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ABSTRACT

This 22nd volume of the "English Leadership Quarterly" contains articles on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Each issue highlights a different theme. Articles in Volume 22 Number 1 are: "Collaboration: Making a Difference" (Stephanie Quate); "Using Faculty Study Groups to Implement Innovations" (Barbara King-Shaver); "Goals and Issues: A Framework for Implementing Technology" (Jonathan Bush); and "A Student-Centered vs. Teacher-Centered Approach in the Secondary Classroom" (Ronald T. Sion). Articles in Volume 22 Number 2 are: "What New English Teachers Need to Know" (Marshall A. George); "Assessing Teacher Performance with a Portfolio Rubric" (Bonita L. Wilcox and Lawrence A. Tomei); "You're the Leader: What Are You Going to Do about It?" (Barbara K. Thompson); and "Innovations with Staying Power: Creating a Climate for Change" (Rebecca Bowers Sipe). Articles in Volume 22 Number 3 are: "Fostering Literacy: Connecting Families with Schools" (Nancy L. Hadaway); "Looking at Literacy in Urban Families: Surveying the Scene" (Sylvia M. Vardell); "Taking the Initiative: Dallas Teachers as Parent Mentors in the Literacy Development of Children" (Diana L. Wisell); and "Building Home and School Literacy Partnerships: A Principal's Perspective" (John E. Jacobson). Articles in Volume 22 Number 4 are: "Thoughts Worth Thinking About: Reflections, Connections, Projections" (Jeffrey N. Golub); "Guiding Minds on a Global Journey: A Principled Approach to Professional Development" (Susan W. Golder and Peter C. Grande); "Engaging Students to Learn: A Reflection on IBM's Learning Village" (Frank S. Mander, Jr.); and "Truth or Consequences: Evaluating High School Online NetCourses" (Liz Pape). (NKA)

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English Leadership Quarterly, 1999-2000

Henry Kiernan, Editor

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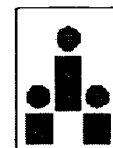
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Conference on English Leadership



Leadership
for Excellence

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More Ways to Implement Innovations

by Henry Kiernan, editor

There once was a time, whether in reality or myth may depend on how long ago, when a school leader's job was easier. The school building was a centerpiece for the entire community where a rather homogeneous group of students came prepared to face a group of dedicated professionals. Parents supported teachers and administrators. They also participated in school functions and in making sure their students completed homework.

Yes, things have changed. Our schools are highly specialized, extensively regulated, and enormously complex. In the press for accountability, results of state assessments and

SAT or ACT scores seem to be more important than the pursuit of developing passion for learning. The true test for today's school leader is finding the balance that creates commitment toward producing student achievement and at the same time maintains a passion for learning and growth.

In a 1995 issue of the *Quarterly*, the theme of implementing innovations drew many manuscripts and many insights about staff development, collaboration, and change. It just seemed like a good idea to reach for additional voices who could offer knowledge and wisdom about how to shape educational practice.

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Our authors in this issue demonstrate that effectiveness as a leader is related to the capacity for responding to events in symbolic ways. Implementing innovations requires leaders to draw from experience and to discover new ways to infuse purpose, spirit, traditions, and values into our classrooms and schools. ●

Collaboration: Making a Difference

by Stephanie Quate, Colorado Department of Education, Denver, Colorado

As it often did, the phone rang late in the afternoon. "I need help understanding this standards stuff," a fourth-grade teacher pleaded. "Ever since we got our scores on CSAP, my principal has been going nuts."

This was the second year of the fourth-grade CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program), the state assessment of reading and writing.

Even though the results showed a slight improvement over the first year, no one was happy. With all the intense media attention, many educators felt pressured to raise student scores and to do so immediately.

The teacher continued. "I don't mind the test. In fact, it looks like some of the work I give my students. Of course, I assign more than desk work; we do lots of projects. And

that's what my principal is so upset about. He told me that I needed to get my kids back in their desks so they could do the standards."

Because of my job at the Colorado Department of Education, I often hear complaints such as this one. Since my job includes providing technical assistance to districts as they implement our reading and writing standards, I have a bird's eye

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view of how schools have responded to the standards movement. Some schools have thoughtfully provided teachers with necessary resources, including staff development, while other schools have responded with threats and finger pointing. This and other similar phone calls have led me to reflect on the connection between leadership and student performance. As I thought about the impact this one principal had on the teacher who had called me, I contrasted him with other leaders that I knew. All were committed to raising student achievement, and all focused their sights on student achievement. But the leaders I was thinking of would never have told a teacher to get students back to their desks in order "to do the standards."

It is the stories of two of these leaders that I want to tell. Each has provided the kind of support needed to make a difference in students' lives, and each has zeroed in on two qualities: collaboration and focus on instruction and learning. Within their schools, they have created collaborative learning communities that center on student achievement. In these learning communities, teach-

ers build a common vision for student performance, develop a shared vocabulary, and coach each other as they continue to raise expectations in a nurturing environment.

Chris's Story

Chris works at an alternative school for students who have been unsuccessful in traditional schools. Despite their poor showing in other academic settings, the students have been quite successful here, with many continuing on to higher education. Chris is convinced that one cause for this is the school's version of staff development. Throughout the year, teachers meet in groups of 5–10. Following a formal set of procedures, the teachers critique each other's work through a process called a tuning protocol (see Figure 1). First developed by Joe McDonald (1996) and the Coalition of Essential Schools, the tuning protocol is a structured means of critically examining teacher work.

The following vignette illustrates how the tuning protocol works. Molly, an English teacher, had been working with her students on writing about a few local problems. Troubled about the quality of the student work

and the lack of enthusiasm for the project, she brought the assignment to a group to "tune."

Chris facilitated this day. She began by reinforcing the familiar procedures. "For the next ten minutes, we're going to listen to the description of the work Molly has required the students to do. You might want to make sure that you jot down a few notes and pay close attention to her question."

Molly explained the task and detailed the student reaction. At the end of her ten minutes, Chris turned to the group and redirected them. "Do you have any clarifying questions? Remember, this is your chance to ask Molly questions that will help you understand her concerns."

One person asked, "How long did you give them to do this task?" Another asked, "Explain again what standards you were working on." At the end of five minutes, Chris asked Molly to move out of the group and to listen to the group's discussion. Knowing the protocol, Molly scooted her chair back and opened up her notebook to take notes.

For the next seven minutes, the group talked about what had impressed them about the assignment. "I'm amazed that she would give them so much responsibility."

"The rubric certainly sets up the expectations. Look at how clearly she explains the difference between exemplary and satisfactory work."

When a teacher new to the tuning protocol made a general comment about liking the assignment, Chris probed for the detail. Later she explained that general comments aren't informative, and the purpose of the tuning protocol is to be specific about the quality of work.

"Time now for the cool, not cruel, comments." The group laughed, having heard this comment each time they moved into this part of the protocol. "At this point, you can point out concerns or gaps in this assignment. You might also raise questions that Molly needs to wrestle with."

The group began examining the

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) of the National Council of Teachers of English is an organization dedicated to bringing together English language arts leaders to further their continuing efforts to study and improve the teaching of English language arts. The CEL reaches out to department chairs, teachers, specialists, supervisors, coordinators, and others who are responsible for shaping effective English instruction. The CEL strives to respond to the needs and interests germane to effective English instruction from kindergarten through college, within the local school, the central administration, the state, or the national level.

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work. "I'm confused about . . ."

After seven minutes of cool comments, Chris invited Molly to respond to what she had heard. She thanked them first and then turned to her notes. She pointed out misunderstandings of the group and then commented that their misunderstandings were similar to the students'. "Guess I'd better check on how clear I am in my expectations," she smiled. For the following ten minutes, Molly discussed her insights with her colleagues.

The tuning protocols did more than clarify strengths and gaps in Molly's assignment. It helped create a common view of the implementation of standards and the use of rubrics. For instance, during the closing discussion, one teacher commented that even though Molly's rubric was for student work substantially different from his, this close examination made him realize a problem with his own rubrics. Not untypical. As the group reflected on the work of one colleague, others were able to better understand their own teaching.

Jeanne's Story

At a nearby school, the teachers had been debating formulaic writing. One teacher argued that students needed the structure of the five-paragraph essay in order to learn to write expository text. Other teachers debated this position. Overhearing the debate, Jeanne suggested that at their next department meeting, they hold a collaborative assessment conference to describe a few expository essays (see Figure 2). Since the district had just adopted the six-trait writing model, one teacher suggested that they focus their discussion on the six traits.

For most of the school year, the English department had restructured its regular meetings into issue groups. At most of their department meetings, they closely examined each other's assignments, using procedures similar to the tuning protocol. Earlier that month, they watched a video of one teacher conferring with a rather difficult student and critiqued

her skillful work. Along with looking at instructional practices, they were examining student work. For instance, shortly after attending a workshop on six-traits, teachers scored a handful of student papers to ensure that their department was interpreting the rubrics in similar ways. One teacher explained, "If I think an essay is a strong one, I'd like to know that my colleagues agree with me. Nothing is going to be more confusing for kids than to move from a

Working in collegial groups is not the norm in most schools. Instead, teachers tend to work in isolation, plan in isolation, and reflect on their work in isolation.

teacher with one set of expectations to one with a completely different set."

At this meeting they wanted to put to bed the ongoing arguments about formula. Jeanne facilitated the discussion. "Linda has graciously agreed to share these essays by one of her students. When you get your copy of them, read them silently and

then we'll begin describing them. Let's be sure to use the six-traits as the framework for description."

Each member of the group read the essays, some making notes in the margin and others pausing to think. Linda removed herself from the circle and prepared to take notes.

After it was clear that everyone had read the piece, Jeanne asked the group, "As you know, Linda is not going to explain the assignments or the context in which they were written. Instead, our job is to just describe what we see here. Remember you're describing, not judging. Also, you might want to look carefully at how the writer organized his ideas. Dan, why don't you start?"

"I noticed that his main idea in this essay is . . ." The teacher sitting next to Dan quickly followed. "His third paragraph begins with a topic sentence about the main character's anger but the rest of the paragraph talks about . . ."

Another teacher looked up and said, "He loves to use transitions." Jeanne quickly asked, "Where is the evidence in the paper of that?"

"Just that each paragraph in both papers begins with one. Look, here he says, 'My first point,' and then in the next paragraph, he says . . ."

"Um, I want to describe the voice

The Tuning Protocol
1. The group selects a facilitator who will keep track of time and ensure that the participants follow the protocol.
2. The presenting teacher explains the work to be examined. After explaining the task, she asks a question she would like the group to address. This often lasts 5–10 minutes.
3. The group asks clarifying questions. What's very important at this point is that the questions are designed to help the listeners understand the task and the presenter's question. This often lasts up to 5 minutes.
4. The presenter distances herself from the group while the group discusses the work together. The presenter is not a part of this discussion; instead, she takes notes on their comments.
5. The participants closely examine the work and state "warm" comments. They point out the strengths of the work. This often lasts 7–10 minutes.
6. Still examining the work, the participants state "cool, not cruel," comments. They note problem areas, address gaps in the work, and pose questions that the presenter might want to consider. This often lasts 7–10 minutes.
7. The presenter returns to the group discussion, comments on their comments, and reflects on her next steps.
8. The group debriefs the process.

Figure 1.

in this paper, but it's hard to do so. He's so distant from his topic," noted the next woman. "It's not much stronger in the other one."

Again Jeanne asked, "What in these papers would lead you to that observation? Remember you want to describe, not judge."

The teacher pointed to some of the words, noting how general they were and commenting that the student was listing general ideas with little elaboration. Knowing the six traits well, they looked carefully at the word choice and sentence fluency. Through this description of the student work, the group noted the strong verbs in one paragraph, the sentence lengths in another paragraph, and the frequent use of transitions.

"What do you think he's working on?" Jeanne asked. One teacher proposed that the writer was working on transitions, while another suspected he was figuring out how to master the essay form. Through this discussion, the teachers noted that as the student was working on the five-paragraph form, he had forgotten to attend to the other traits, particularly sentence fluency and voice.

As the conversation began to lull, Jeanne asked Linda to join the group. Linda then responded to the group's

comments, thanking them for the insights they triggered. She explained the context for the assignments, which was to teach students how to write the academic essay. From here, Jeanne led the group to consider what the implications were for teaching. "Based on our conversation, what does this young writer need to learn?" For about ten minutes, the teachers brainstormed with Linda about her next steps and which of the six traits needed to be addressed.

In the closing discussion, the group returned to their original concern about the five-paragraph essay. Linda summed up the group's emerging awareness, "What I realized as we were talking is that this student

Leaders understand the discomfort associated with making one's instructional practices public, so it makes sense for them to begin their own work first.

didn't need that structure. He's written stronger pieces throughout the year, and that by focusing on this

particular form, I oversimplified the essay and misled him to think that it's five paragraphs that produce strong academic writing." Not everyone agreed with her conclusion, but through the collaborative assessment conference, they were able to ground their debate in student work. At the same time, they were teaching each other about how to teach writing.

What Can Leaders Do?

Chris and Jeanne provided leadership that doggedly focused on student achievement. They were the vision-keepers and part of that vision meant fighting for the time to focus. They resisted the principal's attempts to bring in staff development about issues unrelated to student achievement. Instead, they insisted on freeing up inservice days so that teachers could have large blocks of uninterrupted time to work collaboratively on tasks that would raise student performance. Before groups met, they swept away issues that might interfere with concentration on the task at hand. Management issues, such as ordering books or developing budgets, were handled at other times, occasionally through department e-mail. "If something is going to get in the way of focusing on our work at hand, I do everything in my power to get it gone," Jeanne explained.

One challenge these leaders faced was redesigning their departments into learning communities. Working in collegial groups is not the norm in most schools. Instead, teachers tend to work in isolation, plan in isolation, and reflect on their work in isolation. Fullan (1991) notes that collaboration leads to enhanced student performance. He argues that collaboration must be central to the lives of teachers as they plan, work, and assess. However, collaboration rubs up against two well-ingrained norms: congeniality and politeness (Ball & Cohen, 1995). Teachers tend to treat each other in friendly, sympathetic ways, yet tuning protocols and collaborative assessment conferences do

The Collaborative Assessment Conference
1. The group selects a facilitator who keeps track of time and makes sure the group follows the protocol.
2. The presenter distributes copies of the student work, but does not explain the work, the assignment, or the background of the student.
3. The presenter moves away from the group to take notes but not to participate in this part of the protocol.
4. The participants read the work.
5. The facilitator directs the group to describe the work.
6. The participants briefly describe the student work, avoiding any judgments. The description continues until there are no new ideas.
7. If participants make evaluative comments, the facilitator asks for the evidence in the student work.
8. The presenter returns to the group and provides background information on the assignment or the student.
9. The facilitator asks the group to hypothesize about what the student seems to be working on.
10. Participants hypothesize on what the student is working on, grounding their comments in the work.
11. The group discusses implications for teaching and learning that emerged from the discussion.
12. The group debriefs the process.

Figure 2.

not necessarily translate into congeniality as occasional comments have the potential to ruffle feathers. Aware of the challenges, Chris and Jeanne carefully nurtured these learning communities. Before they began collaborating on instruction and learning, they wrestled with the tension of honesty within professional relationships and agreed to norms of tactful directness. Because they respected each other and trusted the intentions of their colleagues, they knew that if they worked to preserve good feelings, they would unwisely avoid provocative and challenging questions. Those might be the very questions they needed to tackle if they were going to make a difference as a group on student achievement.

Recognizing the difficulties of creating collaborative learning communities, Jeanne and Chris offer the following tips:

1. *Keep student work at the center.*

Many innovations have traveled the road of educational reform. We saw cooperative learning move through; we learned how to write strong behavioral objectives; we learned to resolve conflicts. Even though school is about student achievement, we have not moved classroom work into the spotlight. By building collaborative communities that focus on the work within the classrooms, teachers can provide insights into problems and successes while refining their shared visions.

2. *Lead through example.*

Leaders understand the discomfort associated with making one's instructional practices public, so it makes sense for them to begin by sharing their own work first. Along with modeling the process, the leader can bring issues out of the shadows and into the light. Jeanne, for instance, asked for feedback on the reading journals her seniors were keeping. Disappointed in the quality of their work, she asked the group for help in looking at how she had structured the assignment. Instead of blaming students for an inadequate job, she assumed responsibility as a professional in addressing the situation. At

the end of the protocol, she compared her feelings at having her colleagues so closely examine her work to "feeling naked." She let them know how vulnerable she had felt and yet how

It's the leader who sculpts the professional climate, whether it be the kind of climate that leads to regressive practices or one that leads to enriching classrooms.

supportive the group had been. By leading through example, Jeanne not only modeled the process, but also opened up the dialogue about the personal side of collaboration.

3. *Follow the protocol's structure.*

When educators first encounter the tuning protocol or the collaborative assessment conference, they often question the rigid structures. However, it is those very structures that lead to success. For instance, in the tuning protocol, presenters are tempted to rejoin the group in order to comment on their colleagues' observations during the warm and cool discussions. By being removed from the conversation, they are able to silence the internal dialogue often filled with defensive statements, and are better able to listen to an outsider's perspective.

But that's not the only change in structure Jeanne and Chris have observed. Occasionally, a presenter will ask the group to skip the warm comments and move directly into the cool comments. Chris and Jeanne urge groups *not* to skip this important part. They explain that one reason a group must include warm comments is that by naming strengths, other teachers learn to look at work in a particular manner. The protocol is not just for the presenter; it's also for the observer. Naming strengths, recognizing gaps, and offering questions are all important ingredients in building a shared vision.

4. *Debrief the process.*

Not only is it important to keep the

lens pointed at classroom work, it's also important for the group to spend a few minutes discussing the tuning protocol or collaborative assessment conference. Debriefing the process should be an integral part of the process. In the debriefing, participants will be able to discuss what did or did not work for them. This important step alerts the group to occasions when they were either untactful in their comments or too general to be helpful. From here, the group can refine its skills and become more adept in collaborative work.

