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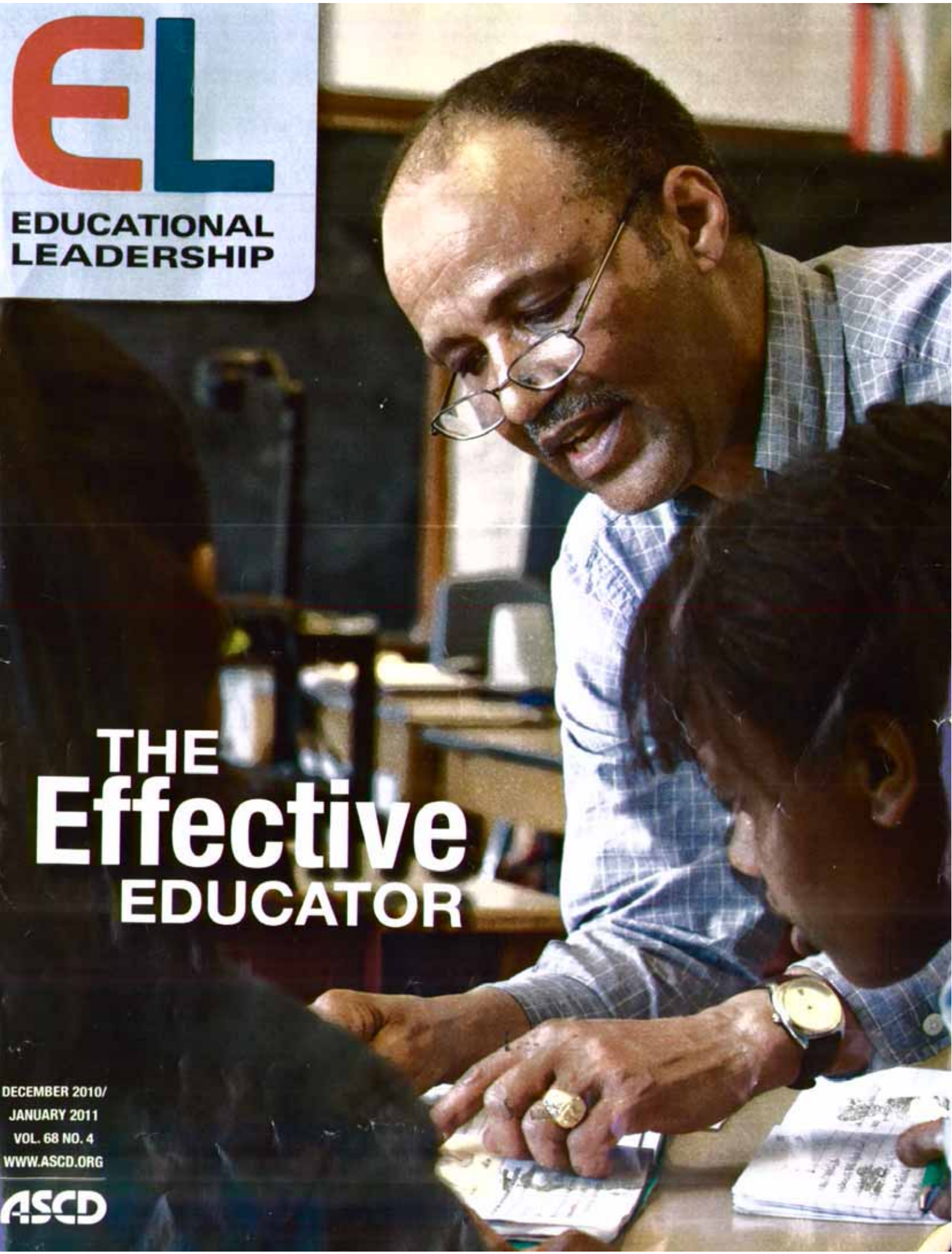

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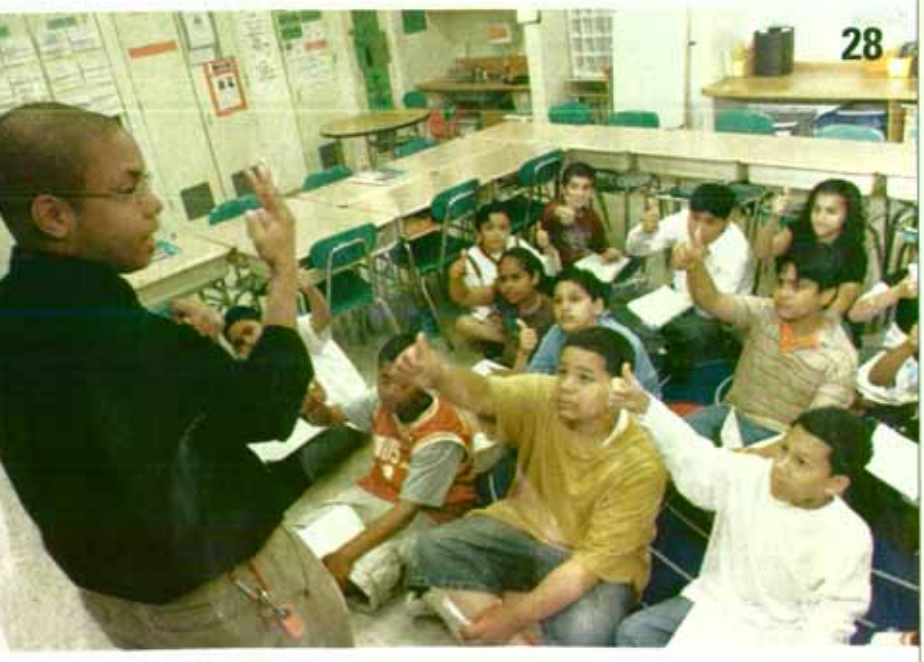

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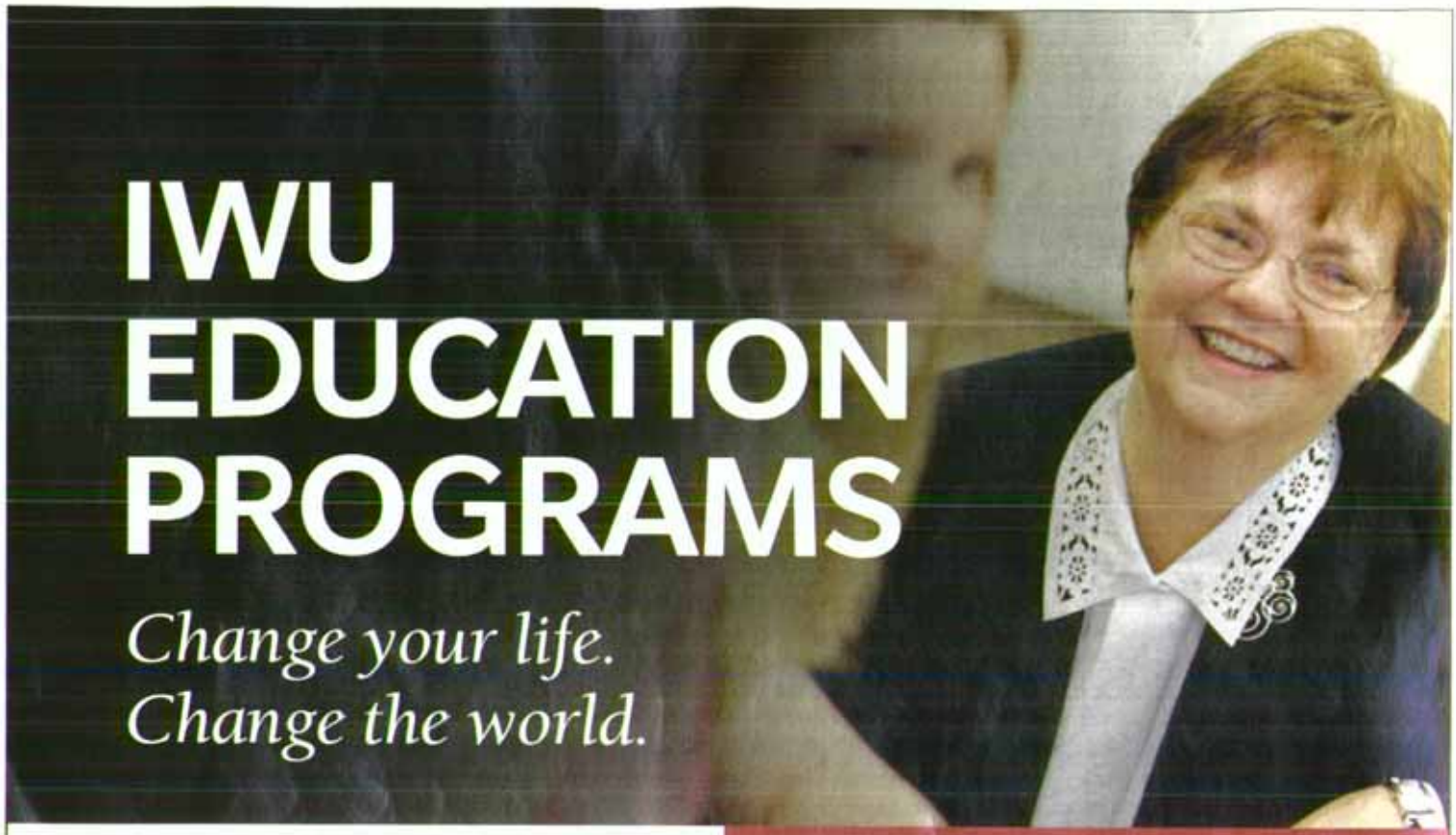
On the cover: Tadesse Gobu, American History Teacher at Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center School in the Seattle Public School District. Photo © Stefanie Felix.

Departments



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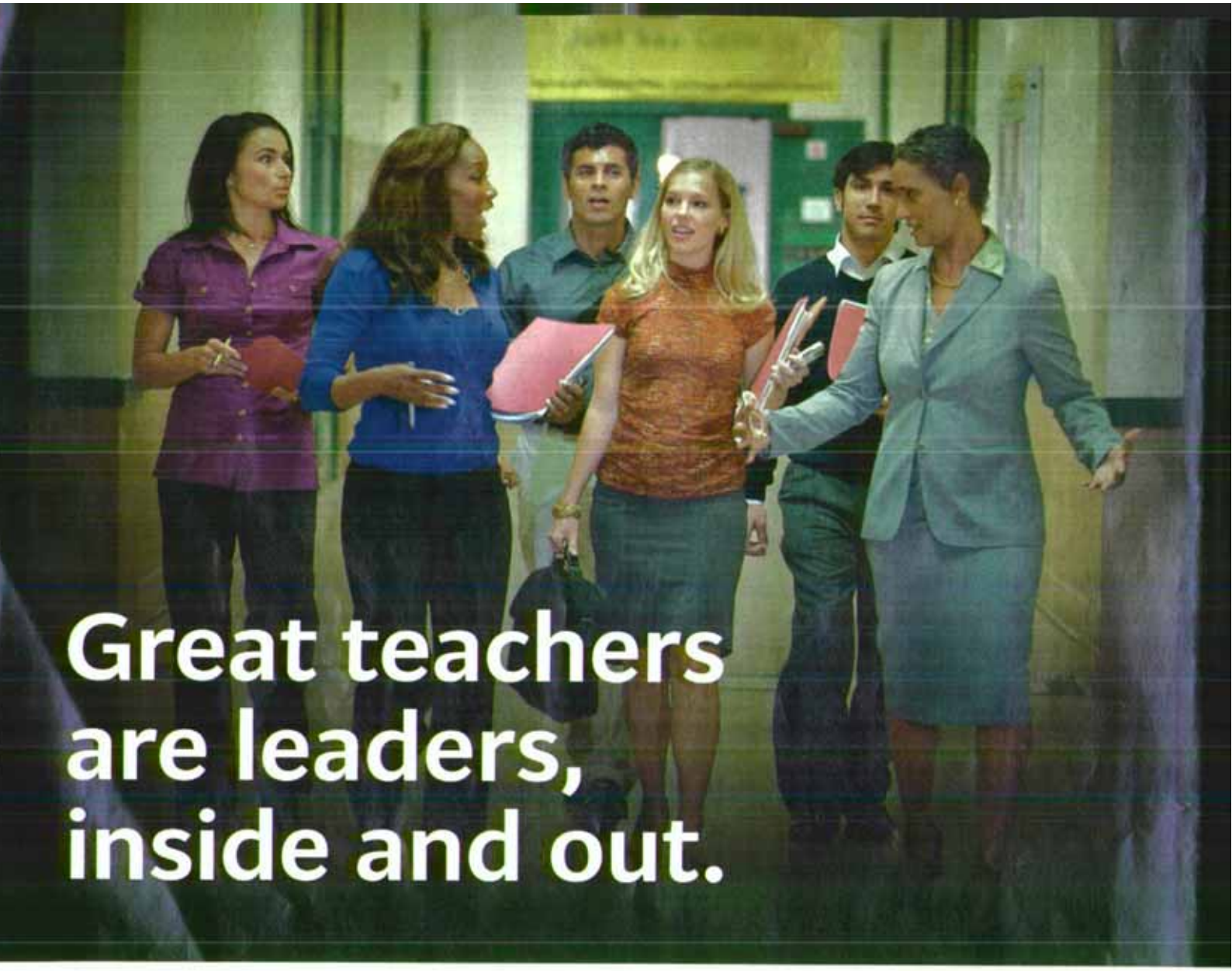

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Perspectives

Teacher Effectiveness: Getting the Whole Picture

At a family reunion this past fall, I asked some of my relatives to tell me about their most effective teacher. From the chemist in the family, I heard about Viva Craig, a Latin teacher who greeted her students with "Salve, Salve" when she met them in the hallway. "She was active in the Classical League, and she knew her subject well.... I learned more English in that Latin class than I did in all my English classes," he said.

The nurse in the family recalled Emily Huber, who taught her class fundamental hospital skills, like making beds with mitered corners and the proper techniques for giving shots and back rubs. Compassion was her most notable quality. "She knew everyone personally, and she wanted everybody to love nursing."

The CPA's favorite was Sister Mary Raynald, a chemistry teacher. "She pulled me aside to explain a concept she saw that I didn't understand. She knew what each student needed. She made me enjoy chemistry. And she slipped a few of us notes letting us know we had made the National Honor Society."

Listening to my family's impressions of effective teachers, I have to conclude that most of us know effective teaching when we experience it. Caring, enthusiasm for the subject, getting the best out of students—those are the hallmarks we former students remember.

But this intuitive recognition of effective teaching is not enough to inform policymakers, teacher educators, and those who must hire and evaluate teachers. They ask more complicated questions: Which high-leverage practices consistently lead to student achievement, and do they work for all students? Can we teach the requisite personal characteristics, the best strategies, and the right attitudes to aspiring candidates? Can we measure the tangible and intangible qualities of effectiveness? And what policies would best nurture teacher talent?

Our authors in this issue address these questions and more. We start with one of the most recent policy issues: the call for *measuring* "teacher effectiveness." Coauthors of a new report from the Council of Chief State School Officers, Circe Stumbo and Peter McWalters (p. 10), believe that the growing reliance on student outcomes—instead of years of experience and advanced degrees—to determine teacher effectiveness holds promise for ushering in a new era of professionalism for educators.

But they also enumerate the challenges of moving in this direction: Student assessment data have their limits, and many subjects are yet untested. Most teacher evaluators have not been trained to analyze teaching in this way, and relying on student outcomes as indicators of effectiveness too often fails to take into consideration student differences, working conditions, and group accountability. Finally, the new measures must also take into account that teacher influence goes far beyond student academic performance. Teachers also foster students' motivation, perseverance, and citizenship. To really support good teachers, any new evaluation system must consider the whole picture.

Vivien Stewart (p. 16) offers a fascinating glimpse at what countries around the world have already done to address these complexities. The world-class systems for attracting, preparing, and supporting good teachers range from highly selective teacher preparation programs in Finland, to innovative recruiting practices in England, from investment in meaningful professional development in Japan and Singapore, to evaluation that involves extensive principal and teacher conversations about student progress in Canada. These countries' sophisticated, multifaceted policies have paid off, not only in boosting student learning but also in making teaching a highly sought-after career choice.

Not all our authors talk policy, however. Many of them give us their personal and professional views of what it takes to be good at teaching. Whether they call for pedagogical content knowledge, high-leverage practices, a framework for teaching, teaching in context, or deliberate strategies, they reveal that the act of teaching requires individuals to continually strive to improve at a plethora of skills. "No matter how good a lesson is, we can always make it better," Charlotte Danielson (p. 35) says.

Columnist Bryan Goodwin (p. 79) puts the research about teacher effectiveness in context. After looking at the measures that matter most—like cognitive ability, adequate knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach—and those that matter less, but still matter—like experience and advanced training—he concludes that "good teachers do not necessarily fit one mold."

Those who measure teacher effectiveness have a difficult job ahead of them, but not as difficult as the job of teaching itself. There will always be those precious intangibles to insert into the rubric.

Marge Scherer

Marge Scherer

DoubleTake

Research Alert

Fewer Hours, Fewer Results?

Are schools improving the delivery of teacher professional development? Yes and no, according to a recent report from the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and the National Staff Development Council titled *Professional Development in the United States: Trends and Challenges*. Here are some findings:

- Nearly 75 percent of beginning teachers participate in induction programs, and 80 percent report having a mentor. A significantly lower percentage of teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools report such supports.
- Teachers received fewer hours of professional development in 2008 than in 2004 in reading instruction, classroom management, and using computers for instruction.
- Two-thirds of teachers reported structured opportunities for collaboration, but time spent in collaboration averaged only 2.7 hours each week.
- Fewer than one-half of teachers reported access to professional development on teaching students with disabilities (42 percent) and English language learners (27 percent).
- Preferred professional development topics remained the same from 2004 to 2008, with teachers citing four areas as most essential: content knowledge, classroom management, students with special needs, and technology.

The report raised the issue of the *intensity* of professional development—that is, the number of hours that teachers receive training on a given topic. The authors concluded,

> In areas like reading instruction, uses of computers, and teaching of English language learners and special education students, U.S. investments in teacher learning appear to be increasingly focused on the least effective models of professional development—short-term workshops that research suggests are unlikely to influence practice and student achievement. (pp. v–vi)

Teachers reported engaging in an average of 44 hours of professional development during the previous 12 months. However, research suggests

that for professional development to have significant effects on student achievement, teachers need at least 49 hours on a given topic and at least 100 hours in math and science.

Professional Development in the United States: Trends and Challenges, by Ruth Chung Wei, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Frank Adamson, is available at www.nsdc.org/news/NSDCstudytechnicalreport2010.pdf.

World Spin

An End to Wild and Wacky

In the United Kingdom, British Education Secretary Michael Gove recently exhorted teachers to adopt a "commonsense" approach to teaching and stay away from what he called "wild and wacky" pedagogical methods that have distracted schools in the past. Instead, teachers should teach academic subjects rigorously and insist on strict standards of behavior. School uniforms are also high on his list.

Gove's comments come on the heels of a recent BBC documentary that suggests that Britain has a larger gap in performance between private and state schools than most other developed nations. The country has also witnessed a serious slump in the study of core subjects. The number of students achieving good results on the General Certificate of Secondary Education in five core subjects has declined to 15 percent over the past four years, whereas the number taking vocational qualifications has skyrocketed. Gove blames this circumstance on the Labor Party's decision to give nonacademic qualifications equal value in school rankings ("league tables"); he asserts that this move encourages schools to have their students take easier rather than more challenging exams.

Numbers of Note

1,080
The average number of hours per year that U.S. educators teach in primary school.

vs.

803
The average number of hours per year that educators in all OECD nations teach in primary school.

Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2007). *Education at a Glance 2007: OECD Indicators.* Paris: Author.

44 The number of hours of professional development that U.S. teachers reported experiencing "in the last 12 months."

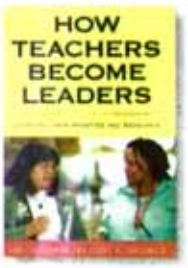
vs.

100+ The number of hours each year of professional development required of—and provided to—teachers in the Netherlands, Sweden, Singapore, and other high-achieving countries.

Source: Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2010). *Professional Development in the United States: Trends and Challenges.* Dallas, TX: NSDC.

Relevant Reads

How Teachers Become Leaders: Learning from Practice and Research **by Ann Lieberman and Linda D. Friedrich** (Teachers College Press, 2010).



What challenges do teachers face when they assume leadership roles in their schools and districts? Lieberman and Friedrich explored this question by asking teacher leaders to write a vignette about what they have learned from their leadership experience. The 14 educators who tell their personal stories in this collection include a teacher who found that her new role as assistant principal cut her off from her colleagues, a literacy director who discovered the value of teacher collaboration, and a districtwide staff developer turned literacy coach turned 3rd grade teacher who discovered that each role enabled her to exert a different kind

Only Online

A Lifeline—and More

Ever wished you could ask an accomplished teacher for help creating lessons, setting up your classroom, or handling a tough teaching dilemma? You've got a helpline now—at the Teachers Network website (www.teachersnetwork.org).

The helpline (http://teachersnetwork.org/aboutus/web_mentors.htm) connects visitors to teachers with expertise in areas ranging from using new media to adjusting instruction for language learners. Visitors can not only access lesson plans, activities, and articles that these "web mentor" teachers have posted related to their specialties, but also e-mail a practice-based question to a web mentor teacher and expect a response within 72 hours. There's also a New York City Teachers Helpline that connects to teacher mentors working in New York City schools.

While you're there, take a look at

- *Teachers on Teaching*, an 18-minute documentary that features interviews with classroom teachers around the United States. The teachers frankly discuss what drew them to teaching, why they stay, and what kinds of supports and learning opportunities they believe teachers need to remain in the teaching profession.
- The Network's Teachnet project, which features a large database of free units and classroom projects. Users can search 12 subject areas—including special education, the arts, and health—and pull up detailed descriptions of units or projects created by participating teachers, grouped into elementary, middle, and high school levels. You'll find lesson plans and assignments, lists of materials needed, a review of the standards that the unit or project meets, tips for teaching the unit, and teacher contact information.

PageTurner

"A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be 'fixed,' but rather because teaching is so *hard* that we can always improve it."

—*Charlotte Danielson, p. 35*

Measuring Effectiveness: What Will It Take?

As states look to a more active role in teacher evaluation, they face seven major challenges.

Circe Stumbo and Peter McWalters

As the dust settles from the flurry of activity surrounding the education stimulus package and the new programs it created—such as Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, and the School Improvement Grants—a clear message has taken shape: Federal policy now focuses on teacher "effectiveness" rather than teacher "quality."

The centerpiece federal law for K–12 education, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), set teacher quality as a major policy priority when it was reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. *Teacher quality* largely refers to how well teachers know their content as measured by the postsecondary courses they have taken. The shift toward *effectiveness* focuses on how well teachers perform with students. Rather than measuring inputs (such as how many academic degrees the teacher has or how long he or she has been on the job), we should measure the outcomes of a teacher's work to see how effective the teacher is (the extent to which the educator has met crucial student needs, such as increasing student achievement). This is analogous to the shift from paying attention to student inputs (how many courses a student has taken, or "seat time") to looking at outcomes (how much the student knows and can do, or performance).

Recent Advances

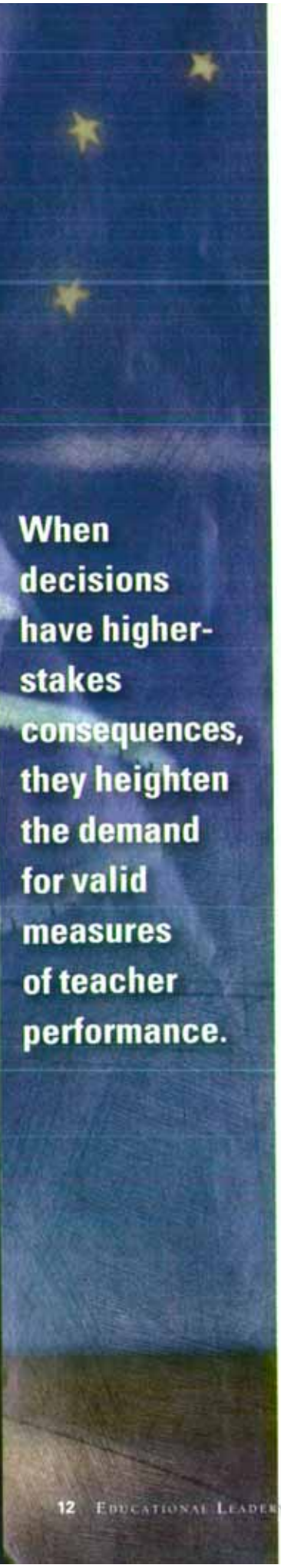
Although measuring outcomes rather than inputs has been the expressed intention of standards-based reforms for at least two decades, policy changes that make that shift real have been slow to come to fruition. The year 2010 sped up the pace of reform. The new attention to effectiveness is most obvious in the call for improving teacher evaluation. Although evaluation has traditionally been a local responsibility, federal programs have been calling for states to require evaluation systems that include specific measures of teacher effectiveness, such as student achievement data.

For example, section (D)(2)(ii) of the Race to the Top application (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) asks states to "design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that . . . differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth . . . as a significant factor" (p. 34). Although there is no clear definition of "significant," some of the winning Race to the Top states set the weight of student performance at 50 percent or more of a teacher's evaluation score.

The focus on teacher effectiveness does not end with the stimulus fund programs. The administration's *A Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) lays out proposals as Congress engages in its periodic review of ESEA:

> We are calling on states and districts to develop and implement systems of teacher and principal evaluation and support, and to identify effective and highly effective teachers and principals on the basis of student growth and other factors. (p. 4)

Through ESEA, the effectiveness agenda could become enduring policy.



When decisions have higher-stakes consequences, they heighten the demand for valid measures of teacher performance.

Seven Challenges Ahead

Proposals for change in the way we evaluate teachers are particularly knotty when teacher evaluation is connected to high-stakes decisions such as tenure, promotion, removal, or compensation. As part of each teacher's regular evaluation, some districts already look at student test score data that demonstrate how much students advanced while working with that teacher (value-added data). However, districts tend to use that information to determine things like a teacher's professional development needs.

When decisions have higher-stakes consequences, such as a teacher potentially losing her or his job, they heighten the demand for measures of teacher performance that are valid, reliable, credible, fair, and legally defensible. As states move to take a more active role in teacher evaluation, they face major challenges in meeting this demand. These challenges raise questions that range from the psychometrics of creating valid and reliable measures of effectiveness to the purpose of public education.

Challenge 1: The Limits of Student Assessment Data

Sophisticated value-added modeling—using student assessment data, adjusted for some student and school characteristics, to determine how much growth in student performance occurred with a particular teacher—is relatively untested as a high-stakes measure, as demonstrated by the controversy that arose when the *Los Angeles Times* released value-added assessment data by teacher (see http://projects.latimes.com/value-added/). According to highly regarded testing experts, the evidence supporting the validity and reliability of value-added modeling results is weak enough that such results should not yet be used as the major measure of teacher effectiveness (Baker et al., 2010).

Similarly, testing experts such as W. James Popham and members of the Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment argue that the types of standardized exams used in most value-added assessment systems are not "instructionally sensitive." Popham (2007) defines "instructional sensitivity" as "the degree to which students' performances on a test accurately reflect the quality of instruction specifically provided to promote students' mastery of what is being assessed."

Unfortunately, too many standardized exams do *not* demonstrate whether a teacher's instruction had an effect on the student's performance. With this kind of assertion waiting in the wings, educators are likely to challenge the use of summative statewide standardized exams in high-stakes evaluations.

Challenge 2: Many Untested Subjects

The most obvious problem associated with attributing individual teachers' performance to individual students' test scores is connecting test scores to teachers who teach untested subjects. Every state administers English language arts and mathematics tests in grades 3–8 as well as once in high school. Thus, preK–2 and three years in high school are mostly untested. Further, although many states administer tests in science and social studies, they are not administered at every grade level and may not provide the right kind of information for teacher evaluation in those subject areas.

We can see how these difficulties play out if we look at a student in a traditional junior high school. Last year, Jacob, the son of one of the authors, was a 7th grader. His favorite class was Global Studies. In 7th grade, students are required to take two full-year courses in literacy and language arts and just one Global Studies course for one trimester. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) cover social studies. However, as the ITBS website states "The content of the [social studies] questions is taken from the areas of geography, history, government, economics, sociology, and the other social sciences" (Iowa Testing Programs, n.d.). Is it reasonable to believe that Jacob's Global Studies teacher, with just 60 days with each child, stands a chance at preparing students to succeed on such a general exam? To what extent are Jacob's scores on the ITBS an accurate measure of his teacher's performance?

It is possible to find alternative measures of student performance that can be compared across classrooms beyond statewide, multiple-choice standardized exams, such as the National Writing Project's rubrics and juried competitions to judge senior year capstone

projects for graduation. Some states (such as Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, and Nebraska) and high-performing countries (such as Finland) are engaged in this work, but it is both complicated and expensive.

If we are using such student performances for high-stakes decision making, we will need to make sure that the determinations are valid (that we measure what we mean to measure)

and reliable (that the measure will yield the same results on repeated trials). For the arts, physical education, and other untested subjects, the development of such measures of student performance has yet to be completed.

The federal Race to the Top program acknowledged this challenge. In both the state and assessment consortium grants, it provided funding that could be used to improve the type and quality of assessments. Still, this is a massive undertaking.

Challenge 3: Quality of Evaluators

A scan of the literature on teacher evaluation demonstrates that teachers do not routinely and consistently receive quality evaluations. Several studies examine deficiencies in administrators' ability to conduct quality evaluations (see Brandt, Mathers, Oliva, Brown-Sims, & Hess, 2007; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009).

Lack of evaluator training is a threat to the reliability of the evaluation and objectivity of the results. An untrained observer may introduce bias into observations; the observer's expectations of a teacher may influence the observation to a greater degree than the actual teacher behaviors displayed (Mujis, 2006). Researchers at the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (Little et al., 2009) found that a "reliable classroom observation protocol may be wildly inaccurate or inconsistent in the hands of an untrained evaluator" (p. 21).

However, districts rarely require evaluators to be trained. Only 8 percent of the districts in a study of midwestern districts had written documentation detailing requirements for training evaluators (Brandt et al., 2007; Loup, Garland, Ellett, & Rugutt, 1996). In many of the 12 districts examined in the *Widget Effect* (Weisburg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009), evaluation training was a one-time endeavor provided either when an administrator was new to the position or when the district implemented a revised system of teacher evaluation. Inter- and intra-rater reliability is also increasingly needed as evaluations inform high-stakes decision making, but this has not been developed yet (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994; Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008; Mujis, 2006).

