

Key Issue: Improving the Working Environment of Teachers

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SCENARIO

Patty Hines is finishing her first year as Superintendent of Vinter County Public Schools. The last day of school has come and gone, and she can hear some children fly by her office window on their bikes. The teachers remain at their schools, with only the mandatory work days standing between them and summer vacation. When Patty tells people that she is the head of a rural school district, they usually tell her how lucky she is to be far from the problems of urban school systems. They do not know that most of Patty's students live in poverty and that her district ranks near the bottom on the state exam. They do not know that Patty has trouble attracting teachers and even more trouble retaining them.

Patty is the kind of person who likes to see the data before making any decisions. With the state exam scores spread out on her desk, she sees that two of her schools outperformed the state average in math and reading. The other 13 schools sit near or at the bottom in both subjects. She could have guessed which two schools performed well without even looking at the scores. Every time she enters these two schools she feels something, something that she doesn't feel when visiting her other schools. Is it success, confidence, community? She is not sure, but she knows that she needs to dig deeper to find out.

The sunny day is just another excuse to drive over to Biltern Middle, one of two middle schools in her district. Patty enters the school and the sense of success or confidence or community is still present. She walks into the first classroom she comes upon and reads the name on the chalkboard: Mr. Stevens. There are two Stevens in the district, but Patty is pretty sure that the man sitting at the classroom desk was Jim Stevens, seventh grade science teacher. She wondered if she could have a few minutes of his time to talk about his experiences at the school. She wanted to know what it was like to work in the school. Jim explained,

This is my fourth year at the school, and I feel like this was my best year. My students really excelled, especially during our team's unit on volcanoes. My team is very good at planning interdisciplinary units and working together to make sure each child is learning. The new assessments that I developed with my content team helped me to know when my students were actually learning and when I needed to try a different teaching method. I had a lot of trouble with discipline my first year. The other teachers helped me out, observing my class and giving suggestions, but I felt the team needed a consistent approach to discipline. My lead teacher mentioned this to our principal, and she established a discipline committee to follow through on my suggestion. I sat on the committee as we developed a school-wide approach to discipline. Then our team adapted the system to fit our mission and goals. I have had very few discipline problems since. I am looking forward to the pre-service days in August when our team will develop interventions for struggling readers.

Patty thanked Jim Stevens for his time, said hello to the turtle in the tank at the back of the room, admired student drawings of photosynthesis, and then headed for her car. She drove across town to Matinau Middle, the lower-performing of her two middle schools. She did not look forward to her Matinau visits and as she approached the front door, she felt a tightening in the depths of her stomach. When she walked down the hall, she spotted Tina Ellings, a math teacher in her fifth year at Matinau. They exchanged greetings and walked together to Tina's classroom. Tina began to remove decorations from the wall as she spoke,

I am not staying in this school. I do not feel safe here. I do not feel valued. I do not feel healthy. Since the day I arrived here I have received very little support. I tried to reach out and work with other teachers my first year, but the other teachers *knew* what I soon learned: in order to survive, you have to shut your door and deal with your own class. You can't worry about what is going on in the rest of the school. Each year a new reform and some useless professional development are handed to us. Then we retreat to our own classrooms and hunker down for a new group of students. I am on a team, but the only time we meet is to discuss discipline problems. I can not do this for twenty more years. I can't do this for one more year. I need to be able to work with my colleagues, to grow as a professional, to feel safe and effective and valued. I'm sorry to be so negative on my last day. Nothing against you. It's just a tough school.

Patty thanked Tina for her honesty and wished her luck in her new school, which happened to be located in the district next door. Patty added one to the list of teacher positions that she now needed to fill. Her visit to the two schools had raised many questions, and as she sat in her office they bounced around inside her mind like the numbered balls of a lottery drawing. Were Jim and Tina's views representative of the other teachers at their schools? How did the teachers at the other 13 schools feel? What could she and her principals do to replicate the success of Biltern Middle School and improve the working conditions of the teachers in her district?

BENEFITS

Improving the working environment of teachers helps at-risk schools and districts:

1. **Improve retention of beginning teachers.** The turnover rate among teachers during their first five years approaches 50%. According to surveys of teachers who left their jobs, poor administrative support was the most frequently cited source of job dissatisfaction. New teachers who benefit from an extensive program of support are half as likely to leave their jobs at the end of their first year as new teachers with no formal induction.
2. **Reduce turnover of all teachers.** Each year at-risk public schools lose one-fifth of their teaching faculty. The decision of whether to stay or leave a school is substantially influenced by the working conditions found in the school. Qualitative studies have found that many teachers move voluntarily from school to school in search of an environment that makes good teaching possible. Teachers who moved from at-risk schools felt safer, had sufficient resources, and taught in a well-maintained facility. Several strategies for improving working conditions for all teachers effectively promote retention. Promoting a collegial work environment harnesses the power of teamwork through activities such as common planning time and study groups. When teachers are mutually supportive, they are more satisfied with their jobs and more likely to stay, reducing attrition rates and the costs associated with this attrition.
3. **Meet the NCLB highly-qualified teacher provision.** When teachers leave a school or district because of difficult working conditions, that school or district must scramble to fill vacancies. Highly-qualified teachers are not going to jump at the chance to teach in an environment in which they receive little time, power, leadership, resources, and respect. Schools and districts are forced to fill vacancies with less than highly-qualified teachers. This practice negatively effects student learning and violates the NCLB highly-qualified teacher provision. By providing a positive working environment, schools and districts will be able to attract and retain highly-qualified teachers.
4. **Increase the supply of new teachers.** When discussing working conditions, researchers and policymakers usually focus on teacher retention. However, improving working conditions can also influence teacher supply. By creating a safe, supportive environment in which teachers are allowed to grow, school leaders can convince more people to enter the classroom.
5. **Raise student achievement.** Teacher working conditions are student learning conditions. Research shows that there is a positive relationship

between professional culture and school performance. In one study, a school's professional learning culture appeared to counter the negative effects of poverty. Recent surveys of teachers in North and South Carolina have shown that working conditions – leadership, professional development, time, empowerment, and facilities and resources – are powerful predictors of school performance. When teachers viewed these conditions favorably, schools were much more likely to make Adequate Yearly Progress and to perform well within the state's accountability system.

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TIPS AND CONCERNS

DON'T BOTHER

Improving the Working Environment of Teachers ... IF YOU DON'T:

- Reevaluate, fundamentally, what must be done to improve the climate and working conditions to better support teaching and learning.
- Assess the needs of teachers at the school level.
- Evaluate improvements in the working environment based on student achievement and teacher retention.
- Focus on the ways that improving the working environment will improve the learning environment.

STRATEGY 1

Ask teachers about their working environment.