5. *Diffuse philosophical differences by grounding discussions in student work.*

Too often teachers have argued about the best pedagogical procedures. These arguments have ranged from canonical issues around what kind of literature students should read to whether or not a writer's workshop structure is effective. Often the arguments are based on anecdotes. Grounding these debates in student work changes the debate from which method is best, to "How did this approach shape the learning of this student?"

Does leadership make a difference? Will effective leadership make a difference in the lives of our students? Absolutely! It's the leader who sculpts the professional climate, whether it be the kind of climate that leads to regressive practices or one that leads to enriching classrooms.

I'm hoping that one afternoon, the phone will ring and I will hear a voice say, "I have to tell you about what we're doing around standards. It's called a tuning something or other." ●

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Using Faculty Study Groups to Implement Innovations

by Barbara King-Shaver, South Brunswick Schools, Monmouth Junction, New Jersey

Many school districts begin the school year with faculty inservice days. These one-day workshops provide time for the training and retraining of faculty in innovations in teaching and learning. But we know from experience what often happens when the one-day inservice training is over. The faculty is busy preparing their classrooms, filling out forms, and meeting new students. They are often too busy to reflect on the issues presented in the inservice workshops, and even the best intentions to implement what they heard are often put on a back shelf because of the need to be ready to teach on Monday.

In order not to lose the innovative ideas introduced at our inservice workshops, South Brunswick High School offers faculty study groups for those teachers who want to discuss and implement innovations in teaching. Teachers in these faculty study groups come from all disciplines and grade levels in the high school. Our first study group began when the principal at that time, Willa Spicer, offered a copy of *Horace's School* to any faculty member who wanted to read and discuss the book. Subsequent study groups have focused on classroom practices: Writing across the Curriculum, Teaching in the Block, and Assessment. The Writing across the Curriculum group met for three years, and the Assessment group is currently in its second year. We are planning to offer a Teaching in the Block study group again next year because we have added a number of new faculty members to our staff.

The format of these groups is basically the same no matter what the topic. Teachers volunteer to meet one day a month after school. They read books and professional articles on the topic, discuss what they have

read, and share ideas about ways to implement new practices in their classrooms. The teachers also report back on lessons they have tried and they ask for peer feedback. Perhaps the best way to understand the function of study groups is to look at the Assessment group.

South Brunswick was fortunate to be a member of a consortium on assessment coordinated by Grant Wiggins and his CLASS group (Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure) in Pennington, New Jersey. In the summer of 1997, Maribeth Edmunds, another faculty member who attended the CLASS meetings, and I invited interested teachers to attend a two-day workshop on performance assessment and rubric construction. Fifteen teachers from across the curriculum attended the introductory workshop.

After the 1997 summer training, interested faculty members joined a study group that met once a month during the school year to continue

year, a number of Assessment group members asked that we continue this study group for another year. As one member stated, "We're just getting the hang of it. Now we are ready to create full performance tasks and rubrics." Because of this enthusiasm, we offered a second-year study group for the continuing teachers and invited new teachers to join us. In addition, scheduling difficulties prevented some interested faculty members from attending regularly. For these people, we have created a second group that meets occasionally to discuss performance assessment models and critique each other's work. The members of this group do not receive inservice credit. A few times this year, the two groups were able to combine to share ideas.

This model of faculty development to promote innovations has several advantages. First, it is a voluntary program. Teachers elect to participate based on their interests and needs. Second, it has institutional support. The district recognizes the work that the participants do and supports this work by giving inservice credits. Third, the innovative practices studied begin to spread throughout the building. For example, the work that the Writing across the Curriculum teachers did was so successful that the group was no longer needed. This study group ceased to exist as a special interest group because writing across the curriculum became integrated into all areas.

Faculty study groups have been successful because they offer teachers a place to learn about innovations in teaching and learning, and they provide peer support for teachers who want to try new classroom practices. In the groups, members are both learners and teachers, helping each other and students learn better. ●

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investigating and practicing different methods of assessment. At the end of the 1997-1998 school year, this group compiled a booklet of their work to share with other faculty members. Those participants who attended regularly received inservice credits for the work they did.

At the end of the 1997-1998 school

Goals and Issues: A Framework for Implementing Technology

by Jonathan Bush, Purdue University, Indiana

Computer technologies have brought great opportunities and possibilities for positive change in English instruction. As research has shown, not only do networked computers offer word processing programs that greatly affect student writing processes, but they also open up windows of opportunity to teach visual design, conduct online research, and, in numerous other ways, create new and exciting means of bringing greater understanding of language to students in classrooms at all levels. However, integrating English classrooms and schools with computer technology requires a large commitment on the part of administrators, faculty, and students. To do so without understanding the complexities of such a transition can create facilities that do not fit the needs of the curriculum and faculty and lead to misuse or underuse of equipment. One way to avoid situations in which valuable technological equipment finds itself under a layer of dust or used in inappropriate ways is for administrators and faculty to carefully consider the uses of the technologies before and during the transition into its placement and development.

Here, based on my own experiences with helping schools integrate technology into their language arts curricula, I suggest some ways to help others make the best use of their resources. My examples deal primarily with physical issues that may develop in the implementation of technology, but the framework I suggest can also be useful in dealing with any type of technology integration issues.

An important means of integrating technology into instruction is to have a guiding vision of the technology's use. I have often heard stories of computer facilities left unused be-

cause they have not been developed carefully. Once, a teacher told me that the school's lab was not being used because it was equipped with Windows-based PCs and the faculty had used Macintoshes previously. On other occasions, I have seen labs full of expensive high-end computers being used primarily for keyboarding instruction. Before a computer lab is funded and created, the departments or school programs who will be the primary users should know what they plan to do with it. For example, if an English department at a high school tends to privilege group-written projects, a lab with strictly defined rows and small screens with limited space for multiple viewing and input of documents will be unsatisfactory. Likewise, if a department wants to use the lab for whole-class presentations or lectures, a lab with poor sightlines and a weak overhead monitor will find itself lacking. Or, a department may realize that computers can be put to better use if they are split up and placed in individual classrooms instead of concentrated in a computer lab.

One of my key purposes here is to show how a framework can help schools avoid creating a resource that is inappropriate for the context and ensure that these issues are confronted and developed in positive ways, thus allowing schools to utilize computer technology that works *with* current practices rather than *against* them. During my recent work with a school that was beginning to develop a network and upgrade computer usage in its language arts curriculum, I came up with some techniques that may help departmental and school administrators effectively and smoothly integrate computer technology into their departments and programs.

The Technology Team

The first step in effectively developing technology is to create a "technology team." Its primary goal is to ensure that computers and other technologies are appropriate to the context in which they are placed for use by the school, community, students, faculty, and curriculum. The team should have a defined framework of goals and an agenda that works to best represent its constituency. This team should include a cross section of interested parties attempting to define the goals of the technology's use, recognize the limitations in place at the school, and anticipate issues that may come up later.

For example, if a school decides to create a new computer lab for the exclusive use of the English department, but fails to consider the teaching styles and curricular goals of the program in place, chances are that the lab will find itself underused and the effort put into the lab will be mainly wasted. However, if that school were to use a technology team to allow the English department to create the lab, consider and develop the goals of the lab, and have input into the hardware, software, and architectural design of the lab, chances of the lab's effective use would be much greater.

In the case of a high school English department planning a computer upgrade or language lab development, I would recommend that the technology team include members of the school's administration, the department head, and various members of the faculty that represent different grade levels (or specialties) that would use the lab. It may also be desirable to include community members, parents, or even students. This will ensure that the lab's purpose and

design are as appropriate as possible for the different types of users.

Goals and Issues

This technology team will not function effectively without a solid framework to guide it. In the past, I have used three questions to guide technology teams. The first is a consideration of goals. That is, "What does the department/school/community want to use this technology for?" The technology team should make it an initial item of business to find out what the constituents want the lab to do. A survey or informal discussion with teachers would help accomplish this. If a survey of department faculty shows that they primarily want to use a computer lab as a place for group work, then specific design considerations must be adapted. Likewise, if the lab is to be used for remedial instruction, design considerations must be put in place to allow tutoring. Certainly, this can also work in other directions as well; perhaps the departmental faculty does not have a vision of how the technology can be utilized. In this case, the technology team can show the department how the lab can be used and serve as an advocate, getting faculty to consider means of using the technology before it is placed into service.

Once the department comes to an

understanding of what the goals of the technology/facility are, the technology team's job changes somewhat. The second guiding question anticipates and considers issues that need to be confronted in order to use the technology. The team should ask itself, "What possible issues might occur?"

One key issue that always must be confronted includes limitations. In this case, I use "limitations" as any development that may limit what the facility can become. This includes limitations of space, finances, or experience with technology of faculty and students as well as others. For example, the technology team may know that the English faculty has only limited Web publishing and technology experience. They must then begin to consider how the department can create a situation in which teachers learn ways to utilize the facility with confidence. Likewise, the amount of space available for the new facility may be limited, which creates the need for modifications that still address the goals the department has for the technology.

Certainly, no technology team, no matter how well prepared, can anticipate every issue that will develop with the departmental facility. That is specifically why the technology team's role should continue *after* the

facility has been developed and adapted for the context in which it is used. Thus the third question in the framework, "What issues continue to develop?" For example, if a lab is up and running, but it is discovered that the space is limited to the point that full-sized classes cannot use the lab together, the technology team should be the entity that develops ways to adapt the curriculum so that groups can work away from the class during class meeting times. Likewise, if issues develop that show the installed software is inappropriate for the described goals, or if the goals of the department change over time, the technology team should decide how to modify the facility to meet the needs of the department.

In describing a means for schools to systematically implement technology into their English curriculum. I have dealt primarily with the physical considerations of creating a computer lab, but the same framework can be used for any technology issue. Considering the goals, anticipating what issues may occur (including potential limitations), and creating a means of considering and dealing with issues as they develop are all important means of ensuring that technology is implemented effectively in English instruction. ●

A Student-Centered vs. Teacher-Centered Approach in the Secondary Classroom

by Ronald T. Sion, Saint Raphael Academy, Pawtucket, Rhode Island

In a world of interactive communication, the Internet, computer programs, and audience participation in the field of entertainment, it is little wonder that educators have tried to emulate the society outside the classroom walls by engaging students in interactive learning techniques. The current catch phrase is the *student-centered classroom* with

its interfaced companion, *cooperative learning*. Ironically, if education and true learning ever had an authentic purpose, the student was always a central figure involved in the classroom, and his or her cooperation was crucial—without student presence and engagement, there is no school.

However, in the past, the traditional teaching methodology was for

the teacher to come up with a list of objectives and goals to be realized within a specific time period, and to make a presentation to the class (perhaps in the form of a lecture or a question and answer mode) in an attempt to cover the material. Students sat in neat rows, conscientiously took notes, raised their hands to ask questions or respond to que-

ries, and were tested on how well they understood the material covered. The assessment frequently reflected the students' ability to return the information—on standard objective and/or subjective tests—in the manner in which it was presented to them. Life was simple and uncomplicated for educators who stood in the spotlight from the beginning to the end of class—they determined the pace and operated in a totalitarian manner.

Obviously this long-standing procedure continues to a great extent to this day. Just recently I proctored an exam in a colleague's classroom. While a few students still remained in their seats at the conclusion of the exam, the teacher eagerly prepared the room for the next class she would be teaching there by placing the desks in perfectly straight rows. Certainly this single action reflected the teacher-centered classroom approach that she has utilized for many years.

Learning, or at least what is believed to be learning, does transpire in this type of classroom, since for some time students have succeeded in passing their courses, and eventually have graduated from high school. If the student was ever actively involved during class time, it was probably in the form of copying his or her homework answers or solutions on the chalkboard or engaging in a review similar to the spelling bee of the elementary school years. Occasionally, students may have been paired to accomplish a task, but this was listed as adjunct in the teacher's plan book to the traditional teacher-determined and directed approach.

At the other end of the spectrum is the new student-centered approach. In this instance, the method used to cover the material at hand and the objectives and goals to be achieved are an integral part of the activity. For example, students may be handed a sheet of questions on a specific topic that could take the form of a scavenger hunt. In pairs or groups, they may be asked to uncover cooperatively different pieces of information that they subsequently share with each

other in a large group setting. The assessment may also be constructed by the students in the form of pivotal questions they devise that synthesize the material covered, or it may take the form of a hands-on project. The focus is on the student, who is the active learner from the beginning to the end of the period. Desks are not always in rows—students move around the room, perhaps to reference books or to work with a computer software program. The atmosphere is one of organized disorder to an outside observer. The teacher may only briefly describe what is about to occur. The degree to which the educator meticulously

If performance on a test is a measure of learning, it would appear that the student-centered approach is far more successful.

plans the activity, keeps the students on-task, facilitates the process, and frequently utilizes the approach so as to produce a comfort factor on the part of the student determines how successful the class performs the activity. Most significantly, the activity is the learning tool and not just an adjunct aspect of the learning process.

At the beginning of the past school year, I made a formal commitment to our vice-principal of academics to make the student-centered classroom a frequent reality in my traditionally structured English class. I had often made an effort to try this approach in my 17 years of teaching, but the activity was always an adjunct feature rather than the focus of the lesson plan. In an interdisciplinary classroom where I team-teach, it was a regular procedure. In the traditional English classroom, however, it was a challenge. Often I spent so much time presenting material to the students that time ran out before the activity was initiated or, more frequently, I tried to squeeze it into the

last 10 minutes of class. In a mad rush to move on, rarely was I able to return to the activity the following day.

This was going to require a change in approach from the outset of the period. To demonstrate how such a maneuver was implemented, I offer this comparison of the techniques utilized in a twelfth-grade English class then and now: the teacher-centered approach used the previous year and the student-centered approach implemented this year.

Robert Browning and the Dramatic Monologue

Then: Teacher-Directed

The Objective: The student will come to appreciate and comprehend two poems of Robert Browning with a full understanding of his use of dramatic monologue.

The Method: The teacher will impart information about Robert Browning, will read "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" to the students while they follow along, stopping along the way to clarify certain points. The students will be asked key questions about the poems posed by the teacher to which they will reply orally.

Follow-up/Homework: Questions about the two poems and dramatic monologue will be given to the students as a homework assignment. A unit test will follow in a couple of weeks that will include questions directly related to the material covered.

The Class Experience: Background information about Robert Browning was presented to the students in the form of notes listed on the chalkboard. A definition of dramatic monologue—the poetic technique that Browning developed—was given to the students. While reading "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess," students were asked key questions in an attempt to foster an understanding of the poem, what has transpired within the verse, and Browning's use of the technique. The class concluded with a homework

assignment of questions located within the text. This assignment was due the following day.

Now: The Student-Directed Approach

The Objective: The student will determine a definition of dramatic monologue as a technique developed by Robert Browning and will comprehend how this technique is utilized in two poems by the writer.

The Method: Students will be placed within groups of three and will be handed sheets that require that they read two poems ("Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess") by Browning. They will uncover certain aspects of the poems based on key questions that follow the reading of each stanza. After completing the readings and the questions, each group will define dramatic monologue as a literary technique based on the information gathered and the similarity in form between the two poems. The answers to the questions will be solicited from a spokesperson in each group and one individual from each group will place their group's definition of dramatic monologue on the chalkboard. The students will be asked to synthesize the definitions rendered into a comprehensive one for which they will be accountable in a future assessment.

Follow-up/Homework: Students will be asked to paraphrase one of the two poems in prose form in the first person. The class will be divided in half for this purpose, with one half writing on "Porphyria's Lover" and the other half on "My Last Duchess." The intent is to share the works in class the following day.

The Class Experience: Students worked cooperatively to uncover the answers. The teacher moved around the room to facilitate the process. At the conclusion of the activity, each group was solicited to respond to different questions. One student from each group placed the group's definition of dramatic monologue on the chalkboard. The plan to have the

students synthesize the material on the chalkboard into one comprehensive definition, however, was only partially accomplished since time ran out. Students were asked not to compare their definitions to the one located in the glossary of their textbooks until the exercise could be completed the following day. Homework was assigned quickly at the conclusion of the class.

A Comparative Assessment

The teacher-directed approach worked—students were attentive, took notes, and appeared to comprehend the concept. The class was quiet, neat, and organized. The teacher was very much in control. The material was covered in about 35 minutes and students had time in class to begin their homework assignment. Preparation for the class by the teacher was limited since he had taught both poems and the technique several times before. Only a cursory re-reading of the poems and a review of the questions were required. The homework was collected the following day and the teacher was able to move on in the syllabus to Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The student-directed classroom was quite different. In order to get right to the activity and avoid running short of time, information about Robert Browning (as given in the teacher-centered class) was put off until a later date. Desks were moved so that groups of three could work together. There was noise—students were reading the poems aloud and talking to each other about the questions. In some cases, there was disagreement. The teacher, moving around the room, was challenged to keep everyone on-task and keep the noise level down since a traditional class was taking place next door.

The teacher experienced anxiety when he heard inaccurate interpretations. Although tempted, he avoided recapturing control even though at times some groups were completely lost—they did not comprehend what

the poem was about (especially "My Last Duchess"). However, the questions were targeted sequentially to realign their thinking, and by going over the answers later, errors in interpretation were corrected. Some novel insights were generated and students laughed at comments that their peers made about the poems. Since a comprehensive definition of dramatic monologue did not materialize before the class ended, this aspect of the lesson was tabled until the following day. Actually, determining a comprehensive definition for the dramatic monologue technique and sharing the original prose works given for homework comprised a complete second class period.

In preparing for the student-centered class, the teacher had to design a means for the students to gather the information without his intrusion on the process except to facilitate it. This took time and a considerable effort. Just reviewing the poems was not enough. Questions had to be generated (and typed) that would guide the students without doing the work for them. Moving around the room and keeping everyone working toward a common goal was far more difficult than just providing the information. Standing back, letting go, and facilitating required more energy than speaking to a large group.

Covering the same material took twice as long in this case. Some students experienced frustration when they turned to their teacher for a solution to the problem at hand and were faced only with further questions. Other students found this approach intriguing. As it continued throughout the school year, it became routine, comfortable to all and, in most cases, enjoyable. The involvement of the students in the learning process was far more active. Even the homework assignment was more meaningful than the traditional approach of answering questions in the text since it actively reinforced an understanding of the poems and the

technique of dramatic monologue.

