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# Update

NOVEMBER 2007

## From The President



Fall is briskly welcoming our winter months and these months find our schools embracing their school improvement plan innovations. At the heart of these innovations is Professional Learning. Collaborative teams across the state are formatively assessing concept and content mastery to ensure their next steps will lead to high levels of student learning. As our students find success, our hearts are warmed and our path to continuous improvement quickens in pace.

While formative assessment is essential for our students, the process is also essential for our enduring learning as adults. I encourage you to take a pause. Pause and evaluate your learning and your needs as an educator. If you participated in a professional learning process that caused you to change your actions and behaviors, take the time to evaluate the impact. Focus your reflection on one particular learning process you engaged in . . .

- Was the professional learning process you experienced designed with a supportive formative evaluation process to assess your understanding and knowledge gain, how was the innovation implemented and supported in your classroom, and how was student learning impacted?
- Have you invited a colleague into your classroom to observe the innovation implementation and follow-up with a discussion of the observation? Have you written notes on your lesson plans or in your journal to reflect your thoughts as you prepared for the innovation implementation, have you implemented the innovation, and what did you observe in student performance? Have you engaged in focus group discussions with your administrators, your team, or colleagues who are also implementing the innovation to discuss your thoughts?
- Have you simply set aside time to allow personal reflection on your professional development experiences?

The Georgia Staff Development Council recognizes the importance of evaluation. Professional Learning that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact (NSDC Evaluation Standard). Our learning through the National Staff Development Council encourages us to go beyond the initial collection of data on participants' reactions to training experiences. We are challenged to collect data that evaluates teachers' acquisition of the new knowledge and skills, collect data on how the new learning affects teaching behaviors and actions, and how those changes in practice affect student learning. Strong evaluation continues beyond student performance impact to overall impact on the school culture and continuous improvement planning processes.

## ***From The President*** (continued from Page 1)

The National Staff Development Council Standard Assessment Inventory (NSDC-SAI) is a tool that Georgia has embraced. The planned learning experiences through Georgia Staff Development conferences have focused on providing rich opportunities to learn more about Learning Communities through an understanding of characteristics and coaching. The Spring and Fall of 2007 brought Joellen Killion and Tom Guskey to us as we explored assessing impact and true evaluation of professional learning experiences. I encourage you to embrace the learning community you spend your professional time with and evaluate the impact of your work!

The Georgia Staff Development Council Board is excited about our upcoming Spring Conference in Augusta. Professional Learning is the Key to Unlocking Continuous Improvement! We are planning two learning filled days focusing on motivation, experiential learning, and story telling.

Georgia Staff Development Council wants to extend a warm congratulations to our own Cheryl Love from Dekalb County who is now serving as an active board member for NSDC - we look forward to your leadership, Cheryl!

Hope to see you in Dallas, Texas for the 2007 NSDC Conference and I look forward to definitely seeing you in Augusta for the Spring 2008 GSDC Conference!

## **LEGISLATION IMPROVES DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Congress has the opportunity to promote a significant improvement in teaching quality in American schools by supporting legislation that will strengthen the quality of educators' professional learning.

SB 1979 amends ESEA and improves the definition of professional development by saying that professional learning for educators:

- Engages teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff in ongoing professional development;
- Focuses on teams that engage in professional learning multiple times per week during the regular work day;
- Revolves around a continuous improvement cycle that uses data to (1) determine and define student, teacher, and school learning needs, (2) institute learning strategies to address learning needs, and (3) measure the effectiveness and impact of professional learning.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) introduced SB 1979 and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Sen. Barack Obama (D-III.), Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) co-sponsored the legislation. The bill has been sent to the committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SB 1979 also introduces a new evaluation component to ensure that federal dollars spent on professional development achieve the intended results. The bill calls for evaluating the impact of both induction and mentoring for new teachers and high-impact professional development for all teachers by examining the following indicators: teacher retention, student learning gains, teacher instructional practice, student graduation rates, parent, family and community involvement, student attendance rates, teacher satisfaction and student behavior.

The amendment to ESEA links school improvement activities in Title I to the teacher development initiatives in Title II.

***To learn what  
you can do to  
support this  
legislation, visit  
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## DISTRICT DIRECTOR NOMINATED



Dr. L.C. "Buster" Evans, Forsyth County Schools' next Superintendent and GSDC District 3 Director, is one of four finalists for the 2008 Georgia Superintendent of the Year, an honor presented annually by the Georgia School Superintendents Association. Dr. Evans was chosen from a field of 23 nominated superintendents from across the state.

Dr. Evans, who has served as Deputy Superintendent in Forsyth County since August 1, 2007, was nominated for the award by the Bleckley County School Board. He will become superintendent of Forsyth County Schools on January 1, 2008 following the retirement of current superintendent Paula Gault. Dr. Evans served as superintendent of Bleckley County Schools for more than a decade.

"As Chairman of the Bleckley County Board of Education it has been my honor and privilege to nominate Dr. L.C. (Buster) Evans for the 2008 Superintendent of the Year award," said Gary Lister. "This nomination has the enthusiastic support of the entire board. As beneficiaries and first-hand witnesses of Dr. Evans' servant leadership, we can think of no individual more deserving of such recognition. We believe his selection would also receive enthusiastic support and approval far beyond our local board; Dr. Evans is highly regarded by his peers, state legislators, members of our community, and educators, both local and statewide. He is an excellent representative of the Georgia School Superintendents Association, Bleckley County, educators, and the State of Georgia." Forsyth County Board of Education Chairwoman Nancy Roche echoed Lister's sentiments.

