

Preview from Notesale.co.uk
Page 1 of 34

Professional Community and Professional Development in the Learning-Centered School

Judith Warren Little
University of California, Berkeley

December 2006

The views presented in this publication should not be construed as representing the policy or position of the National Education Association. The publication expresses the views of its author and is intended to facilitate informed discussion by educators, policymakers, and others interested in educational reform.

A limited supply of complimentary copies of this publication is available from NEA Research for NEA state and local associations, and UniServ staff. Additional copies may be purchased from the NEA Professional Library, Distribution Center, P.O. Box 404846, Atlanta, GA 30384-4846. Telephone, toll free, 1/800-229-4200, for price information. For online orders, go to www.nea.org/books.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk
Page 3 of 34

Reproduction: No part of this report may be reproduced in any form without permission from NEA Research, except by NEA-affiliated associations. Any reproduction of the report materials must include the usual credit line and copyright notice. Address communications to Editor, NEA Research.

Cover photo copyright © NEA 2006.

Copyright © 2006 by the
National Education Association
All Rights Reserved

National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-3290

participants from schools, universities, or private industry. Such institutes and other long-term activities permit a measure of content depth together with the kinds of professional exchange that are rarely possible in other kinds of workshop settings. In addition, long-term professional development may involve partnerships with universities, reform organizations, or professional development providers.

School or Teacher Networks

Teacher collaboratives and networks grew in size, visibility, and influence during the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps the most long-lived and widely known exemplar is the National Writing Project, but other well-documented examples exist in science, math, the humanities, and the arts. Lieberman and Miller (1996) posited that networks fill a need created “because schools are organized in ways that often do not encourage the kind of frank discussion that is necessary for inventing new modes of working with students” (p. 14). In these “intentional” but “borderless” learning communities, outside their own bureaucracies, teachers “find it easier to question, ask for help, or ‘tell it like it is,’ rather than be fearful that they are exposing their lack of expertise in a given area” (p. 15; see also Lieberman and Wood 2001).

Building Teacher Learning into the School Workplace

Schools join professional development and professional community by strengthening the various naturally occurring niches where professional community might flourish—grade level groups, departments, and teams—and by allocating time, space, and dollars to other kinds of activity that expand the opportunities for teacher learning in the course of ongoing school life. This element of the linking strategy rests on an important premise: that the most promising forms of professional development are those that engage teachers in the ongoing pursuit of genuine questions, problems, and curiosities, over time, in ways that leave a lasting mark on their thinking and practice. The following paragraphs, without constituting an exhaustive set of possibilities, indicate some of the most commonly described approaches to organizing teacher-to-teacher learning opportunities at the school level.

Teacher Study Groups for Inquiry into Teaching and Learning

Some schools, especially those affiliated with comprehensive school reform initiatives, have sought to anchor

teacher learning in organized teacher study groups. In some cases, teachers are encouraged to frame research topics tied to school goals, priorities, or problems. In other cases, they are afforded complete independence in deciding what to investigate. Examples include the Critical Friends Groups initiated by the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the teacher study groups developed as an integral part of the Atlas Communities school improvement model.¹⁷

Lesson Study

Adapted from a well-established practice in Japanese schools, Lesson Study is a continuous cycle of action research organized by teachers to improve curriculum and instruction. It engages teachers in collaboratively planning a lesson on a key concept and in relation to shared goals and then observing, critiquing, and refining the lesson together.¹⁸ The Standards in Practice (SIP) model, developed by the Education Trust, also focuses on an analysis of lessons in relationship to academic standards. On the premise that “students can do no better than the assignments they are given,” the SIP process joins a review of student work with scrutiny of the corresponding classroom assignment (Education Trust 2003; see <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/SIP+Professional+Development>). Participants in school-based teacher groups bring an academic task and samples of the student work that resulted from it. They begin by completing the assignment themselves and then analyzing the learning demands embedded in it and the degree to which it is linked to relevant standards. Using the assignment and standards, they develop a scoring guide for assessing the student work and pose the question of whether a given sample of student work would “meet the standards.” The eventual aim of reviewing student work is to turn attention back to instructional strategy—specifically to the design of appropriate academic tasks.

¹⁷ Although the volume of research is not large, the available studies point to conditions that make such groups more or less productive. For example, see studies of Critical Friends Groups by Nave (2000), Matsumura and Steinberg (2001), and Curry (2004). In addition, *The Journal of Staff Development*, published by the National Staff Development Council, has published numerous articles designed to help schools organize viable teacher study groups.