While national studies point to certain characteristics of a healthy working environment (time, resources, empowerment, management, leadership, etc.), each school and district is unique. School leaders need to ask teachers what is important to them and what areas of the working environment need improvement. By asking teachers, school leaders can focus reforms on the areas of greatest need.

Resource 1: The Keys to Excellence for Your Schools (KEYS)

The Keys to Excellence for Your Schools (KEYS) Online Survey
National Education Association
<http://www.keysonline.org/>

Keys to Excellence for Your Schools (KEYS) is a survey tool that lets schools measure for themselves the extent to which the following quality indicators are present:

1. Shared understanding and commitment to high goals
2. Open communication and collaborative problem solving
3. Continuous assessment for teaching and learning
4. Personal and professional learning
5. Resources to support teaching and learning
6. Curriculum and instruction.

A school facilitator can register a school for the survey. School members can then complete the on-line survey. Once a significant number of surveys are completed, the responses are analyzed and the results are posted on-line.

Resource 2: Teacher Working Conditions

Teacher Working Conditions: What We're Doing
Center for Teaching Quality
<http://www.teachingquality.org/twc/whatwedo.htm>

Presents the Center for Teaching Quality's (CTQ) current work on assessing teacher working conditions in several states and school districts. The site also reports where the CTQ is currently working and what the organization and its partners have learned thus far.

Resource 3: Building a framework

Mikkelsen, K. (no date). *Building a framework: Improving working conditions*. Redding, CA: Northeast Regional Resource Center. Available online: <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/persprep/qualityteachers/conditions.pdf>

Appendix 2-1 is a self-assessment instrument that focuses on working conditions and assists school leaders in identifying strengths and needs.

STRATEGY 2

Set standards and measures to support continuous improvement of the school environment.

Assessment of the working environment must be ongoing in order to measure changes in teacher satisfaction and to identify areas still in need of improvement.

Resource 4: The School Improvement Self-Study

The School Improvement Self-Study
<http://www.cprd.uiuc.edu/self-study/>

The School Improvement Self-Study is one way for [middle schools](#) and [high schools](#) to gather reliable data about their practices and progress that will assist them in improving the teaching and learning process. The Self-Study consists of a set of surveys for students, teachers, and principals. An additional survey is available for parents. These confidential and anonymous surveys ask about classroom practices, integration of instruction and curricula, decision-making practices, parent and community involvement, climate and attitudes, professional development needs, educational expectations, school safety, and student well-being.

Resource 5: Effective School Battery

Effective School Battery, Gottfredson Associates, Inc.: Resources for School Assessment <http://www.gottfredson.com/esb.htm>

The Effective School Battery generates an in-depth picture of school environment. It measures and reports on school safety, staff morale, administrative leadership, fairness and clarity of school rules, respect for students, classroom orderliness, academic climate, school rewards, student educational expectations, attachment to school, and other aspects of school climate as reflected in teachers' and students' perceptions, behavior, and attitudes.

Resource 6: Staff Climate Survey

Staff Climate Survey
Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS)
<http://goal.ncrel.org/winss/staff/sampques.asp>

An example of a teacher and administrator survey that can be used to assess school climate.

Resource 7: Safe School Facilities Checklist

Safe School Facilities Checklist
National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF)

<http://www.edfacilities.org/checklist/checklist.cfm>

The NCEF on-line checklist allows school leaders to assess the safety and security of proposed or existing school facilities. After filling out a free registration form, school leaders can select from categories to create a personalized assessment tool. The categories range from school grounds to communication systems to emergency power.

STRATEGY 3

Implement consistent, school and district-wide approaches to climate, safety, and discipline.

New teachers often find classroom management to be the most difficult aspect of teaching. Many new teachers point to an inability to manage students as the reason they leave the classroom. Schools and districts can help teachers manage their classrooms by creating a safe, positive school environment. This starts with setting clear, high, and consistent expectations for behavior. Too often, students face a patchwork of rules and are expected to misbehave. Schools need to create a simple set of behavioral expectations that are present in every classroom. Such consistency helps to eliminate confusion and reinforce that all school staff are on the same page. In addition to being consistent, approaches to climate, safety, and discipline must set high standards. Just as low academic expectations lead to low academic achievement, low behavioral expectations lead to discipline and safety issues.

School leaders need to involve teachers in the development of consistent, high standards for behavior and safety. Such development is an opportunity to empower teachers, foster collaboration, and improve the culture of the school.

Resource 8: School Safety and Security Toolkit

School Safety and Security Toolkit: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities

National Crime Prevention Council

http://www.ncpc.org/cms/cms-upload/ncpc/files/BSSToolkit_Complete.pdf

Assists parents and administrators in implementing the Be Safe and Sound model in their schools. It includes a step-by-step procedure for assessing school safety and security, forming an action team, identifying the problems, holding a forum with stakeholders to brainstorm solutions, developing an action plan and building support for it, and evaluating the results. The appendices provide all the materials needed to implement this process, from surveys to identify the problems to a sample press release and media advisory to publicize your efforts.

Resource 9: Setting the stage for strong standards

American Federation of Teachers (2003). *Setting the stage for strong standards: Elements of a safe and orderly school*. Washington, DC: Author.

Available online:

<http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/settingthestage.pdf>

Discusses seven essential elements of safe and orderly schools. The paper then explains several strategies for implementing each of the elements.

Resource 10: Every child learning

Learning First Alliance (2001). Every child learning: Safe and supportive schools. Washington, DC: Author. Available online: <http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/safeschools/>

The report presents four key components of a safe and supportive learning community, as well as the supporting research. Following the components, the report lays out recommendations for action by all key stakeholders in five categories:

- Engaging students, families, school staff, and the surrounding community
- Standards and measures to support continuous improvement
- Professional development for all school staff
- Structures and supports
- Research and development

STRATEGY 4

Involve families and the surrounding community.

Family and community involvement and support help to facilitate teachers' ability to educate all students. As opposed to an adversarial relationship where teachers feel isolated, a strong community partnership can offer a positive environment in which teachers feel valued. Parental involvement has been shown to increase teacher morale, effectiveness, and job satisfaction. In addition, student achievement improves when families and the community are positively engaged at the school and district level.

Resource 11: Community and Family Involvement

Community and Family Involvement

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

<http://www.sedl.org/learning/index.cgi?command=showcatalog&course=connections>

The SEDL Learning Center offers two online courses in community and family involvement:

- *What Do We Mean by Family and Community Connections with Schools?* This interactive module discusses the benefits of family and community connections with schools and introduces 8 types of family and community connections. The module then teaches school leaders how to plan strategies for developing or increasing family and community involvement in schools.
- *What Structures Can Help Schools Create Effective Family and Community Involvement That Supports Learning Outside of School?* This interactive module discusses research-based strategies that involve families and communities to support learning outside of the classroom. The module then introduces a framework for effective family and community involvement.