Recognizing this challenge, Iowa, Minnesota, and North Carolina are providing training for evaluators, but few other states have taken up a similar mantle. We predict that evaluator training will become a priority for many states.

Challenge 4: Individual Versus Team-Based Accountability

It's difficult to attribute student performance to a specific teacher in secondary school or in virtual programs because students in these environments have multiple teachers daily. But even in elementary school, which traditionally assigns students to one teacher only, students who need additional learning supports might work with an adult in addition to the teacher of record on basic skills in English language arts or mathematics.

Let's look again at Jacob's junior high school, which is organized by trimesters. Jacob had 11 different courses last year, meaning 11 different teachers. All 7th graders in his school take two courses in English language arts. Which of his two English teachers can claim success with Jacob on the basis of his language arts scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills? Moreover, can his Global Studies teacher lay claim to success in any of those areas—or is social studies the only test that matters to her? The Iowa Testing Program states, "The questions on this [social studies] test measure objectives of the social studies curriculum that are not measured elsewhere in the ITBS tests" (Iowa Testing Program, n.d.). This implies that her instruction may have an effect on Jacob's scores on other tests, but it's unclear how to discern that effect.

Trying to attribute student performance to a specific teacher also runs counter to the collaborative way we think about teaching today. Teachers who collectively engage in participatory decision making, lesson design, data analysis, and analysis of student work are better able to deliver rigorous and relevant learning for all students and personalize learning for individual students. The new core teaching standards reflect this understanding, calling for teachers to participate actively as team members in decision-making processes.

Most teacher evaluation systems have been designed to assess individuals, but the collaborative culture envisioned by the new core teaching standards (and

by the administration's reauthorization blueprint, for that matter) will require us to explore a next-generation, team-based approach to performance review.

Challenge 5: What Else Matters?

Up to now, under NCLB, teachers have defined teacher quality as knowing their subject matter. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has recently revised its model core teaching standards, which go beyond possessing content knowledge to incorporate knowledge of *how to teach* one's subject matter (for example, how to identify students' common misunderstandings and help students move beyond them) and "how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical/creative thinking and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues" (CCSSO, 2010, p. 15). Presumably, students whose teachers have this set of skills would perform well on exams.

But even in the most stringent state policy propositions, one-half of a teacher's evaluation is based on criteria other than student performance. How a teacher helps students to become motivated to learn, persist in their work, strive to be lifelong learners, express themselves artistically, behave civilly, and not bully others—these factors matter to parents, students, and communities. The Obama administration captures these sentiments in its call for a more holistic understanding of education. States have asserted their interest in citizenship education, not just college and career readiness. And teachers point to an obligation to support a culture of learning in their school communities as well as to develop their profession. As the focus on teacher evaluation rises to the state and federal levels, we will need to articulate the full range of teacher practices and student outcomes that we want from our education system—and determine how we can measure them.

Challenge 6: Working Conditions

When developing an approach to teacher evaluation and its high-stakes consequences, states will need to consider the systems in which teachers work. Have teacher evaluation systems taken into account circumstances beyond teachers' control? These range from having access to appropriate resources (such as a heated classroom) or equipment that enhances learning (such as computers); to access to professional communities of support (such as other teachers with whom to collaborate, behavior specialists, and other resource staff); to the alignment of education programs among the school, district, and state.

And what about other conditions over which teachers have little control, such as student readiness? Are students hungry or suffering? Is the school climate conducive to student learning and teacher collaboration? Research suggests that improved working conditions significantly influence a school's ability to reach achievement goals (for a full summary, see Emerick, Hirsch, & Berry, 2005), yet we have few strong models that account for working conditions in evaluating teacher effectiveness.

Challenge 7: Engaging All Stakeholders

Teacher evaluation has primarily been a local responsibility, but federal programs such as Race to the Top signal a shift toward using evaluation to meet state and federal goals. Aligning these multiple levels of authority to support the dual purposes of evaluation—professional growth and accountability—will require adjusting the purpose, design, and mechanisms of evaluation systems. It will also require a culture of shared responsibility and mission as more players claim a stake in the outcomes of teacher evaluation and take a more active role in designing evaluation systems.

No matter how we proceed, we need to engage all stakeholders in the discussion. Stakeholders include professional standards boards, boards of examiners, professional organizations, membership associations, unions, boards of regents, teacher educators, professional developers, local school boards, and teachers and administrators. Only then can we clarify feasibility, mobilize interest, anticipate and prevent barriers, and ensure high-fidelity implementation.

What Next?

We raise these challenges not to sound an alarm, but to suggest an agenda for cooperative research, design, development, and assessment of state policy and local practices. When grounded in agreed-on standards for teaching—such as the recently revised Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards—and developed in ways that overcome the challenges cited, evaluation can be an effective lever for state and local policy.

Having just completed the initial stage of revising the standards, CCSSO is now turning its attention to crafting a developmental continuum across a teacher's career, pegged to the standards, as well as rubrics for evaluating

progress. An additional goal is to work to validate the standards in practice. We expect these efforts, as well as the efforts of states already using the draft standards in their teacher evaluation pilots, will lead to a rigorous foundation for a system of teacher performance.

We further expect the assessment community to work vigorously to design multiple measures of student performance in both tested and untested subjects and to develop value-added assessment systems that have greater reliability. Two assessment consortia received funding through Race to the Top to engage specifically in this work. In addition, groups such as the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium—a partnership among the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the CCSSO, and Stanford University—are developing improved teacher performance assessments and portfolio systems. Projects such as the Measures of Effective Teaching, developed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, are evaluating video samples of practicing teachers against validated rubrics, student surveys, and student performance.

Finally, we will need to learn from experts in the business community, who have long been working on team-based accountability systems, how to shift the model from the individual as the sole unit of authority and responsibility to next-generation systems that recognize the importance of professional collaboration, transparent practice, reflective and collective inquiry, and joint accountability. ■

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Raising Teacher Quality

Countries that excel in education use a wide array of purposeful strategies to build an outstanding teacher workforce.

Vivien Stewart

All across the globe, countries are trying to improve education. Some countries are in the earlier stages of education development, mainly striving to expand access to elementary and lower secondary education and to ensure transmission of basic skills; in these nations, reformers are less concerned with the quality of the teaching force than with just getting enough teachers into classrooms. Other countries are entering the global knowledge economy and seeking to prepare their students with the complex, higher-order cognitive skills that economy demands; in these nations, the major focus is strengthening the quality and effectiveness of the teacher workforce (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2005).

Contrary to what many people assume, a high-quality teacher workforce is not the simple result of some traditional cultural respect for teachers. Rather, it requires deliberate policy choices. High-performing countries build their human resource systems by putting the energy up front; they concentrate on attracting, preparing, and supporting good teachers and nurturing teacher leadership talent, rather than on reducing teacher attrition and firing

Around the World

weak teachers (Stewart, 2009). These countries spend a higher proportion of their education dollar on classroom teachers than the United States does. This often requires trade-offs in terms of class size, special services, or facilities.

Here are some examples of how high-performing and significantly improving nations are developing effective educators.

Attracting and Recruiting Teachers

In modern, diversified economies, education has to compete with other sectors for talent. Some countries, such as Finland, have found that when they raised the standards for new teachers, they increased the status of teachers and actually received more applicants. An important factor in attracting the most able young people into teaching in Finland is that teaching is considered an independent and respected profession rather than a mere technical implementation of externally mandated standards and tests. In Finland, teaching is now a highly sought-after career; only one in 10 applicants is accepted into teacher preparation programs after two rounds of selection (Sahlberg, 2010).

Other countries don't just wait for prospective teachers to apply but actively recruit teachers. Singapore, for example, selects prospective teachers from the top one-third of their secondary school class. Strong academics are essential, along with a commitment to the profession and to serving the nation's diverse students. Trainees receive a stipend equivalent to 60 percent of a teacher's salary while in training and commit to teaching for a minimum of three years (Ho, 2010). Singapore also actively recruits mid-career candidates, believing their experience in the world of work is valuable to students (Asia Society, 2006).

In England, the government has taken steps to raise the

China has weekly teacher research groups that focus on classroom improvement.

status of the profession: a sophisticated advertising campaign that recruited new candidates; teacher awards programs on television; encouragement of alternate routes into teaching to compete with traditional university teacher training programs; and bonuses for those who commit to teach in high-need communities. As a result, teaching went from the 92nd career choice to the top career choice within five years (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

When shortages occur, all these countries focus on recruiting teachers in innovative ways rather than lowering the standards to get more teachers. One added benefit of this attention to recruitment and induction is far lower attrition rates among new teachers than in the United States.

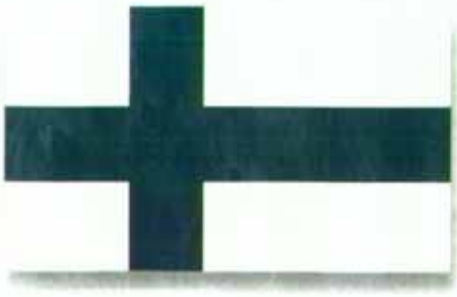
Teacher Preparation

Relatively few international comparisons of teacher education have been conducted. However, we do know that some high-performing countries (such as Finland and Singapore) limit the number of candidates accepted into teacher education programs to get higher-quality applicants and to secure better job placement rates, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the profession. Other countries (such as England and the United States) do not limit the numbers of people who prepare to become teachers.

Criticisms that teacher education is too theoretical and that universities do not take responsibility for the quality of their education graduates are heard in many countries. So too is the concern that colleges of education are not moving fast enough to respond to rapid global changes in the economy and in essential career skills.

Countries vary considerably, however, in their approaches to modernizing teacher education. In China and Finland, for example, traditional teacher preparation programs are accepted and valued, and adaptations are made within the existing institutional framework (Asia Society, 2006; Sahlberg, 2010). In Ontario, Canada, on the other hand, government reformers viewed teacher education institutions as too hard to change, so reform efforts ignored these institutions and focused primarily on improving professional development for existing teachers (Levin, 2008). England chose the strategy of creating alternate routes to compete with traditional providers.

The central theme of Singapore's Teacher Education Model for the 21st Century (TE21), announced by its National Institute of Education in 2009, is that 21st century learners need 21st century teachers who not only possess 21st century literacies themselves, but also can create the learning environments that enable their students to develop such skills. In a study of Singapore schools that I recently completed for an upcoming OECD report, I found that many of the changes put forward under TE21 echo the teacher preparation reforms being made in a number of other countries. These include placing more emphasis on guided practice in classroom settings from the beginning of training and holding teacher education institutions accountable for a set of initial teacher competencies that directly relate to the national standards.



Professional Development

Regular professional development is essential for effective teaching and

learning. The policy challenge is to determine what forms of professional development are effective and to implement them in all schools, not just some. In the United States, professional development is not tightly linked to the instructional agenda of the school, so it is often incoherent and many teachers avoid participation.

In contrast, all teachers in Japan participate regularly in lesson study. This traditional practice, in which groups of teachers review their lesson plans and consider how to improve them, provides a mechanism for self-reflection and continuous improvement. In China, classrooms are routinely open for observation; teacher trainees, practicing teachers, and administrators are required to observe and provide feedback on a certain number of their colleagues' lessons each year. China also has weekly teacher research groups that focus on classroom improvement and whose work may be published (Asia Society, 2006). Singapore's policy of "teach less, learn more" frees up time in the school day for professional development as well as planning and working with students outside the classroom; every teacher is guaranteed 100 hours of professional development every year (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Compared with U.S. teachers, those in Asia spend fewer hours teaching classes and more hours providing feedback to students individually or meeting with families to collaboratively diagnose classroom problems and design solutions. The trade-off for this increased attention to improving professional practice tends to be larger class sizes (Schleicher & Stewart, 2008).

Compensation and Evaluation

International studies show that to attract high-quality graduates into the teaching profession, entry-level teacher salaries must be roughly comparable to those in other careers that these graduates could enter. But beyond the entry level, working conditions—being treated as a professional, having the opportunity to work with colleagues, and having opportunities to advance—seem more important than salary (Schleicher & Stewart, 2008).

Teacher evaluation is a controversial subject in many countries, and practices vary greatly from country to country. Policymakers in Finland and Canada, for example, have rejected merit-pay approaches because of a lack of empirical evidence supporting

All teachers in Japan participate regularly in lesson study.

such approaches; both of these countries encourage extensive principal and teacher conversations about student progress (Asia Society & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Chinese and Singaporean teachers, on the other hand, receive financial bonuses and promotions for high performance. In Singapore, teachers' performance is appraised annually by several people on multiple measures, including classroom instruction and results, collaboration with parents and community groups, and contribution to their colleagues and the school as a whole. It is important to note that high-performing countries have developed strong systems of professional and school-level accountability. They do not, however, base these systems solely on student test scores, but on a wider range of school improvement goals, professional contributions, and indicators of student well-being.

Teacher Distribution

In the United States, the distribution of teachers by qualifications and experience is highly unequal. In countries that have a uniformly strong profession, such as Finland, this issue is relatively unimportant. However, most large countries do have to pay attention to teacher distribution.

In China, where there has been massive migration to the cities, it is increasingly difficult to find teachers willing to work in rural areas. Consequently, China provides scholarships to people in rural areas to train as teachers. Rural teachers also earn 10 percent more and may have housing built for them. China provides long-distance professional development through satellite television and the Internet, as well as by organizing rural schools into clusters with one central resource center for materials and assistance (Asia Society & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

The Australian federal government also gives financial incentives to teach in rural areas, away from the coasts where most young Australians prefer to live. In fact, providing bonuses to teach in hard-to-staff rural or urban schools is a common practice globally (McGaw, 2010).

Principal Recruitment and Training

At the same time that countries are establishing national standards or national curriculums to drive their systems, they are also transferring more authority for meeting education goals to the school level (National Governors

Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, & Achieve, 2008). This trend, together with the recognition that weak school leadership can result in poor school performance and high teacher turnover, has brought increasing attention to effective recruitment and training of prospective principals.

England established its National College of School Leadership in 2000 and also developed programs for aspiring leaders and peer support mechanisms for new head teachers (principals) in their first two years. The National College program, which is partly online and partly residential, is now mandatory for all prospective school heads (Hopkins, 2007). China has two high-level, university-based centers on school leadership, one for primary and one for secondary schools; these centers run extensive executive training sessions for current principals.

My recent research for the OECD in Singapore found that this country identifies teachers with leadership talent early in their careers and moves these teachers into middle management and then assistant principal roles with accompanying experiences and training. If individuals do well in those roles, they may be selected as prospective principals and spend six months at the Leaders in Education program at the National Institute of Education.

The focus of principal training is on innovation and school transformation. Participants conduct a project to revamp some aspect of their current school; they also take a two-week trip to study a significant innovation elsewhere in the world and then propose how it could be adapted to Singapore schools. As part of Singapore's continuous improvement strategy, principals are also transferred periodically between schools and sometimes between schools and the Ministry of Education.

Lessons for U.S. Education

As countries face the challenges of a global knowledge economy that requires them to develop higher levels of knowledge and new capacities in their students, they are focusing intently on ways to attract high-quality candidates into the teaching profession, to improve and modernize teacher preparation, to improve teacher professional development, and to make a quantum leap in the training of principals and head teachers who can lead school transformation efforts.

In Finland, teaching is now a highly sought-after career.

None of the policies and practices reviewed in this article is unknown in U.S. schools; in fact, examples of most can be found somewhere in the country. But the United States has not yet found ways to systematically bring together and apply such world-class human resource practices in its schools. We urgently need to do this.

In a nation as large and decentralized as the United States, it may not be possible to revamp human resource policies and funding at the national level. A state or a city, however, could bring together these best practices and work with the relevant stakeholders to create a comprehensive system that would ensure every student a good teacher and every school a great leader.

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Notes from an Accidental

What builds a solid teacher? The right setting, a sense of calling, a zeal for learning, and a renewable energy source.

Carol Ann Tomlinson

I've always liked the title of Anne Tyler's book *The Accidental Tourist*, perhaps because much of my life—and certainly my teaching career—seems accidental. I'd love to say that I never wanted to be anything but a teacher. In truth, I aspired *not* to be a teacher.

My mother was a teacher—a very strong one. For one year in my early adolescence, I went to the school where she taught. It was a dismal year for me. I was the new kid in my class, having just moved with my parents from another town. I was too tall for 6th grade. My hair was too long (until I made an argument for getting it cut, and then it was too short, too straight, and too stubborn). The school was very different from my prior school, and I couldn't quite figure it out. I was pathologically shy.

The teachers in the school were good people and good educators. That made no difference. From time to time, a teacher would say something to my mom about me and the comment would innocently make its way into dinner-table talk at home. I hated the feeling of being watched and talked about. I vowed

Teacher

with rancorous fervor that I would never under any circumstances be a teacher.

I didn't major in education in college. My first job out of college was stultifying and had nothing to do with teaching. One Friday in late October, finding the morning at work to be particularly tedious, I read the want ads in the local paper at lunch. There was a teaching vacancy in a town an hour away that I had never heard of. I took the afternoon off, applied for the job, and began teaching the following Monday.

To say that I didn't know what I was doing when I entered the classroom redefines the word *understatement*. I planned to finish out the year in that little rural school and then get a "real" job. That was four decades ago, and I've never since had the inclination to do anything but teach.

Nonetheless, my career evolved—as it began—more by happenstance than by design. Teaching works for me, my work is satisfying, and I feel proud—at least on many days—of what I do. But when I reflect on why all this is true, one thing is clear: It's *not* because I had a clear sense of direction at the outset!

I've learned a great deal about high-quality teaching from things that worked in my classroom—and things that didn't—and from watching teachers whose work speaks of excellence. Of the many elements and practices that make up the architecture of effective teaching, I offer here five that I have come to believe are foundational.

Find a Place That Fits You

Teaching is hard. Teachers at every stage need to be cultivated. That's certainly the case in the novice years, when a teacher is practicing who he or she will become. It's important for each fledgling teacher to find an environment that nurtures fearless practice and discovery. Early in my journey as an accidental teacher, I taught in three settings for roughly a year each. In each place, I learned an immense amount, and each place contributed significantly to my understanding of teaching. Two of the schools had relatively toxic environments; the third was neutral. I'm not sorry I worked in any of these settings, but I would have been a very different teacher—and not as good a one—had I remained in any of them for long.

The fourth school in which I taught was precisely the right setting for me during the years I was there. It was relatively small; in a larger place, I would have been lost. It was, when I began teaching there, fairly unsophisticated in its pedagogy and expectations. That, too, was right for me; I'd have felt like a failure in a cutting-edge place. The community was embracing, and I needed the sense of being known, welcomed, and trusted. The district leadership was, for the most part, open to new ideas. In that way, the school was an incubator for creative teaching.

During the years I worked at this school, the community, the district, and the school changed in a way that mirrored my own development. We grew up together, which continued to make the place fresh and challenging for me for nearly two decades. Leaving there was wrenching. I wanted more than anything to continue teaching in that place that stretched and nurtured me.

Serendipitously—accidentally?—an opportunity to be part of a university faculty opened up just at the point when the district leadership changed. I would not have accepted the university position, however—I would not even have noticed it—except that the new leadership felt pernicious to me and I sensed that remaining in the school would erode my growth rather than contribute to it.

The places we teach shape who and what we become. If they don't feed us as human beings and as teachers, we atrophy.

I wasn't able to articulate all my thinking at that point, but here's what I know now: The places in which we teach shape who and what we become. If they don't feed us as human beings and as teachers, we atrophy. In teaching and in life, if we are not growing, we are losing ground. So a school, school district, and community need to be the right fit at the right time to fuel our professional and personal evolution.

Understand Teaching as a Calling

A job is something that has to be done to receive a paycheck. All legitimate jobs are worthy, of course, but a calling is something more. It challenges us to be more than we think we can be and to draw on capacities we didn't quite know we had. A calling becomes a way of life, offering us the opportunity to affect individuals in a profound, enduring way.

I once asked two nurses in difficult hospital settings why they each did what they did. The first said, "because I am most fully alive when I'm here." The second responded, "because I can give people hope when they are in pain and companionship when that's all that's left." I found it interesting that neither spoke about the actual medicine they were practicing or the routines they followed every day. Those things were integral to their success, yet these two people did not see their knowledge and skills as ends, but rather as tools in service of something greater. If I get sick, I hope I'll have the good fortune to be aided by someone who is knowledgeable about medicine, but who also, like these two nurses, feels called to do everything feasible to help me heal—and who feels most fully alive while doing so.

Great teachers are like those nurses. They feel called to connect content and kids. They understand that they interpret shared human wisdom, codified in the academic disciplines, to young people who need to make sense of life. They look at both the content they teach and the people whom they ask to learn that content with considerable reverence, and they find what Steven Levy (1996) calls the genius in both content and in students. They dignify whom and what they teach by making the act of learning dynamic and compelling.

Know You Don't Know

Excellent teachers never fall prey to the belief that they are good enough. The best teachers I have known are humbled by how much more they need to learn.

They don't add to the chorus of voices chiming, "I already do that."

High-quality educators are determined and often voracious learners. They seek daily to understand their content more fully, to probe the mystery of the young lives before them more deeply, and to extend their pedagogical reach beyond yesterday's boundaries. They know that the parameters of their own lives are extended every time they extend possibilities in students' lives.

These teachers seek out the best professional development opportunities. They read about education. When a district or school fails to support their learning meaningfully, they become their own professional developers.

Two years ago, as I conducted a multiday workshop in the late spring, I became aware of one older man within the group. His questions were interesting, and it was clear he was engaged with the ideas. At a break, this man came up to ask me another question. During our conversation, he remarked wistfully that he would soon be retiring after 40 years as a classroom teacher. My first response was to ask him why he'd chosen to come to a professional development session on a complex topic so close to his retirement date.

"Oh," he replied, almost surprised by my question, "I promised myself that I would learn something new every single day I was a teacher. I've kept that promise for four decades. I'll keep it until the day I close the classroom door behind me." He paused for a moment and continued, "How else could I have been the teacher my students needed?"

Associate Yourself with Quality

The pursuit of quality occurs on at least three levels.

Develop friendships with colleagues who set high standards. Such educators are in every school, and their partnership provides both light and energy for professional growth. It's as true in the teaching life as in high school that we take on the attributes of those we hang out with. When we spend what little free time we have at school with colleagues who watch the clock or who have ready reasons to dismiss whatever threatens the status quo, we're more likely to have our aspirations lowered than raised.

In every human endeavor, those who are most successful work the hardest.

I am a better teacher many times over because of people like Diane Wiegel, Judy Schlim, Debbie Kiser, Nancy Brittle, Sandra Mitchell, Mary Ann Smith, Dick Rose, and so many other colleagues who constantly reminded me of what excellence in the classroom looks like—and what is required to achieve that level of quality. Those teachers are roughly my own age. But I also learned much from Mrs. Gardner, who taught next to me during my accidental first year of teaching. It was her final year as a classroom teacher. She modeled excellence in everything she did, answered my naive questions efficiently, listened when I was discouraged, and offered suggestions she knew were within my reach. She informally provided my first meaningful course in education over the eight months that I knew her.

As a more seasoned teacher, I learned from top-rate new guys on the block like George Murphy. Teachers like George, infused with the brash energy of youth, brought knowledge and strategies that I found fresh and renewing. For example, George taught his high school biology students to understand the scientific process in an indirect and potent way by involving them with a mock archaeological dig staged by stu-

dents from the previous year, which involved hypothesizing about what was revealed by the artifacts they discovered. Then he reinforced that understanding by having them stage a dig for the next year's biology students. Through this project, students had to encounter uncertainty, look for clues, hypothesize, test conclusions, and so on.

There's something to be learned from everyone, and there's rarely a reason to be unwelcoming to anyone. Nonetheless, it makes a difference when professional friendships multiply your effectiveness rather than deplete it.

Develop a keen sense of what quality looks like. Such organizations as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Middle School Association, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals have delineated the attributes of high-quality teaching. Many books now exist that break down the elements of great teaching—Charlotte Danielson's *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (ASCD, 2007); James Stronge's *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (ASCD, 2007); Ron Brandt's *Powerful Learning* (ASCD, 1998); or the National Research Council's *How People Learn* (National Academies Press, 2000), to name just a few. These would have been a godsend to me as a young teacher. I was largely on my own to discover the characteristics of high-quality work; my focus would have been sharper and my progress faster had I had such resources to draw on. Great teaching is both a science and an art, and many educators who are both scientists and artists can provide rubrics that point the way to excellence.

Seek quality from students. We compliment young people by asking them for their best and supporting them in achieving it. Ron Berger (2003) talks about building "an ethic of excellence in the classroom" so that students take pride in producing work that reflects their highest possible effort. Clearly this not only benefits both individual learners and society, but also benefits teachers. When we ask students to give their very best, we are obligated to be sure the work we assign is worthy of that level of effort. In learning how to explain quality to young learners, we become clearer about how it looks in our own work.

The best teachers I have known are humbled by how much more they need to learn.

Generate Your Own Energy

It's a reality that in every human endeavor, those who are most successful work the hardest. In *Outliers*, in which Malcolm Gladwell (2008) describes boundary-breaking people in fields from technology to music, Gladwell notes that it was relentless effort more than raw talent that helped these professionals reshape their fields. We have no reason to assume otherwise in teaching.

Most teachers can mount a defense that they work hard. What makes the difference in the work ethic of high-quality teachers is that their work is regenerative; they draw energy from what they do. They achieve the state that Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls *flow*, a highly satisfying condition in which an individual feels aligned with a task and the work becomes its own reward. Some educators experience flow in teaching because they find their content fascinating, some because they find it rewarding to make a difference in students' lives, some because they love the creativity involved in making instruction work for a diverse group of students, and some because of the personal growth that stems from their work. Whatever the reason, teaching generates their energy rather than depletes it.

Most excellent teachers I know have "alternative energy sources," passions outside the classroom that renew their teaching energy. Those passions not only feed their teaching, but inform it as well. One teacher explained that his love of mountain climbing revealed things about himself and about the nature of teaching that he would likely never have understood without that pursuit. Another teacher said, "I give a lot of my life to teaching, and I wouldn't have it any other way. But I am a better teacher because of the times I can leave it behind for a while and give myself fully to something else."

There is no off-the-shelf blueprint for building a highly successful teacher. Yet excellent teaching, like excellence in all human endeavors, comes in significant measure from the right fit, a higher purpose, hard work, and perseverance. The truly good news is that those things are within our reach.

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LEADERSHIP, Not Magic

Highly effective teachers show what it takes to close achievement gaps.

Steven Farr

One of the recurring joys of my work is seeing the transformative, life-changing influence of teachers like Gillette Eckler. When Gillette met her 4th graders on her first day as a teacher in New York City, they were reading, on average, at a 2nd grade level. They were even further behind in math, unable to add and subtract numbers of more than one digit.

Outraged by the injustice of a system that gives low-income students like hers low odds of even graduating from high school, Gillette determined that she would do everything in her power to change their academic trajectory. She was convinced that her "scholars" had the same potential to achieve that students in higher-income communities did. She seized on the goal that they would gain access to the most prestigious middle schools in the city—schools that would put them on track to college. "These are the schools that my students deserve to know about and have the chance to attend," she explained.

Gillette began by building a classroom culture around hard work and hard-earned success. She established ambitious growth goals for each student and broke those goals into minigoals with detailed plans for the order and pace of objectives. Using a system of individualized progress folders and a student-created "Super Scholars" wall display, Gillette rallied her students and their families to work hard toward their goals. As a culture of achievement took hold, students begged to be reassessed on their reading progress, competitively scrutinized other classes' progress, and helped one another so that the whole class could reach its monthly benchmarks.

Gillette went well beyond conventional parameters, stretching time and resources. She extended the school day,

Teacher Joe Almeida commands his students' full attention.

Gillette Eckler, now an academy dean, built a classroom culture around hard work.

week, and year, as kids came before and after school for extra tutoring, joined her for learning on Saturdays, and worked on summer assignments. She provided extra learning opportunities outside her classroom—for example, taking students on a trip to Ellis Island as part of their study of immigration.

To recalibrate her own vision of excellence after her first year, she worked over the summer at a high-performing school, returning reinvigorated and even more outraged about the opportunities denied to her students.

Gillette had convinced her principal to let her loop with her 4th graders through 5th grade. At the beginning of her second year, she surprised her students by removing the desks from the classroom, requiring each student to "earn" a desk by demonstrating effort and progress on class assignments.

By the spring of 5th grade, Gillette's students had grown, on average, four and one-half years in reading in their two years with her. Every individual student passed the state's English language arts exam, and, collectively, her students ended the year with an average mastery of 90 percent on state math objectives. With Gillette's help in navigating the sometimes dizzying application process, 13 of her 24 students were accepted into one of New York City's selective middle schools, and the rest headed into their neighborhood schools with newfound self-confidence, resilience, and self-advocacy skills.

I've had the opportunity to observe many teachers like Gillette. For example, 7th graders in Felicia Cuesta's class in Los Angeles who were learning English as a second language and who had been lagging years behind academically caught up, and two-thirds of them exited the remedial English track. Students in Eric Thomas's high school English class in Baltimore who had been at risk of dropping out ended up choosing where they wanted to attend college. Many other teachers in low-income communities are changing the academic trajectory of their students.

In fact, there are too many examples of students in low-income communities making dramatic academic gains for us to believe that success is not possible. And yet, stories of highly successful classrooms do little to change many people's insistence that the achievement gap is an intractable, unsolvable problem. Their response to all these classrooms is, "Sure, there are some examples of success in low-income communities, but you can't replicate them. What those teachers are doing cannot be packaged and taught. It's innate, and it's rare." In short, it's magic.

I respectfully submit that that view is absurd.

Studying High-Performing Teachers

At Teach For America, we believe that teacher effectiveness is a key element of the quest to end educational inequity. To open doors of opportunity that have too often been closed, teachers must lead low-income students to dramatic academic and personal growth. And we know that teachers who successfully lead their students to such meaningful achievements are more likely to become lifelong advocates and leaders for systemic change.

We have observed a wide range of effectiveness among the 28,000 teachers whom Teach For America has recruited, selected, trained, and supported in the last 20 years. But as we have sought out—and learned from—our most successful teachers, we have seen an exciting trend. In a growing number of our corps members' classrooms in high-poverty communities, students are succeeding. And not only on assessments of basic knowledge and skills, but also in other areas that pave the way to achievement in school and life, such as critical thinking, self-confidence, perseverance, and self-advocacy.

How are these teachers doing it? What lessons can we glean from their success that can contribute to our collective quest to give every child an excellent education? For almost 10 years, I have been one of the many people at Teach For America obsessing over these questions.

We define great teaching not by what teachers do but instead by those teachers' impact on students' lives. Then we ask what common strategies we see in teachers who have the most positive, life-changing effects on their students.

