SEDL Letter

SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL
SEDL
DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
Building Knowledge to Support Learning

Developing *a* Staff *of* Learners

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For more than a decade, SEDL and other organizations such as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) have been promoting job-embedded professional development. Incorporating such staff development has meant a shift from traditional teacher inservice training—the one-shot workshop—to a model where continuous learning is part of the job. This model uses strategies such as coaching, mentoring, peer observation, and reflection to deepen learning. Administrators become the leaders, facilitators, and role models for on-the-job learning.

In this issue of *SEDL Letter,* we will look at some of the forms of on-the-job professional development as well as standards of effective professional development.

We couldn't produce an issue of the magazine devoted to professional development without featuring professional learning communities (PLCs). SEDL scholar emerita Shirley Hord has been actively promoting PLCs for years. Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink (2006) recognized Dr. Hord in *Sustainable Leadership* as having been the first to distill the idea of a PLC and describe the qualities of a PLC. In this issue, Dr. Hord presents an overview of the characteristics of a PLC. She says that PLCs have been described in about every way imaginable but there are well-established characteristics that define a PLC.

Also in this issue, NSDC's Stephanie Hirsh discusses the standards that have helped strengthen professional development in recent years and the companion assessment used to measure the quality of professional development programs. Noted speaker and author Mike Schmoker discusses the need for an internal culture of accountability in order to strengthen teaching as a profession and increase student achievement. Former SEDL staff member Ed Tobia, now a lecturer at Texas State University, presents an overview of SEDL's Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle. The PTLC focuses on using effective strategies to meet state standards and using student performance data to help inform instruction. It is one process that could help school staffs achieve the internal accountability that Schmoker says is necessary.

In another article, SEDL staff members Laura Shankland and Deborah Donnelly discuss how the Afterschool Training Toolkit can be used in job-embedded professional development for afterschool programs. And to keep hope alive, SEDL program associate and former principal Bill Sommers provides a few suggestions for motivating and supporting staff. We also highlight the work of SEDL's comprehensive centers, which are charged with building the capacity of states in their regions to implement the programs and goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. Finally, because even parents need professional development, we introduce five booklets written to help K–3 parents strengthen their children's crucial reading skills.

We think this issue of *SEDL Letter* will give readers ideas for effective professional development and encourage them to see learning as an ongoing endeavor for everyone in the school community—not just for students.

What is a PLC?

By Shirley M. Hord

At conferences where large numbers of educators gather, you frequently hear the refrain, "Oh, yes, we're a professional learning community. We meet all the time." Sometimes you'll hear, "Our principal gave us each a book on professional learning communities. We are supposed to get together and form one."

The professional learning community, or PLC, has been characterized in endless ways depending on who defines it. Many claim to have established a PLC in their school, but upon further questioning it becomes clear that this is not a true PLC. PLCs are not the norm in the field of education and are often misunderstood, despite having been touted as a significant school improvement strategy for nearly 15 years. This article discusses the five research-based characteristics of a PLC, clarifying just what it means to be a PLC.

Professional Community of Learners

In 1993, T. A. Astuto and colleagues (Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree & Fernandez) described a professional community of learners in which the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn. The goal of these actions is to enhance the teachers' and administrators' effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit. The arrangement has also been called a community of continuous inquiry and improvement. In recent years, the arrangement has become better known as a professional learning community (PLC).

Shared Beliefs, Values, and Vision

Vision is a trite term these days, and at various times it refers to mission, purpose, goals, objectives, or a sheet of paper posted near the principal's office.

— Isaacson & Bamburg, 1992, p. 42

If you are involved with a true PLC, Isaacson and Bamburg's description of a school's vision won't ring true. Values and beliefs guide the behavior of individuals no matter where they work or in what endeavor. Therefore, one basic attribute of the PLC is the shared mission and goals that staff members see as their common purpose. In the PLC, the vision grows as people work together over time. The community constructs a shared vision of the improvements that they will work toward for the increased learning of students. A shared vision is a mental image of what is important to the staff and school community; that image is kept in mind while planning with colleagues and delivering instruction in the classroom.

It is the role of the principal to continuously communicate the vision to all stakeholders. The principal articulates powerful images that encourage everyone's commitment to the vision. Throughout the school and the community, reminders are posted of what high-quality student achievement and successful student learning look like. Student work is displayed prominently in the school. Descriptions and examples of high-quality achievement and learning are shared in the school newsletter, in the local newspaper, and even briefly on banners, bumper stickers, and the school's external marquee. The focus is always on students and learning.

Shared and Supportive Leadership

It is clear from school change and educational leadership literature that any change in a school must be accepted, appreciated, and nurtured by the principal. In the case of PLCs, accepting, appreciating, and nurturing change may be a difficult challenge for some principals as one of the defining characteristics of a PLC is that power, authority, and decision making are shared and encouraged.

Lucianne Carmichael (1982), the first resident principal of the Harvard University Principal

Center and a principal who nurtured a PLC in her own school, discussed the position of authority and power typically held by principals in which the staff view them as all-wise and all-competent. She asserted that principals have internalized this "omnicompetence." Staff members often reinforce it, making it difficult for principals to admit that they themselves can benefit from professional development opportunities or to recognize the dynamic potential of staff contributions to decision making. Furthermore, when the principal's position is so thoroughly dominant, it is difficult for staff to propose divergent views or ideas about the school's effectiveness. Carmichael, and later Kleine-Kracht (1993), suggested that administrators must be learners, too. Kleine-Kracht noted that in learning communities, the traditional pattern that "teachers teach, students learn, and administrators manage is completely altered."

Accepting, appreciating, and nurturing change may be a difficult challenge.

The PLC structure is one of continuous adult learning, strong collaboration, democratic participation, and consensus about the school environment and culture and how to attain the desired environment and culture. In such a collegial culture educators talk with one another about their practice, share knowledge, observe one another, and root for one another's success (Barth, 2006). This new relationship forged among administrators and teachers leads to shared, collegial leadership in the school where all staff members grow professionally as they work toward the same goal.

Collective Learning and Its Application

A PLC is demonstrated by the *collective* learning that occurs. Professional staff from all departments and grade levels come together to study collegially and work collaboratively. They engage in collegial inquiry that includes reflection and discussion focused on instruction and student learning. They are continuously learning together. For example, a group may begin investigating student performance data to assess student successes and needs. Through reflection and discussion, the group identifies areas that need attention—areas where they need to learn new content or instructional strategies. The group then explores how they will learn the new content or strategies. The group members may decide they will learn from someone on staff, from a central office specialist, from a colleague at another school, or from an external consultant. After they have put what they learned into practice, the staff goes through another cycle of reflection, discussion, and assessment. In other words, the learning is ongoing.

It is important to note that the PLC is not just about teachers collaborating; it involves collaborating *to learn together* about a topic the community deems important. As they collaborate, staff members build shared knowledge bases, which contributes to enhanced possibilities for the community's vision.

Supportive Conditions

There are two types of supportive conditions necessary for PLCs to function productively: (1) logistical conditions such as physical and structural factors and resources, and (2) the capacities and relationships developed among staff members so they may work well and productively together.

Physical and Structural Factors

Establishing time to meet is one of the most important factors in creating a PLC. Boyd (1992) enumerated a list of physical factors needed in a context conducive to change and improvement: availability of needed resources; schedules and structures that reduce isolation; and policies that provide greater autonomy, foster collaboration, provide effective communication, and provide for staff development. Louis and Kruse (1995) offer a similar list: time to meet and talk; physical proximity of the staff to one another; teaching roles that are interdependent; communication structures; school autonomy; and teacher empowerment.

Related to the challenges of time and space, it may be necessary for large school staffs (those that exceed 30–35 members) to form smaller groups to meet for learning together.

Relational Factors and Human Capacities

Bringing together individuals who do not respect or trust each other is problematic. In a recent article in *Educational Leadership,* Roland Barth (2006, p. 8) wrote, "The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. . . . The relationships among the educators in a school define all relationships within the school's culture."

A PLC requires not just congenial relationships among the adults in a school but collegial relationships and trust. Barth (2006, p. 11) differentiates between congenial and collegial relationships this way: "A conversation about the Red Sox or Yankees can be noteworthy and lively—an example of congenial behavior." Barth's indicators of collegiality include the following: educators talking with one another about practice, sharing their craft knowledge, observing one another while they are engaged in practice, and rooting for one another's success. While congenial relationships are important,

it is the collegial relationships that are essential to a PLC and more difficult to establish.

Trust provides the basis for giving and accepting feedback in order to work toward improvement. Building trust requires substantial time and appropriate activities that enable the individual to experience the trustworthiness of colleagues and to extend or become trustworthy to complete the cycle.

Principals can contribute to the collegial attitudes and relationships demanded of school staff by nurturing the human capacities demanded of PLC work. They do this by helping staff relate to one another, providing social activities for staff members to get to know each other on a personal level (such as ice cream socials, volleyball games after school in the school gym, or potluck suppers), and creating a caring environment. An example of this last item is the principal who "subbed" for a teacher so she could take an ailing parent to the doctor.

Shared Personal Practice

The review of a teacher's practice and instructional behaviors by colleagues should be the norm. This is not an evaluative process but rather part of peers-helping-peers. Teachers visit one another's classrooms on a regular basis to observe, take notes, and discuss their observations with the teacher they have visited. In this way, teachers facilitate the work of changing practice with one another. They support the implementation of new practices through peer coaching and feedback. This process is grounded in individual and community improvement but can only be done meaningfully if there is mutual respect and trust among the members of the staff. This dimension of PLCs is likely to be the last to be developed because of the history of isolation most teachers have experienced.

Visiting, observing, coaching, and giving feedback are learned skills that will require professional development. A first step in implementing peers-helping-peers could involve the whole school learning together some new strategy, such as questioning. All staff would learn the questioning strategies together, practice them in their classrooms, and then pair up and visit one another to give feedback. Administrators play a supportive role by providing subs or time for teachers to observe others.