Resource 12: Rethinking parent conferences

Black, S. (2005). *Rethinking parent conferences*. American School Board Journal. Available online: <http://www.asbj.com/current/research.html>
If attempting to access after October 31, check the magazine [archives](#).

The article takes a look at why parents stop coming to parent-teacher conferences, particularly in the upper grades. The author examines different models for bringing parents and teachers together, including involving the students and emailing. After summarizing recent research on the topic, the author suggests that schools rethink the way they interact with parents.

Resource 13: The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs: An Implementation Guide for School Communities

Purchasing information available at: <http://www.solution-tree.com/Public/Media.aspx?ShowDetail=true&ProductID=BKF175>

A practical tool for promoting meaningful parent and family participation, raising awareness regarding the components of effective programs, and providing guidelines for schools that wish to evaluate and improve their programs.

Resource 14: Family Involvement Resources

Family Involvement Resources

The Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE)

Harvard Family Research Project

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/fineresources.html>

This website contains the latest research and a great deal of practical information for establishing and strengthening family-community-school partnerships. The resource guide section contains standards for family involvement, tools for educators and family members, programs that promote family involvement, and special initiatives involving several organizations. The guide contains many links to organizations and publications that explain why and how effective family-community-school partnerships are formed.

Resource 15: Becoming a community school

Crane, C. et al (2003). *Becoming a community school: A step-by-step guide to bridging the school-family gap*. Dorchester, MA: Project for School Innovation. Purchasing information available at:

<http://www.psinnovation.org/PSI/btft11.html>

Based on the family-community-school partnerships of Robert L. Ford School, where 57% of the families speak limited English and 95% are low income. The school has dramatically increased the achievement of its students by offering a wide range of educational and social supports to families. This book provides tips and lessons learned from the Ford School's efforts to strengthen family and community involvement.

Resource 16: Helping Every Student Succeed

Helping Every Student Succeed: Schools and Communities Working Together
Study Circles Resource Center

<http://www.studycircles.org/en/Resource.14.aspx>

The website offers several comprehensive guides for discussing how schools and communities can work together. Study circles allow community members and school staff to develop trust and work toward finding solutions.

Resource 17: Reaching all families

Moles, O. (1996). *Reaching all families: Creating family-friendly schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available online: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReachFam/index.html>

Presents strategies that schools can use to reach out to families and help involve them in their children's education. Strategies are offered in five areas:

- [Introducing School Policies and Programs](#)
- [Personal Contacts](#)
- [Ongoing Communications](#)
- [Special Practices and Programs](#)
- [Special Groups](#)

Within each strategy, suggestions for action are made.

Resource 18: Organizing a successful family center in your school

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2005). *Organizing a successful family center in your school: A resource guide*. Madison, WI: Author. Available online: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/fcsprntc.pdf>

This booklet serves as a guide to understanding and establishing family centers. Family centers are located in school buildings and can be especially welcoming to families from diverse cultures and those with limited English skills. The family center permits school staff members and families to establish relationships, programs, and activities to help children succeed. They can be a valuable tool in school efforts to close the achievement gap and raise student achievement. This booklet answers questions related to family center planning, development, funding, staff, activities, and evaluation. Appendix E is a tool for measuring the strengths and weaknesses of family-community-school partnerships.

Resource 19: Family involvement in children's education

Funkhouser, J. & Gonzales, M. (1997). *Family involvement in children's education: Successful local approaches*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available online: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/>

Identifies and describes successful strategies used by 20 local Title I programs that have overcome barriers to parent involvement. Each of the programs utilize five strategies for developing and nurturing school-family partnerships:

- [Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints](#)

- [Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff](#)
- [Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement](#)
- [Bridging School-Family Differences](#)
- [Tapping External Supports for Partnerships](#)

Appendix B describes the activities and strategies of the local approaches to family involvement. Appendix D provides additional resources for building successful partnerships.

STRATEGY 5

Provide teachers with a manageable number of students.

Teachers need to be able to make personal connections with students. As opposed to the factory-era model of education that focuses on efficiency, a small community model allows teachers and students time to interact and form relationships. Students feel less alienated, more nurtured, and more connected to caring adults, and teachers feel that they have more opportunity to get to know and support their students. Such relationships allow teachers to provide individualized instruction and support while eliminating the middle practice of letting students slip through the cracks.

...SUB-STRATEGY 5.1

Create small student learning communities

Teacher satisfaction and effectiveness are related to their sense of the school as a community. In recent years, many districts have broken large schools into smaller learning communities in an effort to create more meaningful relationships between students and teachers. However, simply changing the size of a school is not enough to improve working conditions and student achievement. Small learning communities are not effective because they are small, but because of the opportunities they provide for fostering relationships, creating a collaborative team of teachers, and implementing student support systems. The resources listed below present important elements of creating small learning communities and describe examples of effective small schools.

Resource 20: Small Learning Communities

Small Learning Communities
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/>

The website presents six key questions that need to be answered in order to effectively implement small learning communities (SLCs):

1. [How can we best plan and prepare for SLC implementation?](#)
2. [How can we develop effective interdisciplinary teams?](#)
3. [How can we make curriculum and instruction more authentic, coherent, and challenging?](#)
4. [How can we create equitable SLCs to meet the needs of all students?](#)
5. [How do our interdisciplinary teams pursue continuous improvement?](#)
6. [How do our building and district-level policies and practices support SLCs?](#)

Each question is accompanied by a synopsis of the relevant research, a six-step process for successful implementation, and useful tools and resources.

Resource 21: High schools on a human scale

Toch, T. (2003). *High schools on a human scale: How small schools can transform American education*. Beacon Press. Available for purchase online: <http://www.beacon.org/sp03cat/toch.html>

This is an account of the promise and challenges of smaller, more personalized schools. Each chapter describes a different small school and how it works, including the Julia Richman Education Complex, the Urban Academy, High Tech High, the Met, and the Minnesota New Country School.

Resource 22: What Kids Can Do

What Kids Can Do (2003). *Student learning in small schools: An online portfolio*.

Providence, RI: Author. Available online:

<http://whatkidscando.org/portfoliosmallschools/portfoliohome.html>

Based on Thomas Toch's book (referenced above), this website looks at the similarities and differences of four small, innovative small high schools. School profiles are accompanied by various examples of student work and forms that guide students and teachers.