Working with the messy—and often frustrating—patchwork of student achievement assessments employed across the United States, we identify teachers whose students began the year several years behind academically and ended the year caught up or ahead. We recognize that such data are an imperfect proxy for what we are looking for—nothing less than teachers who are putting their students on a different path in life. But whatever opportunities our students choose to pursue, the bottom line is that academic achievement opens doors—it is a proven, universal currency of privilege.

By compiling our data and our best judgments on other indicators that are more difficult to quantify, such as teachers' success in promoting students' perseverance and self-advocacy as learners, we identify Teach For America's most effective teachers—teachers like Gillette, Felicia, and Eric. Our studies of these teachers are qualitative, iterative, and ongoing—composed of observations, focus groups, interviews, video analyses, and conversations that generate new, stronger hypotheses to be explored in the next dramatically successful classrooms we find.

Teacher Mariel Elguero supports all students to keep them on track toward success.

From all these studies of individual teachers, a clear picture emerges: Great teaching is anything but magic. For all their differences in style, personality, background, geography, grade level, and subject matter, teachers who are changing their students' academic trajectories approach their classrooms in remarkably similar ways. Our best teachers are modeling approaches that can help good teachers become great.

Teaching Is Leadership

Our most effective teachers show that great teaching is *leadership*. Although excellent core knowledge, instructional strategies, content pedagogy, and classroom management are all essential to successful teaching, what most differentiates the great from the good are the leadership principles that govern how the teacher employs those skills.

In every highly effective classroom we study, we find a teacher who, like any great leader, rallies team members (in this case, students and their families) around an ambitious vision of success. We find a teacher who plans purposefully and executes effectively to make sure students reach that vision, even as that teacher also continues to learn and improve. Without exception, these teachers define their role as doing whatever it takes to ensure their students' success.

After studying hundreds of these teachers and contrasting their methods with those of teachers who produce less dramatic effects, we have identified six leadership actions that seem to correlate with exceptional student growth.

Setting Big Goals

Crystal Jones rallied her 1st graders around the idea that by the end of the

year they were going to "read, write, and do math like 3rd graders"—an idea that excited them because they idolized the "big kids" upstairs. Taylor Delhagen got the high school students in his global history class invested in applying to and succeeding in college; to make that work tangible, he mapped out a "World Citizen's Rubric" that tracked students' progress. Meg Stewart challenged her students—who faced an array of disabilities, from speech and language impairments to Asperger's syndrome—to "double their learning" and demonstrate two years of academic growth in one year.

Our moderately effective teachers sometimes say, "I want my kids to learn as much as they can each day." As noble as that sounds, our most successful teachers think differently. These teachers know on the first day where they want their students to be on the last day. They set goals that create the urgency, focus, and alignment of effort necessary to make tremendous progress.

Getting Students Invested in Learning

In dramatically successful classrooms in low-income communities, I regularly see students acting in ways that some people may not believe. When Joe Almeida asks a question in his classroom, every hand shoots up. Lauren Hawley's students spent one recess identifying patterns in the playground, in their clothes, and in their lunch trays, because pattern identification had been the instructional objective that morning. In what was perhaps the highlight of my professional life thus far, when I crouched down next to a 5th grade girl in Sara Cotner's classroom and asked if she could tell me about what she was learning, she politely responded, "Can you ask me later? I'm kind of busy."

As we observe and interview teachers like these, we keep hearing the same story. Their students entered their classrooms believing they were "dumb" and that no amount of hard work would change that. Although exceptional teachers use many and varied methods to convince students that their personal investment in learning *does* make a difference, we see some common patterns that validate what motivational theory researchers are finding. These teachers deliberately create and maintain a welcoming environment where students feel safe taking the risks necessary to try, fail, try again, and learn. They build strong relationships with their students and create a sense of community among them.

Without exception, these teachers define their role as doing whatever it takes to ensure their students' success.

They also create a classroom culture in which academic success—for each individual and for the whole group—is highly valued. They infuse the class with messages supporting achievement, clearly communicate students' academic progress to them, and strategically employ role models who embody values that lead to success. These teachers empower students with choice and responsibility in their own learning. All of these strategies build students' desire to work hard.

Planning Purposefully

Julia King, a 4th grade teacher in Gary, Indiana, whose students averaged gains of 2.4 years in reading and 1.7 years in math, started her planning process by envisioning exactly what her students would know and be able to do at the end of the year. She organized learning objectives into units and ordered them logically across the year so that the skills built on each other. For each week's plan, Julia looked at the objectives for that unit, wrote five assessment questions per objective, and only *then* planned her lessons.

With a tip of the hat to Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design* (ASCD, 1998), we find that our most successful teachers are backwards planners. They begin any endeavor—from lesson plans, to long-term plans, to classroom-management plans—by asking, What result do I want? and How will I know I've gotten it?

These teachers even apply this thinking to the seemingly minor elements of running their classroom. For instance, one elementary teacher described her vision of getting her kids to and from the restroom in six minutes in a way that would both keep them quiet and provide a learning experience. She achieved this goal by having them whisper through a set of flash cards that offered a rapid-fire review of 1st grade sight words as they lined up outside the restroom.

Executing Effectively—"On Your Feet" Adjustments

When we ask our merely good teachers what it means to effectively implement instruction in the classroom, we often hear something like, "having a good plan and acting on it." Our most successful teachers answer differently. Effective implementation, they insist, is about the adjustments you make to the plan to ensure that you stay on track toward your objectives. Consider, for example, how Mariel Elguero thought through a situation in which students

were not grasping the concept of distinguishing important from unimportant details:

> I realize we have a problem, and so I'm thinking, "What is the most efficient way to fix this problem?" It doesn't make sense to reteach because I'll probably lose engagement—I've already led 20 minutes of discussion. It doesn't make sense to individually conference with all the kids around the room because too many are having trouble. And . . . the group of students that needs help isn't small enough to pull to the back of the room during independent practice. In my classroom . . . we have symbols that students can use to show me whether they "need help" or "can give help." I decide to change my lesson plan so I can still reach my objective. I ask students to show me whether they need help or can give help, and I pair students up to go back over the key elements of the lesson. Then I can circulate to the spots in the room where I am most needed.

Continually Improving

The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy may have best articulated the pattern of continuous improvement that we see in highly effective classrooms:

> Every teacher [must], by regarding every imperfection in the pupil's comprehension not as a defect of the pupil, but as a defect of his instruction, endeavor to develop in himself the ability of discovering new methods.[1]

Reflecting on the pace of student progress, our most influential teachers continually seek to improve their own skills. Meg Stewart, for example, routinely videotapes her morning classes and reviews the footage in time to tweak afternoon lesson plans. Norleida Moody uses her daily drive home to reflect on what worked and didn't work in her class that day. The most effective teachers we study are the most eager to talk about their failures—and what they have learned from them.

The teachers who are getting the greatest results treat their classroom as a laboratory. Shannon Dingle, a middle school special education teacher, describes her approach this way:

> It's easy to say, "The kids just aren't getting it." But if that's the case, then I'm not doing what I need to do as their teacher. . . . If they're not mastering concepts they need to master, then I need to learn how to teach them more effectively.

Working Relentlessly

We rarely talk to one of these dramatically effective teachers without hearing, "If I take my big goals seriously, there is just not enough time in the day, not enough resources in the classroom, to get it all done." Then that teacher goes on to describe how he or she finds more time and more resources.

These teachers have kids in their classrooms before and after school and even at lunch. They run Saturday classes, evening tutorials, and family learning sessions. They apply for grants and scrape up resources. One moment they are teachers, and another they are coaches, nurses, or social workers—they do whatever it takes to ensure that students succeed. They realize that given our current flawed system, they must work relentlessly, increasing the time and resources available for learning, to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Ending Education Inequity

A look at the teaching lives of some of the most successful Teach For America fellows, working in some of the most challenging environments in the United States, offers crucial insights about what is required to close the achievement gap.

Many more good teachers can be great teachers. The highly effective teachers we have studied all embody common principles that can provide a general road map for other teachers. In many cases, frameworks for highly effective teaching have not sufficiently emphasized some of these principles: the powerful role that goal setting and motivational theory can play in student learning, for example.

These common principles do not amount to a cookie-cutter vision of excellence. In fact, the ways in which our highly successful teachers manifest these general principles vary dramatically. Some classrooms are loud, boisterous, and dramatic; others are serene but intense. And no single personality archetype correlates with dramatic teaching success. But by learning from the common approaches of highly effective teachers, many more teachers—of all styles and personalities—can lead students to transformative achievement.

The most effective teachers we study are the most eager to talk about their failures.

Highly effective teaching in the most challenging contexts is not for everyone. Although I have seen plenty of evidence that great teaching can be taught, our findings also suggest that certain mind-sets and beliefs are necessary for success. For example, a strong internal locus of control that leads a teacher to assume responsibility for students' failure or success and unwaveringly high expectations for children from low-income communities are nonnegotiable starting points. If someone does not possess these mind-sets, the likelihood of that individual advancing student learning is greatly diminished.

Great teaching by itself will not solve education inequity. The highly successful teachers we are studying make heroic

efforts to compensate for students' extra challenges and for a system lacking capacity to address those challenges. To ultimately solve education inequity, however, we must look for ways to make their efforts more manageable and sustainable.

Ideally, responsibility for changing students' academic trajectories would be spread among the teacher, the school, and the community. In other words, what's important in the long run is not that all teachers do everything these highly effective teachers are doing, but that all students *experience* all the opportunities currently being provided by these teachers. This requires strong school leaders and systems that are built around these same leadership principles. When all classrooms in a given school share a compelling vision, every teacher's influence is amplified.

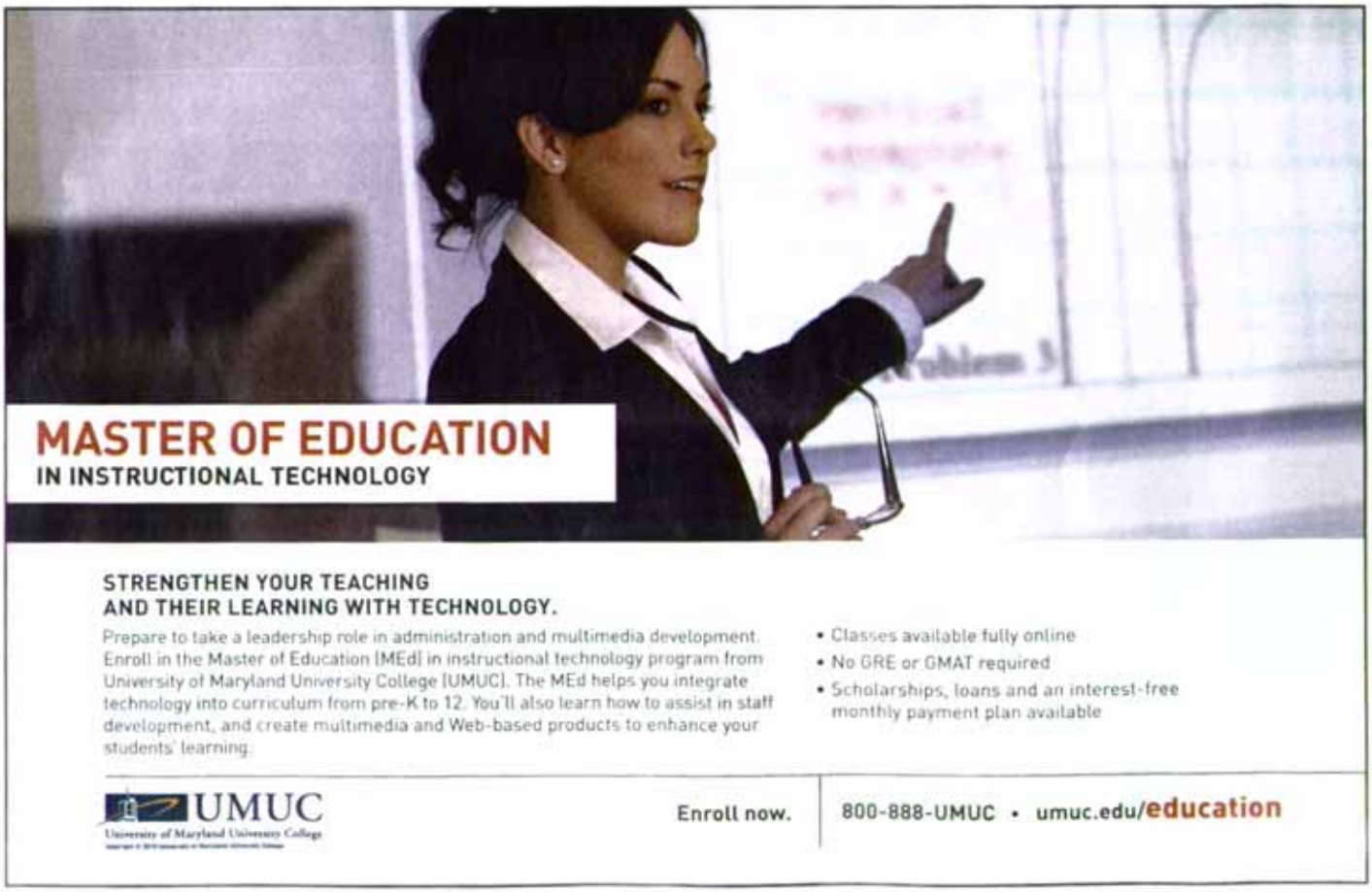
Education can and should be a great equalizer, a means of upward mobility for all children regardless of race, economic background, or geography. Yet, the sad truth is that the most accurate predictors of student achievement and opportunity in the United States are still where a child is born, the color of a child's skin, and the financial resources of a child's family.

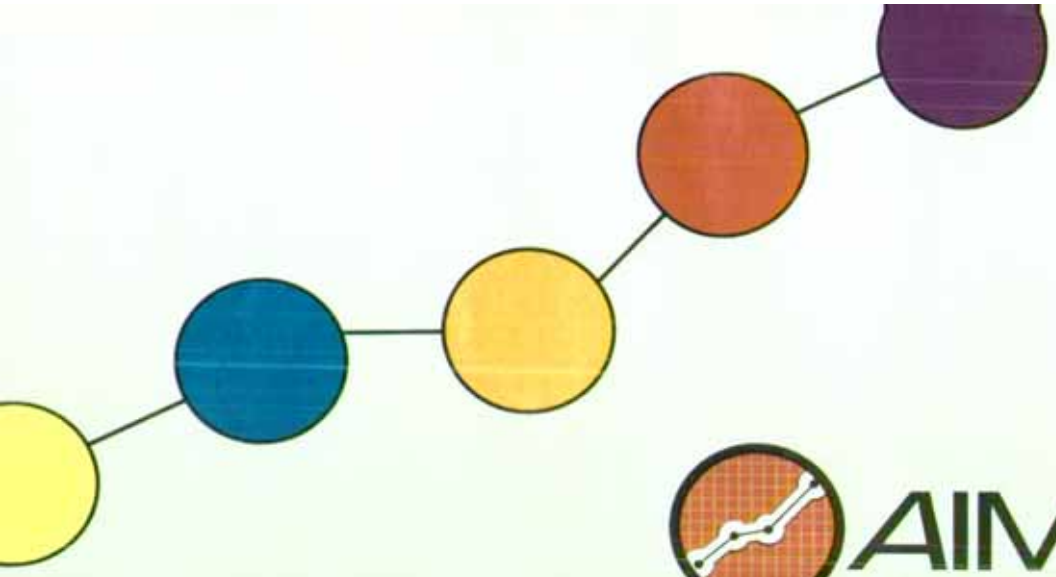
Highly effective teachers acting as strong leaders in their classrooms are by no means the sole solution to this injustice, but they are a crucial component of the hard work necessary to eliminate the achievement gap. Although the challenges ahead remain steep, these educators' students have much greater chance of progressing on a path filled with opportunities for success in college and life.

These teachers are not only forging a path to broader opportunities for their students, but also creating a road map for the rest of us to follow as we journey toward the goal of ending education inequity. EL

[1]Tolstoy, L. (1967). On teaching the rudiments. In L. Weiner (Ed. & Trans.), *Tolstoy on Education* (p. 77). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1904)

Steven Farr is chief knowledge officer at Teach For America and author of *Teaching As Leadership: The Highly Effective Teacher's Guide to Closing the Achievement Gap* (Jossey-Bass, 2010); steven.farr@teachforamerica.org. The book's companion website, www.teachingasleadership.org, offers concrete resources, as well as videos of teachers performing key actions that correlate with student achievement.





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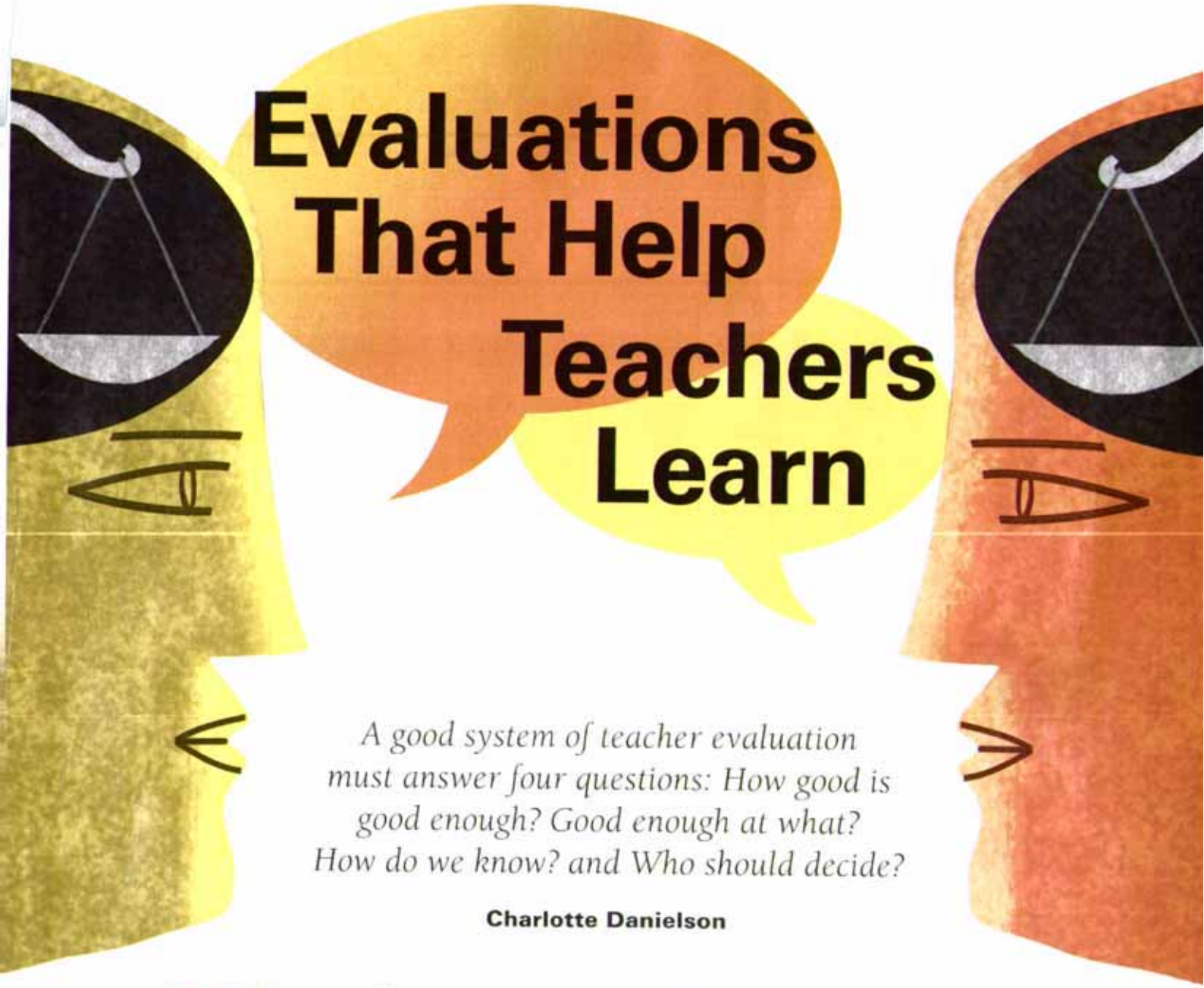


Evaluations That Help Teachers Learn

A good system of teacher evaluation must answer four questions: How good is good enough? Good enough at what? How do we know? and Who should decide?

Charlotte Danielson

"This is so much *better!*" commented Carla, a 4th grade teacher, following an evaluation conference with her supervisor:

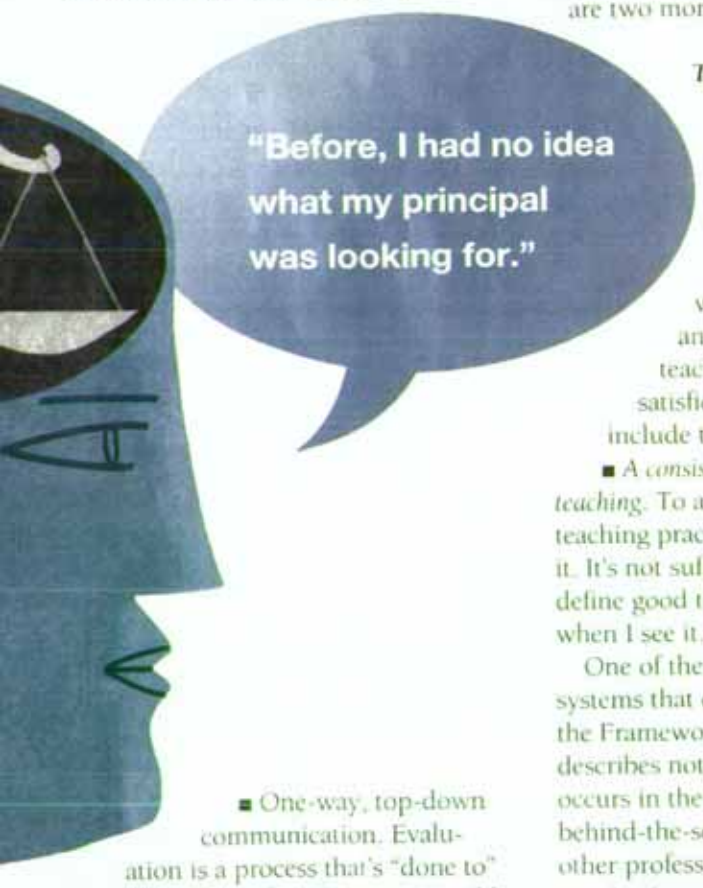
Before, I had no idea what my principal was looking for—I had to be a mind reader! So I just played it safe, taught a familiar lesson, one I knew would go well—but did the process improve my teaching? Not at all! In my old school, the principal just came in with a checklist, but we never really talked. But this time, we had a great conversation about how to help my students *want* to write. It really made me think. As a result, I've got a new approach: I'm going to engage some students around the things they're passionate about and have them try to convince their classmates about the value of such interests.

The Problem

Carla's statement provides an insight into how we might improve teacher evaluation to better foster conditions for both teacher and student learning. Let's consider the deficiencies of traditional systems. These include

- Outmoded evaluative criteria, usually in the form of checklists.
- Simplistic evaluative comments, such as "needs improvement," "satisfactory," and "outstanding" without any consistency as to what those words mean. Many teachers end up being rated at the highest level on every item, with no guidance as to where they might focus their improvement efforts.

- The same procedures for both novice teachers and career professionals—no differentiation that reflects veteran teachers' experience and expertise.
- Lack of consistency among evaluators; a teacher might be rated at the highest level by one administrator and much lower by another. This makes it much easier to attain tenure in some schools than in others, a violation of a fundamental principle of equity.



- One-way, top-down communication. Evaluation is a process that's "done to" teachers, and it often feels punitive, like a "gotcha."

Why Do We Evaluate Teachers?

We can remedy these problematic characteristics by attending to some basic principles of assessment and teacher learning. First, it helps to be clear about why we even *have* teacher evaluation. Laws, of course, require it. But why are there laws? The first and most fundamental reason is because public schools are public institutions; they take public money, and the public has a right to expect high-quality teaching. But there are two more basic purposes.

A principal or a superintendent must be able to say to the school board and the public: "Everyone who teaches here is good—and here's how I know."

To Ensure Teacher Quality

Credibility in an evaluation system is essential. A principal or a superintendent must be able to say to the school board and the public, "Everyone who teaches here is good—and here's how I know." A teacher evaluation system that satisfies this requirement will include the following:

- *A consistent definition of good teaching.* To assess the quality of teaching practice, it's essential to *define* it. It's not sufficient to say, "I can't define good teaching, but I know it when I see it."

One of the most widely used systems that define good teaching is the Framework for Teaching[1], which describes not only the teaching that occurs in the classroom but also the behind-the-scenes work of planning and other professional work, such as communicating with families and participating in a professional community. For each component of good teaching, the framework includes four levels of performance—unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished—that describe the degrees of teacher expertise in that component. (See fig. 1 for the four levels of performance in questioning and discussion techniques.)

- *A shared understanding of this definition. Everyone* in the system—teachers, mentors, coaches, and supervisors—must possess a shared understanding of this definition. Having a common language to describe practice increases the value of the conversations that ensue from classroom observations.

For example, discussing "student engagement in learning" is more effective when everyone understands what this looks like in light of four elements: activities and assignments, grouping of students, instructional materials and resources, and structure and pacing. Conversations using this more specific language invite teachers to analyze their own practice and invite observers to inquire about the decisions a teacher has made in planning and executing a lesson.

- *Skilled evaluators.* Those who support teachers—mentors, coaches, supervisors, and so on—must be able to recognize classroom examples of the different components of practice, interpret that evidence against specific levels of performance, and engage teachers in productive conversations about their practice. Evaluators must be able to assess teachers accurately so teachers accept the judgments as valid and the public has confidence in the results.

Evaluations that focus on quality assurance yield judgments that are fair, reliable, and valid. They are helpful in looking at both new and experienced teachers' practice and in determining whether a teacher's skill has slipped below standard and needs strengthening. Administrators may use the evaluations for decisions regarding employment and compensation. This is crucial when deciding which teachers

FIGURE 1. Levels of Performance in Questioning and Discussion Techniques

Element	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Quality of Questions	Teacher's questions are virtually all of poor quality, with low cognitive challenge and a single correct response. They are also asked in rapid succession.	Teacher's questions are a combination of low and high quality, posed in rapid succession. Only some invite a thoughtful response.	Most of teacher's questions are of high quality. Adequate time is provided for students to respond.	Teacher's questions are of uniformly high quality, with adequate time for students to respond. Students formulate many questions.
Discussion Techniques	Interaction between teacher and students is predominantly recitation style, with the teacher mediating all questions and answers.	Teacher makes some attempt to engage students in genuine discussion rather than recitation, with uneven results.	Teacher creates a genuine discussion among students, stepping aside when appropriate.	Students assume considerable responsibility for the success of the discussion, initiating topics and making unsolicited contributions.
Student Participation	A few students dominate the discussion.	Teacher attempts to engage all students in the discussion, but with only limited success.	Teacher successfully engages all students in the discussion.	Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion.

should attain permanent status as tenured professionals or which teachers should be nominated for leadership positions as mentors or coaches.

To Promote Professional Development

But there's another purpose of teacher evaluation: to promote professional learning. Teacher evaluation typically serves this more developmental purpose through professional conversations between teachers and colleagues who observe in their classrooms and between teachers and supervisors following formal or informal observations.

A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be "fixed," but rather because teaching is so *hard* that we can always improve it. No matter how good a lesson is, we can always make it better. Just as in other professions, every teacher has the responsibility to be involved in a career-long quest to improve practice.

Two in One

The challenge is merging these two purposes of teacher evaluation. Educators need to create procedures that yield valid and reliable results—that is, that satisfy the legitimate demands for quality assurance while promoting professional learning. In truth, the demands are somewhat different. A system to ensure quality must be valid, reliable, and defensible—these are "hard-sounding" qualities—whereas a system designed to promote professional learning is likely to be collegial and collaborative—these are much "softer-sounding" qualities.

Until recently, educators' attempts at merging quality assurance with professional learning have taken the form of enhancing evaluators' skills using techniques like clinical supervision and cognitive coaching. These are valuable skills and worth learning, but they are insufficient. The profession is better served when the requirements for these two purposes are embedded in the *design* of the systems themselves.

Getting from Here to There

We can get a clue as to the nature of this problem if we consider the typical observation, supervision, and evaluation process in use in most schools. The scenario proceeds as follows: The administrator goes to the classroom and watches a lesson, takes notes, goes away and writes up the notes, and then returns and tells the teacher about the lesson (what was good, what the teacher could improve). Most observations are a variation on this theme.

It's important to note that in this scenario, the administrator is doing all the work; the teacher is completely passive. (The teacher has, of course, taught the lesson, but the teacher contributes nothing to the observation itself.) So it's not surprising that teachers don't find the process valuable or supportive of their learning. The process violates

everything we know about learning—that learning is done by the *learner* through a process of active intellectual engagement.

If we want teacher evaluation systems that teachers find meaningful and from which they can learn, we must use processes that not only are rigorous, valid, and reliable, but also engage teachers in those activities that promote learning—namely self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation.

We can modify the traditional observation scenario to accomplish these aims. A revised process—like the one Carla was so enthusiastic about at the beginning of this article—might look like this:

1. The administrator goes to the classroom, watches a lesson, and takes notes on all aspects of the lesson: what the teacher says and does, what the students say and do, the appearance of the classroom, and so on.
2. The administrator gives a copy of his or her notes to the teacher.
3. The administrator analyzes the notes against the evaluative criteria and levels of performance.
4. The teacher reflects on the lesson using the observer's notes and assesses the lesson against the evaluative criteria and levels of performance. The teacher will probably, as result of this reflection, identify aspects of his or her teaching to strengthen, and that teacher will reach these conclusions without prompting from the principal. Of course, the principal can always point things out, but when the teacher reflects on a lesson before the post-observation conference, he or she will frequently be as critical as the principal would have been.
5. The teacher and the administrator discuss the lesson. The teacher puts the lesson into context for the administrator, and together they decide on the teacher's strengths and areas for growth. Naturally, the administrator wasn't in the classroom the previous day and can't be familiar with all the issues that the teacher must address. So the teacher might describe a particular student's learning challenges, and the principal might suggest a different approach. But they conduct the conversation in light of their shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching.

Seeing Benefits in Chicago

A recently published study of a two-year pilot program in Chicago Public Schools has documented the benefits of this approach. Conducted by researchers at the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, the Excellence in Teaching Project aims to accurately measure a teacher's classroom performance. The project is the proposed replacement for a teacher evaluation checklist that administrators have used in Chicago Public Schools for the past 30 years. Principals in the pilot used the Framework for Teaching to guide their classroom observations as well as the required pre-observation and post-observation conferences.