Teachers find help, support, and trust as a result of the development of warm relationships with one another. When these positive relationships develop, Wignall (1992) suggests that "teachers . . . are comfortable sharing both their successes and their failures. They praise and recognize one another's triumphs, and offer empathy and support for

each other's troubles" (p. 18).

Barth (2006, p. 12) recalled that as a principal he had tried to encourage teachers to observe one another and give feedback, but he had no success. Finally, one teacher asked in a faculty meeting, "Well, Roland, when was the last time we saw another principal observing you?" So Barth invited another principal to observe him in a faculty meeting and to give him feedback. In turn, Barth visited that colleague, observing and providing feedback. Barth's actions were just the impetus his staff needed. As he noted, "You can lead where you will go."

Conclusion

From our discussion in this article, it should be clear that PLCs are more than just collaborative working arrangements or faculty groups that meet regularly. A PLC is a way of working where staff engage in purposeful, collegial learning. This learning is intentional and its purpose is to improve staff effectiveness so students will be more successful learners.

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Visiting, observing, coaching, and giving feeback are learned skills.

Shirley Hord is SEDL's scholar emerita and the author of numerous books and articles related to professional learning communities, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, and school change. Currently she and Bill Sommers are completing work on a book about PLCs for Corwin Press to be published late in 2007. You may contact Shirley via e-mail: shord@sedl.org.

Authentic Accountability:
The Education Profession at a Crossroads

By Mike Schmoker

In some ways the education profession is still in its infancy. Certainly, we've made real progress. The profession has generated invaluable research about effective practices. When implemented—even by novice teachers—these practices virtually guarantee achievement gains. This research demonstrates that instruction has more impact on learning than any other factor (Reeves, 2006; Marzano, 2004; Sanders, 1994). *If we chose to respond* to this knowledge as true professionals, the impact on student learning would be front-page news.

But we haven't responded yet. Some researchers contend that we remain the "not-quite profession" (Elmore, 2000, p. 5). Carl Glickman explains:

> By definition, a profession is the work of persons who possess a body of knowledge, skills and practices that must be continually tested and upgraded with colleagues. . . . The challenge is to use more fully what we have learned from this knowledge base. (pp. 4–6)

Why haven't we used this invaluable professional knowledge base more fully? The reason is that, unlike other advanced professions, we have never established a true culture of accountability. In such a culture, professionals themselves would ensure, through various means, that their members stay within the bounds of best (or at least acceptable) standards and practice. The membership would hold itself accountable for results.

Consider medicine. Before 1910, medicine was a profession in name only. The field was characterized by a freelance, chaotic culture that allowed doctors to embrace or ignore practices based on preference or whim. All that changed in 1910, when Abraham Flexner published a report on the abysmal state of medical training and practice. The report led to immediate, stunning improvements, the result of authentic accountability mechanisms implemented and embraced by the entire medical community. Historians have argued that Flexner's report saved more lives and reduced more suffering than any other event in human history.

Freedom Isn't Free

Educators, in their way, are also in the life-saving business; their actions and behavior make or break the lives and potential of tens of millions of students each year. But alas, most teachers and leaders are not truly, professionally accountable for their behavior. They are still surprisingly free to engage in practices manifestly at odds with the most widely known elements of effective teaching and supervision.

This is not an exaggeration; it is confirmed by *every close study* of actual classroom practice, going back to John Goodlad's reports from the thousands of classrooms his teams visited. In the words of Harvard's Tony Wagner, all such studies reveal that "most of us [teachers] are mediocre at what we do" (Wagner, 2004, p. 40). They confirm Richard Elmore's observation that "exemplary practices never take root in more than a small proportion of classrooms and schools" (Elmore, 2000, p. 6). As many educators know, "Effective teaching is quite different from the teaching that is typically found in most classrooms" (Odden & Kelley, 2002, pp. 18–19).

Is this an overstatement? Consider the following examples:

- In every kind of school, daily lessons usually lack a clear focus on a selected standard or outcome—an absolute precondition for the lesson to succeed (Learning 24/7, 2005). In most schools, what teachers *actually teach* varies wildly from any kind of agreed-upon curriculum with calamitous consequences; Marzano and others found this factor to be, arguably, the single most important factor on which learning pivots (Berliner, 1984; Marzano, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1991). Without a "guaranteed and viable curriculum," any effort to improve learning levels is crippled from the start (Marzano, 2003).

- In the crucial area of literacy instruction, decades of studies reveal that purposeful reading and writing activities are alarmingly rare, supplanted by activities with no connection whatsoever to students' ability to read critically or write effectively (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985; Marino, 1988; Calkins et al., 1998; Allington,

2001). While meaningful reading, writing, and higher-order activities go begging, students waste countless hours filling out worksheets, performing skits, or making collages and mobiles. These take the place of systematic, effective instruction on how to master the elements of effective writing, how to use a rubric or an exemplar to guide their effort. This is a direct result of the fact that principals simply do not monitor the quality or substance of instruction.

- While professionals in every other field routinely work in self-managing teams, teachers rarely work in team-based professional learning communities to build and improve lessons, units, and assessments on the basis of assessment data (Wagner, 2004; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Schmoker, 2006). This means that there are no empirically based corrective mechanisms for studying and improving practice and performance where it counts—in schools and classrooms.

- Finally, low-quality, haphazardly selected worksheets continue to occupy an alarming portion of class time despite the fact that children learn best from interacting with materials, concepts, and problems and with each other in activities that strengthen thinking and reading skills and problem-solving (Church, 2006; Allington, 2001; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). The typical teacher in America continues to make extensive use of low-quality worksheets with absolute impunity. In the vast majority of schools, no one—no leader or administrator or department head—discusses, discourages, or confronts this widespread practice, which can have devastating consequences, especially for poor or underachieving students (Allington, 2001).

Good People; Bad System

It isn't that we don't know better. And it isn't that we don't care. Nor is this the result of a shortage of good or talented teachers. The problem is that the current system does not monitor instruction or take steps to ensure that teachers adhere to basic professional practices. The evidence points to the fact that the great majority of our ineffective teachers could be far more effective, but the system does not equip them to be effective: It does not monitor their practice or provide feedback that allows them to improve their practice.

Professional development is needed. Leaders, including department heads and teacher leaders, need to be trained in how to conduct quick, monthly, unannounced classroom walkthroughs—as many as 15 classes in an hour. Especially in the early going, the focus here should be less on individual teachers, more on identifying school-wide patterns of strength and weakness in daily lessons. Questions such as the following should be asked: In how many classrooms was an agreed-upon standard being taught—and was the standard crystal clear to students? Are lessons in line with the most basic elements of good instruction? Are the all-important "checks for

understanding" built into lessons? Is higher-order thinking being taught where appropriate? Are rubrics and exemplars being used and thoroughly explained, so that students can adequately "self-assess" their work? Importantly, leaders must also be trained in how to share data on these patterns of strength and weakness at faculty meetings—and then how to clarify goals and expectations for improvement— which they will monitor through subsequent walk-throughs. It's that simple.

Poor practices have an immediate and enduring impact on students.

Such training and procedures would create a system that forces us to appreciate the profound opportunity inherent in the following unsung but indisputable facts:

1. Good daily lessons and units, *if they align reasonably well with a coherent, agreed-upon curriculum,* pay off hugely and immediately, especially with low-achieving students (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Schmoker, 2006). Cumulatively, they will dramatically reduce the achievement gap, in some cases eliminating it (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2002; Marzano, 2003). A mere 3 years of effective teaching adds, on average, 35–50 percentile points to a student's achievement level—enough to account for high school failure or college graduation (Sanders, 1994).

2. Conversely, poor practices—inferior lessons, units, and assessments—have an immediate and enduring impact on students, especially the poor and disadvantaged; they literally prevent learning and intellectual development. They perpetuate the achievement gap.

The current system needs to repeat and clarify and expound on these simple facts, with examples of real kids from real schools, until we "get it." We need to make the palpable consequences of daily instruction clear and observable to every educator. If we did, the odds are good that practice would improve. If we were routinely provided with evidence of how shabby, poorly planned lessons and worksheets were harming children, teachers and leaders would begin to recoil at such practices.

But alas, the current system lacks the courage to do this. It lets us blame outside or social circumstances; it doesn't force us to confront the brutal facts in the way that medicine did in 1910. It doesn't force us to develop what is the foundation of accountability: a keen, deeply felt sense of responsibility or accountability for the impact which our daily teaching—and that of our colleagues—has on kids' lives and learning.

As James Stigler writes, to build a "true profession of teaching," we must be accountable, and we must "take responsibility for steady and lasting improvement" (2004, p. 15).

The Way Up: Authentic, Internal Accountability

This is a practical and correctable matter. As Pedro Noguera writes, schools still tolerate astonishing levels of malpractice because they've never developed a system of "quality control"—a near-synonym for "accountability" (2004, p. 30). In schools, what appears to be quality control really isn't. We've known for some time that so-called "instructional supervision," including teacher evaluation, has almost no impact on the quality of daily instruction (Marshall, 2005). The same goes for leadership evaluation, which has never—let's be honest here— held administrators accountable for ensuring or even monitoring instructional quality (Reeves, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Evans, 1996). You can't have quality without quality control (i.e, monitoring and accountability).

For those who think there is more accountability now than ever—who look to the high-profile presence of state and federal regulations in our recent lives—take pause. Richard Elmore doubts that such external accountability will ever amount to much absent a strong ethos of internal accountability (Elmore, 2006).

In a true profession, external rules and requirements only codify and support what is embraced internally among the professionals themselves. In a mature profession, there is an abiding, collective sense that one's work must reasonably conform to the best standards and practices out of respect to one's clients, colleagues, and profession. For all our rightful celebration of tolerance these days, internal accountability demands a certain intolerance if you will: a need for professional educators to cultivate what Roland Barth (2002) calls "moral outrage at ineffective practices" wherever they occur. As Robert Evans (1996) exhorts us, we need to embrace an internally established professional ethos that is willing, as matter of professional pride, to "raise appropriate guilt and anxiety" when those among us choose to ignore sound, professional practices.