Resource 23: Schools Sharing Buildings

Chicago Public Schools, Chicago High School Redesign Initiative, Business & Professional People for the Public Interest (2003). *Schools Sharing Buildings: A Toolkit*. Chicago, IL: Author. Available online:

<http://www.archachieve.org/Resources2/tookits/SchoolsSharingBuildings.pdf>

In Chicago, many small and community schools are learning to share building space. This toolkit outlines solutions to the daily challenges faced by schools that are sharing buildings. It gives practical advice for how small schools can share building space by drawing on examples from Chicago. The recommendations include:

- Establish a commitment to shared equitable space
- Build and maintain strong working relationships
- Support school identity and autonomy with visual cues
- Plan for the future with a memorandum of understanding
- Develop a conflict resolution process
- Capitalize on the benefits building sharing

Resource 24: School Size/Small Schools

Resource Lists: School Size/Small Schools

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF)

<http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/size.cfm>

Contains links to books, journal articles, related websites, and other resource lists that deal with the issue of school size and advocate for small schools.

Resource 25: Dollars & Sense II

Dollars & Sense II

<http://www.goodsmallschools.org/>

This website supplements the *Dollars & Sense II* report on the cost effectiveness of small schools. On the site you can download the report, search the content of the report on-line by school or strategy, and read the original school site visit reports to give you a more in-depth look at the schools mentioned. The site profiles sixteen small schools and provides accompanying links to further

information. The site also describes over 75 small school strategies and explains how some of the sixteen schools are using these strategies. These strategies range from community support to sharing space and using volunteers. In addition, the site contains documents relating to each school, such as test scores, budget information, site and floor plans, photos of each school, and other relevant resources.

Resource 26: High schools on a human scale

Toch, T. (2003). *High schools on a human scale: How small schools can transform American education*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. Chapter 1 is available online: <http://www.beacon.org/k-12/high-schools-ch1.html>

Describes the transformation of Julia Richmond from a large comprehensive high school to six small autonomous schools that share one building.

Resource 27: Schools Making Progress

Schools Making Progress
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/descriptions/index.asp>

Profiles several schools who received federal Small Learning Community grants and are making significant progress. The website describes how these schools take advantage of small communities to improve teaching and learning. In addition to school profiles, the website illustrates how certain schools are implementing specific structures and strategies:

- **Structures:**
 - [Academies](#)
 - [House Plans](#)
 - [School-Within-a-School](#)
- **Strategies:**
 - [Alternative Scheduling](#)
 - [Career Pathways](#)
 - [Freshman Transition Activities](#)
 - [Teacher Advisory Systems](#)
 - [Academic Teaming](#)
 - [Adult Advocate Systems](#)

Resource 28: From large to small

Steinberg, A. & Allen, L. (2002). *From large to small: Strategies for personalizing the high school*. Providence, RI: The Education Alliance. Available online: <http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/largetosmall.pdf>

Drawing from their work with the Boston high school reform effort, the authors present the case for small high schools and common pitfalls of small school

reforms. The authors then describe eight strategies for effective school transformation:

- Develop and communicate a clear vision and mission for the reform work.
- Begin planning with the data.
- Engage the district office and the teachers' union in the process of reforming the high school.
- Build community support/mobilize community resources.
- Tackle the difficult issues of autonomy.
- Address the equity issues for bilingual and special education students.
- Create a school schedule that supports the goals of personalization for students and increased collaboration for teachers.
- Develop a process for continual improvement.

The report concludes with a discussion of how to create effective learning environments to capitalize on the opportunities provided by small schools.

Resource 29: Breaking up large high schools

Gregory, T. (2001). *Breaking up large high schools: Five common (and understandable) errors of execution*. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. Available online: <http://www.ericdigests.org/2002-3/five.htm>

Explains five characteristics built into the basic design of most breakup efforts that make it impossible for them to cross over into the world of successful new small schools.

1. Autonomy
2. Size
3. Continuity
4. Time
5. Control

...SUB-STRATEGY 5.2

Create small class sizes.

For teachers, class size is often one of the most important aspects of a positive working environment. Teachers feel that smaller classes facilitate effective individualized instruction and classroom management. Classes of 13-17 students have been shown to positively impact the learning of elementary students, especially in at-risk schools. However, class size reduction is an expensive option and requires an increased supply of qualified teachers. Many researchers suggest that providing teacher training is a more cost-effective method for raising student achievement. An alternative approach is to focus class size initiatives on at-risk schools where smaller classes will have the largest impact on student achievement.

Resource 30: Class-size reduction

Picus, L. (2000). *Class-size reduction: Effects and relative costs*. Eugene, OR: Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management. Available online: http://eric.uoregon.edu/hot_topics/class_size.html

Discusses recent class size initiatives and places these initiatives in the context of literature and research on the impact of small classes. The author also explores alternatives to class size reduction that may be more cost-effective.

Resource 31: Class size reduction

McRobbie, J., Finn, J., & Harman, P. (1998). *Class size reduction: Lessons learned from experience*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Policy Brief #23. Available online: http://www.wested.org/pub/docs/policy/class_red.htm

Poses and answers fifteen questions concerning Class Size Reduction (CSR), including:

- Do small classes in and of themselves affect student learning?
- How small is small enough?
- Is CSR worth the cost?
- Should CSR be used in conjunction with other strategies?

The authors also answer questions about effective implementation of CSR and give an overview of four CSR initiatives.

STRATEGY 6

Create and support professional learning communities.

This term is used so often that it tends to lose substance and meaning. Richard Dufour and Robert Eaker, in their book “Professional Communities at Work,” break down the meaning of professional learning communities:

Professionals have “expertise in a specialized field” and are “expected to remain current in its evolving knowledge base.”

Learning is “ongoing study and constant practice.”

Community is a group that “fosters cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone.”

In schools, professional learning communities are groups of teachers who work together to improve student achievement. They are not the silver bullet to turning around at-risk schools, but they are a necessary component. At-risk schools need better teachers, better school leaders, better support for new teachers, career ladders and performance-based pay, but all of these improvements will not have their desired effect if each teacher shuts the classroom door on the first day of school and doesn’t open it until the last day of school. Collaboration allows good teachers to become better teachers, effective leaders to become more effective leaders, and good reforms to take root.

Collaboration must be embedded in the routine practices of the school, use specific activities to focus on student achievement, be designed to impact professional practice, and be assessed based upon student achievement results.

Resource 32: Professional learning communities

Hord, S. (1997). *Professional learning communities: What are they and why are they important?* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.html>

Provides a good overview by discussing the attributes and outcomes of effective professional learning communities. According to the author, the key attributes of effective professional learning communities are:

- Supportive and shared leadership
- Collective creativity
- Shared values and vision
- Supportive conditions
- Shared personal practice

Resource 33: The LSS Small Learning Communities Project

The LSS Small Learning Communities Project

<http://www.temple.edu/lss/slc.htm>

One effort that the Laboratory for Student Success uses to take on high school restructuring is the creation of has an effort called the Small Learning Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs). SLCs provide an environment in which teachers can work collaboratively with a small group of students and with each other to teach and learn in ways that improve personalization and academic achievement.