If performance on a test is a measure of learning, it would appear that the student-centered approach is far more successful. This may be the case because students in the teacher-centered setting relied on their notes to recycle the information for test preparation, while those in the student-centered classroom were able to recall the experience of learning that became integrated into the definition of dramatic monologue and the reading of the poems. They could recall the information even without reviewing their notes, as was evident in a brief review before the test.

Would this procedure have worked as well in a less motivated class? This question can't be answered since the teacher did not have another class with which to compare this experience. However, I have seen this methodology work quite well in an untracked interdisciplinary classroom as the more academically inclined students served as models and mentors for underachievers.

Could the work ethic for a different activity each day be sustained? At first, this was the most challenging aspect of this approach. Ironically, after the first month of school, the activities flowed more readily, and they did not always require elaborate preparations. Questions dictated or written on the chalkboard could work as well as those typed in advance. Questions and activities were found in the textbook resources or in other published formats. Later, students often came up with their own plan for attacking an assignment.

A Look Back: Research and Experience Meet

In reviewing the year, the same quantity of material was not covered as in previous years but the quality was more meaningful. Students generally enjoyed coming to class. While at the beginning of the school year a great deal of anxiety was experienced by the teacher, this lessened in time. Students became so comfortable with the procedure that

they voluntarily increased their involvement in the class, challenged themselves, engaged their peers, and devised creative means to accomplish the task at hand. They even willingly lowered their speaking voices.

I would be less than candid to state that it worked 100% of the time. There were occasions when the former teacher-directed approach was implemented, as in providing instructions for a research paper or when the class time was reduced due to a school activity. In addition, if not all teachers are comfortable with this approach, there is a segment of the student population that has been so conditioned by the teacher-centered classroom that they find this approach disconcerting—they wonder if they are being cheated and implore the teacher to take back control. Also, some students do not adjust well to working with others regardless of its value.

Recent research indicates that the experience of this class was not unique. In a 1996 study entitled *Student-Generated Curriculum: Lessons from Our Students*, a team of high-school English teachers from Cedar Shoals High School in Athens, Georgia, found that more instructional time was initially needed in designing and implementing a student-centered classroom. In addition, it was a challenge for teachers to foster an environment conducive to the group dynamic feature of interactive learning. Some students experienced a great deal of difficulty in adapting to this new process, and it took time for both the teachers and the students to adjust to their new roles. Furthermore, such a procedure was found to be quite compatible with the heterogeneous classroom (McWhorter, et. al., 1996).

One interesting appraisal of a student-centered shift came from a non-secondary environment. When the Business Resource Center at Tacoma Community College in Washington implemented a student-centered approach, results indicated that students came to feel more valued and respected when they were ac-

tively involved in their own learning. Students tangibly experienced course objectives and goals, perhaps for the first time, and a higher program completion rate was realized (Lockemy & Summers, 1993). An earlier British study of business and technical courses at 16 centers found that while the teachers and students welcomed the student-centered shift, it was far more time consuming and a significant adjustment for teachers who were forced to assume the unfamiliar role of facilitator (Business and Technician Education Council, 1990).

Conscientious design of a cooperative learning, student-centered classroom will always be more work in preparation and implementation. Ironically, the teacher who does not embrace or accept the student-centered approach as valid has frequently been critical on the very grounds that it appears to be all fun and games. The question that most often comes to my mind when I hear such a criticism is: What is really wrong with authentic learning transpiring in an atmosphere of active enjoyment? The rewards of experimenting with a student-centered approach are immeasurable. It may not be the panacea for a lack of student motivation or successful performance, but it does at least merit a life next door to the traditional teacher-centered approach. ●

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Call for Manuscripts— Future Issues

The *English Leadership Quarterly*, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

A decision about a manuscript will be reached within two months of submission. The *Quarterly* typically publishes one out of ten manuscripts it receives each year.

Surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

February 2000 (deadline October 15, 1999)

Leadership Involvement and Family Literacy

Guest editor: Jeanne Gerlach

April 2000 (deadline December 15, 1999)

Leadership and Technology

August 2000 (deadline April 28, 2000)

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Guest editor: Elizabeth Howard (see call, next issue)

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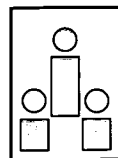
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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP

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▷ IN THIS ISSUE

Action Research Insights

by Henry Kiernan, editor

The speed of change in our world is compelling. What strikes me about this is that most of us are not doing things the way we did a few years ago—indeed, we cannot do them that way any longer. We are all, in fact, creating new worlds.

However, while the tools that surround us and make our work possible are new (they were virtually unknown a few years back), we carry within us the learnings of a world that existed through all the decades of our youth and maturity. So while part of us lives in the present, when we act without forethought or due processing, much of our inner self reacts from the past.

Our inner worlds, especially those that conflict with the world-as-it-is-now, are the products of many differ-

ent decades and many different generations. Thus, when we react without thought, we are acting with values and behaviors from the 1940s, '50s, '60s, '70s, and even '80s. We do not come from the same place, and unless we process our reactions carefully and communicate with equal care, we are likely to be misunderstood. So the past matters.

Yet, we could not carry out our current work without the tools of the present. The computers, the cell phones, the e-mail, etc., are essential for all of us juggling many conflicting responsibilities. It is clearly possible for us to juggle many things even when the task is difficult or even overwhelming at times. So the present matters.

What do we have to sustain us? From all of the literature on school

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reform, we have learned that one of the characteristics most essential for success in a culture of change is the opportunity for teachers to dialogue with each other. When professionals engage in problem solving and in actively researching solutions, we gain significant awareness of our own growth and the growth of others. ●

What New English Teachers Need to Know: CEL Leaders Speak Out about the English Methods Course

by Marshall A. George, Fordham University, New York

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A couple of years ago when I was visiting several of my preservice English language arts interns in a local high school, I was cornered by one of their cooperat-

ing teachers. Mrs. Cook, a 20-year veteran teacher, wanted to talk with me about an intern who was holding reading workshops twice a week in his classes. Ashley, the intern, had

reported to me several weeks earlier that he was trying out a modified version of the reader's workshop approach described by Atwell (1987) and Rief (1992) that I had introduced

in my English methods course earlier in the semester. He also had shared with me that Mrs. Cook had been very hesitant to let him experiment with reader's workshop, so I braced myself for a tongue-lashing. However, my conversation with Mrs. Cook surprised me. It went something like this.

"Ashley convinced me to let him allow his students to choose their own books for in-class reading during the whole period on Wednesdays and Fridays. I've never been one for *wasting* [emphasis added] in-class time like that, but I decided to let him find out for himself firsthand that it wouldn't work. Well, I must admit I was the one who had the lesson to learn! His idea has been working beautifully. The kids love it and are actually reading all sorts of books, including many of the titles I've tried unsuccessfully to get them to read at home! I am so pleased with the success of reader's workshop that I'm going to try it with my other two classes! I am so glad you introduced the interns to reading workshop in your methods class."

Beaming at her praise, I was ready to respond when she charged right on

saying, "But you really need to spend some time on classroom management in that course, too. Ashley doesn't seem to know enough about that, I'm afraid," she grimaced. So did I.

This caused me to reflect on the English methods course. When I had planned my first English methods course that semester, I consulted extensively with my mentor at the university, did an exhaustive ERIC and Dissertation Abstracts search for articles and dissertations written about planning English methods courses, and poured over the just-published *How English Teachers Get Taught* (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995). But I had never asked any of the mentoring teachers I worked with in area middle and high schools (men and women with a great deal of teaching experience) what *they* felt should be included in the course. Following the advice of Ms. Cook, I made a modification to my course outline, and invited a veteran teacher, whose approach I had observed and admired greatly, to come to my methods class to share her thoughts on effective classroom management. My students were thrilled, and the class ran over by half an hour

as they bombarded her with questions. I had learned an important lesson. I wanted to continue my research on the English methods course. This time, however, I wanted to consider the voices of experienced English teachers in my study.

What the Research Says

The 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, suggests that many teacher preparation programs have a "superficial curriculum" in which "candidates do not learn deeply about how to understand and handle real problems of practice" (1996, p. 32). Moreover, the report suggests that serious fragmentation exists, not only within teacher education, but also between teacher educators and practicing teachers. The Commission joined others (Holmes Group, 1995; the Renaissance Group, 1993) in a call to end this fragmentation with a reexamination of the content of the courses taught to preservice teachers, as well as increased cooperation between teacher educators and practitioners in the public schools. Indeed, all three groups suggest that collaboration among teacher education programs and local schools may be the key to meaningful change in our schools.

A review of related literature suggests that methods courses, in general, do seem to influence teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and approaches to teaching (Bennett, 1979; Bush, 1986; Lamme & Ross, 1981; Quinn, 1993). However, the content of these courses may not be completely appropriate for the realities of teaching in today's schools (Killian, 1983; Mertz & Zidonis, 1982; Myers, 1983). There has been some research focusing on the content of English methods courses and the beliefs and perceptions of their instructors (Evans & Cardone, 1963; Hipple, 1974; Oftedahl, 1985; Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995). In addition, student and alumni perceptions of and satisfaction with English teacher educa-

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tion programs have been the subject of a small body of literature (Fagan & Laine, 1980; Folsom, 1983; Mertz & Zidonis, 1982; Myers, 1983). The most common criticism found in these studies is that English methods courses often do not adequately prepare teachers for the realities of the secondary school English class.

I discovered that few studies have addressed inservice English teachers' perceptions of English teacher preparation. Therefore, I wanted to listen to these important voices in my own exploration of the English methods course.

How I Tried to Answer My Questions

I set out to examine the beliefs of leaders in secondary school English about the English methods courses required of preservice teachers of secondary school English. The methods and procedures I used in this study were inspired by research conducted by Oftedahl (1985) in which she examined English methods courses in terms of their course content and the teaching strategies utilized in teaching them in English teacher preparation programs in the Midwest. I decided to solicit data from members of the Executive Committee of the Conference on English Leadership (CEL), chairs of the CEL Nominating Committee, and the Committee on Developing English / Language Arts Leadership. It was my hope that this panel of sixteen "experts," representing experienced teachers of English at the secondary school level, would provide me, a novice teacher educator, with insight into what new teachers of English language arts need to know.

I developed a four-part survey questionnaire and sent it to the CEL leaders. Part I of the questionnaire asked participants for basic demographic information, such as job title, degrees held, and teaching experience. In Part II, participants were given an open-ended question, asking what they believed the primary purpose of the English methods

course to be. Part III contained a list of nine common teaching strategies, drawn from popular English education textbooks (Christenbury, 1994; Kirby & Liner, 1988; Milner & Milner, 1993). A Likert scale was provided for participants to rate these strategies according to how effective they were in middle and high school English language arts classrooms. The scale ranged from 0 (should never be used in class, as it may be ineffective) to 3 (should frequently be used in class, as it may be very effective).

The most common criticism found in these studies is that English methods courses often do not adequately prepare teachers for the realities of the secondary school English class.

Part IV of the survey consisted of a list of topics that could be explored in the English methods course. Respondents were asked to rank these topics on a Likert scale indicating how much emphasis they felt should be given to these topics in the methods course. The scale ranged from 0 (no emphasis in the course) to 3 (heavy emphasis in the course). These items were grouped into the following content area clusters: (a) general topics, (b) literature, (c) language, (d) composition, and (e) related areas. Furthermore, respondents were provided the opportunity to list topics that they felt should be addressed in an English methods course, but were not included on the questionnaire.

I examined the data on the 16 returned surveys, using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions, percentages, and means to analyze the close-ended questions. I used qualitative methods to analyze the open-ended questions thematically. To do this, I transcribed the

answers of each respondent and analyzed the data for common phrasing and terminology.

What I Found Out

The demographic data confirmed that the respondents were indeed leaders in secondary school English, as they each had significant experience teaching English language arts at the secondary school level, and all but one served in a supervisory capacity at the time of the study.

Purpose of the English Methods Course

In an effort to examine their beliefs with regards to the overall purpose of the English methods course, I presented participants with the following prompt. "Please state what you believe the primary purpose of the English methods course to be." I analyzed their answers looking for common terminology, phrasing, and themes. While the wording of the responses varied greatly, I discovered several commonalities.

Respondents used a variety of verbs to state the purpose of the English methods course. Infinitives such as "to train," "to develop," "to acquaint," and "to teach" were sometimes used; however, the verb that was utilized most often was "to prepare," which appeared in almost half of the responses. In 6 of the 13 answers to this question, respondents included the students of the English methods course in their statement of purpose, with 5 of them suggesting that the students should be active learners. For instance, one stated that, "Students will develop a theory . . ." Another suggested that, "students will reflect on and develop skills . . ." A phrase that appeared repeatedly in CEL members' answers to Part II of the questionnaire was "theory into practice." Each of the uses of the word "practice," or the phrase "theory into practice," referred to the responsibility of the English methods course instructor to provide not only grounding in theories related to the teaching of English, but also to

allow opportunities for students to see how these theories might best be put into practice in the secondary school English class. One response that expressed this idea particularly well stated, "... methods students should develop a theory of teaching and learning the English language arts and be able to design curriculum and instruction and put the theory into practice in a real English class ..."

Variations of this phrase, "real English class," were echoed in a number of the responses. Respondents referred to the need of English education students to be prepared for the realities of teaching in the secondary school. Among these "realities" were frequent references to the diversity found in the typical English class. Leaders in secondary school English used a variety of expressions to qualify this diversity, including "various backgrounds," "multiple levels of ability and interests," "differential learning styles and multiple intelligences," and "a sundry of student behaviors and responses." One respondent stated, "Most student teachers I've known recently are amazed by the lack of social maturity shown by the students they must face every day. Teacher educators *must* do a better job of preparing these student teachers for the reality that is today's high school!" Nevertheless, 3 other CEL responses to Part II acknowledged that the English methods course was very important. One statement began with, "The English methods course has the enormous task of preparing young teachers ...". Another ended with the observation, "A HUGE, BUT VERY IMPORTANT, JOB!" This confirms that the members of this expert panel believe that the English methods course plays an important part in preparing preservice teachers for their careers.

English Methods Course Content

In order to find out what the English methods course should include, Part IV of the questionnaire provided a list of topics that might be explored in the

pre-certification English methods course. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed each of these topics should be covered in an English methods course. CEL leaders' responses suggested that while a number of topics needed to be explored, those related to the teaching of composition should receive the heaviest emphasis. Figure 1 reveals the ten topics that the participants in the study suggested should be most heavily emphasized in preparing preservice teachers of English language arts for the realities of today's secondary school classroom.

It is interesting that, in contrast to the findings of previous studies that examined inservice English teachers' perceptions of the English methods course (Killian, 1983; Mertz & Zidonis, 1982; Oftedahl, 1985), the data in this study indicated that the participants felt that the teaching of grammar, usage, and mechanics required little emphasis in the English methods course. On the other hand, the data in this study indicated that, in contrast with findings in other studies regarding the beliefs of instructors of the English methods course (Hipple, 1974; Oftedahl, 1985), leaders in secondary school English believe that heavy emphasis should be placed on topics related to general teaching and pedagogy, such as classroom management and discussion skills. Several respondents

included unsolicited comments addressing the major task facing teachers of the English methods course. One respondent stated that,

I believe *all* of the topics are important; however, no way can they all be addressed in a pre-certification English methods course!! Many of these topics would have to be approached through a teacher's commitment to professional development after spending some time in the classroom. I shudder to think of some of the mistakes I made in my early years of teaching. EXPERIENCE is *so* important, and you just don't get that in a methods course.

Instructional Strategies

In an effort to get an idea of what teaching strategies may prove effective for use in secondary school English classes, Part III of the questionnaire contained a list of nine instructional strategies. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent each teaching strategy was effective for use in the secondary school English classroom. A Likert scale was provided for participants to answer these questions. The scale ranged from 0 (should never be used in class, as it may be ineffective) to 3 (should frequently be used in class, as it may be very effective). I hoped that the responses to this section would help

Ten Highest Ranked Topics CEL Participants Rated for Inclusion in the English Methods Course		
Rank Order	Topic	Mean Rating
1	Discussion Skills	2.92
1	Relationship between "Language Skills" and Writing	2.92
1	Writing Process	2.92
4	Questioning Techniques	2.85
5	Strategies for Teaching Literature	2.78
6	Assessing Student Writing	2.77
6	Discipline/Classroom Management	2.77
6	Writing Workshop	2.77
9.5	Reader Response	2.70
9.5	Reflective Teaching	2.70

Figure 1.

to determine which, if any, of these nine teaching strategies should be introduced to preservice teachers in the English methods course. Figure 2 summarizes the responses to this section. Respondents indicated that class discussion was the most effective teaching strategy included in the list. This echoes their rating of "Discussion Skills" as being one of the most important topics in the English methods course. Respondents also indicated that group or individual projects and writing workshop should be used fairly frequently in secondary school English classes, as they may prove to be quite effective. The one instructional strategy that respondents suggested was mostly ineffective was "Lecture."

Implications for English Education

So what? What does this study suggest? Are English methods courses doing an adequate job of preparing preservice English teachers? What needs to happen if English educators are to do a better job of preparing preservice teachers of English language arts? I think the first step is that each of us who teach the methods course needs to take a step back and reevaluate what, why, and how we are teaching in the course. Is it our intention to prepare preservice for the realities of the secondary school English classroom? If so, should we not involve experienced inservice teachers of English in the planning, teaching, and evaluating of our courses?

So the first thing English educators can do in assessing, evaluating, and planning methods courses is seek the expertise of inservice English teachers. Recently, M. P. Cavanaugh (1995), in an effort to get input into planning her own methods course, conducted a survey of English teachers in a range of schools near where she taught an English methods course. Many who teach the English methods course also supervise student teachers and interns in the field and come into contact with experi-

enced and effective teachers of English language arts. Why not consult with them about what we are including in our courses?