But don't despair. This major shift toward internal accountability and true professionalism could be achieved by disarmingly simple means: shedding our addiction to broad initiatives and embracing the most fundamental elements of our profession— instructional lessons and units.

The Big Shift to Lessons, Units, and Assessments

For the moment, forget annual test results. Forget the perennial parade of programs and initiatives and improvement plans. Let's instead focus our staff development efforts on ensuring that teachers, in

teams, learn to design individual and highly effective lessons or units. As true professionals, they would adopt and adapt—*largely on their own*—the knowledge they already possess about teaching and learning.

In this simple scheme, teams of teachers would first establish which standards they will teach in each course. They would divide these by quarter and then administer a common assessment on these same standards, also by quarter. As we saw above, this would have a gargantuan impact on learning.

These same teams would pool the best of their already existing knowledge to generate effective lessons and units, always improving them *on the basis of assessment results.* They would refine lessons and units by analyzing assessment results and publicly celebrating and sharing every lesson and unit that succeeds.

These simple activities, if given the emphasis they deserve, would constitute a new culture. Success here would rely less on training and more on common-sense concerns such as these: On which items did the greatest number of students fail? Why? Which skills might have been taught more effectively? Were our explanations or illustrations understandable? Did we make the criteria for success on this assignment clear enough to students? Did we provide good examples or exemplars to students?

Discussions on such questions would become a professional expectation, reinforced by the fact that every successful lesson or unit would be celebrated and analyzed for what made it effective. In this way, we would immediately and profoundly improve the quality of public education—one lesson at a time.

We *Can* Do This

Such efforts as just described represent the most effective form of professional development and need not be extravagant. If time devoted to meetings is spent wisely, even a couple of regularly scheduled, highly focused, 45-minute meetings per month could make a world of difference.

Every new teacher would know and be expected to participate in such *team-based* empirical processes from his or her first day of teaching. Every preservice class, every professional development workshop would link all new learning to these essential processes; every teacher interview would emphasize their importance and demand commitment to them as a condition for hiring. And every faculty and central office meeting would include references to these simple processes along with success stories of results—the "small wins" achieved on any single lesson, unit, project, or written assignment. It would be no different than the discussions among doctors

about a successful treatment or surgical technique. Such results-oriented team meetings constitute the very highest form of professional development.

This focus on individual lessons and units doesn't diminish the growing acknowledgement that more broad-based assessments—i.e., common, quarterly assessments—are a critical part of the new infrastructure of accountability. These are vital tools in helping us mindfully select and organize a schedule for teaching the most essential standards. Moreover, compared to annual assessments, such interim assessments create more frequent occasions for us to stop and consider the relationship between the previous quarter's efforts and the results achieved, which we can then use as the basis for improving future lessons and units.

As Black and Wiliam (1998) have argued, we've embraced large-scale programmatic change for decades with almost no impact while ignoring the actualities and impact of *daily instruction and assessment.* If teachers aren't in the habit of more carefully constructing, evaluating, and adjusting lessons and units against assessment results, and if they don't consciously align these lessons with an agreed-upon set of high-quality standards, we're dead in the water.

Becoming a Profession

Making this shift—just as medicine did in 1910—is absolutely within our reach. It's as simple and doable as anything we've ever attempted. We have an army of professionals who can help us. State department officials, central office and building leaders, department heads, staff developers, teacher leaders, and college professors can clarify, remind, and reinforce these simple actions and structures on every occasion. Some retooling may be in order as we move away from "presentations" and toward self-managing teams, a model that requires teams of teachers to immediately translate their learning into effective lessons, units, and assessments during and after every team meeting or presentation.

It is worth repeating that the next critical, if still overlooked step, is to share, celebrate, and learn from as many successful lessons and units as possible. These small wins are the real stepping stones toward major improvement (Fullan, 2001). From such efforts, we will realize swift, stunning gains in achievement—and a new professionalism will emerge.

Mike Schmoker is a speaker and writer living in Flagstaff, Arizona. His most recent book is Results NOW: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning *(ASCD, 2006).*

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The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle:

Implementing a Standards-Based Approach to Professional Development

By Ed Tobia

In a class I teach for prospective administrators, a student shared the story of one school where the principal announced that this year they were "doing" professional learning communities (PLCs). The principal gave everyone a book to read about effective instruction, told teachers when they were to meet, and let them self-organize to implement the book's ideas.

This example is not unusual. For some schools, the term "professional learning community" means getting groups of teachers together to talk about instruction, with little guidance about what they actually do or how to move from talking together to implementing changes in practice.

Guidance does exist but is too often seen as a way to get a group started through reading a book or hosting a workshop; professional learning resulting in application is minimal (Hord, 2004). In *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards into Practice: Innovation Configurations,* Roy and Hord (2003) provide an in-depth guide for designing and delivering quality professional learning opportunities. The authors discuss an underlying premise of the NSDC standards: "the day-to-day professional conversations focused on instructional issues . . ." form the basis for powerful professional development. Additionally, the terms "collaboration" and "collaborative" can be found in the description of almost every standard.

While this book provides many clues on what collaborative professional conversations about teaching and learning look like in practice, what teachers actually do when they come together to design lessons or talk about student progress varies greatly. Some teacher teams discuss books, some research ways to teach particular concepts, and others have wide-ranging discussions about the various challenges they face as teachers, such as lack of support from administration and parents, unmotivated students, or insufficient resources. In the work SEDL did from 2000–2005 to encourage schools and districts to work more systemically to improve student achievement, we encountered all of the above. It also became clear that almost none of the work teachers were doing when they met as a "PLC" resulted in any real sustained change in what happened in classrooms. What a waste of precious time for teachers. It's no wonder that we heard the refrain, "Just leave me in my classroom so I can get some work done."

Building on previous work on PLCs, lesson study, looking at student work, and standards-based instruction, SEDL staff developed the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle (PTLC). The PTLC process begins when teachers look at student performance data from state assessments or locally developed benchmark tests aligned to state standards. The process comprises six phases that are played out during two collaborative meetings (see chart, p. 12). Ideally, groups of 2–8 teachers are gathered together for a period of 2–3 hours[1] to **study** the standards, **select** an effective strategy to address those standards, and *plan* an effective lesson using that strategy. Then those teachers return to their classrooms to **implement** the lesson. The same group of teachers reconvenes a few weeks later in a second collaborative meeting to **analyze** student work that was generated during the lesson and **adjust** their plans for future instruction accordingly.

The PTLC process is based on elements of research from both effective adult learning and effective instruction tied to increased student

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[1] For the first year or 2 of implementing the PTLC, 2–3 hours is recommended; however, when staff become more adept with the process and more comfortable with collaboration, meetings can be run more efficiently and require less time.

The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle

Prior to beginning the cycle, a team of teachers examines student achievement data from state achievement tests or local benchmark tests aligned to the state standards and selects standards on which to focus.

Phase I: Study

Teachers work in collaborative planning teams (grade-level, vertical, or departmental) to critically examine and discuss the learning expectations from the selected state standards. Teachers working collaboratively develop a common understanding of the following:

- The concepts and skills students need to meet the expectations in the standards
- How the standards for a grade or course are assessed on state and local tests
- How the standards fit within a scope and sequence of the district curriculum

Phase II: Select

Collaborative planning teams research and select instructional strategies and resources for enhancing learning as described in the standards. Working collaboratively, teachers

- identify effective research-based strategies and appropriate resources that will be used to support learning that is aligned to the standards; and
- agree on appropriate assessment techniques that will be used to provide evidence of student learning.

Phase III: Plan

Collaborative planning teams work together to formally plan a lesson incorporating the selected strategies and agree on the type of student work each teacher will take into the Analyze phase of the PTLC to reveal evidence of student learning. Working collaboratively, teachers

- develop a common formal plan outlining the lesson objectives (relevant to the standards), the materials being used, the procedures, the time frame for the lesson, and the activities in which students will be engaged; and
- decide what evidence of student learning will be collected during the implementation.

Phase IV: Implement

Teachers teach the planned lesson, make note of implementation successes and challenges, and gather the agreed-upon evidence of student learning. Working collaboratively, teachers

- deliver the lesson as planned in the specified time period;
- record results, noting where students struggled and where instruction did not achieve expected outcomes; and
- collect the agreed-upon evidence of student learning to take back to the collaborative planning team.

Phase V: Analyze

Teachers gather again in collaborative teams to examine student work and discuss student understanding of the standards. Working collaboratively, teachers

- revisit and familiarize themselves with the standards before analyzing student work;
- analyze a sampling of student work for evidence of student learning;
- discuss whether students have met the expectations outlined in the standards and make inferences about the strengths, weaknesses, and implications of instruction; and
- identify what students know and what skill needs to be strengthened in future lessons.

Phase VI: Adjust

Collaborative teams reflect on the results of analyzing student work. Teachers discuss alternative instructional strategies or modifications to the original instructional strategy that may be better suited to promoting student learning. Working collaboratively, teachers

- reflect on their common and disparate teaching experiences;
- consider and identify alternative instructional strategies for future instruction;
- refine and improve the lesson; and
- determine when the instructional modifications will take place, what can be built into subsequent lessons, and what needs an additional targeted lesson.

achievement. It takes the recommendations from Marzano's (2001, 2003) work on classroom instruction and school factors that are closely related to student achievement (particularly the importance of having a guaranteed, viable curriculum) and puts them into an organized model for teacher development. The PTLC also models the behaviors suggested by the NSDC standards. The process

- encourages teacher collaboration;
- focuses on job-embedded learning;
- uses a systemic improvement strategy;
- ties learning to a set of standards; and
- monitors progress of teachers and students.

The PTLC process begins by introducing staff to the process, carving out sufficient time for teachers to meet during the school day, and pulling together the print resources necessary to support the work (student achievement data, state standards, curriculum documents). Teacher teams made up of 3–8 grade-level or content-area teachers must be established. Teams begin by examining student achievement data and selecting a state standard or a set of standards to focus on for the first cycle. Depending on the level of comfort teachers have with student achievement data or with taking time to really study the state standards, some professional development may be necessary before beginning.