Resource 34: Professional learning communities at work

DuFour, R. & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

A comprehensive look at professional learning communities: what they are, what they look like in action, and how they develop. The book explains the essential steps to forming a professional learning community, from a common vision to a focus on student learning to the roles of principals, teachers, and parents.

Resource 35: Multiple mirrors

Hord, S. (2000). *Multiple mirrors: Reflections on the creation of professional learning communities*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/cha97/>

A collection of stories written by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) co-developers who assisted schools in creating professional learning communities. The stories reflect the experiences of schools trying to develop a professional learning community. The stories offer many lessons in establishing trust and illustrate the role that leadership and collaboration play in the change process.

Resource 36: Group wise: No time for learning?

Garmston, R. (2005). *Group wise: No time for learning? Just take it in tiny bites and savor it*. National Staff Development Council: Journal of Staff Development. Available online:

<http://www.nsdcc.org/library/publications/jsd/garmston264.cfm>

Looks at how teacher-led action research has helped to transform Highland Park High School in Highland Park, Illinois into a professional learning community focused on improving instruction and student achievement. Teams of teachers pose a question and then use their classrooms to find the answer. The action research process helps teachers to reflect on their practice and grow as

educators. Action research has changed the way that Highland Park teachers view themselves and their work, and has led to changes in curriculum, school organization, and communication.

Resource 37: Creating a professional learning community

Hord, S. & Rutherford, W. (1998). *Creating a professional learning community: Cottonwood Creek School*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). *Issues About Change*, Volume 6, Number 2. Available online: <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues62/>

A case study of Cottonwood Creek School's development into a professional learning community. The study explains the five components that made transition to a positive working environment possible:

- Supportive and Shared Leadership
- Collective Learning and Application of Learning
- Shared Values and Vision
- Supportive Conditions
- Shared Personal Practice

In summary, the researchers present several premises from the case study, some of which are listed below:

- “In a school where the staff operates as a professional learning community, the aspirations of the teachers, as well as the needs of the students and goals of the school, are realized.
- There must be some factor or purpose around which the staff rallies its interest and energy to join in community, and that factor must ultimately benefit students.
- The factors that make it possible for students to grow and develop (provision of stimulating and relevant material, processing the material in a social context, feedback on performance, support and encouragement, etc.) are the same that enable professional staff to grow and develop.
- In addition to a focus on goals and productivity, the community of professionals in the school demonstrates care and concern about the students and each other.
- Organizational learning, in contrast to individual learning, is richer and provides focus for the members of the professional learning community.
- The school's administration must provide the schedules and structures for initiating and maintaining organizational learning and its application by the professionals in the school.
- An undeviating focus on students, their needs and care, is the compelling motivator of the learning community of professionals.”

...SUB –STRATEGY 6.1

Create school and district cultures that foster collaboration.

Resource 38:

Eaker, R., DuFour, Richard, & DuFour, Rebecca (2002). *Getting started: Reculturing schools to become professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Discusses the cultural shifts that are necessary to transform schools into professional learning communities. The authors also present the lessons that can be learned from Boones Mill Elementary School's efforts to become a professional learning community.

Resource 39: Launching professional learning communities

Leo, T. & Cowan, D. (2000). Launching professional learning communities: Beginning actions. *Issues About Change*, Volume 8, Number 1. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). Available online: <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues81/welcome.html>

Describes the actions of Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) co-developers and school personnel in their early efforts to initiate development of professional learning communities (PLCs) in 22 schools. The descriptions, including comments from the co-developers, are organized into five categories and provide insight into the necessary steps and pitfalls for implementing PLCs.

Resource 40: Arrive at agreement—agreeably

Richardson, J. (2004). *Arrive at agreement—agreeably*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, *Tools for Schools*. Available online: <http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/tools/tools4-04rich.cfm>

The article defines consensus and provides ten deliberate steps that teams can take to reach consensus.

...SUB-STRATEGY 6.2

Focus collaboration on improving instruction.

If common planning time and team structures focus on discipline or school politics, teacher working conditions and student achievement will not improve. A focus on instruction creates meaningful collaboration that facilitates teacher learning. One method for focusing collaboration on instruction is action research. Through action research, teachers can collaboratively examine their educational practices systematically and carefully. Several action research resources can be found below.

Resource 41: *Developing communities of instructional practice*

Supovitz, J. & Christman, J. (2003). *Developing communities of instructional practice: Lessons from Cincinnati and Philadelphia*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Available online: <http://www.cpre.org/Publications/rb39.pdf>

Analyzes the efforts of two urban districts to form professional learning communities within schools. The paper explains that the districts created small communities, but these communities rarely discussed issues of instruction and student achievement. The professional communities that did focus on improving instruction were able to raise student achievement. The paper concludes by laying out steps that school and district leaders can take to develop communities focused on instructional practice.

Resource 42: Small Learning Communities

How do our interdisciplinary teams pursue continuous improvement?
Small Learning Communities
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL)
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/interdisc.shtml>

Shows how data, stakeholder input, and professional development can be used by teacher teams to reflect on and improve instruction and student achievement. NWREL first helps school leaders and staff members examine research-based methods for improving instruction. NWREL then leads users through a six-step process that begins with self-assessment and concludes with implementation and evaluation. NWREL also offers tools and resources that correlate to the best practices and strategies.

Resource 43: Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools

Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools (2001). [*Looking collaboratively at student and teacher work*](#). Boston, MA: Center for Collaborative Education. Available online: <http://www.turningpts.org/pdf/LASW.pdf>

Provides six protocols for looking at student work and addressing instructional dilemmas. The paper presents the purpose of each protocol and walks participants through the collaborative processes.

Resource 44: Plan thoughtfully for team time

Hirsh, S. (2002). *Plan thoughtfully for team time*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, *Results*. Available online:
<http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/results/res11-02hirs.cfm>

Once teachers have time to collaborate, it is essential that teachers use this time to improve instruction. This article presents three essential steps that school leaders must take to ensure meaningful collaboration takes place:

- Establish expectations
- Specify the content
- Teach meeting processes

Resource 45: Themes in education

Ferrance, E. (2000). *Themes in education: Action research*. Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online:
http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/themes_ed/act_research.pdf

Provides an overview of the history of action research, a process for completing it, stories from two teachers who have completed action research, and additional action research resources.

Resource 46: Teacher collaboration supports instructional change

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). *Teacher collaboration supports instructional change*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Available online:
<http://www.ncrel.org/info/notes/fall03/nrfall03.pdf>

Outlines strategies for adopting a collaborative approach to professional development. The guide presents several different models of collaboration, real-life examples, and practical observation tools.

