the course itself and the instruction delivered by the PD facilitator would also be valuable. These surveys could

be made available publicly as a way for other professionals to be better informed when choosing PD offerings for their employees or themselves.

What is your role in shaping your school and/or district’s PD offerings?

ER: I make decisions about professional development as part of my school’s Instructional Leadership Team. We make decisions with the principal about how PD time is spent and what teachers do during their content-area specific professional development time. I lead some of these professional development meetings.

PL: I don’t feel like I have a role in shaping my school’s or district’s PD offerings. This is my second year as a special educator in my district and I still feel as if I’m learning what PD experiences I need to be an effective teacher. How else do you find opportunities to voice your opinions?

ER: Most teachers have little or no role in shaping district-level PD. I have also had opportunities to shape PD as an Education Pioneers Fellow and by working with the PD group in the Boston Public Schools Office of Teacher Effectiveness to improve the content and delivery of PD for new teachers. Our work as Teach Plus Fellows provides opportunities to meet with district leaders about PD and to inject teacher voice into plans for PD.

Why did you choose to take on a more active role?

ER: I chose to take an active role because I’ve experienced really good PD and really bad PD. I’ve learned how empowering PD is when it is good, and how demoralizing it is when it is bad. I’m not content to complain about PD if I have passed up opportunities to be part of

the planning process. Also, I think that I’ve had a great deal of experience at this time in my career that can help me to make good choices about useful PD.

What advice do you have for teachers who want to get involved in the planning, selection, and delivery of PD?

ER: First I think districts and teachers need to start thinking of themselves as consumers. Teachers need to be empowered to make choices; districts and school leaders need to make sure that PD offerings are grounded in best practices and research in effective adult learning while being relevant to student performance and teacher needs. Survey feedback needs to be taken seriously and districts need to be responsive to which types of PD are found by teachers to have positive effects on practice. Teachers need to take opportunities to advocate for themselves and communicate with district and school leaders whenever possible.

PL: I take it into my own hands to find worthwhile PD opportunities that are relevant to my students’ needs. I ask colleagues whose work I respect and whose students I see making effective progress for suggestions on courses that have improved their teaching. I talk openly to my building and district academic coaches about the difficulties I have in my work due to need for further training and the PD that I feel I need to be a successful teacher of special needs students. I also forward interesting PD opportunities to colleagues in the hope that we can take the courses as a school-based team.

Principles of Effective Professional Development (Adapted from the National Institute for Science Education)

Professional development experiences...

...are driven by a clear, well-defined image of effective classroom learning and teaching.

...provide teachers with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills and broaden their teaching approaches, so they can create better learning opportunities for students.

...use instructional methods to promote learning for adults which mirror the methods to be used with students.

...build or strengthen the learning community of teachers.

...prepare and support teachers to serve in leadership roles if they are inclined to do so. As teachers master the skills of their profession, they need to be encouraged to step beyond their classrooms and play roles in the development of the whole school and beyond.

...consciously provide links to other parts of the educational system.

...include continuous assessment.

In Brief: Teachers Matter More Than Programs

In the Massachusetts Reading Association *Primer*, WGEE member Martha Colwell reflects upon lessons learned about professional development during a ten-year principalship, concluding that the most effective professional development is geared towards capacity-building. Colwell provides a detailed, data-informed description of the all-too-familiar effects of teacher de-professionalization.

Shortly after her arrival in 1999, Colwell applied for and received a state-sponsored Elementary School-Wide Literacy Grant. With a \$63,000 award from the state, the school was able to hire a literacy consultant to provide pro-

fessional development for one teacher from each team; these new "literacy leaders" then provided training and professional development for other team members. These capacity-building exercises had dramatic effects on literacy achievement; DRP data from 2001/2002 show that all groups of students exceeded the average expected gains.

In 2002, after the passage of No Child Left Behind, Massachusetts adopted the Reading First curriculum and terminated the literacy grant midway through its third year. New basal reading programs were accompanied professional development of a sort, but as Colwell points out, this PD

emphasized fidelity to the basal reading program and minimized the role of the teacher as a professional decision-maker. The gains that all groups of students had made during the grant-funded years diminished steadily, particularly in the special education subgroup.

The data suggest that the move from teacher-driven professional development to the use of scripted programs correlates with an overall decline in literacy development. Based on her experience, Colwell suggests that a whole-school, capacity-building professional development initiative would lead to a greater return on district and state investments.

"It is clearer today than ever that educators need to learn, and that's why professional learning has replaced professional development. Developing is not enough.

Educators must be knowledgeable and wise. They must know enough in order to change. They must change in order to get different results. They must become learners, and they must be self-developing."
-Lois Brown
Easton

**WORKING GROUP
FOR EDUCATOR
EXCELLENCE**

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Many thanks to all who contributed their perspectives to this newsletter, including:

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- Eugene Roundtree, Boston Public Schools

Next Issue's Spotlight:
Comprehensive Induction
Please send suggestions to Sue Freedman (syfreedman1@aol.com) or Jason Colombino (jcolombino@gmail.com)

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Mission of the Working Group for Educator Excellence

WGEE is a broad coalition of 60 individuals from 26 statewide organizations who are united in the belief that the most effective way to provide every child with an excellent education is to take a systemic approach to influencing what teachers and educational leaders know and can do. We believe when key elements of the human resource system are strengthened to align with one another and with a common research-based, field-tested core of professional knowledge, the cumulative effect will be improved student achievement and a more efficient and effective system that strengthens teacher and leader expertise.

Human Resource Pilot Project

The pilot project, funded by the RTTT initiative, is a joint effort by the WGEE and DESE to systematically and strategically create, strengthen, and align the key influences on the quality of teaching and leadership in three school districts: Attleboro, Brockton, and Revere. The influences, or levers, include Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement, Comprehensive Induction, Professional Development, Supervision and Evaluation, Teacher Leadership, Organizational Structure, and Adult Professional Culture. Through qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, we aim to determine whether alignment will improve the quality of teaching and leadership. Goals of the project include:

- Increasing student achievement.
- Using cost, time, and resources with greater efficiency.
- Improving teaching and leadership practices.
- Increasing the satisfaction and retention of teachers and leaders.
- Improving school and district culture.