One of the advantages of introducing the PTLC process is that it provides a way to focus professional development while allowing for individual differences. The PTLC is a professional development model in itself, but it also requires some targeted professional development for the teachers who are using it. Teachers need to be up-to-date on how to analyze student achievement data. They need guidance in studying and "unwrapping" the standards, in deepening content so they have a greater repertoire of teaching strategies to call on, in developing protocols for looking at student work, and in using multiple approaches to adjust instruction for students who have not mastered the standards they have taught. Providing professional development sessions in each of these areas creates a purpose for professional development that is focused on supporting the PTLC (see figure on p. 13).

The PTLC process itself is not revolutionary, but its structure provides some clear direction for teachers as they begin to work together to improve instruction. Introducing and initiating the structure of the PTLC, however, is not enough

Context for Change
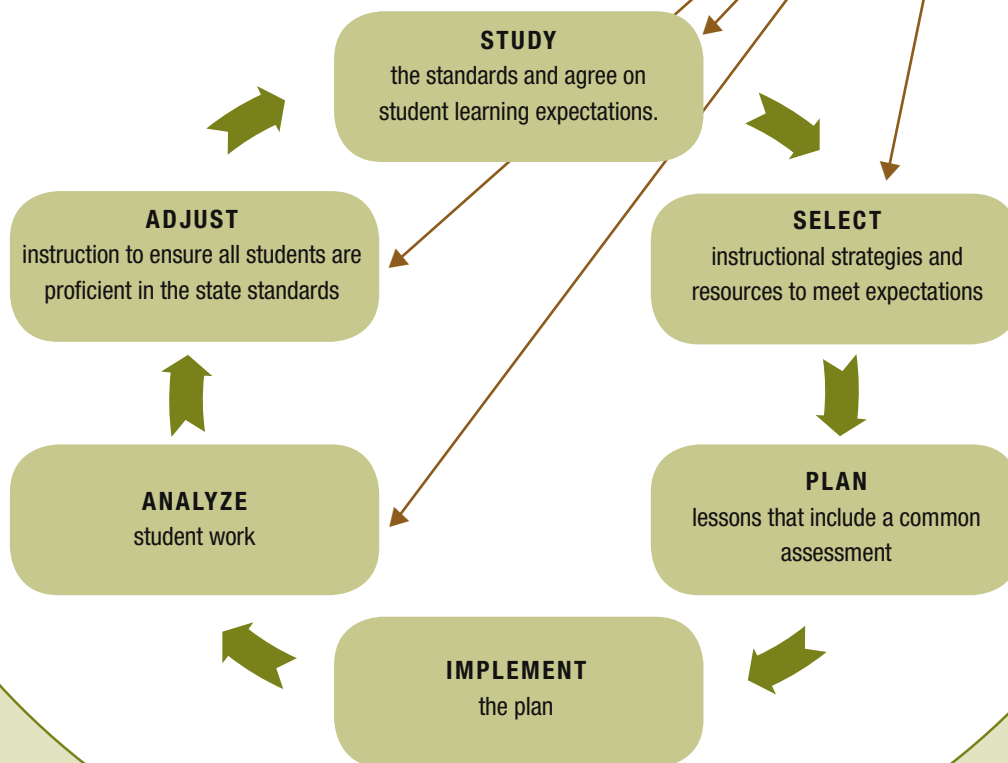
What teachers _do_ in a professional learning community

⇩

Focus on data

⇩

Focused Professional Development

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE*

Teachers collaborate to ensure instructional coherence

STUDY
the standards and agree on student learning expectations.

SELECT
instructional strategies and resources to meet expectations

ADJUST
instruction to ensure all students are proficient in the state standards

PLAN
lessons that include a common assessment

ANALYZE
student work

IMPLEMENT
the plan

*Adapted from the professional teaching model of the Charles A. Dana Center

Teacher collaboration is enhanced by a context of favorable conditions within the school:
- Safe and orderly environment
- Climate that promotes open, trusting relationships and collaboration
- Sense of urgency
- High expectations for staff and students
- Competent, caring adults
- Mutual accountability

Leaders can create the favorable conditions for powerful professional learning by:
- Creating an atmosphere and context for change
- Developing and communicating a shared vision for change
- Planning and providing resources
- Investing in professional development
- Checking progress
- Giving continuous assistance

to ensure that teachers use the process in a way that improves their classroom instruction and student achievement.

During a site visit to a high school, I watched in amazement as a group of algebra teachers (who met on their own time) struggled with how to teach a particular math concept well. They had developed their own Web site where they posted lesson plans they could each follow and had developed some common assessments. During this session, they were using the results of one common assessment to figure out why a number of students didn't get a particular algebraic concept and were struggling with how to teach that concept in such a way that all students would successfully apply it in practice. Two novice teachers were in the group, and I can only imagine the learning that was taking place, not to mention the modeling of what it means to be a professional.

During another site visit, I watched as teachers who had been provided with 2 days of professional development on PLCs met to collaborate on teaching their students to develop pre-reading skills. The conversation almost immediately turned to statements about individual students, general comments about parents, and complaints about the expectations being placed on them by administrators. The one area they were in unanimous agreement about was that they would be better off working in their own classrooms in isolation.

What made the difference between these two situations? It all came down to leadership—not only the leadership of the principal and the district personnel, but also that of teacher leaders with responsibility for creating the conditions in which the PTLC process can be successful. Leaders who hope to implement the PTLC must pay close attention to the implementation of the process. Researchers focusing on implementation have identified six key leadership behaviors, which are discussed below (Hord, 1992).

1. Create an atmosphere and context for change

The conditions in which teachers are working can be the difference between the successful implementation of the PTLC resulting in improved student learning or its inclusion in the vast burial ground of educational reform ideas. If teachers have had little opportunity to work on collaborative teams, simply giving them time, test results, a set of standards, and the charge to improve doesn't work. Sharing what they know about the standards and about instruction is risky business. If they know more than their colleagues, they risk being isolated as know-it-alls, and if the know little, they risk exposing their ignorance. Either scenario results in stifled meetings that soon lead to frustration with the process and eventual anger with those

Leaders must create a climate that promotes open, trusting relationships.

who initiated the change.

Leaders must help create a safe and orderly environment in the school. They must create a climate that promotes open, trusting relationships and collaboration among all staff members (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Leaders hold high expectations for staff and students and pay attention to the concerns of teachers and students alike while holding everyone accountable for results. Finally, they model the behaviors they want to see in others, like attending professional development sessions and PTLC meetings to provide encouragement and support.

2. Develop and communicate a shared vision for change

When everyone in the school shares a sense of urgency about the need for improvement, there is greater likelihood of being able to have teachers implement the PTLC. Leaders work with all staff members to create a clear picture of what should happen in classrooms in order to achieve improved student learning. With that end in mind, the staff can then picture how they can work together to reach their goals. Leaders refer to this vision at every meeting and in every communication and make it clear that the PTLC is the kind of process that meets NSDC standards and can help focus the work of teachers rather than adding to it.

3. Plan and provide resources

In order for the implementation of the PTLC to be effective, leaders plan for the best use of time, personnel, materials, and fiscal resources to support the process. Teachers who have access to disaggregated data, the state standards for the grade and content they teach, and a scope and sequence that is aligned with the state standards have the easiest time using the PTLC. They also need sufficient time for collaboration and access to sources of information about research-based instructional strategies and assessment practices.

4. Invest in professional development

Too often, professional development sessions are offered away from the school and cover a wide variety of topics that may or may not address the needs of teachers or the students they teach. As mentioned earlier, professional development can be designed to support teachers in deepening their content knowledge and becoming more familiar with the use of data (including classroom evidence of student learning) to inform instruction. By focusing professional development and avoiding "one-shot wonders," the investment made in professional development has a greater long-term impact on classroom instruction.

5. **Check progress**

Once the PTLC is in place it is imperative to continually check with the teachers to see how it is going. The key questions are, "Is it helping you teach more effectively?" and "Is it making a difference with student learning?" Leaders visit classrooms frequently and gather progress information about the impact of the PTLC on teaching and student achievement both formally and informally. The data gathered provide information about what additional assistance or professional development may be needed and what adjustments need to be made to the implementation plan.

6. **Give continuous assistance**

When SEDL staff introduced the PTLC to a number of school districts, we found it invaluable to have someone with content expertise to work with teachers as they tackled the challenging job of studying the standards and developing a common understanding of effective instruction and assessment that supports students' mastering the standards. Based on the conversations, classroom visits, and formal assessments of teacher and student learning, targeted assistance must be made available to teachers through the focused professional development opportunities, on-site content and instructional assistance, and ensuring that necessary resources are available to support teachers implementing the PTLC.

The PTLC can be a powerful tool for helping teachers not only learn new strategies for helping students succeed but also implement and test those strategies in a community of learners who are focused on bringing state standards to life in the classroom. An assistant superintendent in Arkansas, Sally Bennett reported that for teachers in her district, using the PTLC has become a part of their routine. They meet collegially on a regular basis and talk about how their students are performing. She can see the evidence of their collaborative work from the "dynamics of what's going on in the classroom" when she makes her school visits.

The PTLC process is complex, and attention must be paid to the context in which it plays out and the support it needs to become a regular part of what happens in school. In a recent conversation, Michael Fullan said, "It's no longer OK for teachers to work in isolation. The new role for teachers is 'interactive professionalism.'" The PTLC is an excellent tool for helping teachers take on that new role.

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Ed Tobia is a project director with SEDL's Improving School Performance program. He can be contacted at ed.tobia@sedl.org.

NSDC Standards and Tools
Help Strengthen Professional Development

By Stephanie Hirsh

Sometimes a chance meeting can ignite a revolution. That's exactly what launched the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) on the path to develop its Standards for Staff Development and the many tools that support them. In 1994, Hayes Mizell heard NSDC executive director Dennis Sparks speak about aspects of professional development that contribute to its effectiveness. At that time, Mizell was director of the Program for Student Achievement at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation in New York. He was intrigued by what Sparks said and was determined to learn more about the organization that Sparks represented.