Another approach to achieving a better balance of theory and practice would be a team-taught methods course. A couple of years ago, at the Annual Convention of the NCTE in Detroit, Mauro and Schiavone (1997) presented a session entitled "Theory and Practice Connections: Team-Teaching the English Methods Course." Mauro, a professor of English education at George Washington University, and Schiavone, a doctoral student still teaching at the secondary school level, shared their highly successful collaborative experience in team-teaching an English methods course. As I listened to their enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive description of that experience, I realized that their story supported the findings of this study. The theory-practice connection can surely be best shared with students through a collaborative approach.

Another way for English educators to become more effective in their efforts to bridge theory and practice, recommended almost a decade ago by John Bushman (1989), is to teach one or more classes in the public schools every few years, allowing them to experience the "real world of classroom teaching." Although I am in middle and secondary English language arts classrooms on a regular

basis, I am not there as a teacher. I have the option of leaving when things get rough! Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could take a sabbatical and spend a year teaching in one of the schools where my student teachers intern every year?

It is also important that teachers of the English methods course not only *teach about* innovative instructional strategies but actually engage students from the methods class in these activities. It is for this reason that I have begun to devote several classes each semester to actual writing and reading workshops. I have students read young adult literature and engage in literature circles right there in the methods class.

My study indicates that English methods courses are not necessarily in dire need of total change. However, it does confirm what I suspected when Mrs. Cook and I had that conversation three years ago: I, a teacher educator, have a lot to learn from the people who teach daily in the middle and high schools for which I am preparing preservice teachers. Likewise, those inservice teachers may learn from novice teachers, fresh out of college, theories and ideas that can make the schools where they all work more innovative and effective places. ●

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Rank Order and Mean Score of Teaching Strategies Rated for Effectiveness for Use in the Secondary School English Class		
Rank	Teaching Strategy	Mean Score
1	Class Discussion	2.85
2	Group/Individual Projects	2.70
3	Writing Workshop	2.62
4	Audiovisuals/Instructional Technology	2.54
5	Reading Workshop	2.46
6	Individualized Instruction	2.31
7	Simulation/Role Playing	2.23
8	Computer-Assisted Instruction	2.08
9	Lecture	1.54

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Assessing Teacher Performance with a Portfolio Rubric

by Bonita L. Wilcox and Lawrence A. Tomei, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

As a beginning English teacher, I [Bonita] had never heard of a "professional portfolio." My contract depended on satisfactory teaching, and that was determined by a visit from the building principal twice a year. My students thought they were the ones being evaluated, and their attention and behavior changed, just as mine did when the principal entered the classroom. Even when the visits were short, it was a relief when the principal finished the observation and left the room. Nearly everyone questions the accuracy and value of this kind of a teacher assessment.

But that is only half of the problem. A recent article in *Education Week* asked these questions: "If teachers aren't continuously jump-starting the intellectual stimulation and

challenge within a school, who will? If the adults are not treated as professionals and as learners, what hope is there for the children?" (Evans, p. 31). Everyone is concerned about the students and whether or not they are getting a quality education, yet it seems obvious enough that only quality teachers can deliver a quality education. Still, schools are often the worst places for teachers to learn. Even with the emphasis on reform in the last ten years, current practices in professional development still have little impact on teaching and learning.

Although there is plenty of evidence to show that schools offer disconnected inservices without feedback, many factors contribute to poor professional development programs. For example, teachers tend

not to apply or implement new ideas without support. The school culture allows little time for sharing, and teachers are isolated in their classrooms. Serious discussion about course content or instructional skills is often lacking. Many teachers do not read professional journals or current books on education, even if they are available in school libraries. How can schools encourage teachers to be lifelong learners, continually engaged in personal and professional development?

A recent study by the National Staff Development Council, based on a variety of assessments, reported that staff development improved student learning of middle school students. The professional development strategies included giving teachers time to refine and imple-

ment new ideas, access to experts and support materials, and follow-up activities (NSDC, 1999; www.nsdc.org/midann.htm). Appropriate professional development, according to this study, can improve student learning. By improving the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers, we certainly increase our chances of improving teaching and learning.

Of course, it is never as easy as it may seem. Professional development requires strengthening one's knowledge base. Teachers' content areas encompass a broad spectrum, and books and resources come in a wide variety. Teachers' skill levels, goals, and philosophies differ, and it is difficult to get a consensus as to what is most needed. Perhaps the greatest challenge in professional development is attitude. Many dispositions embedded in a school's culture conflict with current concepts of "Best Practice," such as the idea that seat time and an accumulation of credits can indicate that one is educated. Much of the required curriculum may not be in the best interest of all or even most of the students. Many still frown on students who follow vocational paths in high school, and college *preparation* rather than *education* is often the goal of the curriculum. Even teachers believe that 30 years of practice means *best practice*. Regardless of all the efforts of reformers, schools are reluctant to change, even when the evidence indicates that the new ways increase student learning, as with the writing-across-curriculum movement.

Arguing over who is to blame rarely solves the problem, yet blaming teachers seems to be politically correct since teaching and learning in classrooms usually depends on teachers. The fact is that teachers, just like students, decide whether or not they want to learn. Teachers, just like students, can actively participate in school with little effort toward thinking or learning. As a classroom teacher, I was influenced by the advice of Beverly Chin, a former President of NCTE. She said it was up to each one of us to take charge of

our own professional development. "Recording my ways of knowing, gathering new information, wondering whether these new ideas could be applied in my classroom, considering whether these new ideas would be helpful to my students, and deciding which to keep and which to throw away have made me a more thoughtful teacher" (Wilcox, p.179).

For all these reasons, we wrote the book *Professional Portfolios for Teachers: A Guide for Learners, Experts, and Scholars* (1999). We wanted teachers to be in charge of their own development. We wanted teachers to keep records of their work so they could articulate, reflect, and learn from their experiences. We know this is a challenge in busy school environments, but we think it is well worth the effort. The advantages of keeping a professional portfolio far outweigh all other considerations.

Having academic conversations with other teachers is essential, whether those conversations are live, virtual, or vicarious.

Professional Portfolio

A professional portfolio is more than a place where you organize your teaching materials. It is a place where you record your thinking and learning about your teaching. It requires reflective self-assessment and goal setting. It requires reading and writing and talking with others. It requires knowledge and understanding of current literature in one's field. It requires keeping track of all this cognitive activity and making your own meaning. These kinds of activities result in gaining new perspectives and stretching one's mind.

Understanding that classroom teachers really are the experts is

important. Having academic conversations with other teachers is essential, whether those conversations are live, virtual, or vicarious. There are many books on teaching and learning written by teacher-experts. It used to be difficult to find good books for teachers written by teachers. Today this is not the case. Teachers who publish their ideas are not only engaged in teaching, but also in their own learning—learning from others, learning from reflecting on their own teaching practices, and learning from reading and writing.

Engaging in learning means setting goals and trying new strategies. Asking questions and reflecting on current practices. Taking opportunities, even if they are risky, and modeling what it means to be a learner. Our records of what we know and can do, of what we are learning and thinking, are called *artifacts*. In any portfolio, the most important artifacts can be found in journals where we toss ideas around until we see what we think. Journals are full of visible evidence of all kinds of thinking—critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, and reflective thinking. From our own experiences and from studies, Larry and I are convinced that teachers who record their teaching and learning history in a professional portfolio become better teachers day by day.

How can we be so sure? We asked the teachers to assess their *own* teaching and learning. Then, using a summary of the same tool, we assessed the teachers and found the assessments to be a close match. Another important finding was that every teacher had different ways of representing teaching and learning (different artifacts). Our assessment tool worked as well with all kinds of artifacts, regardless of specific disciplines.

Six-Step Approach

How difficult is it to get a portfolio assessment system in place? Not so difficult. We suggest the following six-step approach.

Step One

Teachers organize portfolios into five parts: Reading, Writing, Thinking, Interacting, and Demonstrating. (See Figure 1.) This is most easily done on a technological landscape, but a tabbed, 3-ring binder works fine.

Essential Elements of a Professional Portfolio

Reading: Reading is necessary to gain new knowledge and new perspectives. Whether the texts are compendiums of basic skills and teaching strategies, individual texts on innovative approaches or handouts from professional journals, new information and new ideas lead to new understandings and must be explored continually.

Writing: Formal papers usually represent the capstone experience in which reading, writing, interacting, demonstrating, and viewing come together. Thinking has been extended, presented, defended, and refined. Prior knowledge has been assessed, new knowledge has been integrated, and current knowledge can be documented.

Thinking: An “academic” thinking journal contains three parts, one for booknotes and reading responses, one for class interactions and feedback from demonstrations, and one for personal reflections to stretch our minds and deepen our understandings.

Interacting: Artifacts from activities and exercises done in groups emphasize the importance of thoughtfulness in teaching and learning. Defending what we do, justifying the way we think, and articulating our ideas is essential to professional development.

Demonstrating: Teachers deliver lessons and present demonstrations to illustrate significant differences between traditional lessons and enhanced lessons incorporating current methods of “best practice.”

Step Two

Teachers gather all kinds of artifacts to store in these divisions. Artifacts are key to professional development; we suggest three types: collecting, working, and showcase.

Collecting artifacts include journal articles, unit plans, and a list of Web sites. These represent the *acquisition* of knowledge and skills.

Working artifacts include rubrics for our students, lesson plans, and graphic organizers. These help us to hone our skills and improve our practice, and represent the *application* of knowledge and skills.

Showcase artifacts include conference proposals, transcripts, and publications. These allow us to make a contribution to our field, representing the *generation and sharing* of knowledge.

Step Three

Teachers keep journals to set goals, to reflect on reading, to record discussion, to illustrate ideas, and to make connections. The journal is “a place where thinking becomes visible, where it can be finely tuned, where the thinker is engaged, and where making meaning is personalized” (Wilcox & Tomei, p.14).

Step Four

Periodically, teachers assess their own portfolios using the Portfolio Rubric for Self-Assessment shown in the 5 panels of Figure 2. This self-assessment should be placed in the portfolio before it is submitted to others for assessment.

Step Five

After teachers have completed the Portfolio Rubric for Self-Assessment, a principal, for example, could quickly and easily assess a portfolio with the following *Portfolio Assessment Rubric Summary* (see Figure 3). This overall assessment is multidimensional and more accurate than a classroom observation. The evidence (artifact or original document) is in the portfolio and can be scrutinized if there are questions of misrepresentation. Portfolios could be holistically assessed by a group of teachers and administrators for validity. Teachers are judged on long-term goals and achievements, and by learning to monitor and manage their own learning, they are better able to show students how to monitor and manage theirs.

Reading

As readers gather evidence of new knowledge in the form of journals, booknotes, summaries, outlines, drawings, or graphic organizers, patterns and connections will begin to form. Reading extends an individual’s knowledge base. Do your reading artifacts show evidence of the following?

- Collected a significant amount of new knowledge
- Strengthened a position with documentation
- Initiated new ideas for teaching and learning
- Demonstrated an open-minded attitude
- Critiqued a resource for publication
- Suggested and shared new applications of knowledge

Choose four artifacts from your professional portfolio as evidence of your learning through reading. List the artifacts below and explain how they contributed to your acquisition of knowledge, application of knowledge, or generation of new knowledge.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Figure 1.

Figure 2. Portfolio rubric for self-assessment (panel 1).

Writing

As writers we illustrate what we know and understand through publishing for others to read. Informal writing extends our thinking and understanding. Making meaning through writing involves formal and informal papers, book reviews, thematic units, poems, letters, lessons, and publications. Do your writing artifacts show evidence of the following?

- Documented thinking and learning experiences
- Analyzed in-depth educational concepts
- Designed new curriculum or course of study
- Prepared papers for conference presentation
- Self-assessed teaching experiences
- Submitted journal article for publication

Choose four artifacts from your professional portfolio as evidence of your learning through writing. List the artifacts below and explain how they contributed to your acquisition of knowledge, application of knowledge, or generation of new knowledge.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Thinking

Thinking lies at the heart of the portfolio and animates thoughts and ideas, giving them momentum and bringing them to life. An academic thinking journal is a place where we toss ideas around, consider other viewpoints, make our own connections, and judge the value of our learning. Do your thinking artifacts show evidence of the following?

- Advanced your personal philosophy of teaching and learning
- Recorded thinking and learning processes in a journal
- Constructed graphic organizer to show patterns of thinking
- Initiated problem-solving strategies to address educational issues
- Integrated thinking into existing teaching and learning strategies
- Generated concepts/ideas that contributed to the knowledge base

Choose four artifacts from your professional portfolio as evidence of your learning through thinking. List the artifacts below and explain how they contributed to your acquisition of knowledge, application of knowledge, or generation of new knowledge.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Interacting

Interacting addresses the responsibility of teachers to argue, defend, and share their ideas. It involves peer assessment, memos from group activities, notes from brainstorming sessions, solutions to problems, and position papers. Do your interacting artifacts show evidence of the following?

- Considered ideas and arguments contrary to one's own
- Attended lectures, seminars, or conferences
- Articulated and defended ideas for teaching and learning
- Shared ideas with colleagues in formal and informal situations
- Established a leadership role in professional organization
- Created an environment that fosters a community of learners

Choose four artifacts from your professional portfolio as evidence of your learning through interacting. List the artifacts below and explain how they contributed to your acquisition of knowledge, application of knowledge, or generation of new knowledge.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Demonstrating

Demonstrating represents the portion of a portfolio rich in the application and transfer of learning. Demonstrations include lessons, special projects, conference presentations, speeches, oral interpretations, audiovisual materials, and exhibitions. Do your demonstrating artifacts show evidence of the following?

- Designed a presentation or lesson for peer assessment
- Demonstrated knowledge, skills, and a disposition for learning
- Created a forum to articulate and share *best practice* methods
- Prepared, delivered, and validated a unit of instruction
- Presented a workshop or a paper for a national audience
- Published scholarly resources

Choose four artifacts from your professional portfolio as evidence of your learning through demonstrating. List the artifacts below and explain how they contributed to your acquisition of knowledge, application of knowledge, or generation of new knowledge.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Figure 2. Portfolio rubric for self-assessment (panels 2–5).

Step Six

Teachers present posters synthesizing the process and illustrating products of their teaching and learning over a term or a year. This allows an additional chance to learn from colleagues. Principals could assess posters with speed and accuracy. The principal's recommendations would be formative, offering suggestions for improvement, rather than summative, ranking and sorting and grading. Teachers would consider a principal's meaningful assessment and give more attention to suggestions to improve practice. This approach to the assessment of teaching and learning offers a "bigger picture of practice." The "Big Picture" has to be a better view and more informative than a short classroom visit. Still, when it is all over until next year, you have to expect those sighs of relief.

In conclusion, this portfolio model was designed as a professional development tool to facilitate the use of thinking strategies and to encourage learning communities. Most important, this portfolio process is well suited to all educators as they transition a career, whether the emphasis is on gathering information to build a knowledge base, honing skills to gain expertise, or doing research and writing to make a contribution in a discipline. Second, this portfolio process balances assessment and learning through emphasis on self-reflection and metacognitive approaches to teaching and learning. Thus, by encouraging deeper understanding of assessment and its relationship to learning, we ensure a better understanding of the balance between assessment and learning for those we teach. And finally, this portfolio process is reliable and valid, promising a more authentic assessment of professional development. It gives the teacher the opportunity to synthesize thinking and learning in a creative way, while illustrating engagement and reflection, deep understanding of content, meaningful (personal) connections, habits of

mind, and skill in oral communication. The rubrics can serve as tools to guide the portfolio construction, while adding dimension to the portfolio assessment process. ●

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Portfolio Assessment Rubric Summary		
(+) Excellent	() Acceptable	(-) Unsatisfactory
<u>1. Reading</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected a significant amount of new knowledge • Strengthened a position with documentation • Initiated new ideas for teaching and learning • Demonstrated an opened-minded attitude • Critiqued a resource for publication • Suggested and shared new applications of knowledge 		
<u>2. Writing</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented thinking and learning experiences • Analyzed in-depth educational concepts • Designed new curriculum or course of study • Prepared papers for conference presentation • Self-assessed teaching experiences • Submitted journal article for publication 		
<u>3. Thinking</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced personal philosophy of teaching and learning • Recorded thinking and learning processes in a journal • Constructed graphic organizers to show patterns of thinking • Initiated problem-solving efforts to address educational issues • Integrated thinking into existing teaching and learning strategies • Generated concepts/ideas that contributed to the knowledge base 		
<u>4. Interacting</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered ideas and arguments contrary to one's own • Attended lectures, seminars, or conferences • Articulated and defended ideas for teaching and learning • Shared ideas with colleagues in formal and informal situations • Established a leadership role in professional organization • Created an environment that fosters a community of learners 		
<u>5. Demonstrating</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed a presentation or lesson for peer assessment • Demonstrated knowledge, skills, and a disposition for learning • Created a forum to articulate and share <i>best practice</i> methods • Prepared, delivered, and validated a unit of instruction • Presented a workshop or a paper for a national audience • Published scholarly resources 		
<u>6. Overall Assessment</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented evidence to show personal and professional growth • Organized the portfolio for long-term benefits and easy access • Modeled a strong disposition toward lifelong learning • Illustrated a metacognitive approach to pedagogy • Demonstrated applications of <i>best practice</i> strategies • Indicated an ability to monitor and manage one's own learning 		

Figure 3.

You're the Leader: What Are You Going to Do about It?

by Barbara K. Thompson, Hazelwood School District, Florissant, Missouri

Face it. You've read Hillocks' (1987) meta-analysis of research on the teaching of grammar, which shows that the teaching of grammar in isolation has a negative effect on the quality of student writing. You've read Constance Weaver's *Grammar for Teachers* (1979), and you know that research indicates that even the grammatical knowledge itself is not long retained. You've read both the first (1987) and second (1998) editions of *In the Middle*; you know that Atwell's students scored second on the Maine state assessment after being taught in her reading/writing workshop. You are definitely savvy about what works and doesn't work in writing instruction. You've presented dozens of workshops on just that topic.

So, an experienced teacher from your school/district avows, "Well, before my students write anything, I teach sentence diagramming. That's how I learned how to write. Once they know the parts of speech and can write sentences, then I teach them _____ (fill in the blank with *paragraph structure, how to write an essay, etc.*). They don't know *anything* when they come into my class."

