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Update

JULY 2007

From The President



As summer is winding down, it's time for schools and leadership teams to continue to work on their school improvement plans. Professional learning will be at the heart of these plans. I encourage your school team to review student learning data as you have traditionally done, AND to review adult learning data, available to you through your school's Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI), the on-line survey of the National Staff Development Council's staff development standards that the Georgia Department of Education provides, free of charge to all of us, twice each year. From these data, you are able to determine the gaps in your professional learning and work to improve in those areas as well as for your student learners.

Because Georgia Staff Development Council's Board studies these data, we know that we need to focus our adult learning on the standards of Learning Communities and Evaluation. Over the past two years we have been fortunate to work with Dennis Sparks on setting the vision for highly effective professional learning, with Stephen Barkley on coaching to improve our teaching, and with Joellen Killion on developing and being accountable for our theories of change in adult learning and student learning. This September, in Savannah, we welcome Tom Guskey who will continue to guide us in evaluating professional learning.

Here is a question I'd like for us to "put in our pockets" and pull out constantly in conversations around professional learning in our schools and in our districts. "How will we know that the time and money spent on this (call it "x") staff development is making a difference in student learning? If we cannot answer that question, and most of us cannot, then Guskey's work, as a continuation of Killion's, will give us the tools needed to begin having those difficult conversations and making sure that the true purpose of professional learning in our schools is to improve student learning.

As my two years as president of this wonderful organization come to a close, please allow me the time and space to thank those that make this very important work possible. Kathy and Art O'Neill keep this organization running, and without their behind-the-scenes support, I shudder to think what my life with GSDC would be like. I appreciate both of you incredibly, and value our friendship as well. Lynn Seay, as past-president, has been an exceptional role model for me to follow, and Rhonda Baldwin, as president-elect, has done so much work for this organization that she will probably think being president is less work than being president-elect. Judy Godfrey as our secretary has kept our meetings and correspondence in perfect condition, and gifted each of our speakers with small tokens to remember their visits to Georgia. Sharon Moore has taken our financial accounting to another level and has bills paid faster than I can even imagine. Our area board members, listed on the website, are too numerous to mention in this space, but I hope they each know how much I value the time and the expertise they have freely given over these last two years. Finally, I thank all of you for working together as a powerful force, not only in Georgia, but as a national model, so that all educators will experience highly effective professional learning every day. I look forward to seeing you in Savannah in September, and hope to see you in Dallas in December for NSDC. Thank you friends,

Lea

MY THOUGHTS ON *PD EVALUATOR*

Joellen Killion

According to NSDC, one standard of effective professional development is that it is evaluated, using multiple measures of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. Schools and school systems will benefit from products and tools that make evaluation a routine part of professional development practices. The PD Evaluator is one such tool. It assists schools and school systems to collect, analyze, and interpret data about professional development. With these data, schools and school systems have information to both improve professional development and assess its impact on educator practice and student learning.

MORE SCHOOLS DITCHING FINAL EXAMS

As thousands of public school students sat for standardized tests last week and others prepare for upcoming final exams, Wildwood School in West Los Angeles is one of a number of schools across the country using oral presentations -- or exhibitions -- to determine students' readiness to move on to the next grade, or to graduate. Carla Rivera in the Los Angeles Times reports that while the federal No Child Left Behind Act and California's state high school exit exam exert pressure on students to master standardized fill-in-the-bubble tests, a growing number of educators argue that exhibitions offer a better way to assess students' academic achievements. Testimony last week during congressional hearings on the reauthorization of President Bush's education reform law focused on the need for the federal government to support states that use performance-based assessments and on the increasing frustration that parents and teachers have with high stakes testing. "I think what politicians are hearing right now is that tests are driving the curriculum and narrowing the way kids learn, so there is a lot of pushback from parents and teachers," said Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor of education. "There's more receptivity to the possibility of a different approach to assessment than there might have been five years ago."

STATEMENT OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has released a new code of ethical conduct for school leaders. The AASA Statement of Ethics for Educational Leaders outlines 12 key standards for school system leaders. The document affirms that the educational leader: (1) Makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making; (2) Fulfills all professional duties with honesty and integrity and always acts in a trustworthy and responsible manner; (3) Supports the principle of due process and protects the civil and human rights of all individuals; (4) Implements local, state and national laws; (5) Advises the school board and implements the board's policies and administrative rules and regulations; (6) Pursues appropriate measures to correct those laws, policies and regulations that are not consistent with sound educational goals or that are not in the best interest of children; (7) Avoids using his or her position for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic or other influences; (8) Accepts academic degrees or professional certification only from accredited institutions; (9) Maintains the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development; (10) Honors all contracts until fulfillment, release or dissolution mutually agreed upon by all parties; (11) Accepts responsibility and accountability for one's own actions and behaviors; and (12) Commits to serving others above self.