Early in his investigation, Mizell offered NSDC several small grants to provide professional development in districts supported by his program. He watched to see whether NSDC actions aligned with Sparks' words. Satisfied to some degree with the services delivered through the grants, he offered NSDC another grant with a specific challenge: Mizell would agree to fund the development of standards for staff development for the middle grades.

Developing Staff Development Standards Collaboratively

For some time, NSDC leaders had discussed the role standards might play in advancing quality staff development in schools. When Mizell issued the invitation, NSDC staff accepted with caveats. The NSDC board and staff wanted standards to be developed in a collaborative manner with representatives from a significant number of professional associations. By bringing association representatives together to write the standards, the practitioners had the benefit of great thinking and a consensual mandate for improvement.

NSDC's standards have been through two revisions. Today's standards represent contributions from the following organizations: the National Middle School Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National School Boards Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Education Commission of the States, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the U.S. Department of Education. SEDL scholar emerita Shirley Hord and University of Kentucky professor Tom Guskey provided content expertise.

SEDL joined NSDC in making the most recent set of standards available in its region. Since 2001 more than 100,000 copies of NSDC's standards have been disseminated to educators. More than 40 states report having adopted professional development standards, and more than 25 are using NSDC's standards.

Assessing Professional Development Quality

NSDC provides tools and resources to assist the growing number of school systems and states using the standards to improve the quality and increase the impact of professional development. In 2001, NSDC again reached out to SEDL to develop an assessment

NSDC's Staff Development Standards	Context Standards	Process Standards	Content Standards
	Learning Communities Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.	**Data-Driven** Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.	**Equity** Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
	Leadership Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.	**Evaluation** Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.	**Quality Teaching** Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
	Resources Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.	**Research-Based** Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making.	**Family Involvement** Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.
		Design Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.	
		Learning Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.	
		Collaboration Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.	

instrument that would measure the quality of a local school system's professional development as defined by the standards. SEDL produced a valid and reliable instrument that schools could use with teachers to assess their perception of how well staff development aligned with the standards. The final instrument, known as the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI), met the following criteria (SEDL, 2003):

- Instrument reliability was consistent and high across all three pilot studies for the overall scale and consistently good for the 12 subscales.

- The instrument demonstrated good content validity through the process of soliciting expert advice on the instrument's clarity and relevance to the characteristics of each of the standards and to the experiences of school faculties.

- Criterion-rated validity was supported, indicating that teachers' ratings of their school's professional development program alignment with NSDC standards were comparable to their school's rating by experts.

NSDC recommended the SAI to school leaders to help them address the following questions:

- What is the overall picture of professional development in the school?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of professional development in the school?
- Where might attention be focused to improve the quality of professional development in the school?

The SAI comprises 60 questions (five questions per standard). Most educators complete the inventory in about 20 minutes. Some state, regional, district, and school leaders use the instrument for some or all of the following purposes:

- To assess the current status of professional development at the school level, determine areas of strengths and weaknesses, and plan for improvement
- To help schools get a clearer picture of what is working for them and where they may want to focus their attention
- To guide conversations regarding the qualities of professional learning that produce better results for students
- To assess whether a particular improvement effort has contributed to the quality of professional development within a school and/or across several schools or systems
- To identify schools that are strong in certain areas and may have lessons to share with other schools
- To help schools focus on the particular actions that contribute to higher-quality professional development as guided by the questions on the assessment
- To assist groups in focusing planning efforts and using NSDC's innovation configurations (ICs)
- To organize and convene schools with similar needs and priorities for technical assistance
- To recognize and/or reward schools for quality professional development

For these reasons and others, the Division of School Improvement, Professional Learning Services for the State of Georgia, contracted with NSDC to use the SAI statewide. Previously, the state had adopted the NSDC standards as its standards for professional learning. Steve Preston, then-state director for professional learning, understood that the next logical step was to assess the degree to which professional learning practice in school aligned with the standards.

For 3 years now, every staff member in every school has been asked to complete the assessment inventory. While individual responses remain anonymous, the schoolwide results are available to educators committed to helping schools perform better. The principal, the central office, the regional service agency, and the state department all have access to the results. Technical assistance is planned according to the scores.

Visualizing the Standards in Action

The SAI offers one tool valued by educators. However, others continued to seek assistance in moving the standards into action. Again in partnership with SEDL and with leadership from Shirley Hord and consultant Patricia Roy, a team of educators developed Innovation Configurations (ICs) for the standards.

Studies of policies, practices, and programs have shown that how teachers implement new programs often varies from the vision and expectations of policymakers, program designers, or professional staff developers. For example, although a trainer may explain and even model a new reading method, classroom instruction may look very different from that model when teachers return to their classrooms. In addition, teachers make adaptations when they return to the classroom that can vary across an entire school or system. These adaptations can influence the results a district or school achieves compared with expectations based on program results in other schools and systems. District and school leaders, program developers, and professional staff developers concerned about fidelity to a program design use IC maps to facilitate implementation that more closely aligns with their expectations for practice.

NSDC is equally concerned about what happens when states, technical assistance agencies, school systems, and schools adopt the standards. ICs define the various actions educators can take to move from low levels of implementation of standards to higher levels. NSDC published the first set of these frameworks in 2003. Titled *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards into Practice: Innovation Configurations,* this publication addressed the roles of teachers, principals, central office staff members, superintendents, and school board members. NSDC published a second set of ICs in 2005 that address the roles of state departments, technical assistance providers, state agency personnel, higher education professional associations, and district staff developers.

IC maps, which can vary in complexity, describe the major components of a program or innovation in action. IC maps for the NSDC standards are fairly

complex as they describe 2–6 outcomes associated with each of the 12 standards for each role. For example, the following five outcomes are stated for the first standard, Learning Communities for the Principal:

1. The principal prepares teachers for skillful collaboration.
2. The principal creates an organizational structure that supports collegial learning.
3. The principal understands and implements an incentive system that ensures collaborative work.
4. The principal creates and maintains a learning community to support teacher and student learning.
5. The principal participates with other administrators in one or more learning communities.

Each outcome is followed by a description of a series of actions—what the principal will actually be seen doing if the standard is being fully implemented (labeled as Level 1) through descriptions of lesser levels of implementation. As an example, we will look at Outcome 4.

Desired Outcome 4: The principal creates and maintains a learning community to support teacher and student learning.

Implementation levels 1–5 are described in the IC map as noted below:

Level 1: Builds a culture that respects risk-taking, encourages collegial exchange, identifies and resolves conflict, sustains trust, and engages the whole staff as a learning community to improve the learning of all students.

Level 2: Works with faculty to create a variety of learning teams to attain different goals; facilitates conflict resolution among group members; and supports learning teams by providing articles, videos, and other activities during team time.

Level 3: Works with faculty to create learning teams with clear goals, outcomes, and results outlined in writing and expects and reviews team logs each month in order to coordinate activities within and among the teams.

Level 4: Creates ad hoc study teams without clear direction or accountability.

Level 5: Does not create learning teams.

Downloads

Standards
www.nsdc.org/standards/about/index.cfm

Assessment tool
www.nsdc.org/standards/about/selfassessment.cfm

In the end, NSDC published the IC maps so all educators will have a clear and richly descriptive vision of what the standards look like in action and will use that vision when helping others implement the standards to improve the quality of professional development for a state, organization, district, or school. NSDC hopes that the IC maps are one of the tools educators find helpful.

A consistent set of staff development standards provides a common language and supports a deeper understanding among educators. NSDC recognizes its responsibility to ensure the applicability and usefulness of the standards to educators. NSDC will continue to monitor the research and, when it again becomes necessary, facilitate another update. Meanwhile, NSDC continues to believe that the single most valuable way to help all educators and students achieve at high levels is through high-quality professional learning. The NSDC standards are an effective strategy to help in that process.

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Stephanie Hirsh is executive director-designate of NSDC. You can contact her by e-mail: stephanie.hirsh@ nsdc.org.

Sections of this article previously appeared in Hirsh's column in the Journal of Staff Development *and have been used with permission. Hirsh's columns about the standards can be found at http://www.nsdc.org.*

After Hours:
Professional Development for Afterschool Staff

**By Laura Shankland and
Deborah Donnelly**

Whe hen the bell rings at the end of the school day, you can almost feel the tension evaporating as students grab their books and run out the door. Their minds turn from social studies to social events. More and more, however, these students are entering afterschool programs, where their teachers face the difficult task of letting the students relax while still encouraging their learning. Increasingly, educators and policymakers expect the hours after school to have a positive impact on student performance, forcing afterschool practitioners to become savvy in their attempts to meet these demands.

NCLB Fosters New Perspective

The role of afterschool programs has grown in importance since Congress authorized the creation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLCs) program in 1994. When the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed 7 years later, the 21st CCLC program's focus was narrowed to helping students, especially those in low-performing schools, meet academic standards. In addition to the hundreds of afterschool programs that were established as a result of the legislation, NCLB created a new demand for professional development that would teach afterschool professionals how

to offer academic enrichment that was different from the school day but would still improve student achievement.

The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning at SEDL came together in 2003 in response to this new need. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the 21st CCLC program, the National Partnership identifies promising practices in high-quality afterschool education through firsthand observations of programs across the United States. The National Partnership also provides training and technical assistance to help other afterschool programs reach the same level of quality.

During the site visits, the National Partnership researchers discovered that adequate staff development was not available to help afterschool professionals achieve what was expected of their program. For one thing, practitioners did not know how to meet the expectation that they would include academic enrichment in their programs.

"We noticed that most of the staff development that was available addressed programming needs but little else. These resources taught afterschool staff how to get funding and administer their program, but quality instruction wasn't part of the training," says Catherine Jordan, director of the National Partnership.

Other staff development issues included the range of experience and skills among afterschool instructors and the limited time and money available for training. Joe Parker, a SEDL program associate who coordinates the site visits for the National Partnership, says, "It is not uncommon to see a staff that includes certified teachers with years of teaching experience, college students, senior citizen volunteers who may or may not have taught, and employees from a community organization who are there to focus on the arts or some other elective but don't have much experience with academic instruction."