Why do you stand there tongue-tied? Why don't you do something about it? After all, you *are* in a leadership position.

You don't do something about it because you are no fool. You know that:

- a. you aren't going to change this teacher's mind by disagreeing with her.
- b. if you issue an ultimatum, this teacher will close the classroom door and quietly continue to teach as she always has.
- c. she is highly respected, and the "good" kids always do well in her class.
- d. it is hard to switch from the

grammar paradigm to a writing paradigm, having once reigned as the "Grammar Queen/King" yourself.

- e. you grew up in that old school, and despite all the research *and* your experience, the model of years of experience in grammar-intensive classrooms creates a persistent illogical nagging doubt in your mind, "Maybe she's not wrong . . ."

So you smile weakly, ask about her kids and her part-time business, and move on your way. What else can you do? How can you effect change in the teaching of composition?

One way that I have found to effect such change is by teaching with teachers in their classrooms and setting up writing workshops together. I find that classroom-based staff development is much more likely to support teachers in making instructional change than any number of workshops, no matter how skillful the presenters, nor how intensive the follow-up.

I have often found that working with a small group of influential teachers in a school will cause the instructional change to spread.

During the past eight years, I have worked with over 400 different teachers to help them set up writing workshops in their classrooms. In follow-up surveys, 88% of the teachers indicated that they had continued using writing workshop, and 3% indicated that they were no longer using writing workshop only because they had since left the classroom.

Thus, only 9% of the teachers did not continue the instructional change.

Over the past eight years, I have developed a seven-day sequence of lesson plans (see Figure 1). I try to work with teachers and their students for approximately 45 minutes on seven out of ten days during a two-week period. I have often found that working with a small group of influential teachers in a school will cause the instructional change to spread. These teachers find ways to teach their fellow teachers how to implement a workshop by combining classes, using planning time, or managing to bargain for precious teacher assistant time so that they can go into another teacher's classroom to help set up a writing workshop.

The seven-day workshop that follows is based on Atwell's model (1987, 1998), but I have added more structure to the model. If, as an instructional leader, you have or can arrange for released time to work with teachers in their classrooms, you can help teachers to harness the power of teaching through the workshop structure.

As I help to set up the workshop structure, I explain that it is just a structure and that each teacher can substitute other structures, as long as they remain consistent with the six principles listed above. I also suggest alternate structures that I have seen other teachers use successfully. Alternate structures often provide additional support for classroom management. For example, if students have difficulty getting into conferences, teachers may assign conference partners, rather than letting students choose. Alternatives for assessing the status of the class might be to pass around the status of the class form and have students fill it in (rather than call out the names), or give each student a name magnet

Sample 7-Day Outline for Beginning Writing Workshop

Day 1

Model topic search.

Hand out daily folder, which has a form "My Ideas for Writing" stapled to the left inside cover, and a form "Things I Can Do/ Things I Need to Work On" stapled to the right inside cover.

Invite students to make a list of "My Ideas for Writing."

Pair students; establish "A" and "B"; practice *whispering*. Each student has 60 seconds to tell a story to the partner; start and stop after each person.

Go over Writing Workshop rules.

Write; teacher writes also.

Each person shares first sentence of story, including teacher(s).

Day 2

Bring posters outlining writing process and conferencing model; model content conference with a student in front of the class. [*Model content conference*: The student reads aloud Draft 1 of a piece of writing. I listen, tell the piece back, and ask at least two questions about the story. The author writes down the questions, and I sign and date underneath the questions. We try to accomplish this in five minutes, unless the story is unusually long.]

Initiate status of the class, in which I read aloud each student's name, and students reply by telling the name of their piece of writing and where they are in their writing process. On this day, students will either be finishing Draft 1 or getting ready to have Conference 1.

Write and conference. Students move into conferences as they finish Draft 1. Students quietly ask classmates to be their partners and move away from their desks so as not to disturb other writers. They return to their desks after completing conferences with two different classmates and begin Draft 2.

Begin author's chair with first two students at top of list on status of the class form. Students always have option to pass. After a student author shares, the class responds by naming specific things they liked about the writing or asking questions. Two students serve as secretaries, taking turns writing down the questions asked by their classmates and giving the questions to the author after author's chair is over.

Day 3

Use overhead to read a story I have written, the questions my partner asked in Conference 1, the questions my partner asked in Conference 2, and the way I incorporated the *answers* to those questions in Draft 2.

Status of the class.

Write and conference.

Author's chair—next two students.

Day 4

Use overhead to self-edit the story I have written. Then have the class edit with me to find the mistakes I missed.

Establish letter tray or other place where students put all their drafts, stapled together, when they are ready for teacher editing conference.

Write and conference.

Author's chair.

Day 5

Hand out final copy folders; model the way that final copies go into the folder. Re-collect the folders, and show the students where the folders will be kept in the room.

Write and conference.

Author's chair.

Day 6

Mini-lesson that meets students' needs. Possibilities: model another content conference, model clustering (Topic: "Why I like ____ as a teacher"), model choosing a lead or a title.

Write and conference.

Author's chair.

Day 7

Mini-lesson that meets students' needs. Possibilities: Prewriting, revision, focus, poetry, business letter.

Write and conference.

Author's chair.

Before I start setting up a writing workshop, I talk about the philosophical basis for writing workshop, again basing my model on Atwell's model (1987), although I have added several components. Atwell states that students will grow as writers and as thinkers if we provide them with the following:

- Time (to write)
- Ownership (of their writing)
- Response (to their writing).

I have added three additional components to Atwell's original three. We must also provide students with the following:

- Structure (that makes the classroom predictable for their writing)
- Community (of writers who support and communicate with each other)
- Direct Instruction (to meet the needs that you see in the student writing, presented in whole class, small group, and individual conference groupings).

Atwell mentions the first two of these three in her book, but does not establish them as underlying philosophical bases for writing workshop.

Figure 1.

and have the students move their magnets on a board to show where they are in the writing process. Status of the class might work best at the end of the writing period so that students know what they should work on for homework in writing.

The biggest challenge that I have met as I assist in setting up the workshop structure is helping teachers understand the close relationship between theory and practice in writing workshop.

The biggest challenge that I have met as I assist in setting up the workshop structure is helping teachers understand the close relationship between theory and practice in writ-

ing workshop. They often have difficulty in seeing that the specific practice and structure are not ordained by a higher being, but are informed by theory and understanding of what writers need. I suggest that teachers listen to their students to help them adjust their practice.

Teachers who abandon writing workshop usually tell me that their students just couldn't handle the "freedom," or that their writing skills were not good enough for a workshop. I try to keep open lines of communication with teachers so that we can problem-solve and work through obstacles. By teacher request, we have a Writing Workshop Support Group that meets quarterly after school at a local restaurant to share ideas, problems, and frustrations. All district teachers are invited to come, and we have had some teachers from other districts join us. Many teachers stay to

continue their conversations over dinner. As we share good food and good conversation, I sometimes think of the teachers who steadfastly continue to teach grammar as their total writing program. Then I remember what Dilbert said, "Change is good. You go first." ●

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Innovations with Staying Power: Creating a Climate for Change

Rebecca Bowers Sipe, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan

Let's stop and reflect for a moment. Think about change initiatives you have experienced during your teaching career. When has change been successful? What characteristics did those successful change initiatives reflect? Now think about initiatives that have not been successful. They, too, share characteristics. Recently, as I worked with a group of literacy leaders, we opened our discussion with this type of reflection. Amazingly, the lists of characteristics generated were very nearly mirror images of one another. Of course issues like relevance and "buy in" were cited as important. However, over and over, commitment, communication, and support surfaced as factors that were crucial to the success of change efforts.

We tend to think of change as an

additive to the classroom experience. In fact, whether we are implementing reader response, process writing, whole language, or a phonics first program, change necessitates a renegotiation of the teacher's view of herself in the classroom. Changes in practice must be situated within the mosaic of existing teacher beliefs, attitudes, and subconscious understandings for them to become part of the day-to-day classroom experience. For change to last, the teacher must keep at the process long enough to allow new learnings to fit into their personal working theory of teaching.

As a rule, school districts buy into reform initiatives with great zeal; unfortunately, the shelf life of efforts tends to be short-lived. Teachers have become accustomed to the routine: lots of rhetoric, an initial outpouring

of funding, some intriguing—and occasionally glittering—early inservice efforts. After a year or so, the original fanfare and passion wane and soon everyone is back to business more or less as usual. The pendulum is a familiar and frustrating metaphor in American education. Ask anyone in English departments across the country and they'll tell you about innovations that have come and gone, about great ideas that grew quickly—only to wither away just as rapidly.

What happens when teachers are tantalized with new possibilities only to have them vaporize when funding or support is withdrawn? Those of us who work in literacy leadership roles live with the reality of resistance to change that has been evoked, at least partly, by ill-advised or poorly or-

chestrated change initiatives. Those who work to effect change see the results every day: cynicism, frustration, and passive resistance—if I just wait a while, this too shall pass. The perceived pendulum of education is no less than a trail of programs started and subsequently abandoned. The message for those of us who work daily to promote literacy change: we must be very careful what we start. Every time we initiate a program that fails to be situated squarely on what is already working, building toward a clear and obvious change in long-range practice, cynicism—like scar tissue—builds a tougher layer of resistance that must be overcome for future change efforts to stand a chance.

Change Isn't an Event—It's a Process

Change does not happen overnight. Sustainable change is evolutionary and builds on questions that are real and relevant to those involved. For change efforts to be successful, it is essential that we understand clearly—and up front—how proposed initiatives relate with existing beliefs, practices, and theories at work in the institution and with individual teachers. The larger the change, the more essential this becomes. Most literacy innovations represent an enhancement to or refinement of existing practices. When leaders understand the scope, the direction, and the rationale for new approaches and programs, they should be able to look closely at existing instruction and identify positive practices that can be used as a bridge to new ideas. Building upon questions that are real takes us away from inservice efforts that give teachers answers for which they have no questions (Sipe, 1995). Real questions lead to investigation and learning through readings, observations, and experimentations. New learning leads to more—and probably more sophisticated—questions that lead to more learning. Sustained and lasting change, then, becomes a

learning cycle through which we continually seek ways to do things better. How can this happen? Developing climates for change requires an environment of inquiry and conversation. Supporting curricular conversation is an important avenue for building these environments.

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Encouraging Curricular Talk

By establishing a climate of curricular conversation in our departments, we provide a fertile environment for change to occur. Routine curricular talk sets a tone that says instruction and innovation are fluid and constantly evolving. It creates a fundamental assumption that perspectives on practice vary and that such variation is healthy. It establishes a safe place for discussion of positive and negative effects of practice, for talking about what works, for whom it works, and how we might reasonably modify strategies to accommodate for individual needs. Curricular talk helps establish a safe forum for keeping the pot stirred with new ideas.

However, we make many assumptions about curricular talk: that it happens; that it is engaged in willingly; that we have the skills to support it. All too often our meeting times are filled with topics and issues that have little to do with teaching. Schedules, budgets, and book orders fill time, pushing substantive discussion of new ideas and possibilities to the fringes of departmental business. Curricular conversation is further complicated by the fact that some faculty members tend to see any curricular discussion as an attack on the way they teach instead of an

opportunity to look at different perspectives on teaching.

If we reflect again for a moment, most of us can recall at least one individual who possesses the unique capacity to de-rail almost any discussion. Whether this individual consciously strives to close down discussions or not, whether these actions are prompted by fear or antagonism, the effect is the same: colleagues refrain from bringing along an exciting new article to share, avoid talking about new ideas that have been learned in workshops, and exercise caution when revealing areas in which they want to learn more. By establishing mutually agreed-upon guidelines for curricular conversations we can help to avoid difficulties (see Figure 1 for a list). As simple as these guidelines are, they can be powerful tools for helping to establish a community of learners among faculty members who can come to view change as a normal and predictable part of the educational enterprise.

The Role of Change Agents

Again, think about exciting change processes with which you have been involved. In your mind's eye, look around the group of teachers who were involved. What characteristics did they share? As I've researched literally dozens of change efforts, I've unearthed some interesting observations about people who willingly (even eagerly) engage in change.

In one large study completed in 1995, 51 teachers who were literacy leaders agreed to engage in a multi-tiered study including interviews, surveys, and observations intended to investigate their roles as change agents. What did I find they had in common? At first, nothing. The 51 ranged in age from early 20s to mid-50s, came from 19 different states, ranged in tenure from second-year teachers to 30-year veterans. Their educational backgrounds were enormously varied, from public to private schools, from early achievers to late

bloomers, and from military-type schools to optional learning environments. What's more, they taught in all types of programs—and they tended to see themselves in a variety of different ways as teachers, some espousing more teacher-centered ideologies and others more student-centered ones. What I discovered that they did have in common was an extremely high level of openness to new experiences.

Experiential Openness is an established personality trait identified and discussed at length in the works of researchers Costa and McCrae. Defined as “one who exhibits . . . a toleration for and exploration of the unfamiliar, a playful approach to ideas and problem solving, and an appreciation of experience for its own sake” (Costa and McCrae, 1978, p. 127), experientially open individuals value variety, intellectual stimulation, aesthetic experiences; they are adventurous and unconventional, and demonstrate an appreciation for change and autonomy. These are the teachers who continuously ask, “What if we thought about doing it differently?” They are the ones who constantly look at their own classes and

“tinker” with lesson plans and established curriculum. They love to learn and they value “big pictures” and understanding the “whys” of instructions—not just the hows. These teachers may not need immediate application of new learning because, although experiential openness scales approximate a bell curve in the general population, all 51 of these teacher leaders scored in the high and extremely high range on a standard inventory of experiential openness.

At the opposing end of the scale are individuals who are more closed to experiences. Experientially closed individuals are those who favor predictability and routine. They really like to know what is happening well in advance and tend to subscribe to the philosophy, “If it isn't broken, don't fix it.” Inservice may be tolerated less well if information presented is not readily applicable to immediate use in the classroom. Theory may be seen as boring or even a waste of time.

When we initiate change initiatives, it is a sure bet that many of the folks who become engaged initially will reflect a high degree of openness to new experiences. In invitational

teacher institutes like those offered by National Writing Project, for example, participants read extensively in professional literature, write in different genres, critically examine their own teaching, and present to peers. In numerous studies involving institute teachers, the vast majority have scored in the extremely high range on experiential openness. Those of us who have facilitated such institutes are very familiar with the frustration and weariness of these same teachers when, several months after returning to their schools, their less than enthusiastic colleagues have failed to “catch” their excitement for change.

In major curriculum review projects, participants mirror these same types of activities, making curriculum review participation among the best of professional development opportunities for experientially open teachers. Often, decisions that are intended to take the program forward to the cutting edge of disciplinary thinking are made as an outgrowth of these extraordinary experiences. It is when those decisions are taken home to the teachers who have not been so intimately involved that the problems begin.

To make change happen, educational leaders must attract and involve experientially open teachers. To sustain change, strategies must be identified up front that will involve others who are more reluctant to embrace change. The more reluctant the teachers and the more substantial the change, the more critical it becomes that mechanisms are in place to support teacher thinking, talking, and experimenting over an extended period of time.

Support for Sustained Change

Few would argue the importance of quality professional development for sustaining change. As early as 1980, Malcolm Knowles described the difference between training and professional development. Training, generally reflecting a model of short

Guidelines for Curricular Conversations

- Try to begin with the assumption that everyone is “out for the common good” and not “out to get” anyone. After all, we are all in this for students.
- Try to listen intently to ideas and opinions being shared. Concentrate on what you are hearing, not on how you want to respond.
- Seek first to learn from the discussion. Listen for connections to practices that you have observed and know are successful.
- Try to help the other speaker with eye contact and positive body language. Ask yourself, would it help me to express myself better if others were listening to me as I'm listening now.
- Develop active listening strategies: take notes, make lists, capture key points to be sure you are hearing them correctly. Develop supportive body language and maintain eye contact.
- Clarify in non-threatening ways: repeat back what you think you heard. For example, “I think I heard you say . . . Was that correct?” Ask thoughtful questions that are intended to push the conversation forward, not muddy the waters. Remember, interrupting only guarantees that neither you nor the speaker will listen to each other.
- Avoid telling another speaker that they don't understand. Just because they disagree with you does not mean they don't understand.
- At all costs, avoid sarcasm. Probably no one since the beginning of time has changed his/her mind as a result of it.

Figure 1.

sessions designed to create similarity in performance, looks very different from a professional development model which strives to support the individual learner in deepening understandings and pursuing questions that have relevance. Traditional staff development in the United States has frequently demonstrated a training model, one that tends to offer teachers answers. These “one size fits all” models fail to account for the varied experiences of teachers, and assume that similarity in performance will assure uniformity in quality of instruction. Further, these traditional models tend to reflect an understanding that transmitting information and offering abbreviated practice will translate to change in the classroom. An abundance of research clearly demonstrates this to be untrue.

Attempting to move toward standards-based instruction in elementary classrooms, Project EXCELS (Extending Curricular Effectiveness through Links among Standards) designed a three-year initiative intended to support the implementation of standards in English language arts and social studies and which incorporated many characteristics identified in professional development literature: learning over time; in-depth professional reading and discussion on a wide diversity of topics; a classroom-based research model that encouraged teachers to pursue their own instructional questions in relation to new learnings; mentor/discussion groups, facilitated by teacher leaders, which provided opportunities to reason together, to make sense of new ideas and new questions, and to deal with the inevitable dissonance that arose when new learnings clashed with previous understandings about beliefs and practices; and continuous opportunities to reflect in writing as knowledge, insights, and questions grew.

Research emerging from large-scale systemic initiatives such as these suggests three crucial supports for change: time, choice, and collabo-

ration. Case studies on teachers involved in Project EXCELS illustrated the enormous complexity inherent in large-scale instructional change. As EXCELS teachers began their intense learning process in content areas including history, geography, civics/government, and English language arts, a number of dilemmas emerged with which teachers had to come to terms before serious thinking about standards could be undertaken; these dilemmas included the relative roles of process-based and content-based curricula, the orientation of the classroom toward student-centered or teacher-centered instruction, and the evolving role of the teacher in the classroom.