> It's not sufficient to say, "I can't define good teaching, but I know it when I see it."

The pilot provides an insight into the perceptions of participating teachers and administrators, who signaled the following areas as being crucial to effective teacher evaluation:

- *A consistent definition of good teaching.* For a teacher evaluation system to be transparent and credible, everyone—both teachers and administrators—must understand what constitutes good practice. Unless principals participate in focused training, they probably will not have this understanding. But they appreciate acquiring that knowledge. As one principal noted, "The thing I like about the framework is that it actually makes you cognizant of the behaviors that constitute excellence in teaching."
- *Opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations about practice.* As members of the Danielson Group have observed after working with teachers and administrators in hundreds of school districts to enhance professional practices, "It's all about the conversation." Noted one teacher, "You get to close the door, turn off the noise, and actually sit and talk [with your supervisor], which is really, really nice."
- *A focus on what matters.* Both teachers and administrators appreciate an opportunity to concentrate their collective attention on the important issues of teaching and learning. These typically occur in the post-observation (reflection) conference. As one principal pointed out, "The conversation is entirely different. My conversation before was 'You were tardy,' 'You didn't turn in your lesson plans,' all those kinds of things. Now this conversation is about good instruction."

Two Challenges

The Need for Trained Evaluators

A credible system of teacher evaluation requires higher levels of proficiency of evaluators than the old checklist, "drive-by" observation model. Evaluators need to be able to assess accurately, provide meaningful feedback, and engage teachers in productive conversations about practice.

In our experience with the Framework for Teaching, members of the Danielson Group have trained hundreds of observers all across the United States and in other countries as well. Our findings have been somewhat humbling; even after training, most observers require multiple opportunities to practice using the framework effectively and to calibrate their judgments with others.

Most administrator preparation programs don't teach such skills; adminis-

trators must acquire them on the job. But when they do learn them, administrators can be the instructional leaders that schools so urgently need.

A training program for evaluators—one that uses the Framework for Teaching—consists of several steps:

1. Participants familiarize themselves with the structure of the Framework for Teaching, which consists of four domains of teaching responsibility (planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities); 22 components that describe those domains; and two to five elements that fully describe each component.

2. Participants learn how to recognize the sources of evidence for each component and element. For example, Domain 2 (the classroom environment) and Domain 3 (instruction) are demonstrated primarily in the classroom, whereas Domain 1 (planning and preparation) and Domain 4 (professional responsibilities) depend on artifacts, such as teachers' techniques for communicating with families (for example, newsletters or handouts for back-to-school night) or logs of professional development activities.

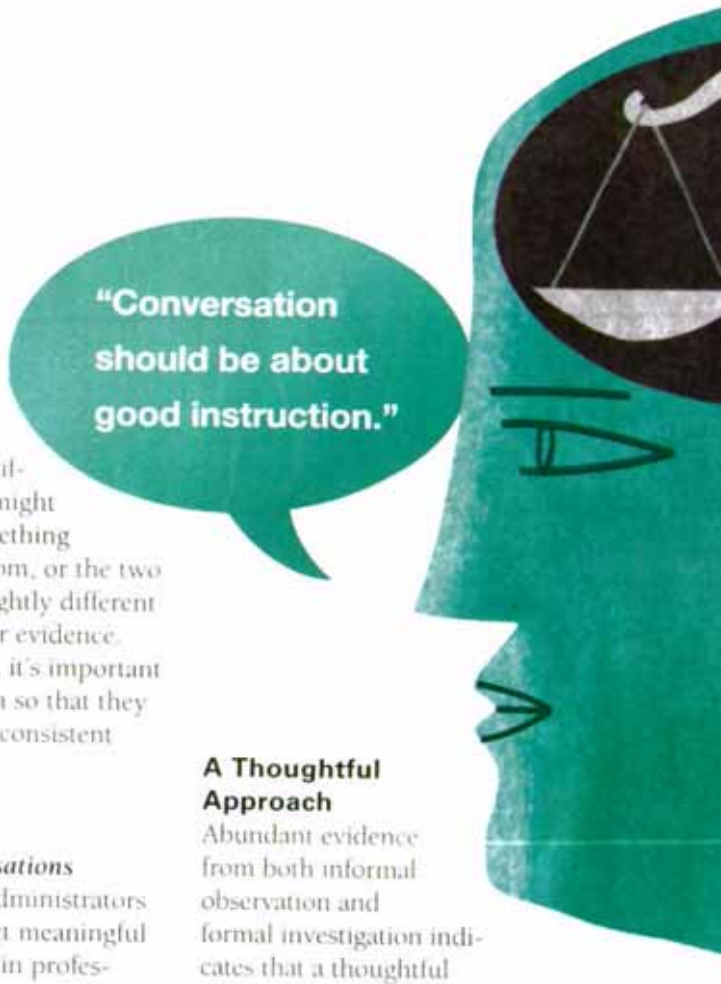
3. Participants learn how to interpret the evidence against the rubrics for each component's levels of performance. For example, in assessing whether a classroom creates an environment of respect and rapport, observers would need to note whether student interactions are characterized by conflict, sarcasm, or put-downs (an unsatisfactory rating for the teacher), whether students, in general, refrain from disrespecting one another (a basic rating); whether student interactions are, in general, polite and respectful (a proficient rating); or whether students demonstrate genuine caring for one another and monitor one another's treatment of peers (a distinguished rating).

4. Participants learn how to calibrate their judgments against those of their colleagues. For example, one observer might interpret interactions in a classroom as representing basic performance, whereas another might see them as proficient. There are many reasons for such differences. One observer might simply have missed something important in the classroom, or the two observers might have slightly different ways of interpreting their evidence. But whatever the reason, it's important they discuss the situation so that they can, in the future, make consistent judgments.

Finding Time for Professional Conversations

A second challenge for administrators is finding time to conduct meaningful observations and engage in professional conversations about practice. However, even in the traditional system, principals need to devote time to the evaluation process—despite the fact that it often produces few benefits. In the words of an educator with whom we've worked, "It doesn't take any longer to do this process well than to do it poorly, so why not do it well?" What better use of a school leader's time than to engage teachers in conversations about practice?

Evaluator-teacher conversations, when conducted around a common understanding of good teaching—and around evidence of that teaching—offer a rich opportunity for professional dialogue and growth. We can't create more hours in the day, but careful setting of priorities and judicious scheduling of both observations and conferences can make the best use of the time available. Moreover, unless a district's negotiated agreement forbids it, brief and informal drop-in observations yield plenty of information for reflective conversation and require far less time than formal observations do.



A Thoughtful Approach

Abundant evidence from both informal observation and formal investigation indicates that a thoughtful approach to teacher evaluation—one that engages teachers in reflection and self-assessment—yields benefits far beyond the important goal of quality assurance. Such an approach provides the vehicle for teacher growth and development by providing opportunities for professional conversation around agreed-on standards of practice. ■

[1]The Framework for Teaching divides the complex activity of teaching into 22 components clustered in four domains of teaching responsibility. Each component defines one aspect of a domain; two to five elements describe a specific feature of a component. To view the framework, visit www.danielsongroup.org/theframeteach.htm.

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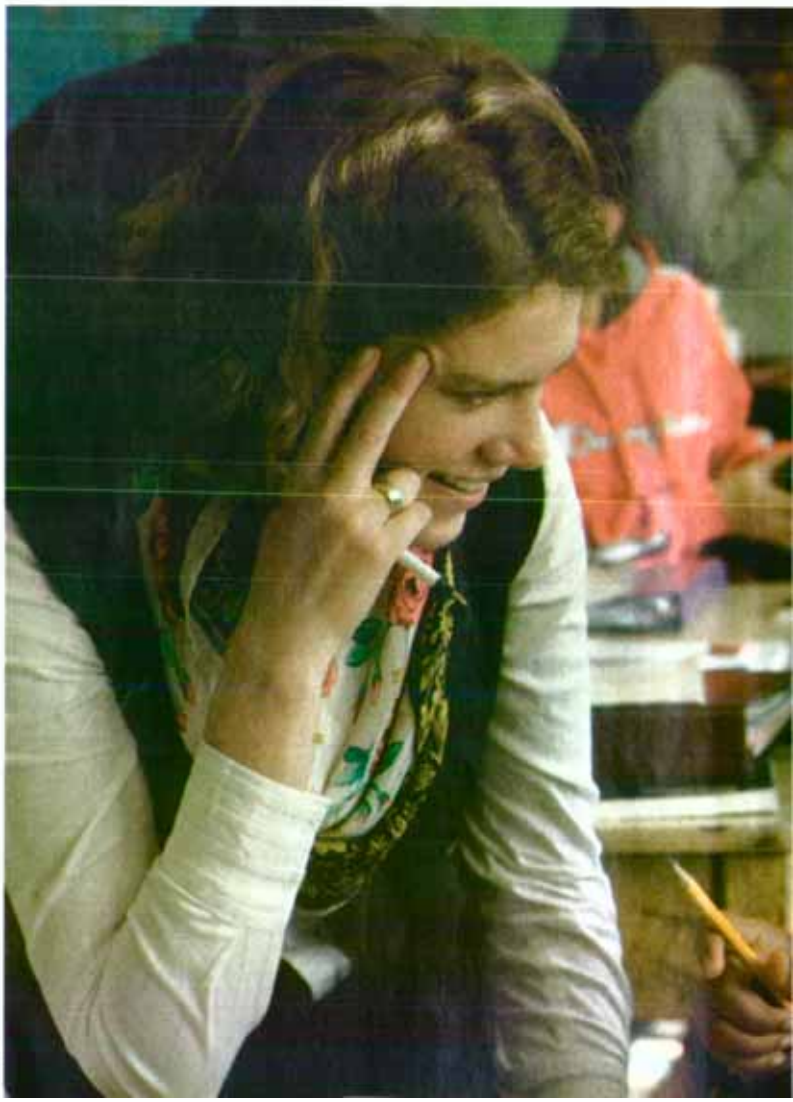
TEACHING *Skillful* TEACHING

Effective teaching is both complex and counterintuitive—but it can be taught.

Deborah Loewenberg Ball and Francesca M. Forzani



What differentiates classrooms in which students make the most progress from those in which they make the least? Several current frameworks have attempted to answer that question by naming the practices of skillful teachers (see Danielson, 2007; Lampert, 2001; Lemov, 2010). Identifying the specific practices fundamental to supporting student learning is at the heart of building an effective system for the professional training and development of teachers.

Two contemporary factors intensify the need for such training. First, students are, more than ever, expected to achieve ambitious goals that include producing disciplined reasoning and solving problems, not simply recalling basic information and procedures. Second, the explicit aim is that *all* students will achieve these outcomes. Although schools have always taught some students a more ambitious curriculum, they have traditionally set different goals for other groups of students. In contrast, teachers today are expected to help a much wider range of learners reach complex levels of

performance. It is crucial, then, to identify the high-leverage practices that underlie teaching complex content to all students.

The "Unnaturalness" of Teaching

Teaching is one of the most common—and also one of the most complicated—human activities. Despite the prevailing view of teaching as requiring little more than patience, basic content knowledge, and liking children, teaching is "unnatural" work; that is, the skills involved in teaching do not come naturally (Jackson, 1986; Murray, 1989). They are distinct from informal showing, telling, or helping (Cohen, in press) in three fundamental ways.

Specialized Expertise

At its heart, teaching involves being able to "unpack" something one knows well to make it accessible to and learnable by someone else. This requires explicit knowledge and skill, beyond simple expertise. A tennis player with an amazing serve, for example, does not automatically know what goes into producing it. A native speaker of Spanish does not, while

speaking fluently, readily notice the nuances of syntax or key semantic or grammatical features; nor do good readers necessarily see what they are doing to read and interpret complex texts. Being accomplished in a specific domain does not automatically include the capacity to break that domain down into its core components for someone who does not yet have that skill or understanding.

In fact, expertise depends on a high degree of fluency. Accomplished practice requires automaticity with many elements to enable careful attention to its less routine aspects. A writer who had to puzzle about simple grammar or word meanings could not focus on the intricate challenges of composition. A runner who had to think about the movement of her legs while running the final 25 yards of a race would be distracted from executing a skilled performance. A pianist who focused on the coordination of his hands would be unable to play smoothly. Teaching is unnatural in that it demands not only skill in a given domain, but also the ability to take that skill apart so others can learn it.

The Challenge of Multiple Perspectives

Teaching is unnatural in a second fundamental way. Because teachers must help others learn, they must see ideas and skills from others' perspectives. And their students often learn differently from the way they themselves learn. Even if a teacher remembers what helped her solve linear equations, write a good paragraph, or understand the concept of gravity, this may not help her students.

Figuring out what others find difficult or intriguing or how experience shapes their interpretations is far from simple. And yet teaching without attention to learners' perspectives and prior knowledge is like flying a plane in fog without instruments. This has big implications for equitable education because the greater the differences between learners and their teachers—in culture, language, and experience—the less

precisely attuned the teaching is likely to be.

Working with Many Learners

Knowing a domain well enough to teach it and seeing it from someone else's perspective are hard enough when tutoring. But unlike many other professions, where the "clients" are serviced individually, teachers work with theirs in batches (Jackson, 1986). Not only do teachers have more learners to understand and interact with, but they also must design and manage a productive environment in which all are able to learn. One student requires a firm hand and a great deal of direction whereas another works best when left to puzzle further on his own. One student is active—tapping her pen, doodling, and rocking on her chair—even while deeply engaged whereas a second is easily distracted.

Differences show up inside the content, too. For example, although five students might correctly explain why .6 is greater than .45, eight others might get the answer right but for reasons that will fail when the numbers are more complicated. Noticing this difference requires careful listening to the students' answers. Attending to these differences while steering toward ambitious learning goals is no simple task.

Winging It Doesn't Work

Teaching is work that the United States expects 4.4 million people to do every day. It demands special kinds of knowledge and skill that most individuals do not naturally possess. Therefore, training teachers for actual practice—to master these unnatural skills—is crucial. Although many factors contribute to underperforming schools, the lack of an adequate system to train people for practice is at the heart of the problem.

The practice of teaching effectively is learnable, and we owe it to ourselves to ensure that those who teach our youth have appropriate opportunities to develop the necessary skills and knowledge. Students whose teachers do not develop these qualities lose out.

So how do we decide what to teach teachers? Among the well-worn responses are the domains of knowledge that fill many teacher preparation programs: academic subject matter, educational psychology, methods of teaching, foundations of education, and so on.

Academic content knowledge would seem the most obvious—how can teachers teach what they do not know? But developing adequate subject-matter knowledge is far from easy. Too little attention has been paid to the special demands of opening up to learners ideas and practices connected to specific subject matter (Ball & Forzani, 2010; Ball, Hill, & Bass, 2005; Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008). Many take for granted that educated adults know and can unpack the subtle ideas and processes of a field. This, however, is not usually the case.

Moreover, although including all these knowledge domains in teacher preparation may make sense, they leave open the endemic gap between knowing about teaching and *doing* teaching. Knowledge about child development does not necessarily enable a teacher to interpret a child's ideas; knowledge about social inequality does not necessarily transfer to teaching in ways that promote equity. Teachers have typically bridged the knowing-doing gap by having experience and improvising.

Certainly experience with youth in real classrooms can build skill with this complicated work. Experience, however, is an undependable source of learning, and individual discretion in the name of creativity can be a risk. Some teachers left to learn through experience manage their classrooms using harshly punitive methods; others attempt to solve difficulties with complex content by providing learning aids, such as mnemonic devices, that enable students to get the right answers but that circumvent actual learning. Some teachers who "naturally" favor particular students treat students inequitably. Many teachers simply make up their own ways of doing things without evidence of the effectiveness of their approaches.

Identifying High-Leverage Practices

Given the size of the teaching force and the nonintuitive qualities of the work, we need to identify a common set of high-leverage practices that underlie effective teaching and to develop ways to teach them. By *high-leverage practices*, we mean those practices at the heart of the work of teaching that are most likely to affect student learning. One example is conducting a meeting with a parent or guardian about a difficult situation with a child. Another is identifying common patterns of student thinking in specific subject matter—for example, upper elementary children's misconceptions about the equal sign, young learners' ideas about "living" versus "nonliving" things, or adolescents' approaches to interpreting the motives and thinking of people in the past.

High-leverage practices comprise the essential activities of teaching; if teachers are unable to discharge them competently, they are likely to face significant problems. Competent enactment of such practices also lays the foundation for beginning teachers to develop into highly effective professionals (Teacher Education Initiative Curriculum Group, 2008).

Identifying a set of core high-leverage practices involves managing three endemic problems.

The Content-Specific Nature of Teaching

High-leverage teaching practices are intimately tied to specific domains. For example, consider two such practices: Framing and delivering questions precisely and purposefully and eliciting and interpreting displays of student understanding. A good question sequence in a history class is different from one in a mathematics lesson. As Grossman and McDonald (2008) observed, we have little formal knowledge about how the work of teaching differs from one subject to the next. However, we can discern that in a history class, teachers ask students to evaluate the credibility of different sources and consider factors that shape their reliability. Mathematics teachers request and support mathematical explanations, which are different from historical or scientific ones. Designing a prompt to assess students' developing writing is different from constructing a task to elicit students' learning about a scientific idea, such as force or light.

Teaching is one of the most common—and also one of the most complicated—human activities.

All of this is complicated by the expectation for teaching complex knowledge and skills. It's one thing to ask a question that prompts students to reduce an improper fraction or to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. It's entirely another thing to pose questions designed to support students' efforts to prove a mathematical claim or analyze data.

The Cultural Context

Classroom instruction is also situated in specific cultural contexts, which place differing demands on the teacher. Introducing 9th graders to the work of Maya Angelou may be a somewhat different task in a suburban Connecticut classroom than it is in a classroom in rural Mississippi. Students in each location bring differing degrees of familiarity with Angelou's context and language and may make different interpretations of the text. Expectations and norms for communicating with parents and colleagues might also vary.

Working at a Useful Grain Size

In other professions, from aviation to medicine to cosmetology, professionals are trained to carry out specific elements of their work. Prospective pilots learn how to execute takeoffs, landings, and turns; medical students learn how to conduct a physical examination and dress a wound; hair stylists learn how to precisely scissor layers into different textures and lengths of hair. Whereas other trades and professions have been able to break their work into meaningfully learnable skills and knowledge, educators have—amazingly—not done this for teaching.

Certainly, examples exist of efforts to describe teaching in terms of its core skills. In the 1970s, competency-based teacher education programs trained teachers in hundreds of "competencies" (Houston & Howsam, 1972). These focused on specific teacher behaviors, such as giving praise, using wait time, and calling on students. However, three problems arose with this approach. First, the lists contained microskills from which it was not obvious how to compose skilled practice. Second, these skills were often content-free. Although some specific practices were identified within subject areas (for example, techniques and tools for assessing students' reading proficiency or skills for teaching counting to young children), these tended to center on basic, primary-level reading and math instruction. Third, inattention to the judgments needed to deploy these skills in context made it difficult to know when a particular practice would be appropriate and how a teacher might use it.

Competency-based teacher education programs were criticized for being too behaviorist; teaching, obviously, depends on significant cognitive and ethical reasoning as well as manner and style (Fenstermacher, 2001). Still, the movement represented an important effort to acknowledge the fact that teaching is a practice that requires skilled technique and action, not merely

a domain of knowledge or an arena for individual creativity.

Grossman and colleagues (2009) refer to this process of identifying the core elements of teaching as "decomposition of practice." Not surprisingly, they found that a language of practice is less well developed in teaching than it is in other fields. For example, although teachers use questions continually, no common, precise vocabulary exists for particular types of questions, purposes, or learning activities within a content domain. Questions that teachers use to elicit students' thinking—such as, What have you found so far? Can you explain how you got your answer?—are different from ones they might use to challenge or extend their students' thinking—such as, What if someone said that 8/8 is greater than 5/5 because there are more pieces?

Managing the problem of choosing a useful grain size that gets inside the work of teaching is not easy. A first step is to identify the tasks that are fundamental to effective teaching. Examples include figuring out and responding to what students say, launching a task in class, checking quickly on students' understanding, conducting a class discussion, or calling a parent about a difficult situation. Many attempts remain at too high a level of abstraction—"planning instruction," for example, or "designing instruction to address each student's learning needs," which is more a principle than a practice. Similarly, "engaging students in using methods of inquiry" is a goal but not a specific practice.

Asking what a teacher has to *do* to act on any of these can help identify actual practices at a useful grain size. For example, take the high-leverage practice of managing and conducting a whole-class discussion. Doing this well is at the heart of the enterprise of teaching, unpacking the content for learning, attending to learners' thinking, and managing the group nature of teaching.

Consider a discussion about the following 4th grade mathematics problem:

What fraction of this rectangle is shaded brown?

Specific practices involved in leading a discussion include specifying and using learning goals to keep the discussion focused on its point (Sleep, 2009), maintaining students' engagement, asking purposeful questions, carefully listening and responding to students, creating norms for talking and listening, choosing and guiding students' use of specific artifacts, connecting students' contributions, and tying up the discussion. Teachers who cannot marshal these skills effectively may be able to generate some collective talk in their classrooms but will be limited in their ability to use discussions to achieve specific learning goals.

In this case, simply accepting the correct answer "one-fourth" would shortchange students' opportunity for learning because it would neither require unpacking why "one-third" is a common incorrect answer nor help students think more carefully about what it means to identify a fraction (Saxe et al., 2007).

Similarly, consider the reasoning involved in choosing the following instructional example to help students learn fractions, instead of the one previously mentioned:

What fraction of this rectangle is shaded brown?

The first example opens up a core mathematical idea (equal area) whereas the second presents a much more routine case. Recognizing that, and being able to decide which example to use for a given purpose or how to sequence them, is essential for effective teaching. To do this ineptly is to be tone-deaf as a teacher.

Teachers' work is full of other instances of crucially important, complex, and "unnatural" practices, such as discussing a student's progress with a caregiver, writing careful feedback on a student's essay, or designing an assessment that will provide useful information to students and teacher alike.

The Teacher Education Initiative

At the University of Michigan, we are piloting a new model of teacher education, which is built on 19 high-leverage practices, as part of our Teacher Education Initiative. Drawing on research linking particular practices to student achievement, published descriptions of teaching, videos of teachers at work, and personal experience, a group of University of Michigan–based researchers, teachers, and curriculum developers created a comprehensive list that included more than 200 items. Because few studies have identified specific instructional practices that should be taught during initial teacher education, we also relied on wisdom of the profession and analysis of the demands of effective instruction. We narrowed our list to 19 practices that met our definition of *high leverage*, that is, practices that significantly increase the likelihood that teaching will be effective for students' learning. As we continue to engage in evidence-based evaluations of each practice over the next five years, we expect the list to evolve.

In our redesign of our teacher education program around these practices, we are elaborating each item to fit the details of teaching at particular levels or in particular subjects. How students learn to enact the practices will depend on whether they are preparing to be an elementary or a secondary teacher and what subjects they intend to teach.

For example, one high-leverage practice is the ability to recognize key ways of thinking, ideas, and misconceptions that students in a specific grade level typically have when they encounter a given idea. Elementary mathematics teachers should be able to examine student solutions to a complex subtraction problem and recognize how

students arrived at the answers they did. High school English teachers should be able to recognize why some populations of students consistently use forms of subject-verb agreement that differ from standard English. Elementary science teachers should know that the process of photosynthesis frequently confuses 5th graders and understand why this process is difficult for learners to grasp.

Not all common patterns of student thinking involve errors; teachers should be able to recognize common ways that students think about content, including common resources they bring and predictable developmental changes they go through as they grow. For example, when young children begin to "count on"—that is, when they know instantly that there are nine items when one is added to a set of eight that they have already counted, as compared with their earlier practice of counting all over again—teachers should immediately recognize this significant step. Many urban black adolescents are likely to have deep experience of word play that can enhance their ability to engage in complex literary analysis (Lee, 2007), and teachers can harness middle schoolers' social preoccupations for productive collective work.

Identifying Common Ground

Even though learners differ and teachers must continually tailor instruction in response, the work of teaching is not wholly unpredictable. Much is common across learners, subjects, and contexts; and it could be shared, studied, and learned by all.

Consider what goes on in other professions. They too demand individual responsiveness, and yet broad idiosyncratic creativity would be neither tolerated nor appropriate. Surgeons do not invent techniques at their pleasure that fit their "style"; pilots do not creatively land planes. Of course, skilled practitioners flexibly adapt to conditions, but they do not make up practices according to their individual "way" of doing things. There is a professionally based bottom line: Surgeons must meticulously carry out procedures that result in high levels of success; pilots must land planes safely. Teachers, too, must teach skillfully so their students learn.

Teachers should be able to recognize common ways that students think about content.

Identifying a set of practices that aims at complex outcomes for all students is a first step toward strengthening the teaching profession. These practices could provide a common foundation for teacher education, a common professional language, and a framework for appraising and improving teaching.

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The Flexible

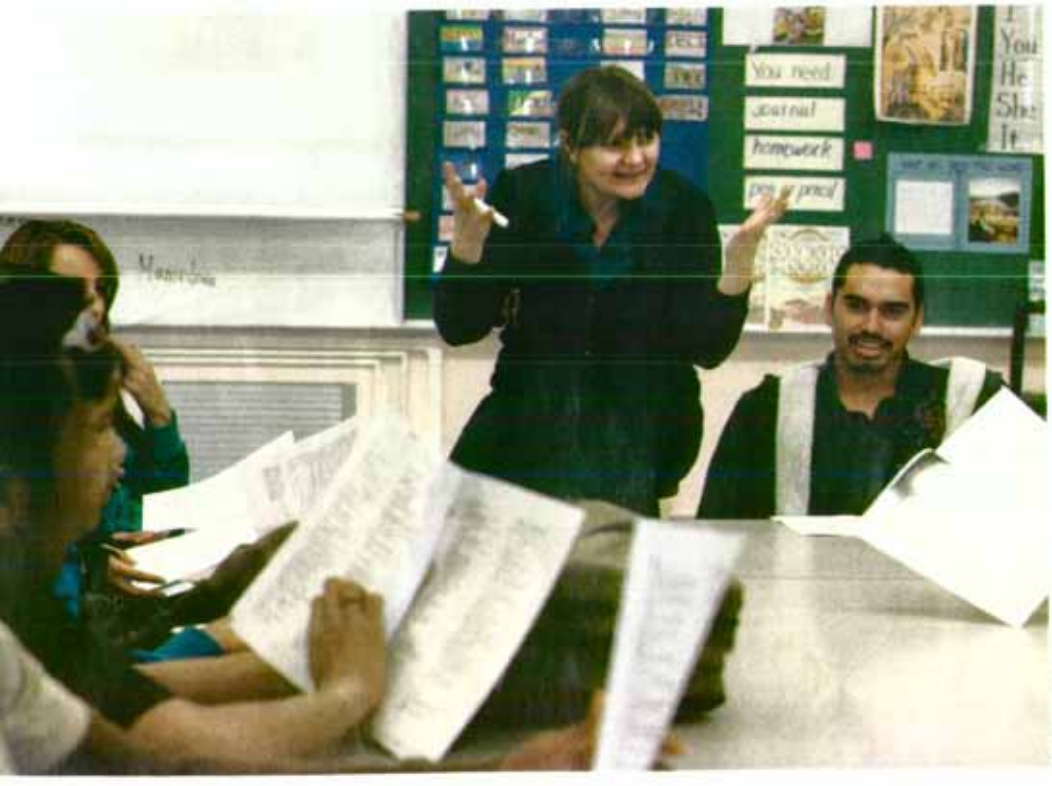
Leila Christenbury

After almost 35 years in secondary and university classrooms, I know something about effective teaching. I have certainly seen inspiring examples from other teachers; I have written and reflected extensively on the topic; and occasionally in my own practice I exemplify effective teaching myself.

I also have a modest reputation in my part of the academic world for exploring *ineffective* teaching—and the source of my most telling examples is still, embarrassingly, myself. In articles and books throughout my career, I have felt compelled to detail my recurring instructional struggles and failures (Christenbury, 1996, 2005, 2007) to serve as a cautionary tale.

This article stems directly from my years of experience and reflection and from my stubborn and consistent aspiration to be a better teacher. I am not yet where I want to be, but as T. S. Eliot (1952) reminds us,

> For us there is only the trying
> The rest is not our business. (p. 128)



For those of us who are still trying to become the most effective teachers possible, it may be useful to consider a bit of history and a recent real-world example.

Scapegoats and Superstars

Although it might seem self-evident that effective teaching is at the heart of student learning, teaching has not always been a central part of the public discussion on education reform. Changing the patterns of school days and school years, establishing a common core curriculum, linking assessments to that curriculum, holding schools accountable for student test scores, altering administrators' preparation and responsibilities, incorporating new technologies into instruction, empowering community groups and school boards—these have all been and continue to be topics on the education reform discussion board.

Teacher

Good teaching comes not from following a recipe, but from consistently putting student needs first.

The teacher, an individual who is crucial to the success of any reform effort, has often been sidestepped, minimized, or even ignored.

Only recently has it occurred to a number of otherwise bright people that effective teaching is central to education success. Yet rather than being a wholly heartening development, as many of us initially hoped, this belated recognition of the importance of effective teachers has had unintended and even pernicious consequences. Both at the height of No Child Left Behind and in its current twilight era, the significance of the teacher's role has often been hijacked and distorted.

Some have claimed that because individual teachers are so important, they should be able to overcome any and all instructional, contextual, and societal issues and consistently raise student test scores every year. Some have argued that teachers are so vital that they must be strictly regulated; they must follow scripted curriculums and be tracked, rewarded, or punished for the performance of their students (again, as measured by test scores).

Further, because teachers are so central, some pundits and policymakers now propose that the best way to improve schools is to strip teachers of tenure and seniority protections so that newer and supposedly brighter and better teachers can quickly take the place of "underperforming" veterans. Certainly in the past year, the wholesale firing of an entire Rhode Island high school's teaching staff and the dismissal of hundreds of teachers from the District of Columbia schools were premised on the idea that teachers are all-important.

The public discussion no longer ignores teachers and their centrality; now it lays most of the onus of blame for student failure on the individual teacher. And it must be reiterated that in these days of high-stakes testing, student success is mostly determined by only one measure: test scores.

Can the individual teacher bear this responsibility alone? Carter (2009) critiques the image of the "teacher-as-saint" (p. 86). The public, he contends, expects teachers to work miracles and blames them when the miracles somehow do not materialize. In an online forum on teacher effectiveness, Kate Walsh (2010) points out that these "superstar" teachers are relatively rare. And although good teaching is integral to student success, it cannot by itself supersede the many other

factors that contribute to educational success or failure.

What Is Effective Teaching?