These issues create logistical challenges for providing staff development. Of course there

are always conferences, but at many sites, only a program director and a site coordinator are able to attend due to financial constraints. Although they often return from the conference brimming with ideas and enthusiasm, they are unsure how to implement what they learned. Few programs have the funds to bring a trainer on-site. Time limitations also pose a challenge, as few afterschool programs offer paid in-service days set aside for staff development the way schools do.

The National Partnership staff realized they needed to develop training materials that program directors and site coordinators could use to conduct their own staff development sessions. These materials needed to be flexible enough for program directors to provide training on-site in a time increment that fit their schedule. They also needed to be affordable, preferably free.

Toolkit Offers Flexible, Focused Professional Development

In response to this need, the National Partnership developed the Afterschool Training Toolkit, a free online resource for afterschool practitioners. The toolkit is organized by six content areas—literacy, math, science, the arts, technology, and homework help—with the different member organizations of the National Partnership developing the content according to their expertise. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed the literacy content; Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning developed the math content; the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro developed the science and homework content; and SEDL developed the arts and technology content. While creating the prototype, the National Partnership conducted focus groups at the 21st Century Community Learning Center summer institute and incorporated the feedback into the toolkit. Currently, toolkits for literacy, math, science, and the arts are currently available. The toolkits for technology and homework help

will be available in Spring 2007. All of the content is available online at no cost at www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/.

Each content area of the toolkit contains such information as the subject's unique role in afterschool, research, and links and references for additional resources. Another important component of each content area is the promising practices—techniques that the National Partnership identified, through research and site visits, as effective in improving student achievement. For example, promising practices in science include investigating science through inquiry and exploring science through projects and problems.

The toolkit uses a theory-to-practice model.

The toolkit uses a theory-to-practice model, meaning it is based on research but shows people how to implement the practice. If, for example, an afterschool instructor reviews the promising practice called "Finding Math" in the math component of the toolkit, he or she can read research on the practice and how to use it in afterschool. Most training materials would stop there, but the toolkit includes videos that show high-quality afterschool instruction in progress, providing the afterschool instructor the benefit of a classroom observation while sitting at the computer. For example, after reading about how

to bring math to life through everyday activities, the instructor can watch a video of fifth- and sixth-grade students playing drums in a percussion group. In the video, a music teacher explains how he has infused a jam session with math enrichment. The students, who are clearly having fun, discuss what they have learned about fractions in their percussion class.

The toolkit also provides lessons to help afterschool instructors master the practice. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the toolkit is not a curriculum but a way for instructors to embed academic enrichment in their programs. The intent is that if an instructor watches the video and then teaches the lesson and reflects on it, that person will not just have found an activity to fill Wednesday afternoon but will have learned something about being a more effective educator.

Toolkit Training Available

The National Partnership offers training sessions to help leaders of afterschool programs use the toolkit for staff development. After they have become familiar with the toolkit, these leaders will return to their sites and serve as facilitators in staff development sessions.

The staff development sessions might be as short as 15 minutes and proceed as follows: first, the facilitator asks staff to read two paragraphs from the toolkit describing the promising practice called "Read Aloud." The facilitator may ask staff to think about the way they conduct Read Aloud with their students and then share their processes with the group. Next, the facilitator draws staff members' attention to the toolkit's video featuring a real-world afterschool program implementing a Read Aloud. The facilitator invites staff to take brief notes of the behaviors or processes that resonate with them.

Following the video, the facilitator asks staff to share their thoughts and reflections through questions related to their practice (i.e., What processes/behaviors did you see that you already do regularly with your class? What aspects of the video did you like? What aspects would you like more information about? Would you try Read Aloud with your class? What additional information/materials might you need to try Read Aloud?).

Christina McAnally, program director of an afterschool program in Hearne, Texas, attended a toolkit training session held by the National Partnership last October and has held staff development sessions based on the training. McAnally's staff consists primarily of college students. Although many of these instructors are education

majors, they do not have the same experience that certified teachers do. McAnally has used the toolkit to improve the quality of instruction that her staff provides. She introduced the toolkit during their daily 30-minute staff meetings. Her staff then watched and discussed a video and selected a lesson that they would teach. After teaching the lesson, the staff reconvened at another meeting to discuss their experiences.

McAnally believes the toolkit has helped her staff provide higher quality instruction. "Before, we were weak in incorporating enrichment and academics [in our lessons]," she says. She refers to the Read Aloud practice in the literacy toolkit as an example. Before using the toolkit, her staff simply read stories. "After watching the Read Aloud video, they started asking pre- and post-questions when they read stories. There's always some sort of an enrichment activity after, like drawing a picture of the story," she says.

Although the focus of the toolkit is mostly academic, McAnally has used the toolkit to model classroom management strategies that her staff may not have learned yet. Between better instruction and better classroom management, McAnally says, "We began to see students more engaged and fewer behavior problems."

Outcomes

The toolkit is helping afterschool professionals change the way they approach staff development. They are learning that, with the proper research-based tools, they can lead staff development sessions themselves. Those who achieve success with the toolkit can then serve as facilitators or coaches during the next professional development opportunity, and in this way, the leadership and learning are shared.

"When we first began visiting afterschool programs, they thought professional development meant sending staff to a conference or paying hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars to fly someone in to lead a training session," says Joe Parker. "The toolkit is changing that."

The National Partnership continues to gather feedback on other ways the toolkit has affected and benefited afterschool programs. Like Christina McAnally, many practitioners have used the toolkit to help staff learn how to infuse academic content into their activities. These changes should enable project directors and site coordinators to develop action plans for moving forward in implementing academic enrichment as the focus of their program. As a result, instructors will come to better understand academic enrichment and plan accordingly. Sustaining their afterschool programs should become easier once site coordinators and project directors share student achievement data with school and community leaders showing that afterschool makes a difference. And although they might never use the toolkit themselves, boys and girls will benefit from engaging, academically enriched activities each day.

Laura Shankland is a SEDL communications specialist and Deborah Donnelly is a SEDL program associate. Both work in the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning program. You may reach Laura at lshankla@ sedl.org and Deborah at ddonnell@sedl.org.

Bricoleurs, Behaviors, *and* Beliefs

"If your job is waking up the dead, GET UP. TODAY IS A WORK DAY."

—Angeles Arrien, Cultural Anthropologist

Bill Sommers

We are engaged in an era of cultural change in education. For a successful transformation from preparing students for traditional post K–12 education to preparing students for the year 2020, our most valuable asset in education—our people—need to be motivated, nurtured, and coached. Think of next year's kindergarten students. They will graduate in the year 2020. What will the world look like? What knowledge and skills will be required to be successful in the year 2020? Educators need professional development that is job-embedded, that happens in the real world of schools, and that has an eye toward the future.

To offer the best for students, we want the best staff possible. How do you attract and retain your best staff? What systems, policies, and procedures do you have in place that keep your best staff working for you and your students?

The best and brightest want to be engaged with authentic challenges. Herzberg and Emery (1987) found the motivating intrinsic factors to retention were the following:

1. Variety and challenge
2. Elbow room for decision making
3. Feedback and learning
4. Mutual support and respect
5. Wholeness and meaning

Variety, challenge, learning, room to grow—these are qualities that supersede many of the programs we try, such as merit pay, fringe benefits, and bonuses. These are the characteristics that should be infused into our work and professional development.

So how do we provide variety, challenge, learning, and room to grow? My first request: Create ideas and attract and share ideas with others; in other words, we must create thinking communities. Sinetar (1991) uses the term *bricoleur* to mean "one who tinkers with ideas." *Bricoleurs* attract other *bricoleurs.* Learners attract other learners. Learners are what professional development is all about. Learners create
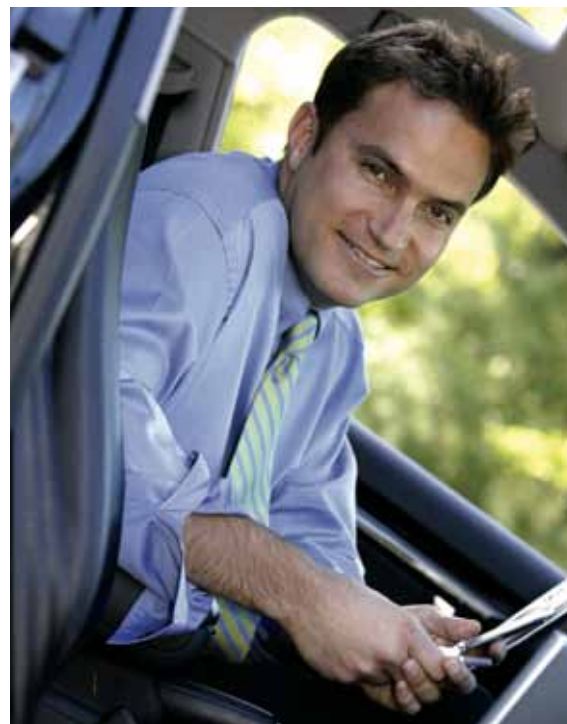
meaning, respond to challenges, and proactively look to the future. They tinker with ideas that will improve teaching and learning.

Ideas are not enough, however. We also want people who are committed to action. If we know and don't do, then information is useless. We must find out what is working and spread the collective intelligence throughout the school. Communicator Donald H. McGannon said, "Leadership is action, not position." So what behaviors and actions are you taking to use our great knowledge?

Sometimes our work as professional development specialists, leaders, and team members ignites fires, creates the capacity to act, and models learning. That requires courage, stamina, and a strong belief in the creative development of people.

My second request: You can't do everything, but you can do something. So do something. Initiate

the Butterfly Effect—one small movement of the butterfly's wing can cause major changes in the environment in the long term. Or be a trim tab, which moves large ocean liners. In other words, make it happen for yourself and for others.

We all need to believe in our own power to influence others. One way to assess that ability is through optimism. When professional developers express hope, change and learning are possible. If we don't have that bright, hopeful, dynamic optimism, we won't be able to perturb our systems and make them better. One of the leaders' main responsibilities is keeping hope alive. Here is a short way to remember to keep hope alive (Sommers, 2007):

- **H** is for *honesty* and *humility.* People trust others who are honest. If we are not humble enough to say we don't know or there might be a better way, we stop looking for answers. As Robert Pascale (1990) said, "Nothing fails like success."