The EXCELS Project appears to have resulted in astounding growth in content and pedagogy for participants. Consistently, informants described the importance of time for reading, for discussion, and for contemplation. Time is a precious commodity for teachers. Projects that succeed build in this essential component as an integral part of the plan. Sustained conversations and collaborations provided by mentor groups offered opportunities for EXCELS teachers to connect with other professionals on a collegial level and to find a safe place for addressing the cognitive dissonance that continued to emerge throughout the institute. Such safety can be found in departmental meetings as well, particularly if participants accept and practice guidelines for curricular conversations. Finally, support by institute leaders (both project directors and teacher leaders) was enormously important. From providing interactions with experts to making available a wide variety of reading materials, from coaching and listening to understanding the complexity and difficulty of change for some participants, talented and supportive leaders were essential to the growth of participants as they worked to provide safe environments for questioning and reflecting. Frequently, this level of support is not available

to teachers who are engaged in change processes in our schools. Certainly, the need for supportive and knowledgeable literacy leaders is highlighted by these findings.

One final point may prove important as we look forward to future change initiatives. Beyond growth in content and pedagogy, EXCELS participants cited personal growth as the most significant aspect of the entire initiative. Many described coming away from the project with a completely different vision of their professional selves. As described earlier, successful change requires a renegotiation of the teacher’s vision of herself in relation to myriad and complex understandings about

Curricular change efforts should be predicated on several assumptions: that change is desirable, that change is possible, and that change can be intensely satisfying if supported appropriately.

theory and practice. For EXCELS teachers, the opportunity for time, collaboration, conversation, and support made that personal growth possible.

Implications for Literacy Leaders

Curricular change efforts should be predicated on several assumptions: that change is desirable, that change is possible, and that change can be intensely satisfying if supported appropriately. Essential to ongoing change is an understanding that change is evolutionary and that professional practice is fluid. Creating environments that encourage ongoing curricular talk, that offer teachers opportunities to pursue questions of relevance through classroom-based research, and that incorporate sustained opportunities

for collaboration and support will provide fertile ground for change to occur. We have long since recognized the need to view students as unique; it is time for us to look at the individual needs of teachers as learners as well. ●

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Call for SLATE Starter Sheets

The SLATE Steering Committee invites submission of Starter Sheets on sociopolitical aspects of education. Samples of past topics have been tracking and grouping, the English Only movement, equal access to computers, and censorship.

SLATE Starter Sheets are intended as action-oriented information sources for English and language arts professionals. The format for Starter Sheets should include, but is not limited to, the following: (1) presentation and background of the issue/topic; (2) general discussion, usually including NCTE positions; (3) recommendations for action or further examination; and (4) brief list references and/or core resources. Starter Sheets manuscripts will undergo blind review by at least two outside referees who have expertise in the area. Please submit four copies of the manuscript, typewritten, and double-spaced on 8½" x 11" paper with one-inch margins. Use your name and affiliation on a title page only. Manuscripts should be between 2,000 and 4,000 words in length. Send manuscripts to: Lynn Carhart, Monmouth RHS, 1 Norman J. Field Way, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724-4005.

Memberships Available in the NCTE Committee on Instructional Technology

A limited number of memberships in the newly reconstituted Committee on Instructional Technology will be available to interested members of the Council. Major functions of the committee will be to study emerging technologies and their integration into English and language arts curricula and teacher education programs; to identify the effects of such technologies on teachers, students, and educational settings, with attention to minority, disabled, and disadvantaged students; to explore means of disseminating information about such technologies to the NCTE membership; to serve as liaison between

NCTE and other groups interested in computer-based education in English and language arts; to maintain liaison with the NCTE Commission on Media and other Council groups concerned with instructional technology.

If you would like to be considered for membership in this group, send a one-page letter by **October 10, 1999**, explaining your specific interest in the committee, relevant background, and your present professional work to: Administrative Assistant to the Secondary Associate Executive Director, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Memberships Available in the NCTE Committee on Public Doublespeak

A limited number of memberships in the newly reconstituted Committee on Public Doublespeak will be available to interested members of the Council. Major functions of the committee will be to create a series of concrete classroom exercises (lesson plans, discussion outlines) calculated to focus student attention on particular uses of language that the committee is prepared to call irresponsible; and alert the profession generally to the forces that in the committee's judgment are misusing the language;

government and its military personnel, industry and its advertisers, educators, you and me.

If you would like to be considered for membership in this group, send a one-page letter by **October 10, 1999**, explaining your specific interest in the committee, relevant background, and your present professional work to: Administrative Assistant to the Secondary Associate Executive Director, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Search for New Editor of *English Leadership Quarterly*

NCTE is seeking a new editor of *English Leadership Quarterly*. In April 2001, the term of the present editor, Henry Kiernan, will end. Interested persons should send a letter of application to be received **no later than November 1, 1999**. Letters should include the applicant's vision for the journal and be accompanied by the applicant's vita and one sample of published writing. If applicable, please send at least one letter of general support from appropriate administrators at the applicant's institution. Do not send books, monographs, or other materials which cannot be easily copied for the Search Committee. Classroom teachers are both eligible and encouraged to apply. The applicant appointed by the CEL Executive Committee in March 2000 will effect a transition, preparing for his or her first issue in August 2001. The initial appointment is for four years, renewable for three years. Applications should be addressed to Margaret Chambers, *English Leadership Quarterly* Search Committee, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Questions regarding any aspect of the editorship should be directed to Carol Schanche, E-mail: cschanche@ncte.org; (800) 369-6283, extension 3625. ●

Call for Manuscripts

Guest editor Elizabeth Howard is seeking manuscripts for the August 2000 *ELQ* issue on Block Scheduling. What conditions are essential to *successful* block scheduling reform? What advice can you give to teachers in departments considering block scheduling? Topics might include the following:

- How can staff development efforts satisfy the needs of English teachers both before and after implementation of block scheduling?
- Does your department have a successful mentoring program on instructional planning in block scheduling for new teachers?
- Can you provide specific and concrete evidence of how block scheduling affects student achievement in your classroom?
- How has block scheduling affected your choices of curriculum content and activities?

Estimates of block reform range from one-third to one-half of public high schools in the U.S. In Arizona, block schedules occur in 38% of the comprehensive high schools with varying degrees of success. We are seeking stories and strategies leading to successful implementation of this reform.

Send manuscripts by April 15, 2000, to:
 Dr. Elizabeth Howard
 College of Education/ MC 3151
 Arizona State University West
 P.O. Box 3710, Phoenix, AZ 85069-7100
 E-mail: elizabeth.howard@asu.edu;
 Phone: (623) 543-6380; Fax: (623) 543-6350

1999 CEL Election Slate

Candidates for Member-at-Large



Elizabeth French Truesdell, High school English teacher and newspaper advisor; school union representative; assistant girls cross country coach; school improvement volunteer; 1999 CEL Hospitality Chair. **Formerly:** Sixteen years of secondary teaching; CEL Program and Hospitality committees. **Member:** NCTE, CEL, Kamehameha Schools Faculty Association, Na Kumu o Kamehameha. **Publications:** *English Leadership Quarterly*. **Awards:** NEH Fellow (1986, 1992, 1998), CBE Independent Study Fellow (1993). **Program Participant:** CEL (1993, 1995, 1998); Hawaii Association of Independent Schools; Pacific Northwest Asso-

ciation of Independent Schools.

Position Statement: Ambition to “advance up the professional ladder” plays little part in my self-image as a leader. In fact, I have always believed in the importance of servant leadership. Throughout my career, I have found myself volunteering to do jobs that I did not really want but that I knew needed to be done; the past two years have yielded a disproportionately large number of these kinds of “opportunities.” The leadership I offer CEL is the practical kind, which I believe is necessary for any organization or institution. I will show up, work with others to develop and articulate visions for our future, and labor to realize these intentions. My talents and skills are well suited to the position of member-at-large.



Tom Scott, K-12 Reading/Language Arts Coordinator, 6-12 Department Chair, Menomonee Falls Schools, Wisconsin; Adjunct Professor, UW-Oshkosh; Planning Committee, Milwaukee Academic Alliance in English; editor, *The Worcester Review*. **Formerly:** President, English Association of Greater Milwaukee. **Member:** NCTE, IRA, WCTE, NEA, WEA. **Publications:** *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson*; *The Little Review Correspondence*. **Awards:** Frederick Hoffman Award; NEH Fellow (Oxford, 1990); Council of Basic Education Fellow (1991).

Position Statement: Given the current reductionist climate calling for accountability as measured through high-stakes standardized

testing, leaders in our field must articulate a broader, deeper vision of English Education—one that speaks to fair play and to the value of our students reading literature, of discussing the implications of their reading and thinking with each other, and of writing to discover who they are and what they think. Of course, we want our students to be skilled, but we also want them to be wise. To its members, CEL has provided, and must continue to provide, a venue in which to share ideas, encourage each other in our endeavors, and define what the priorities of our vision ought to be. To leaders who are not yet members, CEL ought to reach out and tap them on the shoulder.



Bernice Spearman Thompkins, Director of the Arts & Letters Academy, Fremont High School, Oakland, California; English IV—12th-grade English

teacher; Senior Exhibition Coordinator; Member of the Bay Area Reform Collaborative Leadership Team. **Formerly:** English Department Chair (1972–1992); Member of Bay Area Writers Project; California Literature Project Consultant. **Member:** NCTE, CATE, CEL, ASCD, OEA, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority,

Inc. Publications: Reviewer and contributor: *Tapestry: A Multicultural Anthology*. **Awards:** Fremont High School Teacher of the Year (1975, 1985); Educator of the Year, Oakland Black Educators. **Program Participant:** CEL Workshop Leader, (November 1998).

Position Statement: At the dawn of the 21st century, there is a demand for CEL leaders with extensive experience in working with a mix of rich cultural diversities and a wide range of student achievement skills. These leaders must be capable of leading members of the community, school administrators, fellow teachers, and students in implementing innovative new programs. These programs must defy the traditional curriculums that have failed to train young people to meet the demands of jobs that will be available in the new millennium. CEL must be at the forefront of leadership in these major changes in our educational system.



Bob Infantino, Professor of Education, University of San Diego. **Formerly:** Director, San Diego Writing Project (1980–91); English teacher/department chair,

Buffalo, New York; Coordinator of

Student Teaching, SUNY Buffalo. **Member:** Board of Directors, California Association of Teachers of English (1986–98), CATE President (1994–96); President, Greater San Diego Council of Teachers of English (1986–88); SLATE Region 8 representative (1991–94); Board, California Council on the Education of Teachers (1992–95); Membership in NCTE, CATE, GSDCTE, CEL, ASCD, PDK, CCET. **Publications:** Co-author, *Real World Reading for Teachers and Students*; Articles in *California English*, *English Record*, *Momentum*, *NWP Quarterly*, *SDAWP Newsletter*. **Awards:** CATE Award for Classroom Excellence-College; USD University Professorship; CATE Distinguished Service Award. **Program Participant:** NCTE, CEL, CATE, GSDCTE, CCET, NYSEC, others.

Position Statement: Providing leadership in English has been a hallmark of my career. I have felt a kinship with members of CEL since I joined six years ago. I hope to collaborate with the CEL leadership team to provide greater visibility and clout for the organization within NCTE and among our colleagues. Experience, hard work, enthusiasm, and knowledge are what I will bring to the Board of CEL.



1999 CEL Ballot

The CEL Bylaws permit members to vote either by mail or at the CEL business session of the annual fall convention. Each member mailing a ballot should mark it and mail it in an envelope with a **return name and address** to: Bill Newby, CEL Ballots, Shaker Heights High School, 15911 Aldersyde Dr., Shaker Heights, OH 44120.

Ballots must be postmarked **no later than November 1, 1999**. Members who prefer to vote at the convention will be given a ballot and an envelope at the business session of CEL. An institution with membership may designate one individual as the representative to vote on its behalf. Please list the institution name and address on the outside of the envelope.

Member-at-Large (vote for two)

- Elizabeth French Truesdell
- Tom Scott
- Bernice Spearman Thompkins
- Bob Infantino
- _____

(write-in candidate)

Call for Manuscripts— Future Issues

The *English Leadership Quarterly*, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

A decision about a manuscript will be reached within two months of submission. The *Quarterly* typically publishes one out of ten manuscripts it receives each year.

Surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

April 2000 (deadline December 15, 1999)

Leadership and Technology

August 2000 (deadline April 28, 2000)

Block Scheduling

Guest editor: Elizabeth Howard (see call, p. 18)

October 2000 (deadline June 15, 2000)

Mentoring New Leaders

Guest Editors invited—If you would like to edit an issue of the *English Leadership Quarterly*, contact Henry Kiernan for details.

Manuscripts may be sent on 3.5" floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files or as traditional double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to Henry Kiernan, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, West Morris Regional High School District, Administration Building, Four Bridges Road, Chester, NJ 07930; phone 908-879-6404, ext. 281; fax 908-879-8861; e-mail kiernan@nac.net. ●

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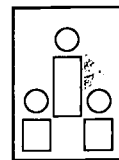
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▷ IN THIS ISSUE

Leadership Roles in Family Literacy Projects

by Jeanne M. Gerlach, guest editor, Dean of Education, University of Texas Arlington

The movement for Family Literacy is becoming one of the most visible educational concepts in American schooling today. "Teach the parent, reach the child" is the slogan of the National Center for Family Literacy. The Center, created over a decade ago, provides programs and classes where adults and children learn to read together. Centers across the country base their missions and work on research that indicates that reading with young children is key to their success.

In an effort to foster student growth and development, these literacy centers, as well as educators in K-12 schools and faculty in colleges and universities, are forming partnerships that focus on language and literacy. These educators realize that the language arts—reading,

writing, listening, speaking, and thinking—are necessary components of learning in all content areas. While this awareness exists, educators know that in order to be successful, they must elicit the help of two other groups—parents and administrators. Thus, the question becomes: how can administrators, teachers, and parents collaborate to provide students with opportunities to develop language and literacy skills that will become the basis for success in lifetime learning?

This issue provides a sketch of what is being done with the Family Literacy movement by the Dean and faculty members from the School of Education at the University of Texas Arlington and administrators, teachers, and parents from the Dallas Independent School District. It is

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important to note here that UTA President Robert E. Witt and Provost George C. Wright as well as DISD Superintendent Waldemar Rojas are committed to supporting university/school partnerships that focus on emergent literacy development. Their leadership has served us well in our efforts to teach all students to read and write. ●

Fostering Literacy: Connecting Families with Schools

by Nancy L. Hadaway, Associate Professor of Reading/Language Arts, University of Texas Arlington

The Importance of Family Literacy

Falling test scores for children in grades K-12 coupled with higher literacy requirements in the workplace have prompted educators to

search for the best ways to impact literacy development. In this quest, school districts have considered intervention plans, instructional programs, and materials for teaching reading and writing. Yet, literacy is

not the responsibility solely of the school; it is a responsibility shared by the school, the community, and the family (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990; Rasinski, 1995). A study by Marjoribanks in 1972 attributed more

than half the variance in children's IQ scores to the learning environment in the home. Indeed, the positive impact of family involvement in a child's literacy development has been well documented in the areas of reading achievement, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, math, and science; regular school attendance; school completion rates; oral language development; decoding ability; and children's self-esteem and health (Anderson, 1994; Benjamin, 1993; Chall & Snow, 1982; Darling & Hayes, 1989; Greer & Mason, 1988; Mansback, 1993; Mundre & McCormick, 1989; Nurss, Mosenthal, Hinchman, 1992; Ostlund, Gennaro, Dobbert, 1985).

According to Postlethwaite and Ross (1992), family involvement may be the most critical factor in children's literacy achievement. What a powerful role! However, many parents are not aware of their potential impact or how to foster their children's literacy development. In fact, there is often a wide gap between the expectations and practices of the school and those of the home. In order to positively impact children's language acquisition and

literacy skills, schools should examine avenues for collaboration with families and local communities, creating networks of literacy that value and reflect cultural and linguistic diversity. Working from this framework, four professors from the University of Texas Arlington, Sylvia Vardell, Diana Wisell, John Jacobson, and I, partnered with the Dallas school district to develop a training model focused on family literacy.

Forming a Collaborative Effort to Foster Family Literacy

In recent years, Dallas schools have faced problems typical of urban and inner-city districts across the nation, such as lagging public support, meeting the needs of ethnically diverse populations, and high numbers of low-income and at-risk students. Most recently, children's lack of achievement in reading prompted the creation of the Dallas Reading Plan, an innovative program of teacher training aimed at children's literacy development. Additionally, recognizing the importance of home and community-based activities focusing on language/literacy development, the plan encouraged schools to implement

and promote outreach programs and support systems fostering parent participation.

Beginning in August 1998, we met with the Director of the Dallas Reading Plan to discuss opportunities for a collaborative effort highlighting family literacy. Our purpose was to identify district needs and to consider ways to meet those needs. This initial brainstorming session resulted in a draft proposal and our promise to act as coaches. Our role would be to develop and pilot a model in which study groups would explore best practices for establishing community-based programs and activities that promote family literacy. These study groups, established on local campuses, would help to create guidelines for the implementation of campus-based activities that would support the district's reading initiative (i.e., having all students reading at grade level in the language of instruction by the end of third grade).

The next step was to select partner schools for the collaborative effort. Campuses invited to participate in this pilot program were elementary schools serving kindergarten through third-grade students and were identified by the Dallas Reading Department and the superintendents of the nine administrative subdivisions of the Dallas Public Schools. One campus from each subdivision was selected to participate.

A preliminary meeting with principals from the selected schools as well as other key staff from support services (Dallas Reading Plan, Early Childhood Education, Community Relations, Multilingual Education, Adult Basic Education, and Even Start) resulted in further review of project goals and additional feedback. Ultimately, the stated goal for the Family Literacy Project was to focus attention on family literacy through a family, school, and community effort. To accomplish this, the members of the project participated in the following activities during the 1998-1999 school year:

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) of the National Council of Teachers of English is an organization dedicated to bringing together English language arts leaders to further their continuing efforts to study and improve the teaching of English language arts. The CEL reaches out to department chairs, teachers, specialists, supervisors, coordinators, and others who are responsible for shaping effective English instruction. The CEL strives to respond to the needs and interests germane to effective English instruction from kindergarten through college, within the local school, the central administration, the state, or the national level.