Resource 47: Action Research Tools and Resources

Action Research Tools and Resources
The Teacher Leaders Network
<http://www.teacherleaders.org/Resources/ARgroup/ARresources.html>

This web page features an extensive list of articles related to action research, sample action research projects, and reviews of books on action research.

...SUB-STRATEGY 6.3

Make sure that key structural conditions are in place for professional learning communities to be effective.

In order to collaborate with colleagues, teachers need:

- Grade level and content area collaborative teams;
- Substantial time to meet;
- Close proximity to other teachers in the collaborative; and
- Space to hold meetings.

Resource 48: Rethinking school resources

Hawley Miles, Karen (no date). *Rethinking school resources*. Arlington, VA: New American Schools. Available online:

<http://www.naschools.org/uploadedfiles/rethinking-resources.pdf>

New American Schools designs emphasize four factors in resource use for transforming schools, including common time for teachers to work together and learn. This brief describes several models for rethinking time and examining the consequences of rearranging time use.

Resource 49: How Resources are Allocated for Staffing and Scheduling

[How Resources are Allocated for Staffing and Scheduling](#) Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/ResourcesAllocatedforScheduling.pdf>

This chart compares school staffing and scheduling in comprehensive high schools and in small learning communities.

Resource 50: Treating teachers as professionals

Curtis, D. (2000). Treating teachers as professionals. Edutopia. Available online: http://www.edutopia.org/php/article.php?id=Art_412

Resource 51: Prisoners of Time

Goldberg, Milton and Christopher Cross. Prisoners of Time: Reprint of the 1994 Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning. Denver, Colorado: Education Commission of the States, October 2005.

It is the contention of this report that in America, learning is a prisoner of time. Compared to countries against which our students' performance is often gauged, U.S. teachers have less time to plan, collaborate and perform research. Flexible time also would enable teachers to interact professionally, observe one another's teaching, and experience productive staff development. Calls for accountability

must be accompanied by assurance that teachers' work life includes sufficient time for personal and professional development.

The ECS reprint list eight recommendations:

1. Reinvent Schools Around Learning, Not Time
2. Fix The Design Flaw: Use Time In New And Better Ways
3. Establish An Academic Day
4. Keep Schools Open Longer To Meet The Needs Of Children and Communities
5. Give Teachers The Time They Need
6. Invest In Technology
7. Develop Local Action Plans To Transform Schools
8. Share The Responsibility: Finger Pointing And Evasion Must End

At the Sherman Oaks Community Charter School, the principal and teachers all meet each day from 11:30am to 1pm for professional development purposes. This article describes the benefits of this collaborative period and how the teachers use the time to focus on improving instructional practices and student achievement. The article also touches on the development of a positive culture, mentioning teacher field-trips and a three-day summer retreat.

Resource 52: Block scheduling: Innovations with time

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory (1998). *Block scheduling: Innovations with time*. Providence, RI: Author. Available online: <http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/ic/block/block.pdf>

Block scheduling is one option for creating substantial opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one another. This booklet describes block scheduling and several different scheduling structures.

Resource 53: How can we develop effective interdisciplinary teams?

How can we develop effective interdisciplinary teams?
Small Learning Communities
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL)
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/teams.shtml>

Provides a six-step process for creating effective teacher teams, from self-assessment and strategies to implementation and evaluation. To support the process, NWREL presents research, tools, and resources for school leaders.

...SUB-STRATEGY 6.4

Use technology to foster collaboration across schools and districts.

Resource 54: Inquiry Learning Forum

Inquiry Learning Forum

<http://ilf.crlt.indiana.edu/>

An online community of K-12 math and science educators working together to share, improve, reflect, and create learner-centered classrooms. While developed primarily for Indiana math and science teachers, the ILF is open to all teachers, school administrators, university faculty, and pre-service education students interested in inquiry-based teaching and learning, free of charge. The ILF is designed around a school metaphor. When you enter the ILF you are able to visit several "rooms" that are typical of a school building. Within these spaces you can obtain or share lesson plans, view video examples of fellow teachers, engage in online discussions, and work online with groups focused around a particular topic or idea.

Resource 55: TappedIn

TappedIn

<http://tappedin.org/tappedin/>

Provides an on-line venue where K-12 teachers, professional development staff, teacher education faculty and students, administrators, and researchers engage in professional development programs and informal collaborative activities with colleagues. After completing the free registration, a participant can explore different chat rooms, collaborate with colleagues, and discuss resources and best strategies.

Resource 56: Seven steps to successful online learning communities

Yoder, M.B. (2003). *Seven steps to successful online learning communities*. *Learning and Leading with Technology*, 30(6), 14-17, 20-21.

This article provides guidelines for asynchronous discussions and online collaborative projects used to extend the traditional classroom environment.

STRATEGY 7

Provide professional development focused on classroom-relevant knowledge and skills.

In order to have teachers advance and lead, school districts and states must provide opportunities for professional growth. In order to be most effective, professional development must be:

- Targeted
- Research-based
- Collaborative
- Job-embedded

Resource 57: The Knowledge Loom

The Knowledge Loom: Professional Development

<http://knowledgeloom.org/pd/index.jsp>

Provides principles of effective professional development for educators, including a list of best practices, related research summaries/bibliographies, and resource links as well as case studies about the practices in action. Interactive online tools and a Knowledge Loom Guidebook provide opportunities for the effective use of this content for professional development.

Resource 58: Teachers observing teachers

Israel, M. (2003). *Teachers observing teachers: A professional development tool for every school*. Education World. Available online:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin297.shtml

Explains the benefits of having teachers observe other teachers, not to evaluate performance, but to provide professional development and encourage growth.

Resource 59: Investing in teacher learning

Elmore, R. (1997). *Investing in teacher learning: Staff development and instructional improvement in community school district #2, New York City*. New York, NY: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

An overview of District #2's attempts to improve instruction through targeted professional development.

...SUB-STRATEGY 7.1

Allocate the time necessary to engage in professional development activities.

Teachers' most frequent complaint about professional development is the lack of time for meaningful activities. This complaint is justified given that it is estimated that it takes 20 opportunities to practice/receive feedback when learning a new skill or practice before it becomes part of a teachers' repertoire. Furthermore, according to a national survey of teachers, most educators spend less than 8 hours a year on typical professional development. Eight hours per year seems insufficient to meet the extensive and ongoing enhancements that educators need to remain competent professionals.

The professional development plan should be created and then dissected to identify a realistic, total time needed to learn and embed identified skills and practices. Schools have developed numerous methods for providing sufficient professional development time, including rearranging the instructional week, "banking" time for longer school days, reducing non-teaching duties, and making the most of summer months.