- **O** is for *openness* and *options.* People who are open to new ideas and feedback continue to learn. A friend of mine, Michael Ayers has said often, "Feedback is the breakfast of champions." Looking for more options to learn, teach, and lead can move people and organizations to higher levels of performance.

- **P** is for *persistence* and *patience.* We can remain persistent when we have the passion for learning and performance. A former colleague gave me a note with "TTT" written on it. She told me after a meeting no matter how much we want something to happen, "things take time." I still don't like to wait, but I know she is right.

- **E** is for *efficacy* and *enthusiasm.* Efficacy is one of the best predictors of teachers' influence on students' learning. As Garfield (1986) wrote, it is a high predictor of peak performance. We, in education, can't do everything—but you can do something. As leaders, people look to us for enthusiasm. Who wants to follow someone who is in the dumps?

So how do we keep hope alive? One way is to focus on what we can do and not spend all our time on what we can't do. Let's look at the story of the "Wolf With Two Heads."

Wilma Mankiller, the first woman chief of the Cherokee Nation, told this story. A young girl was in a chemical dependency treatment center. The experience was not going well. She announced to her counselor that she was leaving the center to go feed the wolves. The counselor followed her to her room as she began packing to leave. The counselor tried to talk her out of leaving but finally said, "I don't understand the statement about feeding the wolves."

The girl showed the counselor a necklace she had with a wood carving of a wolf with two heads. She said her grandfather carved it. One head is the wolf of good, and the other was the wolf of evil. The counselor asked, "Which one wins in the struggle?" The young girl looked at the counselor and said, "Which ever one I feed the most." Which wolf are you feeding the most?

My third request is: Feed the wolf of good and hope. Nobody wants to follow a person who thinks the world is a dismal place. We must be purveyors of hope and optimism if we want to influence others.

Most of us who have spent a fair amount of time in education know that we do not get a lot of positive feedback. As a principal, 90% of my time involved going to meetings and solving conflicts. Both of those activities use a lot of energy. Once in awhile a former student will come by to thank me. Sometimes a parent or a former boss will say a kind word. Unfortunately, these are the exceptions. So how do we support our organizations and ourselves?

The answer is easy, and it brings me to my final request: Say thank you. Take a moment to think about who the mentors, friends, and VIPs (very important people) are in your life. Within 24 hours of reading this, I ask that you call, write, or e-mail one of them. Tell him or her what he or she has meant to you. Within 3 days, call, write, or e-mail another person. Within a week, call, write, or e-mail a third person. It will be supportive and gratifying for them to hear your thanks and appreciation. You'll feel great, too. Honor those who taught you, and honor those whom we teach and to whom we leave our legacy.

Be well. Go forward and make learning happen. AND – Get Up. Today is a Work Day.

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Bill Sommers is a SEDL program associate, a former high school principal, and the immediate past president of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). Portions of this article have previously appeared in his columns in the Journal of Staff Development, published by NSDC.

Professional Development *at the* State Level:

The Work of the Southeast Comprehensive Center and the Texas Comprehensive Center

By Debbie Ritenour

When it comes to schools, there's a clear hierarchy: students report to teachers, who report to principals. If you take it a step further, to the district level, principals report to superintendents. Many people forget that beyond that, there's the state department of education. Just like teachers, principals, and superintendents need technical assistance and professional development, so do administrators at the state level. SEDL's Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) and Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) help fill that need.

The SECC and the TXCC are two of the 16 regional comprehensive centers funded under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The centers were established to help states build their capacity to meet the needs of children served under NCLB. Specifically, the SECC and the TXCC work with state departments of education to identify and address each state's particular issues and needs. Through tailored professional development, the SECC and the TXCC are able to better serve each state—and thereby each district, school, and student within that state.

Supporting the South: The Southeast Comprehensive Center

The SECC provides high-quality professional development and technical assistance to the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. It works to build the capacities of states in its region to (1) implement the programs and goals of NCLB and (2) provide sustained support of high-needs districts and schools. To accomplish these goals, SECC staff met with key leaders within each state's department of education to discuss how to best meet their needs. These discussions led to the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding for each state, which was used to develop a work plan for the SECC.

The work varies depending on the state, although similar patterns do emerge. In Alabama, the Alabama Department of Education requested that an SECC staff member serve on the Alabama Accountability Roundtable (ART). The ART's mission is to provide a seamless system of technical assistance and support to schools in the areas of curriculum, instruction, fiscal responsibility, management, and leadership. The goal of this effort is to enable the schools and systems to achieve and maintain annual measurable objectives.

In September 2006, the ART conducted a needs-sensing survey of school improvement leaders, regional school improvement coaches, and peer mentors who serve on the State Support Team. Using the results of this survey, the SECC developed four professional development sessions: 1) "The Effect of Cultural Relevance on the High School Graduation Rate," 2) "How to Establish and Implement an Effective Mentoring Program," 3) "Writing Effective Goals, Strategies, and Benchmarks in Reading, Math, and Science," and 4) "Addressing the High School Graduation and Drop-Out Rate." Thus far, the SECC has presented each of these sessions at least twice, for a total of 21 days of professional development from October 2006 to March 2007. The professional development was conducted for School Support Team members who, in turn, replicate the training at schools and districts.

In Georgia, the SECC provides training-of-trainers professional development on evidence-based instructional strategies. Professional development on effective reading strategies and effective questioning skills was provided to the Heart of Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency at the request of the Georgia Department of Education.

In Louisiana, SECC staff met with Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) leadership staff in March 2006 to identify state needs. Since then, SECC staff have been busy conducting numerous professional development activities in targeted areas. One key area has been reading and literacy, which spans all divisions at the department. The activities have focused on 1) the K–12 literacy plan, 2) adolescent literacy "catch-up" programs, 3) the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), 4) best practices in teaching reading and

writing, and 5) state staff study groups in which reading reports are used to help inform the statewide reading research professional development plan for districts and schools.

These activities have helped move forward new ideas in the state. One SECC staff member, for example, served on a four-member expert review team to review numerous adolescent literacy "catch-up" programs and provide the LDE with feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of each program. The SECC then guided the LDE to use the feedback to create a guide to assist districts in choosing a program that aligns with the district's reading program, meets the specific reading needs of the district's students, and accelerates the learning of at-risk students who read 2 or more years below grade level. Thus far 10 districts have received state funding to pilot one of two adolescent literacy "catch-up" programs, and several others are using local funds to implement one of the programs described as research-based in the state guide.

"The SECC has been instrumental in helping us identify research-based intervention programs to accelerate the learning of struggling adolescent readers," says Donna Nola-Ganey, LDE assistant superintendent. "The catch-up programs are an important part of our overall effort to reduce the dropout rate and meet the needs of our most vulnerable high school students."

In Mississippi, one focus of the SECC's work has been on providing technical assistance in math and science. SECC staff helped the state revise its math and science curriculum frameworks. Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) staff requested SECC staff to review the curriculum frameworks for vertical and horizontal alignment, consistency in wording, and measurability and to align the standards with national standards. SECC staff also facilitated a 2-day meeting with members of the science curriculum frameworks revision committee to review the frameworks. The MDE is in the process of finalizing the revisions.

Additionally, two intensive professional development activities on NCLB were conducted for MDE staff members during January and February of 2007. The goal of these professional development activities was for participants to become familiar with the basic program requirements of Title I, Part A of NCLB. Each professional development activity was designed to help participants (1) identify and explain key concepts; (2) incorporate legislative requirements into their decision-making processes; and (3) locate key information in NCLB when necessary. The MDE has requested that this professional development activity be conducted again later this spring.

In February, SECC staff also facilitated a work session with the MDE Office of Leadership and Professional Development to revise the current professional development standards and professional development monitoring instrument. The state professional development model was also revised during this session. The MDE is in the process of compiling the revisions, and the SECC is holding a follow-up session to help.

Finally, in South Carolina, the state department of education asked the SECC to build its capacity to better evaluate the implementation of a new curriculum used in three corrective action districts. Under NCLB, states must identify for improvement any Title I school or district that does not meet the state's definition of adequate yearly progress for 2 consecutive years. If the school or district does not meet AYP during the next school year, the school or district enters corrective action. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDOE) identified three districts as qualifying for corrective action during the 2006–2007 school year. The state selected the option to implement a new curriculum in the districts. The SCDOE is working with the SECC and consultants to provide vital technical assistance in monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of the new curriculum. The SECC has also helped the SCDOE in the delivery of professional development for instructional and leadership staff in the three districts.

Building the Base: The Texas Comprehensive Center

The purpose of the TXCC is to provide technical assistance and support to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to ensure Texas has an education system with the capacity to eliminate achievement gaps and enable all students to achieve at high levels. Although the TXCC works with only one state—unlike the SECC's five states—the large and diverse geographic region that is Texas provides its own set of challenges. The TXCC staff met with the TEA to identify these various challenges and ways to address them.

The TXCC has two basic goals: 1) to build the capacity of TEA and 2) to build the capacity of the state infrastructure to meet the intent and purposes of NCLB. To achieve the first goal, TXCC staff meet with TEA staff once a month to discuss emerging needs and appropriate methods of addressing them. Thus far, the TXCC has provided technical assistance on such topics as school improvement, restructuring, defining rigor in science courses, evaluating supplemental education services, and state plans for ensuring teacher quality. Connecting

Debbie Ritenour is a SEDL communications associate. You may contact Debbie via e-mail: dritenou@sedl.org.

New Parent Booklets
Encourage Literacy Activities at Home

Parents can make a powerful impact on their children's reading success. Students do best "when both the home and the school provide optimal conditions for literacy development" (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990, p. 166). And given that students spend most of their time outside of school at home, the potential for increased achievement in reading is great if parents are involved in literacy activities (Murphy, 2003, p. 192). Sometimes teachers and schools need to make the first step to get parents involved in literacy activities, however, and help parents learn how to work with their children at home.