I teach preservice teachers at the university level, and one of the hardest messages I try to impart to them is that there is no definitive recipe, no immutable formula, no simple list of do's and don'ts to ensure effective teaching. As they stand on the brink of entering their own classrooms, many of my students find this news frustrating. Some would prefer the deceptive comfort of Chester E. Finn Jr.'s (2010) reductionist definition, "An effective teacher is one whose pupils learn what they should while under his/her tutelage."

Only when preservice teachers have gained some experience with a range of students and some sense of themselves as teachers do they understand that the individual, idiosyncratic, and contextual aspects of effective teaching are what make it both enormously rewarding and enormously challenging. Students will always learn more, less, or differently than "what they should." Good teachers understand this. Most people outside the classroom, especially those who want to regularize and routinize teaching and learning, do not.

But although there is no precise recipe, we can recognize effective teaching by a number of characteristics.

Effective teaching is variable. Effective teachers use a variety of strategies and a range of methods, and they change and refine these over time. They do not teach the same way and use the same instructional repertoire year after year. Effective teachers also differ from one another; both teachers who use traditional methods and those who employ the most up-to-date pedagogy can be successful.

Effective teaching is contextual. It responds to individual students, school and classroom communities, and societal needs. Effective teachers alter, adjust, and change their instruction depending on who is in the classroom and the extent to which those students are achieving. Effective teachers are not so devoted to their practice that they ignore the students in front of them.

Effective teaching is premised on students' intellectual curiosity. Effective teachers begin with the belief that students are smart and can be enticed to learn. Despite their own skill, knowledge, and experience, effective teachers neither patronize nor condescend to students of any age.

Effective teaching must be somewhat autonomous. Reflective and accomplished teachers do not need to be controlled, managed, or strictly monitored. Such teachers are close to their students in intellectual as well as psychological ways, and they must be empowered to use their judgment to make classroom decisions.

Ultimately, effective teaching is fearless. Because the goal is learning, effective teachers must adjust curriculum, methods, and pacing to meet the needs of the students. Effective teachers put a priority on student needs rather than on the strictly interpreted demands of the school district curriculum guide or the year-end test. Again, to do this, teachers must have a great deal of independence.

Walking the Walk

In spring 2010, I had a teaching experience that illustrates some of the decisions and issues that confront all teachers in all classrooms as we strive for effective teaching.

Because of a scenario that has become common during these recession-plagued days, my university instituted a new round of budget cuts, and I found myself unexpectedly teaching an undergraduate writing course that is cross-listed in English and in education. I had created the course, Teaching Writing Skills, 20 years ago. But my responsibilities had evolved and I had not taught it for a while; it had recently been handled by experienced and talented adjuncts. Now it was mine to teach again.

At first, I welcomed this last-minute change in my schedule, confident that I was in touch with the course focus and the kinds of students who traditionally elected to enroll. In recent years, I had taught almost exclusively graduate students, and returning to teach this favorite undergraduate course would, I thought, be interesting.

New Challenges in an Old Course

Interesting it was indeed. Frankly, a number of issues caught me by surprise. Many of the issues were familiar to me from high school teaching, but I did not expect to find them at my university.

First, it quickly became clear that my 18 students were not prepared for the requirements of the course as I had designed it. On a purely academic level, many students struggled from the outset with the readings, the length and topics of journal assignments, the etiquette of large-group discussions, and the pacing and workload of the course itself. After some awkward class sessions during the first weeks of the semester, I checked student records and discovered that a number of those enrolled in this 300-level course had current grade point averages of 2.5 or lower.

Second, although this course was geared to the teaching of writing in secondary school, few of the course participants planned to go into teaching. (From my experience, this was not the usual course audience, and I wondered whether recent enrollment pressures in the English department had made this course attractive to English majors who needed the upper-level credits.) Not surprisingly, then, early discussions and assignments that addressed teaching scenarios were not successful. When I previously taught the course, the students were relatively able academically and most of them were taking the course as part of their preparation to teach.

As a third issue, some students appeared unaccustomed to norms of academic conduct, a problem I had rarely encountered at my university or even when teaching at the high school level. About half a dozen students had real difficulty with basic expectations. They did not come to class on time; return promptly from the break; or bring the necessary materials, books, and writing journals. When I gave them directions or asked them a question in discussions, some students routinely needed the question repeated; their minds were clearly wandering.

One student was obviously frustrated with the class and dealt with the situation by repeatedly coughing so loudly and persistently in a number of class meetings that class conversations and work had to stop. A least three students, early in the semester, routinely missed assignment deadlines despite an explicit syllabus and reminders.

Only recently has it occurred to a number of otherwise bright people that effective teaching is central to education success.

In short, these students were not an optimal group. The 2010 Teaching Writing Skills course promised to be one hot mess.

Effective Teaching in a New Context

In this context, what did effective teaching look like?

First, it was variable. I ramped up the classroom intensity to the level I usually reserve for one- or two-day inservice workshops in which I need to instruct—and motivate—busy and often tired practicing teachers. As in those contexts, I worked hard with these Teaching Writing Skills students, being more personable and direct than I had been in any classroom in years to keep them awake, aware, and engaged. I used humor with the cougher and with those who needed repeated questioning. I also moved to more direct instruction, which I rarely used in my graduate-level courses.

My teaching in this course was also contextual. Clearly, what I had done before in this course was not going to work with these students. One strategy was to address the elephant in the room; I talked to the students explicitly about what I perceived was going on in the class, and I proposed solutions. I asked for their advice and feedback and gave them time to deliver it both face-to-face and anonymously. Students told me that they wanted more time with assignments, more direction regarding the content of journal entries, and more feedback from me on drafts. All of this I provided. To make the course more appropriate for the students, I broadened the content of discussions and assignments so that the focus was not just on teaching writing but on issues in the students' own writing.

And I found that the students were smart—perhaps not smart in the way I had assumed they would be, but in terms of their own interests. As I made writing assignments more relevant to those interests, students often revealed the kind of intellectual curiosity that I knew was there. One student's traditional argument paper defended the originality of Lady Gaga; another student, in the course of a paper focused on the day he was born, did an extensive—and sophisticated—analysis of affordable Brooklyn apartments that had been available to his young, immigrant parents.

I became more interventionist than I can ever recall in a college setting—or even during my time teaching high school. Specifically, I insisted that students who were struggling meet with me outside of class. I initiated one-on-one conferences, and during the class break I praised students for making progress with behavior and attention. I individually tutored two students whose literacy skills were below par. I used multiple e-mail messages to remind

students about deadlines. At students' request, I expanded class time for discussions that were of greatest interest to the students. I also limited large-group discussions—which often veered out of control when students were not able to present comments or ideas civilly—and substituted small groups or pairs.

Most substantially, I concluded that few of these students would pass the course as currently constructed. Therefore I jettisoned some long-standing components of the course—in particular, the culminating assignment, which was a favorite of mine. This assignment had given each student the opportunity to assume the roles of both writing teacher and writing student. Students designed original writing tasks, exchanged and completed them, and then evaluated the final products. However successful this assignment had been in the past, I knew that it would most likely be a failure with these students because their interest in the teaching of writing was not central, and the detailed nature of the work relied heavily on a pedagogical focus.

I also deleted a quarter of the journal entry assignments, doubled the time allotted to writing-group revision, and initiated rewards for completion of minor assignments. I truncated some readings from the two textbooks and skipped other parts of the books entirely. At the end of the course, for the first time in my university teaching career (although I did this regularly as a high school teacher), I provided a two-page, detailed study guide for the exam.

Some of these changes may appear to have weakened the rigor of the original course; from my perspective, however, not making these changes ensured that most students who had signed up for Teaching Writing Skills would falter in the assignments if not fail the course itself. Compromise seemed the better path and gave students a chance to succeed.

How did students react, and how well did they do in Teaching Writing Skills? Over the course of the semester, nine final draft papers were unacceptable; these students were given an *R* grade (revise) and the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit without penalty, and every student took advantage of that opportunity. For the final exam, the study guide must have been helpful: 14 of the 18 students received *A*s or *B*s; there were only one *C*, one *D*, and two *F*s. End-of-class anonymous student comments were generally positive ("encourages passionate discussions," "willing to help anyone who needed it," "establishes great working environment among all her students") as were instructor and course rankings (on a scale of 1 to 5, high 4s in almost every category). Regarding final course grades, of the 18 students, 12 earned either an *A* or a *B*, 4 received a *C*, and 2 students—who, despite all my efforts, continued to experience difficulties with attendance and deadlines—received *D*s.

Effective teaching must be in service of student learning.

Giving Teachers the Freedom to Put Students First

All of the adjustments I made in response to the context and the needs of students in this course depended on the autonomy I enjoyed in my university teaching position (a level of autonomy that current reform efforts are unfortunately making less, not more, common among elementary and secondary teachers). I think it would be overstating the case to call these adjustments fearless. But I was pleased that by focusing on effective teaching, I could recognize the need for change, respond to the challenges, and make significant pedagogical and content changes to meet student needs.

The spring 2010 Teaching Writing Skills course looked very different from the course I had taught years before. But the point was not to adhere to some preconceived, ideal course that was no longer appropriate for these students; the point was that effective teaching must be in service of student learning. Once we more fully integrate our efforts to improve teaching with school context and student need, we can look more confidently to a future in which all students experience success.

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$pend Money Like It Matters

Our focus should not be on the pay—but on the way in which rethinking pay can help districts attract and deploy effective educators.

Frederick M. Hess

Question: Do you think that employees who are good at their work ought to be rewarded, recognized, and have the chance to step up into new opportunities and responsibilities? I do. If you're with me on this, you embrace the principle of merit pay—whether you know it or not.

Because, although we all have that childhood friend or distant cousin who lives on a commune somewhere and inveighs against the evils of bourgeois materialism, most of us think it makes sense for a talented, hardworking engineer, dentist, accountant, or babysitter to be rewarded for his or her efforts.

There are two crucial provisos here. First, endorsing this principle doesn't mean signing on to the raft of slack-jawed merit-pay proposals that would-be reformers have championed in recent years. Merit pay is only useful if it's done smart, which entails using it to help attract, retain, and make full use of talented educators.

Second, understand that there's no proof that rewarding talented, hardworking folks "works." You can comb through decades of economics journals and issues of the *Harvard Business Review* without finding any proof that paying and promoting good employees yields good results. The premise just seems like a reasonable assumption; you

either buy it, or you don't.

That's how I come at merit pay. I don't imagine that paying bonuses for bumps in test scores, as though we were compensating traveling encyclopedia salesmen in the 1950s, is going to improve teaching or learning. And I don't think that value-added calculations are themselves a comprehensive or reliable measure of teacher quality, even in grades where we can calculate such numbers with a reasonable degree of statistical accuracy. But money and metrics are invaluable tools in shaping a 21st century teaching profession.

The Point of Merit Pay

The point of rethinking pay is not to bribe teachers into working harder. Rather, merit pay is a tool for redefining the contours of the profession. Today's step-and-lane pay scales, built around seniority and credits completed, suggest that the primary way to determine how much teachers are worth is how long they've been on the job and how many courses they've sat through. I don't believe that's a good or useful way to gauge a teacher's value.

There's nothing innately wrong with step-and-lane compensation. Indeed, when introduced in the first decades of the 20th century, it was a sensible response to the massive gender inequities that characterized schooling. At that time, women were routinely paid half as much as their male counterparts. Because male teachers were far more prevalent in the high schools, many districts employed de facto pay scales in which high school teachers dramatically outearned their K–8 counterparts for no discernible reason. In that era, standardizing pay made sense.

By the 1970s, however, schools could no longer depend on a captive influx of talent regardless of the terms of employment. Whereas limited alternatives had meant that more than half of women graduating from college became teachers in mid-20th-century America, the figure today is closer to 15 percent.[1] Meanwhile, new college graduates are much less likely to stick to a job for long stretches, the competition for college-educated talent has intensified, and we can now more or less distinguish teachers who excel at helping students master important content and skills.

All this adds up to a new workforce environment in which the step-and-lane, industrial-era model that flourished as a best practice in post–World War II auto and steel plants is unduly confining. Step-and-lane pay is ill-suited to attracting and retaining talent in the new world of career changers, scarce talent, and heightened expectations.

Merit pay is not a substitute for high-quality instructional materials, pedagogy, or curriculum. Rather, rethinking pay can help make employees feel valued, make the teaching profession more attractive to potential entrants, and signal that professional norms are displacing those of the industrial model. None of this "fixes" schools, but it does establish a firmer, more quality-conscious basis for dramatic improvement.

Problems with One-Size-Fits-All Pay

As cash-strapped states and school systems look ahead to lean years, it's vital to recognize that one-size-fits-all pay is insensitive to questions of productivity. Although the term *productivity* is regarded as an irritant in most education conversations, it refers to nothing more than how much good a given employee can do. If one teacher is regarded by colleagues as a far more valued mentor than another, or if one reading instructor helps students master skills much more rapidly than another, it's axiomatic that some teachers do more good than others do (that is, that some are more productive than others).

One-size-fits-all compensation means that we're either paying the most effective employees too little, paying their less effective colleagues too much, or, most times, a little of each. In a world of scarce talent and limited resources, this is a problem. Savvy leaders recognize the benefits of steering resources to employees who do the most good, as these are the employees whom schools most need to keep and from whom they need to most effectively wring every ounce of skill.

Thus, a crucial element of a well-designed merit-pay system is rewarding employees who not only do a terrific job but also do so in a way that extends their effect on students and schools. Rewarding prized mentors who choose to mentor more colleagues (while continuing to get high marks from them) or boosting pay for terrific classroom teachers who choose to take on larger student loads (while continuing to excel) are ways to use limited resources to amplify the contributions of skilled professionals.

One-size-fits-all pay also inhibits efforts to leverage the opportunities for differentiation and specialization that new technologies and staffing models offer, such as the use of part-time professionals by the Boston-based Citizen Schools. Today, school systems casually operate on the implicit assumption that most teachers will be similarly adept at everything. In a routine day, a 4th

grade teacher who is a terrific English language arts instructor might teach reading for just 90 minutes. For schools blessed with such a teacher, this is an extravagant waste of talent, especially when one can stroll down the hallway and see a less adept colleague offering 90 minutes of pedestrian reading instruction. If we're sincere about the centrality of early reading proficiency, using these educators in this fashion is simply irresponsible.

One approach to using talent more wisely might entail overhauling teacher schedules and student assignment so that the single exceptional English language arts instructor would teach reading to every student in that 4th grade. Colleagues, in turn, would shoulder that teacher's other instructional responsibilities. However, this is not an even swap. Excellent reading instructors are rare; we should refashion compensation to recognize their importance. If that encourages other teachers to develop their skills and pursue this role, so much the better. Districts with a plethora of talent can then revise staffing accordingly. The point is that salary should be a tool for solving problems by finding smarter ways to attract, nurture, and use talent, it should not be an obstacle to doing so.

After all, we pay thoracic surgeons much more than we do pediatric nurses—not because we think they're better people or because they have lower patient mortality rates, but because their positions require more sophisticated skills and more intensive training and because surgeons are harder to replace. By allowing pay to reflect perceived value, law and medicine have made it possible for accomplished attorneys or doctors to earn outsized compensation without ever moving into administration or management. That kind of a model in education would permit truly revolutionary rethinking in how we recruit, retain, and deploy effective educators. That's a far cry from today's ill-conceived proposals to slather some test-based bonuses atop existing pay scales.

A Viable Path Forward

Unfortunately, too many would-be reformers hear the call for rethinking pay as a charge to impatiently rush forth and "fix" compensation in a furious burst of legislation. As a result, promising efforts to uproot outdated, stifling arrangements get enveloped in crudely drawn and potentially destructive policies.

Merit-pay systems are an essential tool for designing schools and systems that can excel in tight times.

Education reformers have trouble accepting that unwinding long-standing arrangements and replacing them with sensible alternatives will take time, humility, and a lot of learning. The fix-it-now approach to pay, with its overreliance on value-added measurements, turns a blind eye to the technical challenges involved and to the fact that reading and math scores are a profoundly limited proxy for instructional effectiveness. This approach also runs the risk of stifling the kind of smart use of personnel that reformers are trying to encourage. Principals who rotate their faculty by strength during the year or who augment classroom teachers with guest instructors or online lessons are going to clash with evaluation and pay systems predicated on linking each student's annual test scores to a single teacher. Even in the states that have spent the most time on these assessment and data systems, value-added scores are available for only a sliver of instruction and for only a minority of teachers. Devising new one-size-fits-all merit-pay systems around this limited population is both premature and nonsensical.

Right now, the smart move is to explore ways to base an increasing share of teacher pay on various measures of performance, drawing on potential metrics that seem useful and reliable in a given district. Labor market conditions should be a consideration; if it's more difficult to find effective math teachers than effective social studies teachers, pay should reflect that. In a world of accountability, there is an increased role for simple principal evaluation. Given the collaborative nature of much good teaching, it makes sense to import a key element of 360-degree evaluation and factor in systematic evaluations of teachers by their colleagues regarding which teachers make the largest contributions to the school and their peers. Measures of productivity; value-added calculations, where appropriate; and systematic classroom observation also have roles to play.

Just as many educators comfortable with step-and-lane pay recoil from such changes, many would-be reformers reject my counsel of patience and seek to "fix" teacher pay immediately. But K–12 is a sprawling, complex exercise. Spasmodic solutions born of frustration can lead to flawed policy—as with No Child Left Behind, which overreached in ways that undermined the law's more sensible provisions.

Doing Merit Pay Smart

Merit pay should reward performance, value, and productivity. We can measure these in many ways—by scarcity of individuals in the labor market, annual evaluation by peers, professional observations, supervisor judgment, and so forth. The contemporary obsession with student test scores as the only metric of interest has been an unfortunate distraction.

Student achievement must be an important factor, but we should employ

it deliberately, with an eye to a teacher's actual instructional duties and responsibilities. Too often, we rely on test scores simply because we don't have anything else. That's not a problem specific to merit pay; that's our peculiar failure to import widely employed practices and tools from other professions.

Second, it's a mistake to imagine there's one universal way to design pay systems. Why debate about whether Google, the Red Cross, or Microsoft has the "right" compensation model? There are a slew of reasonable approaches, depending on organizational context and needs. Rather than searching for proven pay models, education leaders would be better off identifying the problems they're trying to address and asking how reconfiguring pay might help them solve those problems.

Third, the aim must be to craft systems that can evolve. The whole point of pay is to help attract and leverage talent. We need an approach that succeeds in tapping specialists, online instructors, part-time educators, and others who can best serve students. Rather than cement in place new merit-pay systems predicated on improving test scores for a teacher who spends 45 minutes a day for 180 days with the same 24 students, let's design systems that can reward unconventional forms of excellence.

For instance, an online tutor who lives thousands of miles away but who can help struggling students make remarkable leaps in mastery of algebra is an invaluable asset. The same is true of a retired army sergeant who may be ill-equipped to teach a middle school class but who may be able to inspire and mentor 15 middle school students or of a teacher who builds a dynamic arts or science program. Today, there is little room in teacher pay scales to recognize or reward—or, sometimes, even make possible—these kinds of contributions. The attempt to superimpose rigid hierarchies atop an otherwise unchanged profession was one of the big stumbling blocks for career ladders and merit-pay proposals in the 1980s. Let's take care not to repeat those mistakes.

Finally, today's test-based merit-pay systems have nothing to say when it comes to productivity. They funnel more dollars to teachers who yield higher test scores. The reward is a bonus for past performance; it does nothing to amplify a teacher's effect on students and schools. Well-designed merit-pay systems should reward teachers who choose to take up opportunities to do more good—such as instructing additional students, leveraging particular skills, or assisting colleagues—making their increased pay a pound-wise investment for their districts or schools.

This means that merit-pay systems are not, as some would argue, a frilly luxury that is unaffordable in today's bleak fiscal climate. Rather, they are an essential tool for designing schools and systems that can excel in tight times. Merit pay should shift dollars from employees and roles that do less good for students toward those that matter most. This will entail discomfort and disruption and require an array of compromises and adjustments. But if merit pay is to be more than a gimmick, it must be part and parcel of a push to rethink the shape of teaching and schooling. EL

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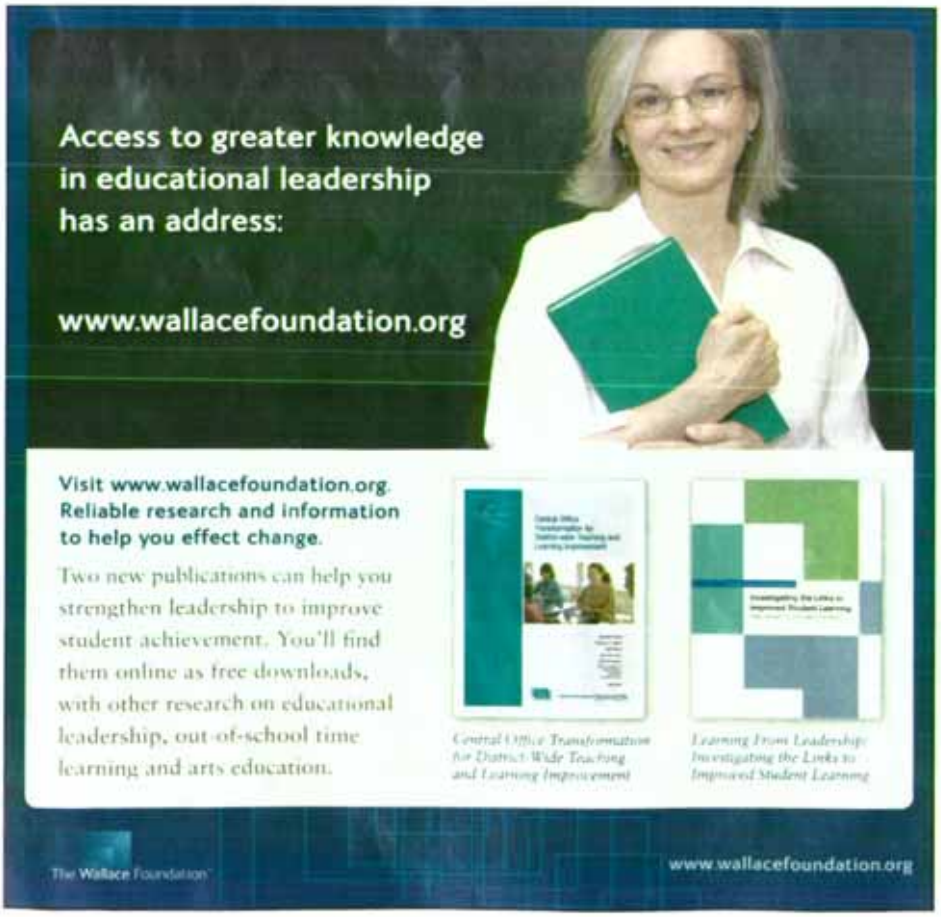


MERIT PAY MISFIRES

Policymakers should be careful about what they choose to reward—because they'll most likely get it.

Al Ramirez

It's sad to see the public education system being subjected to yet another "good idea." Merit pay—the newly rediscovered answer to what ails U.S. public education—will come and go like so many previous "good ideas" that tinker with the system. If we're lucky, it will only delay genuine progress. If we're not, it will do real harm and set the system back.

Like most fads, merit pay is based on shaky theories and false assumptions. Here's a partial list:

- Teachers are holding back. They can produce better learning, but they're just not motivated to do so.
- Teaching is not really a profession, and professional judgment is not a factor in good teaching. Therefore, policymakers can standardize teaching performance and a supervisor can tell a teacher when he or she has deviated from the standard.
- All teaching is the same regardless of grade level, subject matter, or the students in the class.

- Policymakers know what good teaching is and can easily measure it.
- Policymakers understand human motivation. They know where and in what amounts to place incentives to get desired results.
- Greed is good. Teachers will respond to financial rewards.
- Competition is good. Teachers will work harder to beat out their colleagues to get a rationed resource—higher pay.
- If it weren't for unions and their resistance to merit pay, public education would flourish.
- Policymakers have enough money to make a merit-pay system work.

Steps and Lanes in the Crosshairs

The uniform salary schedule, with its steps and lanes, is ubiquitous in U.S. public education. It was developed in the early part of the 20th century to professionalize public education and reform compensation practices deemed unfair and even corrupt. Previous systems had used such criteria as gender, age, grade-level assignment, race, marital status, nepotism, and political patronage to determine salary.

The uniform salary schedule proved to be a popular innovation because people found it fair, transparent, easy to

understand, and predictable. Teachers and taxpayers liked it. Educators and those responsible for administering school district compensation programs highly value these qualities to this day.

Critics argue that the present system is unfair because it promotes mediocrity by rewarding poor performers while failing to recognize outstanding achievement on the job. Advocates for merit-pay systems also contend that the uniform salary schedule ignores the basic purpose of education—student learning. They adhere to a simplistic "input-output" model of education that denies the complex realities of schooling. These realities are among the very reasons that efforts to establish merit-pay systems fail.

Clarifying Terms

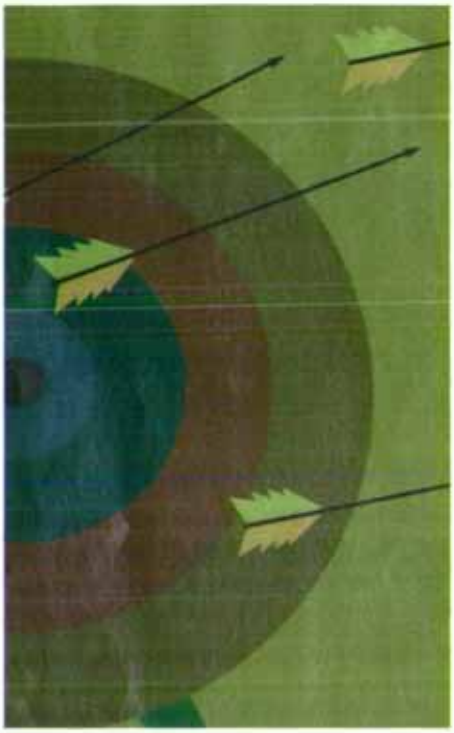
To understand why merit-pay systems don't work, it's important to distinguish among the various pay systems that are sometimes passed off as merit pay.

One common salary approach is the *career ladder*. In this system, educators are rewarded for achieving ever-higher levels of professional rank—for example, novice teacher, associate teacher, or master teacher. Typically, such systems require the employee to acquire higher levels of training, demonstrate competencies in key skills and knowledge, and assume greater job responsibilities.

Another pay model, sometimes called *pay for performance*, provides opportunities for additional compensation when the employee takes on additional duties, such as mentoring new teachers or serving as a curriculum specialist.

A third method offers a differentiated salary schedule or bonuses to educators taking on hard-to-fill teaching assignments in shortage areas or in difficult school settings.

Here, I use the term *merit-pay system* to refer solely to pay schemes that tie salary bonuses to student learning, usually as measured by a test.



Why It Doesn't Work

Merit-pay programs that are solely based on student achievement don't last because they don't work. Even the highly touted Denver Public Schools pays out most of the extra compensation for things other than test score results: for teachers who go into hard-to-attract teaching specialties, such as mathematics, science, special education, and bilingual education; for professional development; for teachers who willingly go to hard-to-staff schools (so-called "combat pay"); or for extra work beyond the contract.

Merit pay seems to work in many other professions—for example, law, professional sports, and used car sales. But it doesn't work in public education. Here's why.

Factors Beyond Teachers' Control

When asked to take on a merit-pay system, teachers typically point to the fact that they have no control over who is assigned to their classes. Every veteran teacher knows that groups of students will vary in their ability and motivation from year to year. Each class presents its own set of challenges. And this variation exists across schools and districts.

Other professions, such as law, engineering, or accounting, operate in a different context. Professionals in these fields usually choose to work with a specific client, and they define the range of possible outcomes before they engage in the work. If a lawyer wins a big slip-and-fall case, the firm makes more money and bonuses follow. In professional sports, the more the team wins, the more money it makes; performance bonuses are linked to things that put more paying fans in the seats. Merit-pay systems in contexts like these are clear, easy to understand, and easy to administer.

Measurement Problems

To achieve fairness in the merit-pay system, policymakers will attempt to adopt objective measures of student learning, usually a test. But this approach leads to major pitfalls, such as narrowing the curriculum, gaming the system through teaching to the test, and victimizing struggling students and their families through blame or worse.

In addition, the literature is full of challenges to the validity of even the most highly regarded tests (Popham, 2008; Wiliam, 2010). Besides, tests are typically designed to measure student learning—not instruction or teacher effectiveness.

Target Problems

Policymakers who would impose merit-pay systems should be careful about what they choose to reward because employees will respond to established incentives. The question soon becomes, What will *not* get done? Teaching is a complex profession, and teachers do a lot in the interest of students that really isn't measurable. Yet many of these hard-to-measure practices, such

as counseling students about academic or personal concerns, are crucial to students' lives and of value to parents.

Teachers are not salespeople. We should not incentivize them through numerical goals and quotas. When policy moves the educator's focus toward money and away from students, families, and communities, it sets the stage for distortions in the education system.

Administration Problems

To overcome the problems of only using a test as a measure, accommodating the complex nature of the classroom, and selecting "the right" employee behaviors to reward, policymakers will establish complicated rubrics to keep score in any merit-pay system. However, the search for the right combination of behaviors and outcomes is a slippery slope that inevitably leads to a complex and unwieldy measurement system that distracts both teachers and principals from their important work.

Morale Problems

Merit-pay systems are demoralizing because they treat educators like laboratory rats and not professionals (Deci, 1971; Deming, 1993). Professionals bristle, as do most workers, when they feel manipulated. Talented staff members may move elsewhere. Further, setting numerical goals and quotas without also giving educators a method for reaching those goals creates great frustration (Deming, 1993).

Misunderstanding Human Motivation

Merit-pay systems are doomed because they fail to recognize the fundamental principles of human motivation and how they apply in schools (Glasser, 1999; Springer et al., 2010). One of the strongest incentives that naturally exist in schools is one's sense of affiliation in being part of the staff. School culture and climate are integral to school success. Merit pay introduces competition among staff members and destroys the sense of community so important to adults and students.

A second natural motivator is the feeling of accomplishment that professionals experience when, as a result of their own professional judgment, they meet the challenges of the job. Manipulating an educator into mimicking patterns of behaviors developed by people outside the classroom diminishes this sense of efficacy.

Merit pay misses the boat entirely—because good teaching is not about money. Most educators chose the profession out of a sense of calling; they understand they will never get rich as a teacher. A long time ago, policymakers in public education understood this as well, and thus a tacit bargain was struck in an effort to attract and retain highly competent and committed professionals. The deal was this: Commit to being an educator in the public schools, and the public will strive to provide you with a professional salary and treat you like a professional. You won't get rich, but you'll do all right; and as you grow in the profession, you'll earn a little more.