Resource 60: A Guide to Using Your School's Resources Effectively

New American Schools (2000). *A Guide to Using Your School's Resources Effectively*

Tool #2 - Diagnostic Overview. Provides questions to take stock of current use of resources. Section I assesses allocation of time.

Resource 61: Journal of Staff Development

Peterson, K. (1999). *Journal of Staff Development: Time Use Flows From School Culture*

Pages 18-19. Provides a list of negative and positive statements about time that can be used to assess staff views and a list of beliefs about time, including amount of time

Resource 62: Moving Forward from where you are

NWREL (2002). *Moving Forward from where you are to school improvement that lasts.*

Toolbox IV: Finding Time for Adult Learning, Planning and Collaborative Work-Supporting Professional Learning Communities. Offers checklist for action, ideas for finding time for adult work, lesson study process, and structured reflection protocol.

Resource 63: Journal of Staff Development

Zepeda, S. (1999). *Journal of Staff Development: Arrange Time Into Blocks*

Pages 29. Provides tips for building a block schedule program.

Resource 64: Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development

SERVE (1999). *Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development*

Activity 4.1, pages 82-83. Provides a finding time activity.

...SUB-STRATEGY 7.2

Target professional development based on specific student achievement data.

The key to analyzing student achievement data is to drill down far enough in the data to identify the specific skills that all students need to become successful learners. This requires analysis at the individual student, classroom, and across grade levels. If generalizations are made from the data, but specific skills tied to content and learning standards are not identified in the data, then the target for professional development may not result in improved performance. For example, if the broad area of reading is identified from the data, the professional development target could be vocabulary, fluency or some other reading component identified by the scientifically-based reading research as being important. However, if the data is specific, e.g. data identifies low inferential comprehension skills, then the professional development can be targeted to building comprehension.

Resource 65: Teachers as Learners

WestEd, (2001). *Teachers as Learners: A Multi-media Kit for Professional Development in Science and Mathematics*

Activity 2.6, Professional Development Design Puzzle Activity. Helps to know the critical inputs to design and how they interact; includes analyzing student learning and other data.

Resource 66: Professional Development: Learning from the Best

NCREL (1999). *Professional Development: Learning from the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on model Professional Development Winners*

Page 22, Action Planner Tool 4 - Needs Assessment: Student Learning Goals Versus Actual Performance. Provides an organizer to identify specific student achievement gaps or strengths.

Resource 67: Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development

SERVE (1999). *Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development*

Activity 3.1, pages 44-45. Provides an activity to connect professional development to student achievement.

...SUB -STRATEGY 7.3

Establish school wide and grade level professional development that support school improvement goals.

Using the school improvement plan (SIP) goals as the basis for school wide and grade level professional development creates the strongest link between the two, and the best chance of improving student achievement and teacher practice. A national teacher study reported that when teachers see a connection between professional development and school improvement, they are more likely to say that professional development has improved their practice. In addition, if the link between goal and professional development is weak, it is harder to achieve that goal. For example, if the SIP establishes reading comprehension as the school wide goal, but the school or grade level professional development is on student discipline, there is less likelihood of reading comprehension improving.

Resource 68: Assessing Impact

Killion, J. (2002). *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*

Chapter 3. Provides back-mapping model for planning staff development programs (not events) that support academic school improvement goals.

Resource 69: The Knowledge Loom

LAB at Brown (2001). *The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching and Learning - Using the Knowledge Loom*

Step 1: Select a Theme. Provides activities that use school improvement goals (focus themes) as a basis for professional development through the process of collaborative inquiry.

Resource 70: Professional Development

NCREL (1999). *Professional Development: Learning from the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on model Professional Development Winners*

Page 17, Action Planner Tool 3 - Align Educational Goals. Gives an organizer to bring district, school, team and individual goals into line.

Resource 71: Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development

SERVE (1999). *Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development*

Activity 3.2, pages 47-48. Provides an activity to connect professional development to school improvement plans.

...SUB -STRATEGY 7.4

Design professional development that is specific to content that students need to learn and that challenges students.

Often professional development is broad, either targeting an instructional procedure (e.g., graphic organizers), a subject (e.g., reading comprehension), or a process (e.g., classroom management). By selecting content that is specific to what students need to know and be able to do, teachers are more likely to learn, re-learn, or reinforce the content students need to know. Procedures and processes can be used to reinforce the content knowledge.

State and local assessments can identify discrete performance areas where students need to improve. By addressing these challenge areas, it is more likely that student performance will improve.

Resource 72: English Proficiency Benchmarks

Massachusetts Department of Education (June 2003). *English Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners*. Available: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/benchmark.pdf>

The benchmarks and outcomes in this document can be used to assist educators in determining whether an LEP student has made progress in learning English.

Resource 73: A Flashlight and Compass

SEDL. (2000). *A Flashlight and Compass: A Collection of Tools to Promote Instructional Coherence*

Section V - Improving Student Learning. Provides activities to determine expectations for learning, define quality work, and set clear expectations for performance.

Resource 74: National Educational Technology Standards for Students

ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS-S). Available: http://cnets.iste.org/students/pdf/NETSS_standards.pdf

Identifies six major standards and related performance indicators, detailing what students should know about and be able to do with technology.

...SUB -STRATEGY 7.5

Use research-based instructional strategies.

Using any strategy isn't good enough. An increasing number of effective instructional strategies based on research is emerging. These strategies can be used to reinforce the explicit content selected.

Resource 75: What Works Clearinghouse

What Works Clearinghouse, 2277 Research Boulevard, MS 6M
Rockville, MD 20850, Email: wwcinfo@w-w-c.org, Phone: 1-866-WWC-9799, Fax: 301-519-6760

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) was established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's [Institute of Education Sciences](#) to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central, independent, and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education. It is administered by the Department through a contract to a joint venture of the American Institutes for Research and the Campbell Collaboration.

Resource 76: Classroom Instruction That Works

Marzano, R., Pickering, D., Pollock, J. (2001). Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement

Nine research-based instructional strategies that are most likely to improve student achievement across all content areas and grade levels. Includes real-life examples and explanations.

...SUB-STRATEGY 7.6

Use a collaborative approach so that teachers can collectively solve problems and learn from and with each other.

Research has shown that activities that focus on active learning such as analyzing student work, study groups, teacher networks, online learning communities, mentoring, coaching and other collaborative efforts have more success in changing teacher practice. Finding solutions together is important to becoming collectively accountable and organizationally effective. By establishing environments where practitioners work together in groups, rather than individually, an environment of professional respect is created and a shared language and understanding of good practice is developed.