2007 FALL CONFERENCE

September 19 & 20 at Riverfront Marriott, Savannah

Early Bird Registration ENDS July 30

STRONG, EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS MAKE SCHOOLS GREAT

So much goes into making a high school great: excellent teaching, vibrant student populations, creative classes and strong extra-curriculars. But just as important is the person who leads the school, reports Barbara Kantrowitz and Jay Mathews in NEWSWEEK. Good principals may seem unlikely superheroes -- unless you're a student, teacher or parent. They set the tone for what happens from the moment the opening bell rings and can turn a troubled school around with a combination of vision, drive and very hard work. It's a 24/7 job. "Schools aren't just about just reading, writing and arithmetic anymore," says veteran principal Al Penna. "School faculties now have the additional roles of mentor, adviser and quasi parent." Principals also have to be politicians, crisis managers, cheer leaders, legal experts, disciplinarians, entertainers, coaches and persuasive evangelists for their school's educational mission. Add to that already daunting list the task of statistician, thanks to reams of data required by the federal No Child Left Behind law and local testing. Who can fill that intimidating job description? Endless energy does seem to be a requirement, as does a talent for getting the best out of a large team. Above all, you have to be someone who is caring and understands teenagers' needs. Finding those leaders is harder than ever.

TEACHERS: THE NEXT GENERATION

Generation Y, the 40 million people born between 1977 and 1986, is dramatically changing the composition of today's teaching staffs. Demographically, women continue to dominate the profession, but as millions of baby boomers enter retirement age, the faces of today's K-12 teachers are younger than ever. In New York City public schools more than half of the teachers have less than five years experience. The U.S. education system typically views teachers as independent operators, encouraged to be creative and expected to do a good job behind closed doors. Collaboration is rare. Worse yet, new teachers seldom see another classroom in action. Loneliness and lack of support further exacerbate the frustrations of beginning teachers. In ASCD Express, Harry K. and Rosemary T. Wong write that induction programs that foster collaborative work and are structured around learning communities can be an effective means of mentoring young teachers. Most young teachers are receptive to the wisdom of older, seasoned teachers. They crave the guidance of knowledgeable, confident administrators and coworkers. They also want their contributions appreciated and their ideas heard by expert listeners. The newest generation of teachers is perhaps the most intelligent, talented, competitive -- and compulsive -- group this country has seen. It's a renaissance generation with great potential. Most are well-educated, thoughtful, confident, and creative. The grandeur of the future is in their capable hands. Let them work together.

WHY DO TEACHERS QUIT?

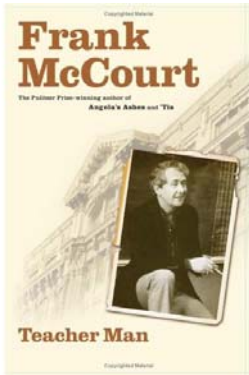
A new study from the Center for Teacher Quality at California State University boldly states that bureaucracy is the single biggest reason why teachers stop teaching, even more important than pay. The researchers surveyed more than 1,900 current and former teachers in an effort to understand why 18,000 California teachers quit every year. Full study at www.calstate.edu/teacherquality/documents/possible_dream_exec.pdf.

FRANK McCOURT'S "TEACHER MAN"

The popular media often embrace teachers as protagonists who act as agents of change, often radical, within schools and children's lives. Frequently, these teachers are outsiders in some way, not bound by the conventional norms of school and so better able to resist traditional school practices. "To Sir with Love" "Stand and Deliver" and "Dangerous Minds" are examples of movies that suggest that an interesting teacher must be one who, against all odds, battles the forces of the status quo. Each of these examples, and there are many more, suggest that the life of an ordinary teacher, who struggles to do his or her job each day, does not make for an interesting story. In "Teacher Man", Frank McCourt writes a different sort of

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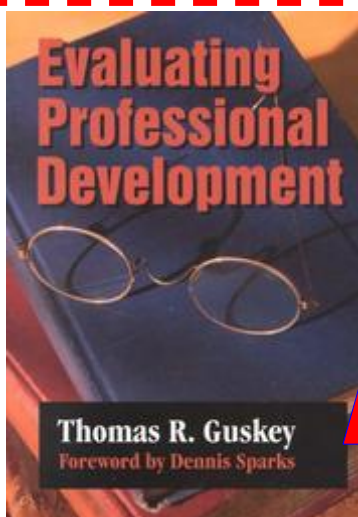


tale -- one that captures the complexity of teaching, while exposing the frailty of the teacher's identity that rests at the heart of the difficult work of teaching. And he does it in a way that portrays the daily life of a teacher as compelling, interesting, and realistically complicated. The opening paragraph captures perfectly the tone of the book -- sometimes hilarious, sometimes melancholy, and always filled with self-doubt: "On the first day of my teaching career, I was almost fired for eating the sandwich of a high school boy. On the second day I was almost fired for mentioning the possibility of friendship with a sheep. Otherwise, there was nothing remarkable about my 30 years in the high school classrooms of New York City. I often doubted if I should be there at all. At the end I wondered how I lasted that long." So begins the tale of his long career,

intertwined with the stories of his life outside teaching, flashbacks to his childhood in Ireland, and his years in college preparing to be a teacher. One of the great strengths of this book is the way that it captures the complexity of schools and the work of teachers, writes Jeffrey J. Rozelle in this insightful book review.



Congratulations to Charles Mason, formerly of Gwinnett County, currently Superintendent of Mountain Brook Schools in Alabama, on his NSDC Presidency beginning in December.



Register for the conference to hear these exciting speakers -

Tom Guskey, September 19

and

Tony Thakker and John Bell, September 20