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- a series of sharing and training study group sessions, where participants could investigate and discuss research-based “best practices” for promoting family literacy;

- development of an instrument to determine current levels of parent involvement in literacy in the home and to identify literacy efforts of local schools and community support organizations;

- development of customized pilot models for parent involvement to be implemented at the home campus during the spring of 1999.

With an overview of the project in hand, principals returned to their home campuses to select participants for this year-long venture. Each participating campus sent a minimum of three representatives: one K–3 teacher, one parent from the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and one parent currently serving on the School-Community Council (SCC); campus principals were encouraged to attend as well. All meetings were scheduled on Thursday from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. By this point, the planning and feedback phase had taken three months.

Building Background

Beginning in November, study groups made up of administrators, teachers, and parent leaders from nine elementary schools met monthly with us and selected lead reading teachers to investigate and discuss research-based “best practices” for promoting family literacy. A typical meeting began with warm-up activities and poetry sharing (with examples linked to school and family experiences). This was followed by circuit presentations of family literacy research and information and a discussion of school-based family literacy projects.

The agenda for the first meeting included an orientation to the goals of the Family Literacy Project and a presentation to explain the configuration of the project. The first three meetings, during the fall and winter, were devoted to building a background on family literacy initiatives.

To accomplish this goal in a hands-on, discussion-oriented format, we, as coaches, adopted a circuit presentation technique to share information. The 40 participants were divided into four smaller groups for the information sharing, and each university coach summarized information for a 15-minute participatory question/answer session with one of the small groups. Then, the coaches rotated to another group until all four groups had been addressed. Realizing that, after a long day at work, teachers and parent volunteers would not be interested in a barrage of educational jargon and statistics, we emphasized *involving* the participants, not lecturing to them. The feedback and ideas we elicited from participants resulted in rich conversation and idea sharing.

The information shared in the circuit presentations varied with input drawn from brochures and books on family literacy, as well as research articles reflecting issues surrounding implementation of family literacy efforts. For instance, one evening I chose to discuss a chapter in Robin Scarcella’s (1990) book, *Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom*. The chapter offered valuable insights about the many obstacles to parental involvement in the school, such as parents’ lack of proficiency in English and the lack of bilingual personnel in schools. To encourage parental involvement in the schools and to foster literacy activities at home, the chapter suggested creating opportunities for family communication with homework activities, such as making a timeline of the child’s life, or having parent volunteers share bilingual books in classrooms. Other articles I presented to the group advocated the use of family stories as a powerful literacy tool at home and at school (Akroyd, 1995 & Buchoff, 1995).

Throughout this background-building process, the other coaches and I compiled a notebook of the research and information shared, as well as other helpful ideas addressing family literacy, including abstracts of

journal articles; journal and informational articles highlighting family literacy in the home, school, and community; and bibliographies of research sources, professional resources (videos, volunteer tutor handbooks, etc.), and children’s literature and poetry addressing families and family literacy. To spur the sharing and dissemination of information, copies of this notebook were given to each of the participating campuses as a resource handbook for their future efforts.

Modeling Family Literacy Ideas

With a focus on involvement, warm-up activities were conducted at each meeting as a means of involving participants and modeling techniques for family literacy at home and in the classroom. A rich variety of activities motivated the participants to reflect and discuss, which contributed to the relaxed tone of each meeting. A brief summary of these techniques follows.

The first night, we began the meeting with a writing prompt, asking group members to reflect on their own early literacy experiences. Many heartwarming and funny examples emerged, including a principal who shared how her early literacy was shaped by growing up with a mother who was deaf.

To help the group members mingle and build a sense of community, we created a “Get Acquainted Bingo” icebreaker. Using a Bingo card with spaces devoted to family literacy activities (e.g., likes to tell stories, remembers being read to as a child, likes to tell jokes, remembers learning songs at home), group members located someone who could sign off on a space. Our Bingo activity was followed by a discussion of the diverse ways that literacy instruction occurs at home (songs, storytelling, etc.).

To demonstrate how school and home could be linked through school activities, we shared a thematic unit on families. Picture books highlighting the family theme were distributed as examples to encourage parents to foster children’s literacy development

through reading high-quality literature. Embedded within the unit were many options for connecting home and school. For instance, we began one meeting with a name interview. With a partner, we shared information about our name and its origin. Then we discussed how children could interview family members about family stories, including ones relating how the children were named.

The power of drama was demonstrated through activities at two separate meetings. First, using the book *Tomas and the Library Lady* (Mora, 1997), a Readers Theater script was created and performed. This wonderful book relates the story of Tomas Rivera as a young Hispanic migrant and the power of reading and books in his life. The Readers Theater script served as both an introduction to the book, available in both English and Spanish, and to the technique of Readers Theater. Next, after a read-aloud from *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant, we involved group members in drama activities and encouraged them to use drama to enhance literacy through participatory activities in the classroom and at home.

Since celebrations such as birthdays and holidays supply rich language opportunities, we turned to a discussion of these special events in December. Reading holiday stories, singing special songs, and relating holiday customs offer many language-building avenues for home or school.

Finally, poems were used to begin each session and as a transition activity. Using a read-aloud and choral response format to model the use of poetry and techniques for sharing poetry, participants stayed actively involved in our evenings of learning and sharing.

Planning and Implementation

In the spring, we put our background-building study group sessions to work as each campus began to build a customized project for family literacy. As an incentive to involve parents more actively in literacy efforts at

home and at the school, all schools were provided \$1,000 in seed money to fund a family literacy project at their school. We, the university coaches, and the Reading Department provided technical assistance and ongoing support for these projects through follow-up meetings. At the end of each meeting, there was time for discussion, clarification, and feedback as each school moved toward a proposal for their own project.

Prior to final submission of their proposals, group members participated in an intensive feedback session. To help fine-tune the projects, we developed a template, based on an article shared earlier in the background-building sessions, that noted the five criteria for successful urban outreach efforts (Come & Fredericks, 1995). Guiding questions followed each criterion. As each campus described its project, participants provided verbal and written feedback.

The Criteria. Successful urban outreach efforts (1) meet the expressed needs and wishes of parents, (2) promote a spirit of shared responsibility, (3) encourage active involvement of parents in decision making and follow-through, (4) establish open lines of communication, and (5) instill long-term commitment to continuous and sustained involvement.

The Questions. To help focus on these criteria, ask these questions: Does the proposal reflect these criteria? If yes, how was the school able to foster each one (e.g., shared responsibility)? How is that goal reflected in the proposal? What feedback can you offer to help the school fine-tune its project?

The next step was to submit a project proposal to us for approval, after which it would be submitted to the Dallas Reading Plan Office for funding. Schools implemented their projects prior to the last April meeting, where they provided feedback to the group regarding the project's effectiveness.

Reflecting the diversity of our family literacy partnership, the campus-based projects mirrored the

variety within our group and the many campus-based needs. Strategies such as book give-aways were included in many school projects as a means of fostering a print-rich environment at home. Additionally, projects incorporated many topics discussed in our background-building sessions (such as drama and games) as literacy-building opportunities. The range of family literacy options included the following school projects.

- A Saturday Parent University Clinic, where concurrent sessions offered a demonstration of playing age-appropriate games with children as literacy activities, a presentation on how to make reading fun, a Food Pyramid Game demonstration by a visitor from the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, and a session on word usage and self-esteem.

- A make-and-take workshop, where parents constructed literacy props for home activities.

- A puppet theater that was followed by a participatory workshop on making sock and paper bag puppets as a literacy activity at home.

- Classes to support the literacy education of parents, such as ESL and GED, as well as a communication workshop, "Can We Talk?" to foster effective communication between children and adults.

- Cultural Awareness Day, where families could secure library cards or information on library services from a library representative, watch a Spanish language radio station crew broadcast an interview with a bilingual teacher talking about strategies to foster family literacy, and hear a motivational Hispanic speaker stressing the importance of reading aloud to children.

Surveying Family Literacy Activity

In addition to the follow-up meetings, the study groups worked collaboratively to develop an assessment of the current levels of family literacy activities taking place in children's homes. Stemming from discussions prior to the beginning of the project

and at early sessions, and the research addressing family literacy efforts, various areas became candidates for the survey. From these initial areas, we drafted a straw document and took it to the whole group for feedback, which was then incorporated into the final version of the survey. Finally, the method for collecting the data was demonstrated to the participating members.

To facilitate the process of K–3 teachers administering the survey to their classes, we suggested using overhead transparencies to “walk through” the survey with their classes and to record the data. After we demonstrated this technique at an early spring meeting, group members were provided with a master of the survey and a box of transparencies, with which they made copies of the survey to distribute to each K–3 teacher. Campus teams coordinated the administration of the assessment instrument during the early spring of 1999. Teachers conducted the survey orally and wrote student responses on the overheads. We set a deadline by which all data was to be collected and submitted to us for tabulation. Once data was tabulated, this information was organized and presented to the Family Literacy Project members at our final meeting.

The survey was composed of 10 simple, open-ended response items centered on literacy activities in the home. Children were asked what literacy activities and materials they witnessed at home, including parents reading aloud or modeling reading and writing, computer use, print matter available, etc. The results confirmed that a range of activities that support children’s literacy development were, indeed, occurring in homes.

Participating in Family Literacy

In addition to our regular meetings, we learned from two other events that were held during our collaborative effort. We discovered that learning can take place in many settings and without direct instruction. For a

March meeting, the group voted to attend a reading by the author Sapphire. The author’s book, *Push*, relates the story of a young girl who has experienced many hardships and who, in her teen years, finally encounters a teacher who uses reading and the literacy/learning process to turn the young girl’s life around.

One of the biggest lessons named was the need to work more closely with families and to listen to their input and feedback, rather than basing programs on only the school’s perceptions.

Next was a visit by storytellers who performed on a Saturday morning at Old City Park in Dallas, an open-air museum featuring old homes and buildings, where they shared a rich, oral tradition with the teachers, families, and children from our collaborative partnership schools.

Gathering Feedback

At the last meeting of the Family Literacy Project, two forms of feedback were used to evaluate the project. First, the group responded to a modified chart modeled after Ogle’s (1986) KWL technique. The idea was to draw the school’s attention back to the criteria for effective outreach and to have them reflect on this year-long effort. Using three columns (what we know, what we did, what we learned), each campus team noted what they knew from the research on urban outreach programs, what each individual campus did at their school in response to the research presented over the course of the project, and what the schools learned from their participation and their efforts back at their campuses. One of the biggest lessons named was the need to work more closely with families and to listen to their input and feedback, rather than basing programs on only the school’s perceptions.

Finally, a summative evaluation was administered to help assess increases in family literacy as a result of the project, increases in teacher/administrator awareness, the effectiveness of the group study model, and useful aspects of the project. Participants gave the project high marks, noting that the study group model had proved very beneficial as a beginning point for awareness of issues and possibilities.

Conclusion

Given increased literacy demands in today’s society, student literacy is a critical area. Family literacy holds great promise in its ability to foster language and literacy development. The collaborative project between the Dallas Public Schools and the University of Texas Arlington worked to connect teachers and administrators with families and community members to discuss the promise and process of family literacy.

The family literacy partners from the Dallas Public Schools were not the only ones involved in the learning process. We learned a great deal as well. A few of our most important findings include the following.

- Collaboration takes time in terms of logistical arrangements and participant ownership.
- Partnership efforts fare better than isolated services directed by the school alone.
- We must strive to include and involve parents in meaningful ways in our discussions and partnership efforts.
- Active involvement of all parties in the collaborative effort—through hands-on activities, field trips, etc.—produces the best results.

For us, the Family Literacy Project was a meaningful connection with teachers, administrators, parents, and children. Families can contribute in powerful ways to a child’s literacy development, but sometimes they need a better sense of direction. We must make sure that every resource is tapped to foster our children’s language abilities. ●

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Looking at Literacy in Urban Families: Surveying the Scene

by Sylvia M. Yardell, Associate Professor of Reading/Language Arts, University of Texas Arlington

Do urban parents read aloud to their children? If so, what do they read? Do they model writing for their children? If so, what kinds? These basic questions come readily to mind when one wonders about literacy practices in the home. But there are other areas of family literacy well worth considering, and questions about the accurate and meaningful assessment of the information we gather. In our partnership with the Dallas Public Schools, described in Nancy Hadaway's article, we wanted to ask and answer some of these questions. This joint project between Dallas Public Schools and the University of Texas Arlington, while focused specifically on literacy

project development and implementation, also included a family survey component.

An initial draft of a survey designed to tap into basic literacy practices in the home was developed and shared through the regular study groups involved in the year-long project. We discussed our objectives in gathering such data, the difficulties in accurately assessing what was happening outside of the school environment, and the complications of administering and collecting survey data from several thousand participants. There were teachers, parents, and administrators from numerous elementary campuses in some of Dallas's lowest socioeconomic

areas involved in this project. These individuals, in turn, represented multiple sections of classrooms from grades K-3. How could we systematically gather accurate information about how many parents were reading aloud to their children on a daily basis, for example? We couldn't; at least not with the time and resources at our disposal. Thus, we decided to shift our emphasis to "casting a wide net" to examine current practices, rather than attempting to establish any exact or comprehensive conclusions. We know from the foundational work of researchers such as Shirley Brice Heath (1983), Gordon Wells (1986), and Denny Taylor and Catherine Dorsey-Gaines (1988) that

truly meaningful data about family literacy practices is gleaned from families and neighborhoods when there is a presence, a dialogue, a relationship, and an investment over time.

Our project was focused primarily on mentoring schools as they developed indigenous projects that fostered family literacy in their own unique school communities. But we also wanted to glean a basic understanding of the status quo. Since we did not have the means for authentically surveying families firsthand, we chose the venue of the classroom for our data collection. Our pipeline of information was the children themselves. Interestingly enough, the whole issue of “family literacy assessment” led to a fruitful debate in our study groups. We discussed the pros and cons of surveying families through paper-and-pencil means, as well as how to get responses back, whether we could trust self-reported data, and the process of making generalizations based on such samples.

We also discussed the survey instrument itself: What kinds of questions were we going to ask? What were we trying to discover? We went back to the kinds of literacy practices we had been reading and talking about in our study groups. The modeling of reading was an obvious priority, but clearly there were other aspects to literacy that we believed were important and worth investigating. We decided to focus on all the language arts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. We wanted to recognize a range of family literacy options. We even included questions related to the use of nonprint media and computers. We would keep the language clear and simple, with open-ended questions that didn't necessarily have obvious “teacher pleasing” answers. We had to keep in mind children's perceptions of the language we were using. For example, instead of asking “Do your parents write at home?” we decided to ask, “What kinds of writing have you seen your

family do at home?” [See Figure 1.]

The next step in implementing this assessment was to determine the method of administration. Study groups decided early on against sending home paper-and-pencil surveys because historically, return rates had not been good. Instead, we relied on teachers to survey their students orally as a whole-class activity. We understood that this would result in a collective perception rather than strictly quantitative data, but it would be a beginning. Having questions asked by the teachers with whom the children were most familiar would create a relatively comfortable and naturalistic setting for talking about families and homes.

The questions would be provided on overhead transparencies; the teacher would introduce the question to the class as a whole, jotting down individual and group responses right on the transparency. The method for collecting the data was demonstrated to the participating members during one of our evening work sessions. All of the classrooms in grades K–3 from each school would participate. The study group members disseminated and collected the surveys themselves.

Remember that we merely recorded the *presence* of literacy activities, rather than the *frequency* of each activity. Thus we have a “snapshot” of home literacy from the point of view of the children. As narrow as this perspective might seem, some intriguing findings emerged. The results reflected a range of activities that support children's literacy development in the home. As the teacher, parent, and administrator representatives on the project presented and discussed these results, it was revealing to note their own reactions to the findings, their surprise at the variety of home literacy activities present, and the pedagogical possibilities for linking home literacy activities and classroom practice.

Results

Do urban parents read aloud to their children at home? Yes, according to

our child participants. “Parents” were cited twice as often as any other reader. However, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts/uncles, friends, other children, and day care providers were also mentioned as leaders of read-aloud experiences. What kinds of books were being read? At the moment, the most popular choice was the “Arthur” books by Marc Brown. This may be a tie-in with a new and popular television program based on the Arthur books. It is also gratifying to note, however, that 30 other different titles were specifically mentioned by the children surveyed, including: *Clifford*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Cinderella*, Dr. Seuss books, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Winnie the Pooh*, Goosebumps books, and the Bible. Children also noted that their families read all kinds of printed matter. The top four favorites, in descending order, were the newspaper, magazines, books, and the Bible.

In addition to these, children reported reading many forms of “everyday” or “environmental” print, including: the mail, cookbooks, instructions, computer text, the dictionary, textbooks, homework, signs and billboards, comics, poetry, diaries, catalogs, *TV Guide*, the phone book, greeting cards, Mapsco, work “stuff,” puzzles, and bills. And where do families get their reading material? From the library, hands down, twice as often as any other source. But also from grocery stores, bookstores, friends and neighbors, bookclubs, bookfairs, through the mail, at the barber's, at garage sales, at work, at discount and other stores, at church, from school, at the gas station, at the day care center, and at the hospital.

What about writing? We asked children, “What kinds of writing have you seen your family do at home?” Their most frequent response was “letters,” “checks,” and “grocery lists.” Again, many examples of “everyday” or authentic writing activities were also volunteered, including writing on the computer, notes, homework, applications, menus, songs, addresses, resumes, phone numbers,

orders, invitations, poems, journals, cards, money orders, and directions.