Resource 77: Action Research

Ferrance, E. (2000). Action Research

Section: Steps in Action Research, pages 9-12

Resource 78: Mapping for Reflecting and Planning

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. (1999). School Matters: Mapping for Reflecting and Planning

Six page plan describes the mapping process used for a variety of topics

Resource 79: Reshaping Instruction Through Lesson Study

NCREL (2002). Reshaping Instruction Through Lesson Study

Video and facilitator's guide cover activities to get to know lesson study, tools to implement lesson study and resources to strengthen and sustain lesson study.

Resource 80: Advancing Reading Achievement

SERVE. (2002) Advancing Reading Achievement

Chapter on Learning From, With and For Each Other, pages 89-107. Pages 97-98. Provides activity to create picture of current professional development culture and the ideal professional culture.

Pages 99-102. Provides guidelines for learning teams

Page 105. Describes stages of concern and types of appropriate assistance.

Resource 81: Journal of Staff Development

Murphy, C. (1999). Journal of Staff Development: Use Time for Faculty Study

Pages 21-25. Gives process guidelines for whole-faculty study groups.

Resource 82: A Flashlight and Compass

SEDL. (2000). *A Flashlight and Compass: A Collection of Tools to Promote Instructional Coherence*

Section III - Establishing a Dialogue, Activity 2: Dialogue vs. Discussion: Establishing Group Norms and Activity 3: Introducing Collegiality. Provides opportunities to learn a process for group members to understand other's perspectives and assumptions.

Section IV – Reflection. Actives that offer opportunities for teachers to practice inquiry and reflection by processing information that comes from multiple sources.

Resource 83: Through New Eyes

DuFour (n.d.) *Through New Eyes: Examining the Culture of Your School*

Included with the video is a Facilitator's Guide that will help in leading a 4-hour workshop based on the discussion video. It includes:

- An introduction to the program
- Guiding questions
- Small-group and full-group activities
- Materials suitable for overheads or replication

Resource 84: Redesigning professional development

Bambino, D. (2002). *Redesigning professional development: Critical friends.* *Educational Leadership*, 59(6), 25-27. Available online:
http://www.nsrffharmony.org/gene/Bambino_2002.pdf

The Critical Friends Group is a model of teachers providing instructional support to their colleagues. This article introduces the concept and benefits of Critical Friends groups and tells the stories of three schools that have implemented Critical Friends groups with great success.

STRATEGY 8

Provide teachers with advancement and leadership opportunities.

Resource 85: Teaching as a career

Link to "[Teaching as a career](#)"

STRATEGY 9

Enhance the ability of school leaders to support teachers.

Resource 86: Building the capacity of school leaders to support teachers

Link to "[Building the capacity of school leaders to support teachers](#)"

STRATEGY 10

Provide strong support for beginning teachers.

Resource 87: Induction/mentoring/support of new teachers

Link to "[Induction/mentoring/support of new teachers](#)"

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE:

It's As Easley As Asking Teachers

In response to high teacher turnover, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission developed a teacher survey in 2001-2002. The Standards Commission, a teacher majority commission appointed by state political leaders, convened focus groups of teachers. These teachers developed standards for high-quality schools, and these standards were then examined by over 5,000 North Carolina teachers. The Standards Commission used the standards to develop and pilot a survey instrument.

Following the pilot survey, the Standards Commission entered into a partnership with North Carolina Governor Mike Easley. In 2002, Governor Easley launched the Teacher Working Conditions Initiative. Governor Easley recognized that teachers were “one of the key ingredients in creating and maintaining outstanding schools.” Facing a potential teacher shortage, the governor realized that his state could not simply attract more teachers. North Carolina needed to retain quality teachers by improving working conditions. The state sent every administrator and teacher a survey that measured their perceptions of five teacher working conditions: time, leadership, empowerment, professional development, and facilities and resources.

Over 42,000 teachers and administrators responded, representing 115 of 117 school districts and 59% of principals. The *Preliminary Report of Findings* summarized the results and analysis at the state level and highlighted areas that needed improvement. The *Case Studies Report* took a close look at the practices of three schools that scored extremely high on the 2002 survey. In addition, each school and district that participated in the survey received a customized report of teacher working conditions. Each school was also eligible to be recognized and rewarded as a Real D.E.A.L. (Dedicated Educators, Administrators, and Learners) School.

The working conditions survey provided valuable data that impacted state policy. For example, the survey confirmed that principals have a major impact on the working conditions of their teachers, and that principals and teachers have a strikingly different view of working conditions. In response, the governor's office, the Principals' Executive Program, and the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching used the survey results to design professional development that focuses on how school leaders can improve teacher working conditions. Through this professional development, school leaders learn specific strategies for empowering teachers, improving professional development, and providing teachers with ample time and resources.

The second North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey was available online and was completed by 34,000 teachers and administrators in March and

April of 2004. The Center for Teaching Quality (formerly the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality) was brought on board to facilitate the online survey, refine the survey, and deepen the analysis of the results. The Center used these results to develop a toolkit to help stakeholders better understand and respond to teacher working conditions in their schools and districts. The toolkit explains the importance of each working condition, lays out recommendations for improvement, and provides concrete strategies that different stakeholders can use to improve teacher working conditions. By measuring and improving teacher working conditions, North Carolina is well on its way to enhancing teacher retention, teacher quality, and student achievement.

West Lenoir Elementary School: From Raven to Eagle

West Lenoir Elementary School is located in western North Carolina and 88% of its students receive free/reduced lunch. In 1996-1997, West Lenoir was a North Carolina “Low-Performing School” with only 46.4% of students reaching proficiency. In 2003-2004, West Lenoir was a North Carolina “Honor School of Excellence” with 90.1% of students reaching proficiency.

In order to turn her school around, principal Donna Kimball created an extended educational team focused on transforming West Lenoir into a “Great Place to Teach and Learn.” Teachers work together to develop and implement researched-based curriculum in small classes. Volunteers and community members tutor, provide resources, and attend parent education nights. In addition, every parent is eligible for a free computer, desk, and internet service through a “Home-School Connect” technology program.

People look at West Lenoir and wonder if it can really be considered an at-risk school. Sure, 53% of its students are minority, 88% of its students are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and a decade ago it was the lowest scoring school in the district. But now West Lenoir has been honored as one of eight North Carolina Real D.E.A.L Schools for leading the state in working conditions and student achievement. At-risk? Not anymore.

Governor Mike Easley’s Teacher Working Conditions Initiative

<http://twc.learnnc.org/>

The Real D.E.A.L. Schools

http://www.governor.state.nc.us/Office/Education/_pdf/RealDeal_Booklet.pdf

Teacher Working Conditions Toolkit

<http://www.teacherworkingconditions.org/>

Center for Teaching Quality

<http://www.teachingquality.org/>

Thomas Blanford, Director of Teaching Quality, National Education Association
(former Executive Director of the North Carolina Professional Teaching
Standards Commission)