Dr. Evans is deeply honored to be a finalist for this prestigious award. "I am truly moved by the honor of being named a finalist for this fantastic award. Being named the Georgia Superintendent of the Year is one of the highest honors in the entire Georgia public education system, and I feel very blessed to be selected as one of the finalists for the 2008 award," he said. "My years in Bleckley County were some of the most rewarding years of my life; I had the honor of working with many wonderful people and helping the Bleckley County school system grow and prosper into one of the top systems in Georgia. This honor is really the reflection of what happens when a Board of Education, leadership team, teachers, and a community work together to make public education successful. I now look forward to working with all of the fantastic people of Forsyth County to help this school system continue down the path of excellence in education. I hope to see Forsyth County Schools become the top school system in the entire nation."

## AUGUSTA IN 2008

And the winner for the Georgia Staff Development Council's 2008 spring conference is Augusta and the Augusta Marriott as the facility.

While Augusta is known worldwide for the Masters® and the coveted green jacket, you'll find that Georgia's second-oldest and second-largest city - also known as the "Garden City" of the South - is full of history, atmosphere, Southern charm, and activities to engage your interest.

In addition to the outstanding professional development experience, you can discover the historic charm of the classic South with Augusta's tree-lined streets and majestic antebellum mansions; or enjoy dozens of shops and restaurants, cultural attractions and entertainment. You can meander along the banks of the Savannah River as you stroll Riverwalk Augusta. Canoe the river or the adjacent Augusta Canal. Whatever your interest, you'll find something to satisfy it in Augusta.

The Augusta Marriott Hotel and Suites is ideally located in the heart of Augusta's downtown business district, on the banks of the Savannah River. You will enjoy being close to shopping, entertainment and cultural attractions as well as the Medical College of Georgia and the Augusta National golf course. Amenities of the hotel include indoor and outdoor pools, concierge services, and luxury bedding in the very comfortably-appointed guest rooms and suites. You can stop by Augustino's Italian Eatery for breakfast, lunch or dinner and treat yourself to prime steaks or specialty Italian dishes. With 45,000 sq. ft. of total flexible meeting space, we will have plenty of space for our conference and Academy.

## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SOURCE BOOK

(Note: *Teacher Magazine* recently launched this free online publication. Access the first issue and sign up for a subscription by going to <[www.teachermagazine.org/go/getsourcebook](http://www.teachermagazine.org/go/getsourcebook)>. The following message from the *Sourcebook's* editorial director describes the contents of the first issue.)

"This kick-off issue of the *Sourcebook* focuses on a compelling theme in the recent thinking on teacher professional development - the idea that teachers themselves should have a more active role in their learning experiences. We begin with an interview with Ann Jolly, a former Alabama teacher of the year who has become a leading voice on teacher professional learning communities. A discussion with three teacher leaders on the value of "teacher-directed professional development" extends Jolly's views. Next, you'll find a research overview detailing new thinking on what works in teacher professional development, as well as bottom-line summaries of key reports and Web sites, and data snapshots of current teacher-learning trends. Finally the *Sourcebook* provides an exclusive directory of more than 200 K-12 professional development products and services - an essential tool for educators looking to guide staff development."

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ONLINE SCHOOLING AND ONLINE LEARNING

(Note: The North American Council for Online Learning recently published this 25-page report. An excerpt from the report follows. Readers can access the report by going to [http://www.nacol.org/docs/NACOL\\_PDforVSandOlnLrng.pdf](http://www.nacol.org/docs/NACOL_PDforVSandOlnLrng.pdf) )

"Research into teaching has consistently shown that teachers teach the way they were taught. That is especially significant for teachers who were educated in a traditional face-to-face classroom environment and then plan to move into virtual environments. Synchronous and asynchronous online courses require different pedagogy, communication, and pacing to be successful. Synchronous technologies, including videoconferencing, change the nature of communication between the teacher and students more than if they were physically in the same classroom. Anyone who is working with virtual schooling needs to understand and experience these differences...Professional development is a continuum that stretches across the career of an educator. The Appendix provides a tentative brief description of this continuum for each role as expertise develops from pre-service education through induction to a fully fledged professional educator. There is also a need to encourage and support the development of leaders who provide professional development for others. The flexibility that comes with online education extends to professional development."

The publisher of *Education Week* has launched an exclusive new resource guide on teacher professional development. The inaugural issue of the *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*, focusing on the expanding role of teacher collaborative work, is available online at <<http://enews.edweek.org/GoNow/a15864a173418a205955995a8>>. This FREE resource may be a valuable tool in guiding staff development and your own professional growth. The exclusive, interactive directory is fully searchable, with links to more than 200 products, services, or organizations which may interest you.

There are many practical features you won't want to miss, including:

- Best practices and advice on creating and maintaining professional learning teams;
- Research on what works in professional development; and
- Data snapshots of current practices and state requirements in teacher professional development.