Merit pay misses the boat entirely because good teaching is not about money.

Money Problems

Unlike other professions and career fields where merit awards can be tied to revenue, public education functions within constrained budgets. Merit-pay programs are typically not funded in a way that can provide or sustain substantial financial rewards. People will respond to monetary incentives, but those incentives have to be large enough. Yet school districts usually need to implement the program "on the cheap." Thus, the primary incentive on which the system is built—money—is in short supply.

This also raises the issue of superstar performers, who tend to perform well year after year and typically end up with all the bonuses. In a limited budget environment like a school district, this leaves small or no bonuses for good performers. Even the New York Yankees, with their seemingly limitless resources, cannot field nine superstars at once. Some school districts, in an attempt to spread around the limited dollars, will tinker with their merit-pay programs by mandating that teachers can't earn bonuses in consecutive years. I guess that's a signal to the superstars to slack off.

Unions are skeptical about promises of extra bonus money because they realize that money is in short supply. They know that teachers' salaries function in an almost zero-sum environment. Awarding bonuses usually means diminishing cost-of-living raises for the entire teaching corps. The union understands that many of its good teachers will lose out. That's why the teachers union in Denver didn't sign on to the new pay scheme until the school district succeeded in passing an annual $25 million tax increase earmarked exclusively for teacher salaries.

Tinkering with the salary structure of a school district is a risky undertaking. If the overall salary schedule declines in order to fund a merit-pay plan, the district becomes less competitive with neighboring school districts and will have difficulty both attracting new teachers and hanging on to its current employees. Building and maintaining a competitive salary structure require long-range thinking on the part of the school board because the system can't be fixed overnight once the school district falls behind.

This latest push for merit-pay programs is particularly puzzling in light of the current economic recession. Many school districts, to lower expenses, face reductions in their teaching force. The timing couldn't be worse to talk about bonus programs.

Reality Thinking

Policymakers should have learned from the recent fiasco on Wall Street. The grotesque behavior of unrestrained, greed-driven individuals led to immoral and illegal activities that have caused suffering around the globe. Do policymakers really think that unbounded greed is good to promote in schools?

There are simpler and more practical questions to consider in the policy debate about merit pay. For example, why are merit-pay systems not routinely found in private or charter schools? Teachers' unions are rare among private schools, and teachers are at-will employees for the most part. It seems it would be easy for private schools to adopt the "good idea" of merit pay. Could it be that private school leaders understand what public school policymakers don't?

If competition is such a good idea, then why haven't policymakers taken steps to make teaching a more competitive profession? Why aren't teacher salaries comparable to salaries in other professions that require a college degree and continued graduate school training? Wouldn't teacher performance problems fade away if we just had some of the talent that is currently flowing to U.S. business colleges enrolling in colleges of education instead?

Are policymakers even clear about the schools they want? Schools should be wary about adopting business practices in a nonbusiness environment, practices which even business understands don't always work (Ramirez, 2001).

A Sturdy Foundation

Effective schools are made up of a complex array of qualities and characteristics. They are hard to create and maintain, but easy to destroy. Such schools are wonderful places to be a teacher and a student, and comforting places for parents to send their children. These schools serve their communities and their nation well.

Effective schools are not built on a foundation of greed. What policymakers don't seem to understand is that adults in these schools are motivated by something far more important than money—a purpose beyond themselves.

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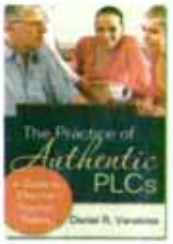

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A Week of Observations

A principal's new observation structure gives her the in-depth information she needs to help effective teachers get even better.

Jenne Colasacco

The most effective teachers want to grow in their craft, and they often look to their principal for feedback and support. However, the more effective a teacher is, the harder it is for the principal to provide new and insightful feedback. Last year, I found myself facing that exact challenge. All the teachers on the faculty of Academy of the Pacific Rim's high school were effective, but they weren't growing. As the principal, I was conducting 20-minute mini-observations weekly or every other week and giving teachers feedback, but they continued to have the same strengths and weaknesses they had had for years. How could I push teachers in a manner that was authentic and that would have a lasting effect on instruction?

With this question in mind, I developed a new observation structure that would enable me to provide more in-depth and valid feedback. The result was an effective, collaborative observation experience that led to more successful teaching and learning.

The Weeklong Observation Structure

With the goal of helping good teachers get even better, I developed a weeklong observation structure that had two key components: an extended observation over the course of the week and a series of conferences between the teacher and me. The model has six steps:

Step One: The teacher selects a week in which the observer will watch him or her teaching the same class each day of the week for the entire duration of the class.

Step Two: Before the weeklong observation begins, the observer meets with the teacher to discuss the lesson plans and objectives for the week ahead. In addition, the teacher selects an area of focus for observation, and the observer also selects an area of focus on the basis of previous observations.

Step Three: The observer observes the teacher on Monday and Tuesday and provides written notes to the teacher each day.

Step Four: The teacher and the observer meet for a midweek conference to discuss the week so far. They examine the observer's written feedback together to ensure that both the teacher and the observer are on the same page. They make a plan for the rest of the week and adjust lesson plans as needed.

Step Five: The observer observes the same class for the rest of the week and continues to provide daily written feedback.

How could I push teachers in a manner that was authentic and that would have a lasting effect on instruction?

Step Six: The teacher and the observer meet for a post-observation conference. The observer provides written summative feedback on a template developed for this new structure. The template (available online at www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_201012_colasacco_template.pdf) lists two areas of focus, one suggested by the teacher and the other by the observer. It provides space for feedback on those areas, as well as on the implementation of suggested changes, flow and cohesion of lessons throughout the week, use of varied instructional techniques, and evidence of student mastery. The teacher and observer analyze the areas of focus established in the pre-observation conference, the success of any changes that were implemented midweek, and the general flow of the week's lessons.

Observation in Action

So what does the new structure look like in practice? Take as an example my weeklong observation of a senior Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus class. The teacher was a veteran math teacher whose students had demonstrated excellent results on the 10th grade state assessments for six years running. In the pre-observation conference, we agreed that I would focus on classroom management and student engagement.

During Monday's class, I observed that not all the students were engaged in the material; only a few were asking and answering questions. It was impossible to know whether the nonparticipating students were mastering the material—more checks for understanding were needed. On my observation form, I suggested that the teacher have students put their answers to the problem sets on the board and then discuss them.

I went to class on Tuesday expecting to see a difference in class engagement. After students completed the problem sets at the beginning of class, the teacher asked students to put the answers on the board. However, the same students who had been calling out the answers on Monday now put multiple problems on the board and argued with one another about the answers. The quiet students still did not participate, and the teacher's attention was directed even more to the louder students up at the board. This was not how I had expected the teacher to implement my suggestion, but my written feedback alone had not provided enough guidance.

The next morning, I met with the teacher for our midweek observation. We discussed the suggestion, and I was clearer and more direct, telling him to call on each student to put one problem on the board and explain it out loud, while the rest of the class listened and took notes, comparing their answers to this one. Then the student at the board was to answer questions from classmates. This way, all students would have the opportunity to answer questions, and the teacher would be checking for understanding among all of his students. The teacher, who had been discouraged that my suggestion didn't seem to help, agreed to try again, following these additional guidelines.

I observed that afternoon, and the lesson was much more effective. Every student had to demonstrate understanding of the material. At the end of class, the teacher remarked, "Now I see what you mean. This was good—I will do it from now on." Although the change was relatively minor, the positive effect it had on the teacher's ability to assess his students' understanding was significant. Without the structure in place to observe on consecutive days, I would not have known that the teacher misunderstood my suggestion, and the teacher would not have had the chance to try again right away. His instruction would not have changed in the long term.

Challenges

With the new model and all of its benefits, some challenges remained. The surprise element of the informal unscheduled mini-observation was gone. Although many educators believe that an unannounced visit is the most likely to lead to an accurate understanding of the classroom, I could not visit the same class each day and maintain an element of surprise.

Additionally, it was sometimes a

struggle to stick to the structure. If I was supposed to be observing freshman history Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. and an emergency came up, I would have to cancel the observation. The interruption to the week's observations decreased the structure's effectiveness.

Finally, I rarely had time for the ongoing mini-observations that had kept me in touch with teachers in the past. Under the new system, a teacher may be observed every day for a week in December, but not again until April. The momentum we built throughout the week in December sometimes got lost in the interim months.

I was able to observe and analyze instruction on a much deeper level than before.

The Results

Despite these challenges, it soon became clear that the benefits outweighed any drawbacks. Through this structure, I was able to observe and analyze instruction on a much deeper level than before. Because I had a conference with the teacher before the week began, I knew the goals and objectives for the week's instruction. Now, I was able to observe multiple lessons designed to meet these goals. For the first time, I was able to see how a series of lessons fit together; I had never been able to give feedback regarding cohesion and flow on this level.

Additionally, I could make suggestions and observe changes as they were implemented. Were my ideas valid and effective? Was the teacher implementing them as I had intended? Did the teacher feel they were effective? Seeing the same group of students in the same class throughout the week also enabled me to collect more data on the students' responses to the teacher's instructional and classroom management strategies. Using this data, the teacher and I could collaboratively plan for improvement.

Faculty Response

Looking for faculty feedback on the new system, I distributed an anonymous survey asking faculty to compare the new observation structure with the old. The results were overwhelmingly positive: 9 out of 10 classroom teachers reported that they found my feedback from the weeklong observations more useful and accurate. They said that they were at least 25 percent more likely to implement suggestions under the new structure. One teacher wrote, "I love the new observation structure! I feel like Jenne really sees what is going on in my classroom." Another stated, "I am more likely to take the time to do the work to implement changes when I know that Jenne is coming in the next day."

Faculty members in general indicated they felt supported, pushed, and validated. They also felt respected and valued because of the amount of time I spent observing. As the principal, I had a much more authentic idea of what was happening in classrooms, and I was achieving my initial goal of helping effective teachers improve.

Next Steps

This year, I am continuing to use the weeklong observation structure with some changes that I hope will address the challenges related to the new structure. I am dividing the teachers on the faculty into two tiers. In the first tier are teachers who need frequent mini-observations, either because they are

Without the structure in place to observe consecutive days, I would not have known that the teacher misunderstood my suggestion.

new and need more consistent, ongoing feedback or because they are struggling and need more regular support. In the second tier are the majority of teachers in my school—those who are effective but could benefit from the in-depth feedback of the weeklong observation. I will also spend a week each trimester doing mini-observations of everyone to ensure that two or three months do not pass without my seeing each teacher in action in his or her classroom.

Applying the Model

Principals and instructional leaders in any setting can use the weeklong structure to provide more in-depth feedback to teachers. In a small school like mine, with only 12 teachers, a principal can observe each teacher for multiple weeks each year.

In a school with a larger faculty, the principal might not be able to use the model schoolwide, but it's still possible to use it in a targeted way by selecting a few teachers each year to observe—perhaps a teacher who is stalled with a particular aspect of teaching or those teachers for whom the principal feels least able to give meaningful feedback. Alternatively, principals in larger schools could provide substitutes for department chairs, enabling these teacher leaders to observe their department members using this structure.

Regardless of the scale of the implementation, I believe this model has the potential to help instructional leaders gain a better and more authentic understanding of the instruction happening in their school.

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Inspired

By developing a deep reserve of techniques, good teachers learn how to read each situation.

Carol Frederick Steele

In 7th grade, my classmates and I had the same six teachers every day. In five of those classes, we regularly acted up or tuned out; in the 6th class, we were attentive and productive. What made the difference? For one hour we had an inspired teacher.

What Is Inspired Teaching?

In describing great teaching, I prefer the term *inspired* to *effective*. Inspired teaching has three components. First, the teacher has a broad, deep understanding of the subject being taught, developed through coursework, life experience, and continuous refinement. Inspired teachers comprehend subtleties, contradictions, and all the fine points necessary to fully respond to almost any question about their subject that arises. Second, the teacher has a wide repertoire of teaching techniques—also fine-tuned over time—and is comfortable and competent with each one. Thus, it's simple for him or her to select one useful approach from many and fit it seamlessly into a lesson. Third, an inspired teacher can also "read" students, situations, settings, and reactions and can select apt responses so that learning goes smoothly. When teaching, the unexpected is the norm. No matter how much you prepare, there is always some reaction from a student you never could have predicted—a question, comment, analogy, or personal quirk. The apparently intuitive responses of expert teachers reflect the distillation of months or years of learning until the essential understanding is in their bones.

So how do teaching skills develop over time? I believe teachers progress through four stages: *unaware*, *aware*, *capable*, and *inspired*. No matter what field a person enters—teaching, civil engineering, or filmmaking—all beginners start out relatively *unaware* of important information. This is not a condemnation; it's a fact. As new practitioners learn new facts, understanding increases. Practitioners progress to the *aware* level once they master concepts, theories, and the names of techniques. Still, while novice teachers are aware of much information important to teaching, they aren't yet able to use everything they've heard about.

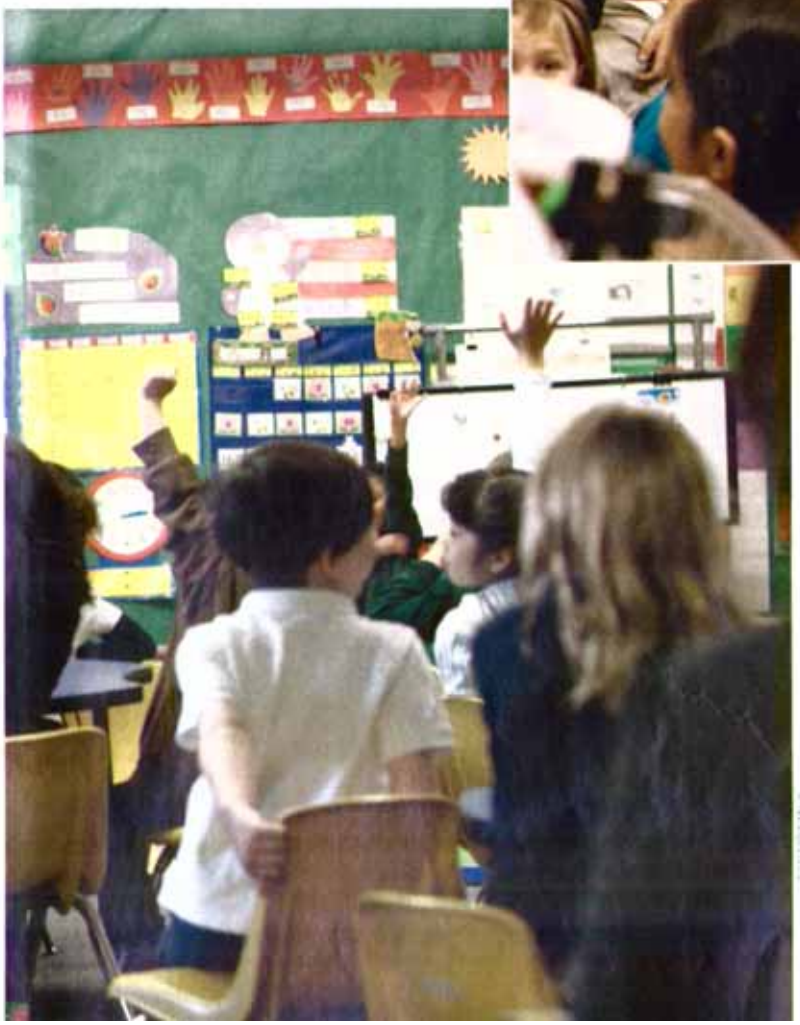
With experience, novices put important ideas and techniques into action. But no one masters a new skill in a single usage. First attempts are awkward and uncomfortable. Remember your first attempt to skate or to type on a keyboard? Wise learners don't reject an approach after one bumbled attempt. If they keep trying, new teachers will see

Responses

their own performance improve until they reach the *capable* level. Although they may still need to concentrate intently to carry out a teaching strategy, capable teachers are increasingly comfortable with a growing repertoire of skills.

Teachers who continually reflect on their practice can eventually reach the *inspired* level. This means they hold vast stores of possible teaching strategies and responses in mind and can sense which ones are most effective at a given moment for given students. They chunk information, meaning that they make associations novices don't and connect disparate facts so quickly that they appear to have strong intuition.

Students will show us how to teach them if we remain open to the clues they send.



Beyond "Know, Tell, Control"

People are quite clear that they want good teachers, yet they often have a simplistic idea of what good teachers do. The public expects teachers to know their subject, explain it to kids, and maintain order—in shorthand terms, to know, tell, and control. But to understand how inspired teachers operate, we must remember that teaching is a multidimensional activity. Teachers observe students, talk with them, explain material, and facilitate activities, often simultaneously, adapting as they go. Although knowing, telling, and controlling are essential teaching behaviors, they aren't the whole story.

Here's why. The core teaching behaviors of knowing, telling, and controlling have something important in common; all three are mostly *sending* behaviors. Although knowing a subject well may not seem like a sending behavior, in the classroom teachers use their previously acquired knowledge more like a "pool" or a tool; they sift through and then select prior knowledge to use to send messages to students. When we are telling, we are clearly sending out information. And as we manage a classroom, we spend ample time announcing rules and consequences. Even when teachers demand explanations for problematic behaviors, we usually hope for a short, apologetic summary.

Teachers often forget the other half of the act of communication—receiving. We continually send messages that we hope students will receive clearly, but we can't know if our students receive and comprehend these messages unless we look for reactions and ask for feedback. We need students' messages as much as they need ours. And every student behavior sends a message. In addition to formal feedback, students send dozens or hundreds of what might be called accidental messages: facial expressions, body language, attitudes, and answers that reveal gaps in knowledge.

PHOTO © ISTOCK

Those who observe classrooms often overlook the importance of how teachers interpret what students reveal to them. This is not surprising; overt actions like talking or disciplining kids are observable, but what a teacher hears or thinks is invisible. However, what a teacher perceives in terms of students' reactions is a powerful predictor of how well that teacher is able to teach—perhaps the most powerful. In fact, four of the 13 most important skill areas in teaching identified in a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards study[1] center around gathering information from students and settings: (1) interpreting events in progress, (2) being sensitive to context, (3) testing hypotheses, and (4) improvising. Let's consider each of these four skills in the hands of an inspired teacher.

Interpreting Events in Progress

Whether there are 13 students present or 36, there's a lot going on, moment by moment, in every classroom. Each person there, including the teacher, is doing, thinking, and feeling things that may or may not advance learning.

When unaware teachers observe a classroom landscape, they are likely to miss lots of useful data. They may experience tunnel vision, focusing on only one speaker or listener at a time; alternatively, they may feel overwhelmed by the swirl of classroom activities and powerless to intervene. Watching a class in action might seem like watching a video—a recorded program impervious to intervention.

Unaware teachers have little skill at separating out the details in the environment that are relevant for learning. They also see each event as discrete, rather than as part of a pattern that can be addressed meaningfully. They are poorly skilled at responding to the details and cues they do note, so they continue their lessons without modifications.

Happily, teachers can advance beyond the unaware level. As they advance, capable teachers can attend to and understand simultaneous events, notice relevant details, respond to student cues, and connect student behaviors with instruction at least a portion of the time. To be as effective as possible, however, they must develop an even more finely tuned ability to interpret the many events in their classrooms and respond accordingly.

An inspired teacher maintains focus on the lesson, conversation, or assessment that she is conducting while simultaneously noticing events in the classroom. We will see this teacher move closer to a problem that she can see may disrupt learning; she may touch a shoulder, give a quick head shake, tap a paper, hand someone a pencil, and keep moving without interrupting the flow of an explanation begun while standing behind the desk. Each of these actions is a response to events that she noted, assessed, and effectively handled while continuing to teach.

The inspired teacher perceives patterns in students' verbal and nonverbal responses. When a student stands up or moves around the room, such a teacher doesn't automatically assume the student is misbehaving. Chances are this teacher has already established procedures for classroom activities that limit interruptions to the lesson, so this student may simply be heading for the pencil sharpener. On the other hand—

because he is aware of body language and students' individual issues—this teacher may react quite differently to the next student who stands up. The teacher can quickly read *this* student's frustration level and knows this student's history of bullying, so intervention is in order.

One of the definitions of *inspiration* is the act of breathing. An inspired teacher inhales the ambience of the classroom, which everyone present contributes to, and "breathes out" precisely the kind of teaching these students need. Thus, inspired teaching is highly interactive. No script could ever improve on the moment-by-moment response of a great teacher to a unique group of learners.

One way teachers can coach themselves to become attuned to student behaviors and the classroom atmosphere is to set up a video camera in the classroom and run it once or twice a week to catch students' actions in response to teaching. As the teacher watches the tape later, he or she can more fully sort out details of interactions and small events that can inform teaching. Students will show us how to teach them if we remain open to the clues they send.

Being Sensitive to Context

Thinking back to my first year of teaching, I now realize that I expected students would react to things the same way I would. When they didn't, I was mystified. At the unaware level, I saw both students and situations simplistically and used one-size-fits-all approaches. It didn't occur to me to modify my lessons when students' reactions did not match my expectations or my plans.

Three years later, I worked as a teacher of homebound students, and my eyes were opened. I observed dozens of different ways that families did everything from washing dishes and caring for babies to socializing and interpreting events around them. The widely differing reactions students had shown in my classes made more sense.

Learning sensitivity to context means becoming a detective. Teachers need to learn about the attitudes and cultural norms in the surrounding community, patterns within the school, and the characteristics and typical reactions of individual students. We can never stop learning more about these kinds of things because there is so much to learn.

At the inspired level of teaching, teachers use a great deal of contextual information to understand how to best reach students. Identical instruction and assignments don't always make for equity. For example, a colleague of mine, Jay, recalled that he frequently got in trouble in elementary school because he had a terrible time sitting still—until one year a teacher let him walk around his desk while he worked. This teacher no doubt observed from the beginning that her admonitions to Jay to remain seated while working had no effect and that he actually did less work the more she tried to keep him in his chair. She realized it was wiser to let Jay work standing up than to waste a whole year scolding him.

Teachers may even draw on the small ways that students reveal themselves, such as through an unpredictable question or personal quirk. For example, I recall when one of my students, Jessica, declared during a vocabulary lesson that she absolutely hated the word *dinner* and always avoided using it. I filed away that bit of data; when the word *dinner* came up in a readaloud later, I said "dinner—or supper, right, Jessica?" At that moment, I sensed that Jessica and the other students felt that I was paying attention to them.

Teachers must also know which particular categories or labels apply to each learner because, although labels don't define students, they can illuminate facets of a student. The inspired teacher explores the neighborhood, interacting with community members and perhaps making home visits; studies the needs of students with disabilities and rehearses approaches to help these students until the tactics are second nature; and invests time in getting to know individuals, making notes about each student's traits, hobbies, and interests to be sure no one is overlooked. The end result is a teacher who can respond in a highly effective manner to all the complicated and interrelated contextual issues that are invisible to novices.

Teachers who reach the inspired level of teaching are quick to see possibilities where others see interruptions.

Testing Hypotheses

Two types of hypotheses operate in most teachers' minds. Some hypotheses are purposely generated: *What will happen if I try this teaching method? I'll collect some data as I use it to find out how well it works.* Whether the hypothesis is found to be true or false, the teacher gains some useful information.

The second type of hypothesis might be called unconscious: *Surely these learners are not capable of that, so I will not ask it of them.* In this case, a teacher doesn't even identify the hypothesis as a guess to be tested; he or she assumes it to be true and acts accordingly.

I suppose all humans carry unconscious assumptions like this. Unaware teachers definitely do. They are often still learning and can barely think of ways to modify their daily lesson plan, let alone hypothesize about new ways to enhance learning. Their

proposed solutions may be superficial and are rarely tested.

Inspired teachers, on the other hand, are adept at asking questions about everything they do. They generate many directions for investigation in their quest to meet instructional goals. They may borrow ideas from business, medicine, or any other field and test whether approaches that yield success in these fields can be adapted to the classroom. They pay careful attention to student responses during each lesson and make adaptations, even midlesson if necessary. They examine test scores and quiz results.

After experimenting with different ways to present a learning experience—and observing carefully what students reveal about how well the learning "takes"—a teacher at this level will alter his or her instructional priorities, reteaching, enriching the content, or skipping forward.

Improvising

Unaware teachers may "wing it," but that is not improvising. Well-prepared novices plan laboriously and then may struggle through the plan with no alternatives in mind. They are prepped but not flexible; unexpected things confuse or frustrate them, and they resist changing their plans or expectations. Teachers who reach the inspired level of teaching, however, are quick to see possibilities where others see interruptions.

Consider possible teacher reactions to outlier student responses. Great teachers seek more information. During a lesson on plant life, a child mentions his grandfather's retirement. One teacher might admonish that child for being off-task. Yet, the teacher who asks, "How does that connect to our lesson?" learns that grandpa retired from the fertilizer *plant* and got a watch with a *stem*. This triggers an explanation of various meanings of these words.

Good improvisers carefully keep instructional goals in mind and use all available class time effectively, yet because they have in-the-moment awareness, they don't shrink from providing spontaneous explanations or creating an analogy to clarify a detail or enhance understanding.

The Endless Road of Learning

Of course, being sensitive to context facilitates a teacher's ability to interpret events in progress, and interpreting events makes it easier to test a hypothesis. All four skills are interdependent, and each supports all the others.

So what leads a teacher from being unaware to aware, then onward to being capable and, finally, inspired? Clearly, desire, a curious mind, and a thirst for continuous learning are essential. But the final ingredient is a belief that two minds—or three or four—are better than one. The greatest teachers learn from everyone in their world. Every coteacher, aide, student teacher, or intern brings new approaches, new technology, innovative units, or lessons that inspire the veteran to greater heights; every conference, workshop, and lecture is a chance to glean at least one new idea. The road is endless and the journey a delight.

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Author's note: For more about how teachers can develop the 13 criteria for high-quality classroom teaching identified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, visit www.carolsteele.net/?page_id=196.

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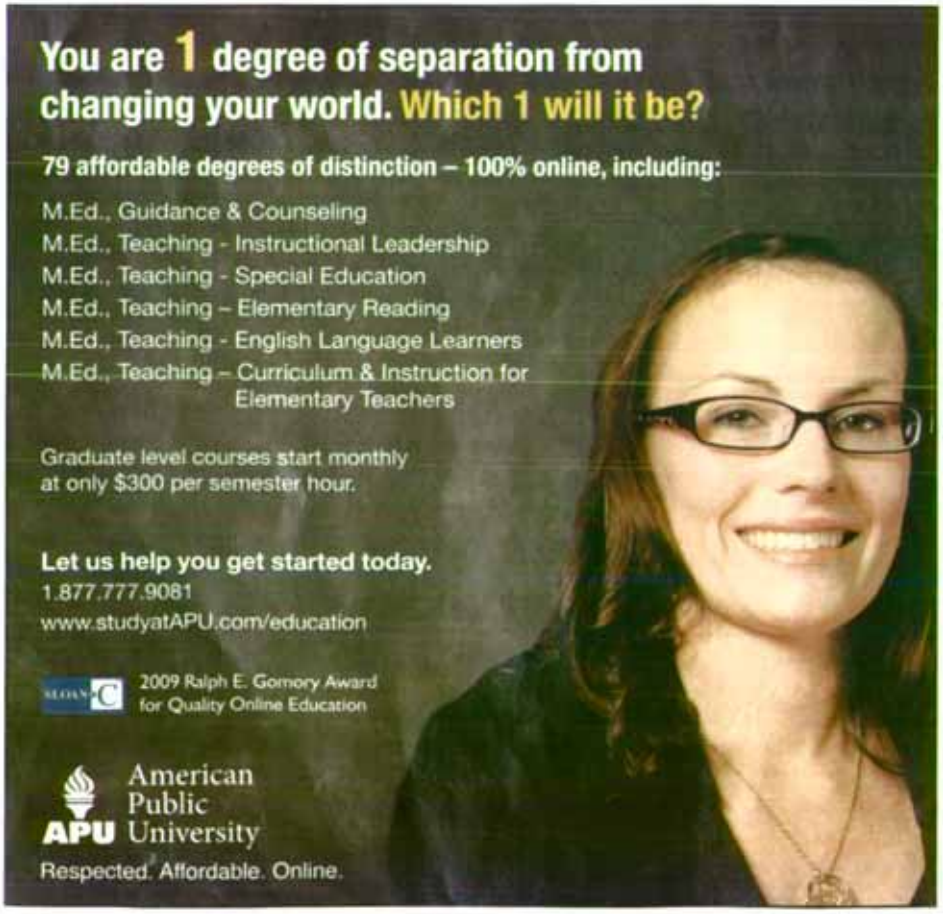

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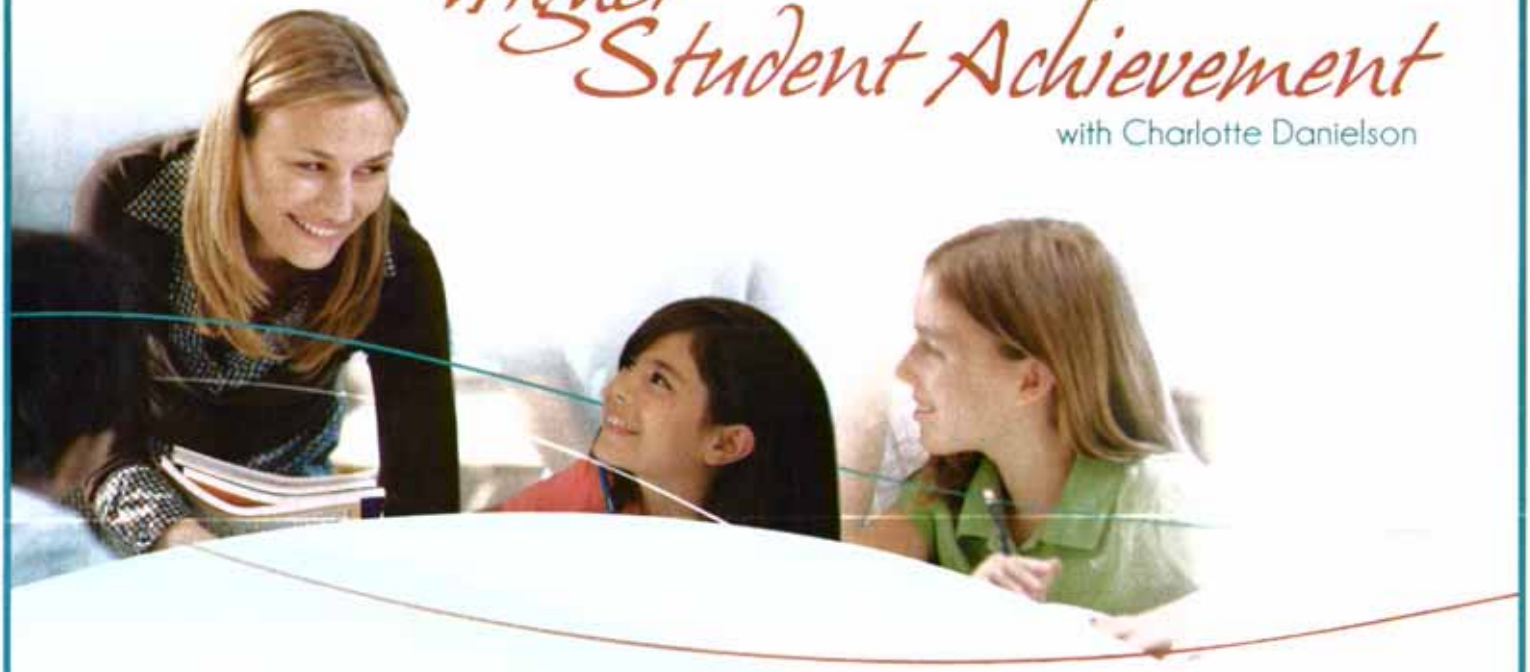

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Once a Struggling

Teachers who faced tough challenges as K–12 students tell what they learned from their experience.