¹⁸ The Lesson Study Research Group at Teachers College, Columbia University (<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/>), has undertaken a set of case studies aimed at understanding the possibilities and problems of Lesson Study in American schools (Chokshi and Fernandez 2004; Fernandez 2002; Fernandez, Cannon, and Chokshi 2003; Fernandez and Chokshi 2002). For a list of the Research Group studies, see http://www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/articles_papers.html.

environment by generating professional community, promoting and organizing activity that sustains a focus on teaching and learning, and ensuring that other workplace conditions enhance rather than impede teachers' professional development and commitment to teaching.

References

- Achinstein, B. 2002. "Conflict amid Community: The Micropolitics of Teacher Collaboration." *Teachers College Record* 104(3): 421–55.
- Allen, D., and T. Blythe. 2003. *A Facilitator's Book of Questions: Resources for Looking Together at Student and Teacher Work*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ball, D. L., and D. K. Cohen. 1999. "Developing Practice, Developing Practitioners: Toward a Practice-Based Theory of Professional Education." In *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice*, ed. L. Darling-Hammond and G. Sykes, 3–32. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Banks, J., M. Cochran-Smith, L. Moll, A. Richert, K. Zeichner, P. LePage, L. Darling-Hammond, H. Duffy, and M. McDonald. 2005. "Teaching Diverse Learners." In *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*, ed. L. Darling-Hammond and J. Bransford, 232–74. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Black, P., and D. Wiliam. 1998. "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment." *Phi Delta Kappan* 80(2): 139–48.
- Black, P., and D. Wiliam. 2004. "The Formative Purpose of Assessment Must First Promote Learning." *Toward Coherence between Classroom Assessment and Accountability: 103rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, ed. M. Wilson, 20–50. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Black, P., C. Harrison, C. Lee, B. Marshall, and D. Wiliam. 2004. "Working inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom." *Phi Delta Kappan* 86(1): 8–21.
- Blythe, T., D. Allen, and B. Powell. 1999. "Looking Together at Student Work." New York: Teachers College Press.
- Boaler, J. 2004. *Promoting Equity in Mathematics Classrooms: Important Teaching Practices and Their Impact on Student Learning*. Copenhagen, Denmark: ICME.
- Boaler, J., and M. Staples. 2005. "Transforming Students' Lives through an Equitable Mathematics Approach: The Case of Railside School." Unpublished manuscript, Graduate School of Education, Stanford University. Available at <http://www.stanford.edu/~joboaler/>
- Borko, H. 2005. "Professional Development and Teacher Learning: Mapping the Terrain." *Educational Researcher* 33(8): 3–15.
- Brophy, J. E., and T. L. Good. 1986. "Teacher Behavior and Student Achievement." In *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd ed., ed. M. L. Wittrock, 328–75. New York: MacMillan.
- Chokshi, S., and C. Fernandez. 2004. "Challenges to Importing Japanese Lesson Study: Concerns, Misconceptions, and Nuances." *Phi Delta Kappan* 85(7): 520–25.
- Clark, C. M., Ed. 2001. *Talking Shop: Authentic Conversation and Teacher Learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M. 1997. "Knowledge, Skills, and Experiences for Teaching Culturally Diverse Learners: A Perspective for Practicing Teachers." In *Critical Knowledge for Diverse Teachers and Learners*, ed. J. J. Irvine, 27–88. Washington, D.C. AACTE.
- Cohen, D. K., and H. C. Hill. 2001. *Learning Policy: When State Education Reform Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Cohen, D. K., and H. C. Hill. 2005. "Teaching Teachers: Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement." *Research Points* 3(1). Available from the American Educational Research Association (www.aera.net).
- Cohen, E., and R. Lotan (Eds.). 1997. *Working for Equity in Heterogeneous Classrooms: Sociological Theory in Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Garry, M. W. 2003. "Critical Friends: A Case Study of Teachers' Professional Development in a Reforming School." Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley.
- Darling-Hammond, L., J. Ancess, and B. Falk. 1995. *Authentic Assessment in Action: Studies of Schools and Students at Work*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Desimone, L. M., A. C. Porter, M. S. Garet, K. S. Yoon, and B. F. Birman. 2002. "Effects of Professional Development on Teachers' Instruction: Results from a Three-Year Longitudinal Study." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 24(2): 81–112.
- Education Trust. 2003. Standards in Practice (SIP). Retrieved from <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/SIP+Professional+Development>
- Elmore, R. F. 2005. "Building New Knowledge." *American Educator* (Spring). Available from http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/spring05/elmore.htm
- Fernandez, C. 2002. "Learning from Japanese Approaches to Professional Development: The Case of Lesson Study." *Journal of Teacher Education* 53(5): 393–405.
- Fernandez, C., J. Cannon, and S. Chokshi. 2003. "A U.S.–Japan Lesson Study Collaboration Reveals Critical Lenses for Examining Practice." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 19(2): 171–85.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk
Page 34 of 34



Great Public Schools for Every Child

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Research

1201 16th Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20036-3290

www.nea.org