The National Institute for Literacy has published the following five new booklets designed for parents of K–3 students. The booklets foster parents' understanding of the five skills necessary for children to learn to read well and provide examples of how parents can work with their children to strengthen the skills. Best of all for teachers and parents, these booklets are available free of charge.
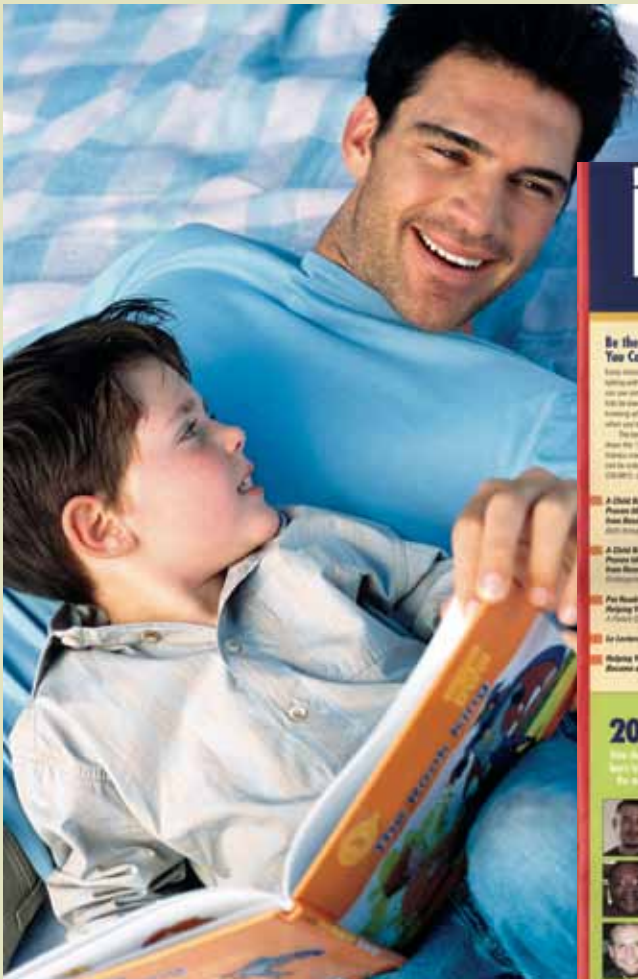
Dad's Playbook: Coaching Kids to Read

This colorful tabloid publication is targeted to dads. It explains why learning to read by third grade is so important, explains the five skills, and provides activities for dads and kids to do together. It also includes profiles of 20 fathers and what they are doing to help their children learn to read.

Downloads and Ordering Information

To view and download these publications, visit the publications page of the Institute's Web site at www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications.html.

To order publications, e-mail the Institute's clearinghouse at edpubs@inet.ed.gov or call toll-free 800-228-8813.

Big Dreams: A Family Book About Reading

Designed for parents with low-literacy skills, Big Dreams explains positive steps all parents can take to help their children succeed.
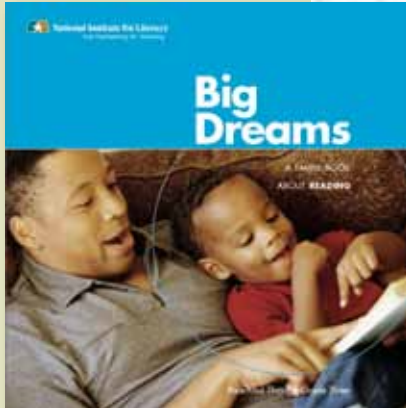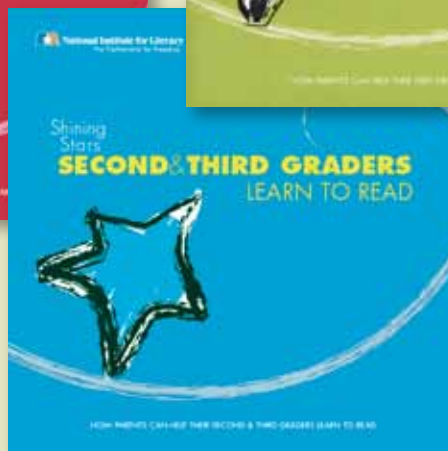
Shining Stars

Each of the Shining Stars booklets includes a story modeling how parents help their children learn to read. The booklets also have a short story to read with kids and include ways to talk to about the story afterward. To encourage parents to think about their children's reading development, each booklet contains a checklist of skills that children should develop at the appropriate grade level.

Shining Stars: Kindergartners Learn to Read

Shining Stars: First Graders Learn to Read

Shining Stars: Second and Third Graders Learn to Read

SEDL's Center for Professional Learning Offers
Focused Professional Development

Professional learning that focuses on student achievement and meets district and staff needs is key to improving teaching and learning. All too often staff development lacks focus on achievement, does not allow time for teachers to practice new skills, and does not include follow-up. SEDL's professional learning sessions have been developed from our knowledge of research and strong practices in communities, schools, and districts. Whether you are learning how to engage the community, strengthen instruction or assessment, or build school and district leadership, the focus is on student learning. SEDL is your center for professional learning, offering high-quality professional development sessions that can be tailored to meet your needs. We can deliver training at your school or district or host your staff at our Austin office.

Some of our more popular sessions are described here. You may visit our Web site to learn about additional sessions. SEDL staff can consult with you to customize your session, plan for long-term follow-up, and help you assess your progress and success.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

New school programs often fail because changes are not being implemented properly or because staff concerns about the ensuing changes are not addressed. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a conceptual framework that describes, explains, and predicts probable teacher behaviors throughout the change process, helping administrators and change facilitators avoid potential problems.

Participants learn how to

- recognize the seven different reactions that educators experience when implementing a new program;
- use the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) to evaluate staff's reactions, feelings, and attitudes;
- apply the Levels of Use (LoU) to document the extent of implementation; and
- use Innovation Configurations (IC) to measure how individuals are implementing a program or practice.

This 2.5-day professional development session enables participants to develop skills in using Stages of Concern to identify educators' reactions to change; Innovation Configurations to measure how individuals are implementing that change; and Levels of Use to determine individuals' behavior in implementing a change.

Leading With Organizational Savvy: Increasing Influence and Impact

In *Leading With Organizational Savvy: Increasing Your Influence and Impact,* participants will discuss the critical interplay between values, vision, and mission within schools and districts. Participants will convert values into simple rules to guide their daily behavior to promote organizational effectiveness. They will learn how their actions today can lead to the desired results of tomorrow. Participants will also develop a plan to bring key measurements into day-to-day conversations about how the organization is performing relative to its mission.

Participants learn how to

- clearly state the organizational mission;
- identify a balanced suite of both leading and lagging indicators;
- justify the cause-and-effect linkages between indicators;
- create an organizational "dashboard" to clearly report on key metrics; and
- devise a plan to implement the metrics and dashboard in the organization.

Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle (PTLC)

Designed for the experienced change agent, the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle (PTLC) is a powerful, standards-based professional development approach to improve classroom achievement in reading and mathematics. The PTLC helps inform the work of highly skilled facilitators who have the responsibility of guiding districts and schools in a long-term systemic improvement effort. This session will provide facilitators with a well-developed and tested structure that shows how to de-isolate the classroom by convening teachers for the purpose of sharing their craft knowledge.

Participants learn how to

- use the PTLC as a strategy for increasing alignment in reading and mathematics;
- explore the implications of using the PTLC as an alignment strategy for improving student achievement in districts and schools; and
- create an action plan to introduce the PTLC to a district and/or school.

Contact Us
Please call us at 800-476-6861 or visit www.sedl.org/services/ for more information.
Sign up now for PTLC training at SEDL's Austin office June 11–12, 2007.

Comprehensive Centers

TEA staff to experts in these areas, such as those from the National Content Centers, and providing information about what other states are doing to implement NCLB are two forms of technical assistance that seem to be of particular value.

To achieve the second goal, TXCC staff provide professional development to the education service centers (ESCs) throughout the state. This training has focused on leadership development and instructional practice. TXCC staff have led sessions with ESC staff to help them learn how to build principals' capacity for meeting with teachers as a faculty and in one-on-one coaching sessions where together they analyze data and use the results for improving student outcomes. TXCC staff also provide professional development for ESC staff who work directly with teachers. These sessions have focused on instructional strategies and support for English language learners in math and science in high school.

The TXCC provides ongoing support in its professional development activities. TXCC staff also try to tailor the sessions to the needs of the group. Haidee Williams, the TXCC's state liaison, says TXCC staff ask for feedback from participants and plan accordingly.

"At the end of the second day of one training, we asked, 'What do you want to learn more about on days three and four?'" Williams says. "They gave us a list of 15 topics, and we said, 'OK, out of these 15, what are your top three?' Those were the topics for the next session."

Williams points out that Texas has a good support system in place with TEA, the Title I Statewide School Support/Parental Involvement Initiative, the 20 ESCs, and the School Improvement Resource Center. She says the TXCC is working to build the capacity of all of the initiatives to work together more efficiently.

"Compared to many states, Texas has a fantastic infrastructure to support schools," she says. "We're looking to coordinate our work to support the implementation of NCLB that is infused within this system, rather than just running parallel to it."

The Future Role of the Comprehensive Centers

In each state, the state liaison meets regularly to discuss and plan professional development activities for state staff based on current and future needs. This constant communication has helped both the states and the comprehensive centers meet their goals. In Texas, for example, five ESCs are partnering in Spring 2007 to redeliver the school improvement process from the TXCC's summer forum, and other centers have done this on an individual basis.

"One indicator of the success of our professional development sessions comes from the fact that the Alabama State Department of Education is already asking us to provide more professional development next year," says Lou Meadows, the SECC's state liaison for Alabama. "I guess we could say repeat customers are a good indication that we are giving the clients what they need."

President George W. Bush, and New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin, left, visit with Dr. Anthony "Tony" Recasner, principal of the Samuel J. Green Charter School, and third-grade students on March 1, 2007. President Bush visited the Gulf Coast region to see the recovery progress of communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Recasner served on the SEDL board from 1998–2004. White House photo by Eric Draper.

Inside this issue