Sara Fry and Kim DeWit

Lois recalls feeling stupid as early as 1st grade. Her teacher would write three numbers on the board and ask, "Which is biggest?" Lois would sit and stare and feel ashamed because she didn't know. Instead of asking the teacher for help, she hid her confusion because she was embarrassed. Lois's confusion had a simple explanation: She did not understand the difference between size and value. She recalls, "I didn't understand that a 10 was bigger than a 5 because I was thinking 'She wrote the 5 the biggest.'" Lois remained anxious about math for her entire school career and into adulthood.

Maisie faced a different set of challenges. A teacher once said, "Maisie, you're so intelligent—I don't understand why you don't do better in school!" The teacher didn't know Maisie was growing up in poverty. Her dad was an alcoholic, paychecks were unsteady, and her mom struggled to support Maisie and her siblings. She looks back on her childhood and recognizes that, for a period of about five years, her home environment made it hard for her to believe in herself and develop basic skills.

Anne prided herself on getting a discipline referral every semester from 7th grade on. Her parents and teachers were constantly telling her she was smart, with the insinuation being, "so why are you messing up and getting poor grades?" Anne realizes now that she was bored and not challenged academically. Social isolation further disconnected her from school, making it a place she preferred to avoid.

By the time Carrie was a freshman in

Student . . .

high school, she had moved approximately 50 times. Both of her parents had significant substance abuse problems, and her mother was mentally ill. Her family was frequently homeless, and she missed a lot of school. When she was in school, Carrie was often hungry, tired, and unable to focus on learning. Despite the difficulties, Carrie found that "school was a safe haven, and teachers were models of all that could be good in this world."

In addition to struggling in school, Lois, Maisie, Anne, and Carrie have something else in common: They all are highly qualified, dedicated, and effective teachers. They are among 46 preK–12 teachers from across the United States whom we interviewed in a recent study of teachers who struggled academically or socially as students.[1] The teachers we interviewed had between 5 and 40 years of experience and taught a variety of grade levels and subjects, ranging from elementary education to art to special education to middle-level mathematics to music. We asked them to tell us about their struggles in school as students and how those experiences influence their teaching.

Four Characteristics of Effective Educators

Four common characteristics of effective educators emerged in our interviews. These qualities reflect the belief that all children can learn. This disposition comes naturally to the teachers we interviewed because they know exactly what it is like to be the student who can—and did—learn despite facing challenges. On the basis of their collective voices, we describe effective educators as having the following characteristics.

1. They have caring relationships with students.

The teachers we interviewed emphasized how important it is not to get so caught up in the minutiae of our profession that we forget to create a safe and welcoming environment for students.

Stella is a high school art teacher whose father was an alcoholic. As a student, she isolated herself from her peers and immediately left school each day to babysit younger siblings. She advocates on behalf of kids like herself:

> School is not their first priority. It's not because they choose to mess up. There are things going on in their lives that are bigger and more demanding of their attention and their energy than school.

Stella keeps an eye out for students who are clearly miserable and lets them know that she understands what they are experiencing. Stella told us,

> When you're isolated in that kind of a family lifestyle, you don't know there are other people who have experienced those things. When you're a kid, you think you're the only one.

Candace is a high school English teacher who was also disconnected from school as a student. She was bored and didn't see how school was helpful. When she was in 10th grade, she ditched her classes for two months, and none of her teachers called home to check in:

> You really get this sense like "Well, do they even notice that I'm not there? Am I invisible?" So I form personal connections with my kids so that they do know. I say "Hey, you weren't here yesterday. What's going on with you? We miss you when you're gone. We notice."

Candace knows her approach has made a difference with individual kids.

2. They set high standards and help students reach them.

The teachers we interviewed were adamant that caring does not mean lowering standards. Ultimately, caring relationships support students' learning because teachers who care help students meet their high standards. None of the teachers watered down their curriculum; on the contrary, they focused on maintaining high expectations while discerning what kind of help students need. Some students need more time, others need specific scaffolding, and some need to experience a success or two so they can find value in the curriculum or discover confidence in themselves.

Many of the teachers' approaches are influenced by memories of their own academic struggles and the support they did *not* receive. For example, Stella, whose parents required that she return home directly after school to babysit, sometimes needed help with assignments or more time to complete them. She couldn't stay after school, which was when her teachers typically provided help and extra time. Today

she works with students who can't stay after school in the mornings before school or at lunchtime.

Angelle overcame her struggles in math at her inner-city school, and today she is a successful elementary special education teacher. She advocates giving students extra time and support, not consigning them to failure because of early struggles:

> Just because you are a struggling reader in 1st and 2nd grade, it doesn't mean that at the end you'll end up being a drug dealer. You'll catch up. Somehow the mental ability, the want to be something in life, and the prayers and dedicated teachers all fit together, and it creates a child who will be successful. But they need a teacher who is going to start engaging them and actually teach them, not scoot them along with everyone else. Take time out one-on-one on your lunch period or after school. I think that is the greatest gift you can give a student who can't read.

For many of the teachers in our study, helping students meet high standards involves talking to them about their thinking, learning, and behavior. Marie is an elementary math specialist, despite almost not graduating from high school because of her struggles with math. She explained the importance of asking students what they are thinking: "I can guess and surmise all day long. But if you ask them, they can tell you."

Lois also asks students about their thinking, particularly in math, because she realizes that her own lifelong math anxiety might have been avoided if her 1st grade teacher had asked her direct questions that were grounded in contemporary math pedagogy. Such questions might have uncovered the roots of her confusion before she became hopelessly frustrated:

> I ask "How did you get this? Tell me about it." And I don't always make them write how they got their answers even though that is the state mandate. I also want it verbally because a lot of times [my elementary students] can't communicate their faulty thinking through writing.

Sabina, who has taught elementary grades and English as a second language (ESL), now works as a curriculum support teacher. She explained how important it is for teachers to persevere and help students reach high standards. She refuses to look at her classroom as a place where she should reproduce the bell curve and finds the mentality that "As long as I have six *A*s, two *B*s, and three *F*s, I'm happy" unacceptable. She told us, "If I have three *F*s, I still have to figure out what I can do to help these three be successful."

3. They connect the curriculum to students' lives.

Students often need to feel the material they learn is applicable to their lives and the world around them. Angelle uses personal examples to help her elementary students in special education see the value in what they are learning:

> I explain to them how I had to take remedial math. I bring my remedial math book to school, and I show them the things I had to learn in college. I correlate that to what they're learning right now, and I tell them you don't want to be a student entering college taking remedial math. You want to be able to test out of this.

Her approach sets the expectation that her students can go to college. Angelle also explains how the skills her elementary students learn now are the foundation for learning in middle school. She knows that once her students "connect content to a real life issue, it becomes important to them."

Candace looks back on her school experience and realizes she didn't see the value of school:

> Everyone seemed to be under the impression that education was valuable just for education's sake. You go to high school and do these things, because that's the way it is. There's value in doing it the way it's always been done. Don't question it. Don't ask, "Why should I be doing this?" Just do it. And that didn't work for me. For the majority of my students, it doesn't seem to work either.

Candace helps her students connect content in their high school English class to their backgrounds. For example, she makes her ESL students comfortable by explaining that her family didn't always use correct English grammar. "I give them examples like, 'Back home this is how we would say this. . . .' And they tell me, 'In Spanish, this is how we say that.'" By honoring students' sense of self, Candace helps them see the school and curriculum as related to their lives.

Maisie currently teaches kindergarten in a large U.S. city with a high crime rate. A high percentage of her students

are new to the United States. Maisie makes school relevant by reaching out to families and helping them experience all their communities have to offer. She helps parents find out about affordable and enriching local opportunities by regularly sending home a catalog that gives information about free days at museums and other events. Maisie has started writing grants to help families start their own home libraries. Grants also fund field trips

> so my children can go to different places. We're not far from the ocean, but I have kids who have never seen the ocean. How do we teach kids about things that they've never seen?

4. They participate in ongoing professional development.

Our study participants value learning experiences that help them stay current on education research as well as experiences that facilitate reflection on their teaching. This combination helps them scrutinize how they teach, analyze their instructional methods, and consider new practices.

Many of the teachers attributed their commitment to learning to their own experiences as struggling students. For example, today Zan is an elementary teacher, but she felt shame at her struggles with math until she took a math class for teacher candidates in college. She finally understood geometry and credits her talented professor, who used manipulatives and literature about math. She remembers thinking, "There just has to be more than one way to teach, and teachers need to know as many ways as possible."

Zan's interest in multiple instructional strategies led her to get a master's degree in special education, not because she wanted to teach special education, but because she wanted to learn more about learning disabilities and about how she could adapt instruction for her students. Her words, "If the child isn't learning, it's my fault. I need to change something," reflect Zan's commitment to helping students avoid the shame and helplessness she felt as a student.

Barbara's commitment to professional development is tied to her experiences as a student for whom learning never came easy. She remembers having teachers who were kind and understanding but who "didn't teach in a way that I learned." She is now an effective educator with nearly 20 years of experience in the general elementary classroom and special education.

Helping students meet high standards involves talking to them about their thinking, learning, and behavior.

Barbara believes the key to success with struggling students is to engage them in fun, motivating learning activities. Professional development helps her learn effective, engaging instructional techniques and keeps her informed of the research that she can use to support these approaches if her principal ever asks her to justify why her instruction is so different from other, more traditional approaches.

Continued professional learning is more important than ever in the 21st century when changes seem to happen overnight. Laurie, a middle school English teacher, told us she needs to keep learning so she can keep up with her students. She doesn't really like computers, but she believes putting kids first means continuing to learn, even if it means learning about instructional tools that she doesn't enjoy using. She explained, "Times change and you have to change with them, at least in the classroom."

A Well-Rounded Definition

The teachers we interviewed all faced and overcame struggles in school. Many of them had learning challenges that persisted into their college education, leading some to take remedial college math courses multiple times before passing and others to select a major that allowed them to completely avoid a troublesome subject.

Their stories of perseverance and records of effective teaching offer us a well-rounded definition of an effective educator. Excellent teachers put students first, help each student meet high expectations, and advocate on behalf of students and families. They interact with their students and ask questions that enable them to understand students' thinking. They keep learning, and they relate course content to students' lives. Most important of all, effective educators truly believe *all* children can learn. EL

[1] Participants in the study were either National Board–certified teachers or going through the certification process.

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What Makes a

Educational Leadership *asked some prominent educators to describe the most important quality of an effective teacher.*

Humility in an Age of Hubris

Humility: The word conjures up meekness, passivity, even submissiveness, and, in the worst case, obsequiousness. Yet this is a false humility. True humility is both a generosity of spirit and a quiet self-confidence. In teaching, it means understanding that although one may know a great deal, one does not know everything. It means being willing to learn from others, whether they be peers, 1st graders, or immigrant parents. It means treating *all* others—whether a parent with a 4th grade education or a professor with a PhD—as though they were as worthy and important as oneself. It means understanding that no method, strategy, or approach is the magic bullet to teaching and learning.

Although we cannot teach humility, at least by traditional means, we can nonetheless nurture and cherish it in school. We also cannot measure it, at least not by the blunt instruments currently in use. But we can easily assess it. We can see it in the eyes of students; in their self-possession and engagement; and in the respectful relationships we have with colleagues, students' families, and communities. In this age of hubris and shameless self-promotion, humility is an essential quality for teachers to have.

—Sonia Nieto
Professor Emerita,
Language, Literacy, and Culture
University of Massachusetts

Excitement About Learning

Effective teachers are more than dispensers of knowledge—they ignite a passion for learning. As a student teacher, I had the opportunity to observe two educators presenting information about Greek mythology. The first teacher sat behind his desk and read a magazine while his students completed worksheets. It was painfully obvious that he lacked enthusiasm, not only for his content area, but also for teaching itself. His job was to fill students' minds with information, and nothing more. In the second classroom, the teacher and her students chattered excitedly about Zeus, Poseidon, and other mythological characters. Each morning, the students couldn't wait to share something new they'd discovered the night before.

Teachers who pique students' curiosity about a topic, provide them with the cognitive tools necessary to learn, and then engage them throughout the learning process are priceless. Can we measure this quality? You bet. Just ask the students. It's obvious which teachers are passionate—not only for their content area, but also for those they teach.

—Joseph Semadeni
Fifth Grade Teacher, Wyoming

Great Teacher?

Making Meaning

In this age of instant information, the most important quality of an effective teacher is having the courage and ability to teach students to process what they've learned.

In the classroom, we teach such processing by having students practice critical thinking and problem solving as well as collaboration and communication. When we do this effectively, we will witness what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi called "flow": Using existing skills, a student will accomplish an attainable challenge, acquiring new skills and confronting greater challenges along the way.

Teachers are also guides on the journey to synthesis, where a child's life takes root and flowers. Guiding students toward synthesis requires teachers to encourage the act of processing. Teachers may never see the results in the classroom, although parents and others outside it will.

The stories our students tell us give us faith. For example, weeks after our unit on making public service announcements, one of my 7th graders told me that she had noticed a glaring continuity faux pas in a movie she was watching at home. I likely won't be there the next time this student has such an insight about some experience in her life. And that's OK.

—Johanna Mustacchi
Media Literacy Teacher, New York

Reflecting on How You Teach

We can provide teachers with professional development in skills and strategies and exhaust the list of acknowledged best practices, but at the end of the day, an effective teacher needs to be thoughtful and intentional about implementing the correct strategies at the precise moments. To quote John Dewey, "It's not the doing that matters; it's the thinking about the doing."

Teachers need to gauge and strengthen their ability to reflect on their teaching by establishing self-reflective habits in the classroom. As administrators and instructional coaches, it's our responsibility to maximize the effect that each of our teachers has on the students in his or her classroom—and a skillful teacher selects, adapts, and refines every teaching move in a reflective, intentional way.

—Pete Hall
Elementary School Principal, Washington

Willingness to Grow

The most important quality that an effective teacher possesses is the desire to continually evolve as an educator to meet students' changing needs. In addition to being self-reflective, teachers must be eager to seek out support and constructive feedback from supervisors and peers and to develop the tools and pedagogical knowledge they need to improve their instruction.

Identifying prospective teachers with these traits can be challenging during the hiring process. I have addressed this issue in several ways. First, I review candidates' evaluations

(Continued on p. 91)

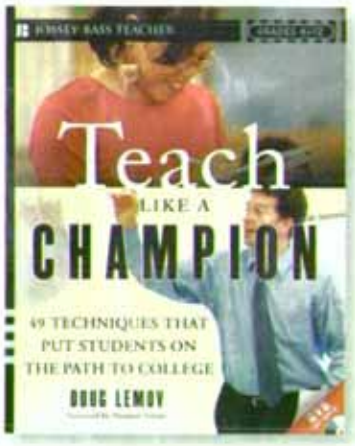
Book Review

Reviewed by Dina Strasser

Teach Like a Champion by Doug Lemov

This past July, my state, New York, hired a crack team of analysts to determine whether our state math and English exams in grades 3–8 were aligned to both national exams and our high school exams.

The result: a radical and depressing raising of state exam cut scores. As the 7th grade English teacher of a class that included high-needs students with individualized education plans, English language learners, and one-third kids in poverty, I had been satisfied with my students' scores. Now, with my students' passing rate sunk to 62 percent, I was looking for answers.



Cue Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College*. After five years of observing and videotaping classrooms serving students living in poverty, Doug Lemov has compiled a "taxonomy" of specific techniques that distinguish great teachers from those who are merely good. In *Teach Like a Champion*, Lemov discusses each of these techniques in detail (and includes a DVD showing the techniques in action).

Elizabeth Green's 2010 *New York Times Magazine* article "Building a Better Teacher," which profiles Lemov, is essential reading. My own reading of the book's assertions, though, has been ambivalent. Let's begin with the problems.

"Philosophy"—Not a Dirty Word

Lemov writes that many of these tools "remain essentially beneath the notice of our theories and theorists of education" (p. 7). In fact, he frequently speaks disparagingly of theory and "philosophy." To those who might feel that the techniques run contrary to the education theories they have been taught, he responds that he didn't write the book "to engage in a philosophical debate" (p. 9).

Characterizing philosophy like this is misleading, however. All educators, even Lemov, subscribe to *some* kind of philosophy—a set of beliefs about learning. To imply that the techniques are philosophy-free conveys a sense of objectivity that the techniques do not earn. It also hides the fact that Lemov actually subscribes to an extremely well-defined education philosophy: speed in all things, constant monitoring, absolute compliance, college as the pinnacle of education, and teacher as ultimate authority. This "not-a-philosophy" permeates the entire book.

Lemov dismisses the school contexts in which his observations take place.

I don't have space to discuss ways in which neuroscience, psychology, and other schooling models suggest that this philosophy is limited. My point is that without such a discussion by thoughtful practitioners, no informed application or evaluation of these techniques is possible.

The Limits of "Data"

Lemov uses the scientific gravitas of the word *data* multiple times. However, the book is not science and shouldn't be treated that way.

The most important flaw in how Lemov presents information is that he dismisses the school contexts in which his observations take place. Lemov didn't target successful individual teachers across diverse schooling situations; instead, he first identified "successful" schools through looking at test scores. Many of these are within his own charter school organization, Uncommon Schools. Why is this important? Because in such schools, the culture is likely maintained not just by lone-wolf teachers, but also by administrators and families. This is undoubtedly the case in Uncommon Schools.

(Check out North Star Preparatory School's "Parent-School Covenant" online for a stark example: www.uncommonschools.org/nsa/ourSchools/parents.html#03.)

There's nothing wrong with this kind of anecdotal observation; Lemov conducts it admirably. However, it is wrong to neglect rigorous analysis of the social, cultural, and political variables in play while still implicitly laying claim to the scientific notion of "data." It violates one of the first rules of social science: When dealing with human beings, context is everything.

The techniques as Lemov presents them are mechanical, existing in a vacuum and supposedly replicable in all situations. Yet given the rule about the importance of context, how can I assume that these practices are objectively repeatable? How can I assume that I could transfer them successfully to my classroom, independent of the school culture, district requirements, or crucial differences in the populations of our kids? I can't. Yet Lemov says I must. He writes,

> *No matter what the circumstances you face on the job* [emphasis mine] and no matter what strategic decisions are mandated to you, you can succeed. And this, in turn means that you must succeed. (p. 6)

Yet education research scientists have known for decades that replicating academic results without considering their context is nearly impossible. Thus, Lemov's remarks impose on practitioners an intimidating—and unsupported—moral imperative.

However . . .

Here's the kicker, though. Since receiving this book, I have implemented some of the techniques. They are wonderfully helpful. For example, *Time*. Lemov is correct that time management is neglected in our practice. I speak from experience, having transferred from small-group English as a second language instruction to mainstream English three years ago. The ways in which this book has helped me manage time would be of major benefit to any teacher.

For example, Technique 28, Entry Routine, calls on the teacher to establish efficient, productive habits as class begins. Its time-saving recommendations include having students pick up packets of needed materials, turn in homework in the same way every day without prompting, and know exactly where to find information about the lesson objectives, homework, and independent opening activities. Other techniques (such as Technique 31, Binder Control, and Technique 33, On Your Mark) are equally useful.

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Teacher talk. I was delighted to find some of my homegrown talk techniques in the book: responding to student behavior in a constructive and positive way (Technique 43); insisting that students answer questions thoroughly (Technique 1); and pushing for student talk that requires students to listen to one another and think critically (Technique 3). We don't recognize enough the power of register, tone, and discourse in the classroom, particularly when questioning students. And yet this may be the essential teacher skill. Lemov's microscopic attention to detail pays off here.

Respectful discipline. One might be concerned that the top-down classroom style Lemov endorses is demeaning, but this is not inherently the case. Kids are treated with strong doses of caring and consistency. Much of what Lemov suggests, such as explaining everything (Technique 48); using precise praise (Technique 44); and normalizing error (Technique 49) is backed up by the research of Carol Dweck (2007) and Ed Deci (1996), two of my heroes. These psychologists emphasize effort, positive mind-set, and the importance of building students' sense of competence.

Ultimately, it appears that *Teach Like a Champion*'s techniques may indeed be helpful to the reflective practitioner. But they must be applied with questioning and care. The very cut score changes which first drove me to read the book, for example, also significantly change the proficiency rates for schools across New York State, including Lemov's Uncommon Schools. It makes me quite skeptical about his assumption, shared by many education reformers, that standardized test scores are the best indicator of student success—and of the success of the 49 techniques.

It is interesting to consider how Lemov will wrestle with the implications of these developments—just like the rest of us.

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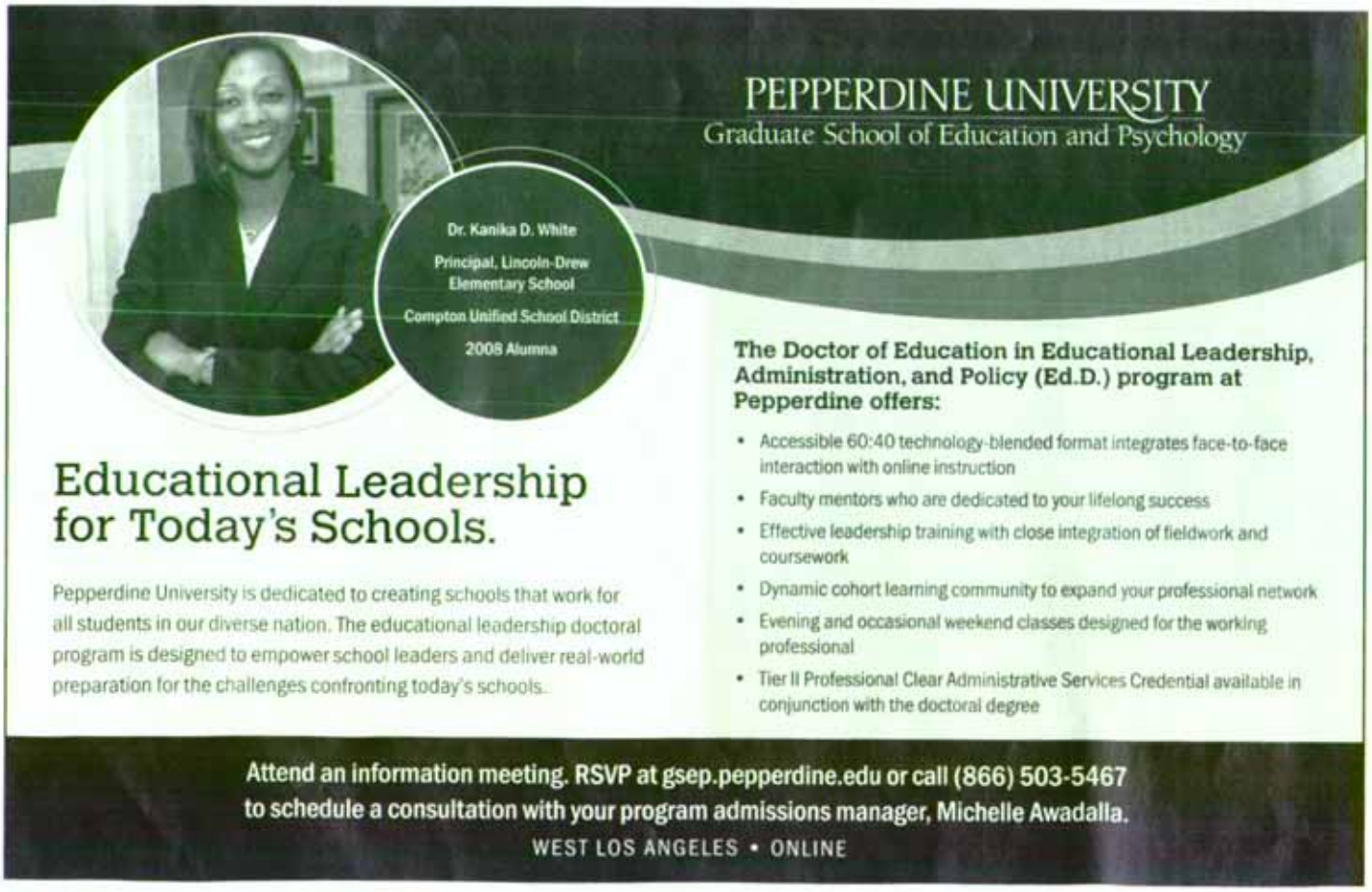

Bryan Goodwin

Good Teachers May Not Fit the Mold

In *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* (Norton, 2003), Michael Lewis relates how Billy Beane, general manager of the Oakland Athletics, helped his small-payroll baseball team compete against teams with deeper pockets. Beane knew intuitively that many commonly used baseball metrics, such as batting average and the tools that scouts look for (arm strength, speed, a good swing, and so on), didn't accurately predict a player's value to his team. By identifying a new set of metrics—including players' internal "makeup" and their ability to draw walks—Beane was able to field a team of overlooked players who didn't fit the regular major league superstar mold but who were every bit as good as the big-money stars.

What does this have to do with teachers? Perhaps a great deal. Like many major league teams, schools may be overlooking some important metrics or even using the *wrong* measures as they strive to recruit and retain the best teachers.

What Matters More

Research suggests that good teachers possess a few simple, quantifiable attributes.

Verbal and cognitive ability. Given that teachers spend most of the day thinking on their feet and communicating with students, it's not surprising that teachers' verbal and cognitive abilities are strongly tied to their success in the classroom. For example, Ferguson and Ladd's (1996) analysis of the achievement of nearly 30,000 Alabama 4th graders found that teachers' ACT scores exerted a larger influence on student achievement than did student poverty level, class size, and teaching experience *combined*.

Adequate knowledge of their content areas. Debates have raged over how important it is for teachers to be experts in their subject areas. Rice (2003), who has reviewed hundreds of studies of teacher quality, notes that "subject matter knowledge contributes to good teaching only up to a certain point, beyond which it does not seem to have an impact" (p. 37). Good teachers must know their subjects well, but having doctoral-level knowledge of Freudian interpretations of Victorian literature, for example, doesn't really improve someone's ability to teach language arts to 8th graders.

Knowledge of how to teach their subject areas. Recently, a team of German researchers addressed the debate about what matters more—teachers' knowledge of subject matter or their knowledge of how to teach it (often called *pedagogical content knowledge*). Baumert and colleagues (2010) tested 194 high school mathematics teachers on both their math skills and their knowledge of how to teach difficult math concepts. They found that although content knowledge is essential, teachers who also possess strong *pedagogical* content knowledge are more effective than those with content knowledge alone. Students in the study whose teachers had strong pedagogical content knowledge (ranking among the top one-fifth of teachers) were likely to gain a full year more learning than students whose teachers had weak pedagogical content knowledge (among the bottom one-fifth of teachers).

What Matters Less

Research has also found that many common metrics for hiring and rewarding teachers are only weakly linked to student success.

Traditional licensure or credentials. After comparing achievement data for more than 3,000 high school students with their teachers' certification, Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) found "little rigorous evidence that [teacher certification] is systematically related to student achievement" (p. 141). One partial exception may be National Board certification. An extensive analysis of North Carolina data found higher achievement in classrooms of National Board–certified teachers. Yet the study detected no before-and-after effects—that is, teachers appeared no more effective *after* undergoing the grueling certification process than before it

(Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007).

Advanced degrees. In her survey of research, Rice (2003) found that several studies conducted since the 1970s "have found no discernible effect of teachers having a master's degree or higher on student achievement" (p. 26). Indeed, some studies, including the North Carolina analysis mentioned earlier, found slightly *negative* correlations with teachers' advanced degrees and student achievement (Clotfelter et al., 2007). One possible exception appears to be high school science and mathematics, where teachers with subject-specific master's degrees are more effective than those without such degrees (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1998).

Extensive classroom experience. After comparing teacher characteristics to achievement results for more than 1.3 million Texas students, a team of economists found that first-year teachers "and to a lesser extent second- and third-year teachers" were less effective than more experienced teachers (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005, p. 447). However, they found little difference in teacher effectiveness after about five years of experience. Certainly, many teachers improve their skills throughout their careers. Yet on average, after a few years of teaching, added years of teaching experience appear to offer little guarantee of increased effectiveness.

The Intangibles

The attributes discussed to this point can be measured or quantified quite easily. Savvy principals, however, know that great teachers also possess many intangible attributes. Here are a few intangibles that research links to teacher effectiveness.

Belief that all students can learn. Since the famous Rosenthal experiment in the late 1960s, the *Pygmalion effect*—the observation that teachers' expectations for their students affect how well students learn—has been well documented (Hattie, 2009).

Belief in their own abilities. A RAND study conducted more than 30 years ago (Armor et al., 1976) found links between student achievement and teachers' sense of efficacy—their belief in not just their students' ability to succeed, but also their own ability as teachers to help those students succeed.

Great teachers possess many intangible attributes.

Ability to connect with students. Cornelius-White (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of research on teacher-student relationships and found that teachers' warmth, empathy, and "non-directivity" strongly correlated to higher levels of student participation, motivation, and achievement.

Advice for Educators

Few teacher candidates are likely to display *all* of these attributes when they first walk through the classroom door. School leaders must consider, then, which attributes they can augment and which they cannot. They may also need to reexamine the metrics, explicit or implicit, they use to select and compensate teachers. Being credentialed, being experienced, or holding an advanced degree is no guarantee of effectiveness. Leaders must look more deeply, examining whether teachers have adequate knowledge of their subjects and know how to teach them. At the same time, important intangibles, such as a teacher's dispositions and attitudes, although more difficult to glean from a résumé, can still be teased out through interviews and observations of teachers delivering sample lessons.

A Lesson from the Major Leagues

Any analogy comparing baseball players to teachers has its flaws. Baseball is, of course, just a game; in the grand scheme of things, it matters little who wins or loses. For students, though, the quality of their teachers can be the difference between academic success and failure. Schools would do well to put as much careful analysis into selecting their teachers as major league teams put into scouting and drafting their players.

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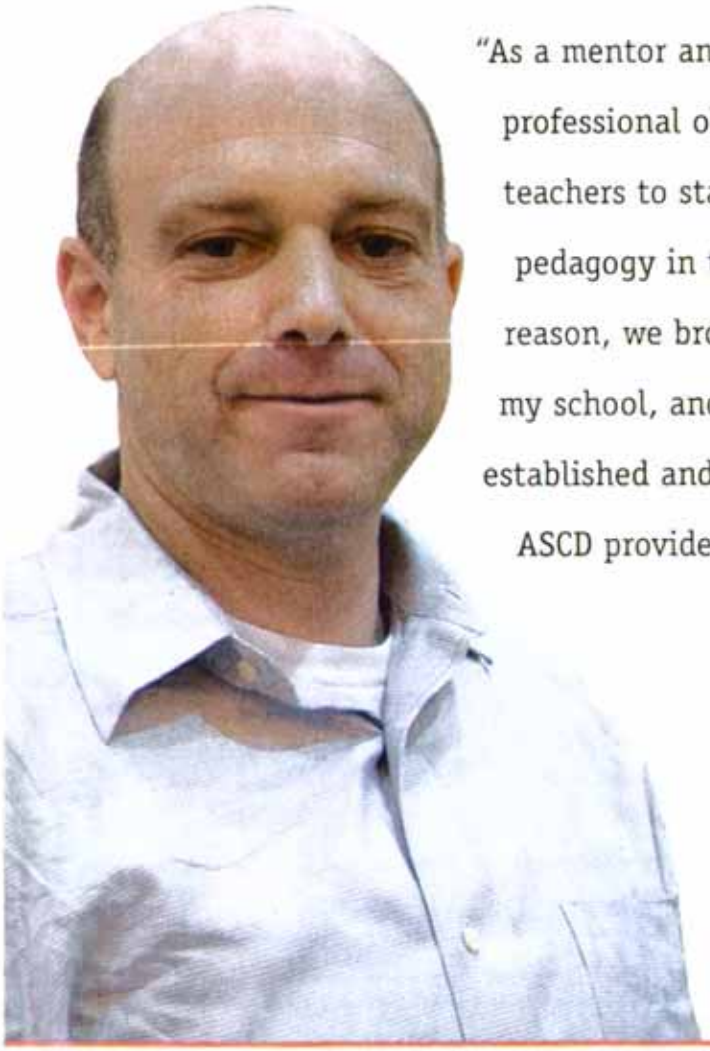

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Robert J. Marzano

What Teachers Gain from Deliberate Practice

Although research suggests that the supervisory and feedback systems in place in many districts do little to systematically enhance teacher expertise (Toch & Rothman, 2008; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009), fortunately we can develop expertise through *deliberate practice* (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993). Deliberate practice involves more than just repetition; it requires activities that are designed to improve performance, challenge the learner, and provide feedback.

What It Looks Like in Schools

Working with teachers at all grade levels across the United States, I have found that deliberate practice, when applied to teaching, has four major components (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, in press).

A Common Language of Instruction

All teachers and administrators in a district or school should be able to describe effective teaching in a similar way. This common language must not devolve into a simple checklist of strategies to use in the classroom and should be comprehensive enough to reflect the diversity of behaviors that can positively affect student learning (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Marzano, 2009).

I have designated 41 types of strategies that a comprehensive language of instruction should include (Marzano, 2007). These strategies fall into three general categories: routine strategies, content strategies, and strategies enacted on the spot. *Routine strategies* (see fig. 1) include five strategy types that focus on communicating learning goals (through rubrics, for example); tracking student progress; celebrating student success; and establishing and maintaining rules and procedures.

The 18 types of *content strategies* (see fig. 2) help students interact with new knowledge (such as by chunking content into "digestible bites"); practice and deepen their understanding of new knowledge (such as by examining similarities and differences); and generate and test hypotheses about new knowledge.

Strategies enacted on the spot (see fig. 3) are those that a teacher might not have planned to use in a given lesson or on a given day but which are helpful to have on hand if needed. These 18 types of strategies focus on engaging students (for example, by using academic games), acknowledging adherence or lack of adherence to rules and procedures, building relationships with students, and communicating high expectations for all students (for example, by asking questions of "low-expectancy" students).

Expertise does not happen by chance. It requires deliberate practice.

A Focus on Specific Strategies

A teacher, with the aid of an instructional coach or an administrator, should select a few strategies to work on as opposed to working on a wide array of strategies all at once. Each year, a teacher should select one routine strategy, one content strategy, and one strategy enacted on the spot. For example, a teacher might select a strategy for communicating clear learning goals from the general category of routines, a strategy for previewing new information from the content category, and a strategy for using academic games to engage students from the category of strategies enacted on the spot.[1] Choosing their own strategies to work on fosters teacher ownership of the process.

The feedback systems in place in many districts do little to systematically enhance teacher expertise.

Tracking Teacher Progress

Tracking teacher progress in the selected strategies requires a description of levels of performance regarding those strategies. One generic rubric that I have used measures five levels of performance. "Not using" means that the strategy is called for but the teacher is not using it. "Beginning" means that the teacher is using the strategy incorrectly or with parts missing. "Developing" means that the teacher is using the strategy with no major errors or omissions but in a mechanistic way.

Level four—"applying"—is the minimum target for developing expertise. At this level, the teacher not only uses the strategy without error but also monitors to see whether the strategy has the desired effect on students. At the highest level of the scale—"innovating"—the teacher knows the strategy so well that he or she has developed adaptations specific to the needs of every student in the class.

The teacher's scores may initially be quite low—either "not using" or "beginning"—because the teacher is focusing on areas that he or she would like to improve. Throughout the year, teachers can monitor their progress through self-ratings, walk-throughs conducted by administrators and instructional coaches, and comprehensive observations conducted by supervisors.

Opportunities to Observe and Discuss Expertise

This final element of deliberate practice refers to activities that enable teachers to observe other teachers—not for the purpose of evaluation but to see other teaching strategies and compare them with their own in hopes of gleaning new insights into effective classroom practice. Activities might include making rounds to other teachers' classrooms or videotaping expert applications of specific strategies. This component also includes structured opportunities for teachers to discuss effective teaching. Teachers with demonstrated expertise in specific strategies might conduct professional development days, function as coaches and mentors, and use technology-based

FIGURE 1. Routine Strategies

Communicating Learning Goals, Tracking Student Progress, and Celebrating Success

1. Providing clear learning goals and scales (rubrics)
2. Tracking student progress
3. Celebrating success

Establishing and Maintaining Classroom Rules and Procedures

4. Establishing classroom rules and procedures
5. Organizing the physical layout of the classroom

Source: From *Effective Supervision: Applying the Art and Science of Teaching*, by Robert J. Marzano, Tony Frontier, & David Livingston, In press, Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Adapted with permission.

FIGURE 2. Content Strategies

Helping Students Interact with New Knowledge

1. Identifying critical information
2. Organizing students to interact with new knowledge
3. Previewing new content
4. Chunking content into "digestible bites"
5. Processing new information
6. Elaborating on new information
7. Recording and representing knowledge
8. Reflecting on learning

Helping Students Practice and Deepen Their Understanding of New Knowledge

9. Reviewing content
10. Organizing students to practice and deepen knowledge
11. Using homework
12. Examining similarities and differences
13. Examining errors in reasoning
14. Practicing skills, strategies, and processes
15. Revising knowledge

Helping Students Generate and Test Hypotheses about New Knowledge

16. Organizing students for cognitively complex tasks
17. Engaging students in cognitively complex tasks involving hypothesis generation and testing
18. Providing resources and guidance

Source: From *Effective Supervision: Applying the Art and Science of Teaching*, by Robert J. Marzano, Tony Frontier, & David Livingston, In press, Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Adapted with permission.

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Building Expertise

Expertise does not happen by chance. It requires deliberate practice. Districts and schools can help teachers gain expertise in the pedagogical skills of their craft if they provide a structured process that includes these four components.

For specific strategies that fall under each category type, see *Effective Supervision: Applying the Art and Science of Teaching* by Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston (in press) or *An Observational Protocol Based on The Art and Science of Teaching* (2010) by Marzano Research Laboratory.

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FIGURE 3. Strategies Enacted on the Spot

Engaging Students

1. Noticing when students are not engaged
2. Using academic games
3. Managing response rates
4. Using physical movement
5. Maintaining a lively pace
6. Demonstrating intensity and enthusiasm
7. Using friendly controversy
8. Providing opportunities for students to talk about themselves
9. Presenting unusual or intriguing information

Acknowledging Adherence or Lack of Adherence to Rules and Procedures

10. Demonstrating "with-it-ness"
11. Applying consequences for lack of adherence to rules and procedures
12. Acknowledging adherence to rules and procedures

Establishing and Maintaining Effective Relationships with Students

13. Understanding students' interests and backgrounds
14. Using verbal and nonverbal behaviors that indicate affection for students
15. Displaying objectivity and control

Communicating High Expectations for All Students

16. Demonstrating value and respect for low-expectancy students
17. Asking questions of low-expectancy students
18. Probing incorrect answers with low-expectancy students

Source: From *Effective Supervision: Applying the Art and Science of Teaching*, by Robert J. Marzano, Tony Frontier, & David Livingston. In press, Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Adapted with permission.

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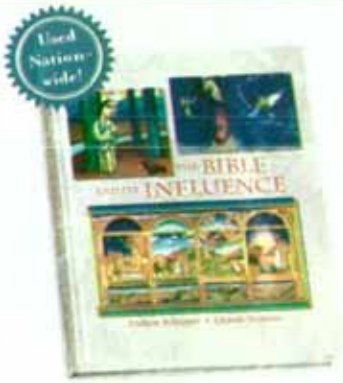

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William M. Ferriter

Using Social Media to Reach Your Community

To the dismay of television producers who count on viewers spending free time on the couch passively consuming content, citizens of most developed nations are spending more free time connecting with one another through social media.

Consider that

- 61 percent of adults who regularly go online—and 73 percent of online teens—interact with one another on social networking websites (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Madden, 2010).
- People spend 500 billion minutes per month on Facebook. The average Facebook user spends 55 minutes per day on the site (Facebook, 2010; Hepburn, 2010a).
- 50 million messages daily (or 600 messages per second) are posted on Twitter, a microblogging site with 145 million users (Alexa, 2010; Compete, 2010; Hepburn, 2010b; Weil, 2010).
- YouTube has 24 hours of new video uploaded every minute and receives 2 billion daily page views (Hepburn, 2010c).

Mirroring these trends, educators are now increasingly taking advantage of social media services and tools. A recent survey showed that 61 percent of teachers, principals, and librarians are active in at least one social media space. Many use those spaces for professional development—attending webinars, watching YouTube videos, listening to podcasts, or participating on blogs (edWeb.net, 2010).

What's frustrating—particularly to many younger teachers—is that the same social media spaces widely embraced outside schools are routinely blocked within schools by district firewalls. Fears—driven by concerns about cyberbullying or inappropriate postings—cause school leaders to think twice about whether the advantages of social media outweigh the potential consequences of misuse.

For schools who've embraced social media spaces as tools for reaching out, however, the rewards are real. As Eric Sheninger, principal of New Milford High School in New Jersey, a school with an active Twitter account (http://twitter.com/newmilfordhs) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/New-Milford-NJ/New-Milford-High-School/114382501908040) explains,

> Unlike traditional forms of communication such as snail mail and press releases, I can provide updates in real time as events happen, on Twitter and in Facebook. Since society as a whole is actively using social media, it only makes sense to connect with my community through these means. (E. Sheninger, personal communication, September 30, 2010)

Fears cause school leaders to think twice about whether the advantages of social media outweigh the potential consequences of misuse.

Connecting is exactly what Sheninger does through Facebook and Twitter. Explore his posts in both places and you'll see messages that celebrate the school's athletic victories, spotlight student work, and promote functions like parent nights and performances. You'll also see parents and other community members interacting with teachers and with one another—lending congratulations, asking questions, sharing opinions. Finally, you'll see Sheninger eagerly sharing photographs from school events and links to local newspaper articles, videos, and resources connected to student learning. New Milford High stakeholders can receive information on

Integrating social media tools into a school's work is essential if leaders hope to build meaningful relationships with stakeholders.

school events, student accomplishments, and innovations in the classroom from any Internet-connected computer or mobile device any time.

Perhaps most exciting for Sheninger is that participation in social media spaces enables him to tap into the thoughts and feelings of students—a group often overlooked in conversations about teaching and learning. "My students took notice of my affinity for Twitter during a meeting with members of student government," he explains. "They conveyed that Facebook was a more appropriate medium to reach them and disseminate the same information." So now, many New Milford High School students follow the school's Facebook page, joining in community conversations that they hadn't been a part of before.

Proceed with Caution

Although Sheninger is proud of the work that he is doing in social media, he has also walked cautiously. All the messages he shares are connected to learning or to school events. He also has every family complete a new media release form before sharing pictures or video featuring students, and he regularly communicates with stakeholders about the purposes of New Milford's social media efforts. With these precautions in place, Sheninger told me, the school district has enthusiastically supported his efforts.

So what would Sheninger recommend to leaders interested in using social media to reach out to school communities? "The first step is to lurk and learn," he explains.

> Watch what other principals are doing to get a good idea of information and content being shared with stakeholders. Begin to establish a vision and some goals as to what you want to accomplish using social media. I do not suggest diving right in. As you become more comfortable, begin to gradually share information relating to your school, students, staff, and the education profession. Finally, as with any new endeavor, communicate with the appropriate supervisors to elicit their support. (E. Sheninger, personal communication, September 30, 2010)

Integrating social media tools into a school's work is essential if leaders hope to build meaningful relationships with stakeholders. Although encouraging teachers to integrate social media into *instruction* may not be a risk you're ready to take, integrating these tools into your school's communication plans is an excellent first step.

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Thomas R. Hoerr

Values Worth Adding

There is a great deal of talk these days about using a value-added approach to look at students' progress. Instead of just determining whether a student is performing at grade level, why not measure the student against his or her previous performance? Then, in turn, let's evaluate teachers according to whether students have made progress. The thinking is that exceptional teachers are those whose students show the greatest gains.

It's hard to argue against charting student progress, but when it comes to the value-added approach, there does seem to be a lot of arguing going on. In this case, the debate centers on teacher performance and accountability. Should we applaud more for the teacher whose high-flying students achieve above grade level, as they did last year and the year before, or for the teacher whose students still aren't at grade level but who made more progress than in previous years? Those are thorny questions that touch on issues related to measurement, the role of teachers, the place of schools, and the nature of the profession. And no, I am not going to try to address those issues here.

What I am going to do is say that we should consider applying something like this value-added approach to *teacher* growth. Why shouldn't we use information from a teacher's professional history to set goals and create expectations? However good Ms. Pita was last year, don't we want her to be better this year and to improve even more next year?

Before you spill your coffee, note that I am not suggesting that we define a teacher's history by students' test scores alone (although test scores should be part of the formula). When we look at a teacher's history, we need to consider *all* of the factors that relate to teacher effectiveness.

What about a teacher's ability to create enthusiasm for learning, for example? How about a teacher's commitment to collegiality? And shouldn't we value a teacher's efforts to work with students' parents? Regardless of how good our teachers are in each of these areas, we want them to improve; moreover, they *need* to improve. What was good yesterday will not be adequate tomorrow. Principals need to create situations in which every teacher grows. And how can we determine progress without measurement?

Too often, educators get sidetracked by focusing only on grades, grade-level equivalents, and percentiles. Those are all valid measures,

I want to know how good we are today so that in the future I can look back and see how we have improved.

but they're not the only ways to gauge growth. Part of the reason that our society gives so much attention to test scores is that we are so bad at measuring other, more amorphous qualities. That's our fault. If enthusiasm for learning is important—and we know it is—we ought to be able to measure it. How might we do that? Certainly not with a multiple-choice enthusiasm test! Instead, we might examine students' reflections in logs or journals or use rubrics to capture evidence of joyful learning. Or we might even ask students to create a play, song, or piece of art that shows how they feel about learning and school.

We could take a similar approach to measuring growth in faculty collegiality or working with parents. How all of these qualities are measured would vary by school and educational context. Indeed, convening a faculty committee to talk about how "joyful learning," for example,

might be assessed and monitored could be a wonderfully rich exercise. It would be great to get student input here, too.

Establishing measures for these kinds of variables would enable educators to set meaningful professional goals and work toward improvement. At my school, for example, teachers set individual goals that focus on incorporating multiple intelligences in their pedagogy and assessment. In addition, teacher teams set goals for using new technology in their instruction. Invariably, progress on these kinds of goals isn't as easily measured as average attendance, days lost to suspension, or how many books have been read (and to be fair, each of these indicators is also important). But we cannot let the difficulty prevent us from setting meaningful goals and trying to capture growth.

When I think about value-added assessment, I think that everyone in my school should be performing better this year than in the past. Sure, I want students to be reading and calculating better, but I also want teachers to be making instruction more engaging and classrooms more exciting. I want faculty committees biting off tough tasks and pushing themselves to figure out better solutions. And it doesn't stop at my door. I want to do a better job of listening and supporting. I want my students and my teachers to be eager to come to school every day because they know that learning is exciting and that they are going to learn more. I want to know how good we are today so that in the future I can look back and see how we have improved. That's the value that I want to add.

Thomas R. Hoerr is head of school at the New City School, 5209 Waterman Ave., St. Louis, MO 63108; trhoerr@newcityschool.org. He is the author of *The Art of School Leadership* (ASCD, 2005) and *School Leadership for the Future* (NAIS Press, 2008).

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What Makes a Good Teacher?
Continued

from previous schools and ask them about some of the areas highlighted for improvement. I provide constructive feedback after they conduct a demonstration lesson and ask them about areas in which they would most like to improve. My goal is to assess how they receive feedback, how much they reflect on their practice, and how often they set goals for personal improvement.

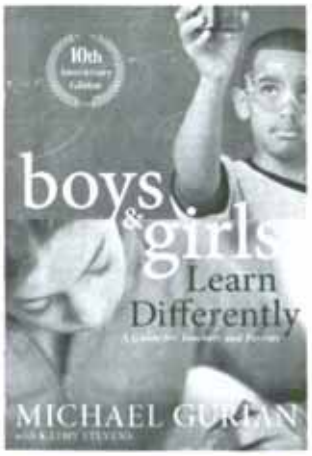
—Deirdra Grode
Codirector/Principal K–8, New Jersey

Designing Good Questions

Using an interactive whiteboard, having students work independently or in cooperative groups, lecturing, or using technology in the classroom can all be engaging and meaningful. But designing good questions is key to success in any lesson format.

Teachers need to design questions as part of the planning process. Too many teachers believe they can wing it when it comes to questioning, which often results in too many low-level, rapid-fire questions. Teachers should, on the contrary, use questioning to differentiate learning. We love to see teachers ask struggling students scaffolded questions that draw them into a lesson. We also like to see teachers ask higher-level questions that students answer and bounce off peers. Teachers should embed such questions into the flow of instruction in every lesson plan.

— Terrence Clark
Superintendent, New York



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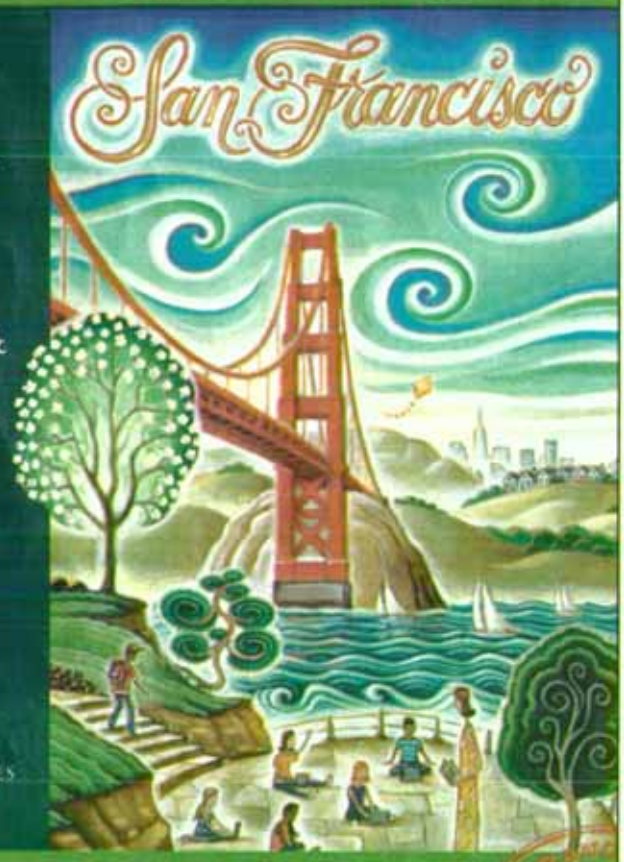

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ASCD LEARN. TEACH. LEAD.

The Whole Kit and Caboodle

Recently, a group of highly effective teachers discussed what characterizes an effective teacher. We agreed that effective teachers continually observe their peers, engaging in regular professional discussions with other successful teachers. They are self-reflective, looking to improve both their classroom practices and their own learning. They don't give up on students, even the most reluctant learners. They frequently assess students' understanding and performance using a variety of means. They respect and incorporate the cultural context in which they are teaching. They take time to know students, and they use that knowledge to interpret student performance, adjusting their instruction accordingly. Finally, they deliberately develop an environment of trust, safety, and comfort for students because they truly care about them.

Teachers can't be effective if they exhibit only one or some of these characteristics—they need them all.

—*Renee Moore*
National Board Certified Teacher, Mississippi

Flexibility and Strength

Effective teachers possess two interconnected qualities. Flexibility is the ability to use different techniques for different kinds of learners, to recognize that each student is unique and comes with a different set of instructions for

how he or she learns best. Flexibility means having the sensitivity to know that when a student doesn't understand what you're saying, you don't merely talk louder and slower; it means having many arrows in your quiver, the most important one being a sense of humor.

Strength is the ability to withstand the onslaught of 26 or more different opinions in one class period, while recognizing that each student needs to understand the lesson in his or her own way. It is the ability to maintain high standards while challenging everyone. Moreover, strength is the ability to breathe calmly while inside you feel as though you want to scream or cry. And strength is the willingness *not* to get into a power play with a student to show that you are stronger.

One can assess these qualities in a teacher by seeing whether the students are successfully learning the skills being taught. And one of the best ways to do this is by asking students to apply those skills in another situation or to teach them to a peer.

—Linda Nathan
School Headmaster, Massachusetts

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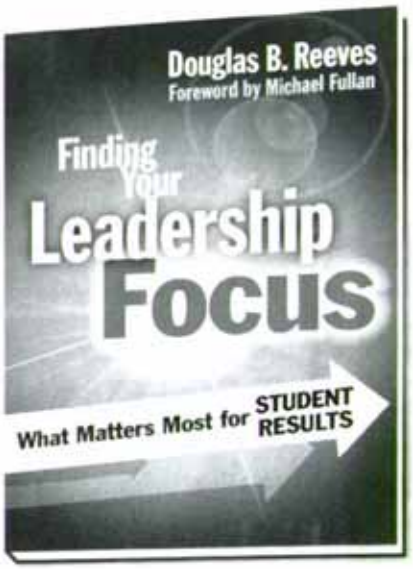

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Douglas B. Reeves is founder and CEO of The Leadership and Learning Center (www.LeadandLearn.com), Brock International Laureate, and recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals. He offers online video conference support to graduate classes and study groups who use this book.

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ASCD Community in Action

Harness the Power of Teacher Effectiveness

ASCD believes that teachers should be evaluated using multiple measures. The association's newest offering meets this need. The ASCD Teacher Effectiveness Suite, powered by iObservation, uses Charlotte Danielson's research-based Framework for Teaching and web-based technology to link specific teacher practices to student performance data, leading to systematic improvement in professional practice.

The ASCD Teacher Effectiveness Suite enables school leaders to evaluate teacher effectiveness across multiple indicators, such as teacher self-assessment, peer assessment, classroom walk-throughs, formal evaluations, and student assessment data. The suite empowers teachers to create professional development plans while helping them achieve benchmark state standards for professional practice.

Key features include

- *An online resource library* that features videos of Danielson explaining the Framework for Teaching and providing examples of each component; classroom footage demonstrating teacher effectiveness; teacher tools, such as feedback and coaching forms; and forms and rubrics for conducting observations, walk-throughs, and teacher self-assessment.
- *Two distinct platforms* for school leaders and classroom educators. iObservation enables school leaders to easily collect, manage, and align teacher evaluation to student data while supporting a culture of collaboration and trust. iGrow is an integrated, personalized online system in which teachers direct their own professional growth.
- *Professional development* that includes system training, professional development for school leaders, and on-site facilitation.

For more information about the ASCD Teacher Effectiveness Suite, visit www.ascd.org/TES.

Run for Elected Office in 2011

ASCD's Nominations Committee invites all members to self-select or encourage qualified individuals to self-select for leadership positions within the organization. In 2011, the General Membership election will fill positions for President-Elect, the Board of Directors, and Leadership Council Members-at-Large. The Leadership Council election will fill positions on the Board of Directors from the Leadership Council.

Nominations forms are available online at www.ascd.org/nominations. For a print version, contact 2010–11 Nominations Committee Chair Mary Gavigan at mary.gavigan@wfbschools.com or Becky DeRigge at ASCD, bderigge@ascd.org, 800-933-2723, or 703-575-5601. The completed forms must be returned to the chair by January 31, 2011.

Resources for "The Effective Educator"

The Well-Balanced Teacher: How to Work Smarter and Stay Sane Inside the Classroom and Out. (2010). By Mike Anderson. Stock No. 111004. Price: $16.95 (member); $22.95 (nonmember).

Changing the Way You Teach, Improving the Way Students Learn. (2009). By Giselle Martin-Kniep and Joanne Picone-Zocchia. Stock No. 108001. Price: $20.95 (member); $26.95 (nonmember).

The Inspired Teacher: How to Know One, Grow One, or Be One. (2009). By Carol Frederick Steele. Stock No. 108051. Price: $20.95 (member); $26.95 (nonmember).

Never Work Harder Than Your Students and Other Principles of Great Teaching. (2009). By Robyn R. Jackson. Stock No. 109001. Price: $20.95 (member); $26.95 (nonmember).

Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd edition. (2007). By Charlotte Danielson. Stock No. 106034. Price: $21.95 (member); $27.95 (nonmember).

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Among Colleagues

How Can We Make Time to Meet Students' Emotional Needs?

Q: My grandmother, Denolis Moore, is a retired teacher. The family recently threw her a 90th birthday party, at which many of her former students talked about how she had helped them get through a personal struggle that hindered their academic performance. My grandmother seemed to work intentionally to develop students' character and academics while meeting their social and emotional needs.

In this different era, teachers face an overwhelming landscape of education initiatives, and we often find it difficult to strike a balance between academic development and meeting our students' social and emotional needs. How do you make time to support your students emotionally, and how has that helped them academically?

—Michelle Neely, Teacher
Henry B. Gonzales Elementary School
Dallas, Texas

A:

Create a Safe Atmosphere

Although time is a big issue for us teachers, attending to students' social and emotional needs is not a waste of time, but an investment. If students feel threatened or insecure, learning will be difficult. If we dedicate some time to make students feel that mistakes are part of the learning process, they will understand that we are there to help and not to judge. For students to feel safe in a classroom, teachers must use specific strategies that create the necessary atmosphere—such as regular class meetings in which students can express their concerns.

—Patsy Pouiller, Deputy Head, Primary
St Andrew's Scots School
Buenos Aires, Argentina

See Students as Individuals

As a classroom teacher, I had my students complete the following statement on an index card on the first day of the school year: *Two things I would like you to know about me as a person are . . . .*

I received so much information about family situations, celebrations, learning styles, and likes and dislikes of the young people I worked with. During the year, I would revisit those cards often to remind myself that I had a classroom of individuals.

Over the years, however, I found that the most important way to help my students feel supported was to design meaningful instruction that met their individual needs and challenged them to reach their full potential. Believing in students more than they believe in themselves is an amazing way to contribute to their lifelong emotional and social health.

—Lori Mora, Assistant Principal
Deer Valley Middle School
Phoenix, Arizona

Establish a Support Network

In our school, we have created a network of administrators, teachers, special education professionals, and counselors who continually share information about our students. By understanding each student's life within the school, I can support the work that my students are doing in their other classes. I can also learn from teachers who have had success with students who are having difficulty in my class.

In the classroom, it's important to give students voice so they become full participants in their education. Meeting students' emotional needs doesn't "just happen" because we care—it requires specific and measurable processes embedded in our work.

—Joanne Eliuk
Program Leader, English and Literacy
Iroquois Ridge High School
Oakville, Ontario, Canada

What's Your Response?

Each month in "Among Colleagues," practicing educators draw from their own experience to share their advice about challenges their colleagues face.

Additional responses appear in the online version of this article at www.ascd.org/el.

To add your own comments to this discussion, go to Inservice, the ASCD blog, at http://ascd.typepad.com/blog/educational_leadership.

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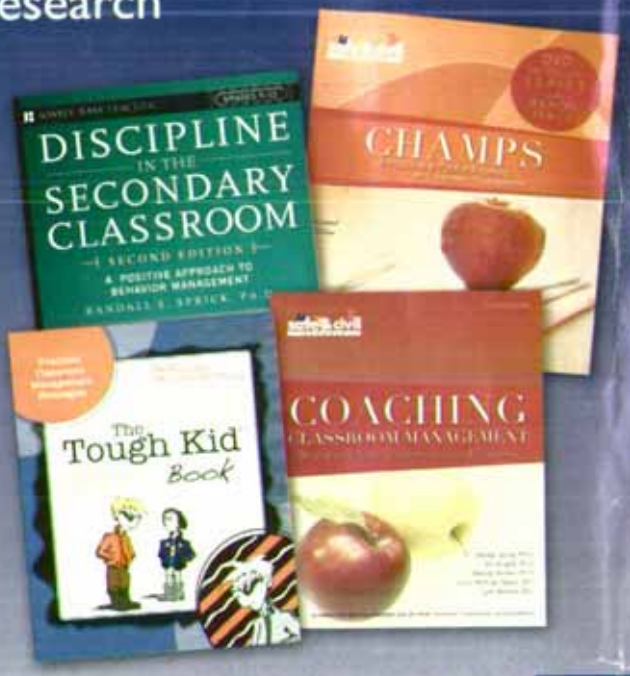

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—Joan Tillery, Teacher, Fresno Unified School District
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