We wondered about oral literacies, too, such as storytelling. Did families still share stories orally? What kinds? The children told us that parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, and aunts/uncles do tell stories at home. What kind? The most popular were ghost stories! But children were also listening to family stories, original stories, bedtime stories, and “once upon a time” stories. Singing and songs interested us, too. Here was yet

another oral venue for developing literacy. Again, in nearly all the classrooms, children reported singing in the home—especially with the radio or religious songs. Other singing at home included holiday songs, songs from TV, bedtime songs, songs from tapes and CDs, and family songs.

What about nonprint media? National statistics tell us children watch plenty of television. Our survey revealed that children generally prefer cartoons and videos to other

forms of media entertainment. They also mentioned, less often, school programs, movies, holiday programs, and television sitcoms.

Homework is a literacy activity that actively links home and school. We wondered whether families were involved in this, too. The results were somewhat mixed. Parents and siblings helped with homework three times as often as any other source of support. Aunts/uncles, grandparents, day care providers, friends, and cousins were also noted as helping with homework. Interestingly, “no one” [helps me with my homework] was cited as often as these latter sources.

Finally, our collaborative group was curious about what activities might bring family members to the school. We were actively seeking meaningful ways to host families on campus. Thus we asked, “What brings your family to school?” Parent-teacher conferences were named twice as often as any other occasion. Next were PTA meetings, special programs, honor assemblies, volunteering, field day, and pick up/drop off.

Although we knew many of the families we worked with would not necessarily own home computers, we wanted to recognize this source of literacy activity in our survey. Thus we also asked the children, “Do you have a computer at home?” and “What kinds of things does your family use the computer for?” Although we do not have exact data on the number of computers in the homes involved, we know the chief use of the computer for this population was games. This application was mentioned twice as often as the next most popular activity—writing. Other uses included: reading, work, typing, math, and homework.

Conclusion

Collecting this data was a powerful exercise in many ways. First, the extensive collaboration in the development of the survey instrument and in planning its administration was fairly unique. Many perspectives

School
Teacher
Grade level

Family Literacy Project
Dallas Public Schools in collaboration with University of Texas Arlington

QUICK TALLY SURVEY (K–3)

DIRECTIONS: Discuss each question orally with your class. Write down their answers as they respond.

1. Does anyone ever read to you at home? Who? Do you have a favorite book you like to have read to you? What is it?
2. What kinds of things do the people in your family like to read?
(Books, magazines, the newspaper, the mail, the Bible, *Ebony*, *Time*, etc.)
3. Where does your family like to get their books and magazines?
(Public library, bookstores, bookfairs, bookclubs, grocery store, friends and neighbors, etc.)
4. What kinds of writing have you seen your family do at home
(Letter writing, grocery lists, messages, checks, writing on the computer, etc.)
5. Does anyone tell stories at home? Who? What kind of stories?
("Once upon a time" stories, bedtime stories, ghost stories, family stories, made-up stories, etc.)
6. Does anyone sing songs at your house? Who? What kind of songs?
(Religious songs, Christmas carols, camp songs, bedtime songs, songs from the radio, etc.)
7. What movies, plays, or TV programs do you and your family enjoy watching the most? (Cartoons, videos, programs, theater, holiday shows, etc.)
8. Who helps you with your homework?
(At home, at school, at day care, with friends, etc.)
9. What brings your family to school?
(PTA meetings, parent/teacher conferences, special programs, field day, honor assemblies, volunteering at school, etc.)
10. Do you have a computer at home? What kinds of things does your family use the computer for? (Games, reading, writing, etc.)

Figure 1.

were represented in the endeavor. Second, the very process of gathering the data was enlightening. In many cases, we broadened the definition of literacy that many held. In this urban setting, it was encouraging to see that many parents were active participants in their children's literacy development, particularly in the area of reading aloud, telling stories, sharing songs, helping with homework, and coming to school for conferences. Environmental print and authentic, everyday writing were consistent vehicles for promoting literacy, as were religious songs and the Bible in many homes.

Our classroom-based surveys attempted to take a "snapshot" of a variety of home literacy activities. As this surveying process evolved, it also became another means of promoting a

more inclusive understanding of literacy, even multiple literacies, among the different participants. One final outcome was a bit of a surprise: as we worked to plan literacy development projects in these various urban settings, it also helped us see the many literacy activities that were already occurring in these homes. Instead of taking a "deficit" view of family literacy, we looked to see what kinds of literacy activities were already in place. So often we tend to view the "glass" of urban literacy as half empty. Our collaborative participation in this investigation helped us all to see this same glass as half full. ●

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CEL Election Results

CEL members elected two new members-at-large at the convention in Denver. Robert Infantino of the University of San Diego, California, and Tom Scott, of the Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, School District will serve three-year terms.

Taking the Initiative: Dallas Teachers as Parent Mentors in the Literacy Development of Children

by Diana L. Wisell, Assistant Professor of Reading/Language Arts, University of Texas Arlington

The literacy demands placed on children today are greater than at any other time in our history. Children must not only learn to decode words, develop deeper vocabulary knowledge, and comprehend text, but also they must be able to read critically, solve problems, and utilize technology. All of this means that parents must play a larger role in the early reading development of their children. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that children who are read to at home tend to have higher achievement in school (Wells, 1986). Other studies (Epstein, 1986; Topping & Wolfingdale, 1985) tend to show that the active involvement of parents in their children's schooling has a positive impact on their school adjustment and performance. However, in order for parents to be actively involved, they may need some information from and training by teachers. For example, in the 1993

American Teacher Survey (Metropolitan Life), 69% of the teachers rated federal support for developing programs to help disadvantaged families work with their children to prepare them for school as highest priority.

I believe that our teachers need to take leadership roles within the schools and broader communities to teach and mentor parents in how to help their children become better readers. For example, teachers can acquaint parents with the emergent literacy model of reading, in which reading is seen as part of a continuum toward becoming an independent reader.

One program with which I have been involved, the Dallas Reading Program, helps teachers (K-3) to become leaders in literacy within their schools. A basic tenet of this program is that children will have adults or other children read to them each day; they will read with adults

or children each day; and they will read independently each day. Within this framework, what the classroom teacher is trying to accomplish can be doubled if parents become involved in the process.

The Dallas Reading Program, which began in the fall semester of 1998 with approximately 500 teachers, is a huge initiative aimed at retraining all Dallas public school teachers in grades K-3 to teach reading more effectively. The stated goal is that all children within the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) will be reading on grade level by the end of third grade. The professionals within DISD realize that reading is at the heart of all learning, and they also realize that writing has to be coupled with reading in order for complete learning to take place. This program takes a balanced approach toward literacy instruction, building on the work of people such

as Marie Clay, Brian Cambourne, Lev Vygotsky, and Lucy Calkins.

Teachers learn the importance of checking children's understanding of print awareness concepts; recognizing children's knowledge of phonemic awareness and ways to help develop those skills; learning to do running records in order to immediately assess a child's reading level and to locate areas for minilesson instruction during guided reading lessons; valuing writing and conducting Writers' Workshop within their classrooms; seeing firsthand how all of these components, especially phonemic awareness and alphabetic principle, connect with writing to help children develop spelling skills, word knowledge, and ultimately, comprehension of text. And as the teachers become more confident in their ability to assess and instruct children in reading, they are also more capable and confident in helping parents learn what they can do to help their own children.

As Debra points out, "The Reading Academy and my [lead reading teacher] have definitely empowered me. First, so many concepts have been clarified for me—like how to conduct guided reading . . . I can help parents by making them aware of what cueing system the student uses or may need to use. For instance, if a child does not use visual cues when looking at a new word, I will strongly encourage the parent to have the child look at all parts of the word as they read . . . I would suggest that the parent read the text first to become familiar with the vocabulary, and then ask comprehension questions. Most of all, I will encourage the parents to read to their child, with their child, and allow the child to read to them."

Or as Lisa pointed out, "This course has been unbelievably helpful for me! The strategies, ideas, and suggestions have been endless . . . After every session and/or reading assignment, I am eager to give a new technique or strategy a shot in my classroom. In order to get parents

involved in their child's reading progress, I let parents know what story we are working on and have the children take the book home every day. I have had several parents express interest and ask questions about how they can help their child with reading. After reading chapter 12 in *Guided Reading* (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), I might make copies of page 161 to give to parents. [Author's note: Page 161 contains prompts for teachers and parents to use to encourage children to make use of all the cueing systems during reading.] I would also encourage parents to make every trip in the car or to the grocery store, etc. a reading experience."

Carla agreed with the ideas stated above and added, "Since taking this class, I have become more aware of my students' reading abilities. I know that I need help with the strategies and the best help and support comes from the parents. One thing I can encourage parents to do is to read to and with their children. This means not only at bedtime, but also while riding in the car; they can read billboards, ads, and road signs. They can also visit the library and get a library card so that they can make regular visits . . . I try to encourage my students' parents to model reading and to set aside a regular time for reading and storytelling."

Or as Wilhelmina points out, "One way that I am going to reach out to parents to get them involved is to talk with them briefly about the reading and writing techniques that I have learned and make sure the parents read to their students every day at least for 15 minutes . . . I will also let the parents know that our

school library is a place that they can use to check out books, and at any time, they can feel free to use our literacy reading lab to learn reading skills that are used to help our students improve their reading."

These are only samples of the teachers' voices who want to be heard, who feel empowered as a result of what they are learning within the Dallas Reading Academy, and who want to reach out to mentor parents and guardians of the children whom they teach. These teachers realize the importance of the caregivers' role in helping children to become effective readers, and, perhaps most important, these teachers now feel empowered to offer ideas, suggestions, and modeling of reading techniques to parents. What a powerful combination for young readers! ●

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Reading Workshop at Spring Conference

CEL and the Secondary Section present "Secondary Readers Reading Successfully," an all-day workshop, March 15, 2000, in conjunction with the NCTE Spring Conference in New York City. Teachers with extensive classroom experience in teaching reading conduct large- and small-group sessions for all teachers of secondary English language arts. Details are available on the NCTE home page. Sign up on the conference registration form available in NCTE section journals and *The Council Chronicle*.

Building Home and School Literacy Partnerships: A Principal's Perspective

by John E. Jacobson, Associate Dean of Education, University of Texas Arlington

In 1990, U.S. governors convened a national education summit, which set six national education goals for schools, students, and communities to be achieved by 2000. The promotion of school/parent partnerships was one of two additional goals added in 1994. Now, a decade later, the National Education Goals Panel, a bipartisan and intergovernmental body of federal and state officials, reports progress in several areas; unfortunately, building school/parent partnerships is not among them (National Education Goals Panel, 1999).

What role does the elementary school principal play in establishing and sustaining this important partnership? To illustrate how elementary principals can effectively build and support school/home literacy partnerships, the following scenario is offered. It is, in a sense, historical fiction: all events occurred, but not in the order presented or with the same faculty. These events come from a culmination of my personal experiences as a classroom teacher, school principal, university professor, literacy consultant, and, most recently, from the activities associated with the Dallas Family Literacy Project.

The Scenario

As the newly appointed principal of the school, I was surprised by the small number of parents in attendance at one of the first PTA meetings of the new school year. I silently wondered why. Didn't parents at this school care about their children? As the meeting progressed, I pondered the effectiveness and purposes of PTA. I also thought about an article I had read earlier that day that had discussed the importance of parent/school partnerships in children's learning. Convinced of the impor-

tance of such partnerships, I decided to bring the matter up for discussion in the next faculty meeting.

I distributed copies of the journal article on partnerships (Flood, Lapp, Tinajero, & Nagel, 1995) before the next faculty meeting so that teachers could read it and be ready to discuss its contents. The meeting agenda was structured to allow enough time to discuss the article. The teachers were not used to discussing such topics at faculty meetings and were initially tentative in offering their opinions and comments. Nevertheless, the faculty decided to form study groups to explore ways to engage parents in school volunteerism and home literacy activities.

A parent advisory committee, consisting of a parent representative from each classroom and a teacher representative, was formed. The same partnership article was distributed to committee members, read, and discussed. The committee members were eager to explore avenues for increasing parent involvement both at school and at home. A special school-wide ad hoc committee on volunteerism and family involvement was created to merge the efforts of the faculty and parent advisory committees. This new committee met regularly throughout the fall and winter months, seeking and collecting information by visiting schools, reading printed materials, and soliciting help from experts through interviews. After several meetings, family/school partnership plans were developed and presented to the individual faculty and parent advisory committees. The ad hoc committee determined that effective family literacy partnerships must be built upon the expressed needs and wishes of parents (Come & Fredericks, 1995).

To assess parent needs and wishes,

the committee suggested several approaches. First, family input was solicited schoolwide through literacy questionnaires designed for both parents and students. Because many of the parents had limited English proficiency, parent questionnaires were written in both English and the dominant second language (Power, 1999). Second, teachers talked with parents as they dropped off or picked up their children at school. Third, teachers solicited comments from children about home literacy practices through classroom discussions. Fourth, teachers collected additional information by visiting children's homes and talking with their parents and family members. Teachers then constructed individual "family stories" for each child that described children and family literacy circumstances (Edwards, 1999). These served to inform teachers about the children's literacy experiences and helped guide teachers' decisions about classroom instruction. Finally, other individuals were able to offer opinions and ideas through a suggestion box placed in the school's lobby.

The parent survey was devised to identify areas of parent expertise and interests so that parents could become a valuable classroom resource. For example, parents who had traveled widely were invited into classrooms to share information about people and places. Parents also shared customs of their culture, such as childhood stories, games, foods, and holiday celebrations; demonstrated occupational skills and hobbies; and read their favorite stories and books to students. All activities served as a bridge between home and school by involving parents in their children's education.

Using information from various assessments, the committee deter-

mined that many of the parents lacked the necessary literacy skills to help their children. As a result, a family literacy center was established in one of the school's empty classrooms. The center was arranged so that the atmosphere felt homelike rather than institutional. Included were rocking chairs, play centers, computers, and reading nooks with many easily accessible reading materials for children and parents. How-to pamphlets and videos on child care and parenting were also available. After-school and weekend seminars were created and taught by school counselors, classroom teachers, parents, and local college adult education teachers (Ermis, 1996). Seminar topics included Working with Preschoolers, Learning to Speak and Read English, Helping Your Child Learn to Read, Family Activities that Promote Literacy Development, Using the Computer, and Helping Your Child Be Successful (Lewis, 1992). Programs such as Head Start and Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) that have strong parent involvement components were researched, and ideas gleaned from those programs, such as helping parents learn best practices in selecting books and reading to their children, were incorporated into the school offerings.

After reviewing several research reports, the ad hoc committee learned that the effects of parent involvement on children's reading scores were significant. When parent involvement was low, classroom means averaged 46 points below the national average on standardized tests, and when involvement was high, classroom means averaged 28 points above the national average—a difference of 74 points. Even after adjustment to account for possibly confounding attributes of communities, schools, principals, classes, and students, the association between parent involvement and classroom achievement remained, although the observed gap of 74 points was reduced to 44 points (U.S. Department of Education,

1996). The committee also learned that children's standardized test scores improved in direct relationship to the amount of time children spent reading (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988) and that reading scores also improved if parents were involved (Epstein, 1991).

From this information, a variety of home/school reading programs were created to involve parents with their children's reading. One such teacher-created program was Catch a Teacher in the Library. Every Thursday evening, a teacher from the school was assigned to be in the neighborhood public library. Students who came to the library that evening and found the teacher reading would be given a slip of paper on which to write their names and grades. An additional slip could be given for each family member brought to the library by the student. The slips were then placed in a box located at the circulation desk, collected by the teacher at the end of the evening, and returned to the school. The next morning a student's name was drawn from the box, and the winner's name was announced over the intercom. The winning child was allowed to select a book from a collection donated by a local community organization for this purpose. In addition to connecting home and school, the program fostered public library use. To help encourage children's out-of-school reading, several incentive programs were incorporated, including Pizza Hut's Book-It, ice cream parties, and Reading Bingo (children read from various genres to fill in bingo squares on cards) (Vaughn, 1994).

Perhaps the most exciting, motivational school reading program was the annual April overnight reading marathon for third- through fifth-grade students. At the beginning of the school year, reading marathon qualification requirements were outlined for students during a student assembly and for parents at the first back-to-school event. To qualify for the reading marathon event, students had to read an average of 20

out-of-school minutes per day beginning at the start of the school year. At home, students recorded minutes read per day on a monthly calendar provided by the school. At the end of each month, parents verified the minutes read by signing their child's calendar, which was then returned to the school and exchanged for a new one. To help ensure that every child qualified for the reading marathon, teachers communicated monthly with parents about qualifying problems and gave encouragement to those students who fell behind.

The reading marathon was held from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on a Friday evening. Children came with preapproved books, pillows, sack lunches, munchies, and pajamas. There were ten-minute breaks every hour, and parents were invited to come read with their children during the 8:00–9:00 p.m. reading period. Then at 9:00 p.m., the books, pillows, and sleeping bags were moved aside and everyone took a one-hour break to eat sack lunches, play games, and prepare for the last hour of reading. (Throughout the evening, any student not reading during the reading periods was given notice for off-task behavior. If the behavior continued, the student was disqualified and sent home. Students wanted so much to be included that none received a second notice.) The sight of having children, parents, and teachers all reading together on a Friday evening was inspiring. At 11:00 p.m., an awards assembly was held, and certificates were issued. Boys and girls were then separated into two rooms where children prepared for bed. In the morning, breakfast was provided and the children were dismissed to return home. This activity not only encouraged home reading, but involved parents throughout the year. It also fostered children's ability to read for extended time periods, provided teacher and parent reading role models, and instilled lifelong reading habits in children (Jacobson, 1998).

Although the ad hoc committee concluded that parent involvement

was critical, they also found through informal assessments that many parents were reluctant to communicate with teachers or even come to school. They explored ways to open lines of communication and help parents feel more comfortable about coming to school. One successful program that fostered positive home/school relationships was the Sunshine Gram. The Sunshine Gram was a positive note to students written by teachers on 4" x 5" two-sheet NCR (carbonless copy) paper. A brightly shining sun at the top of the note reflected its positive nature. Each day teachers identified at least two children from each class who they felt needed and warranted a positive note. Teachers wrote specific comments on how the child had performed well on an assignment, had been kind to someone, or had demonstrated a caring attitude towards others or schoolwork. A copy of the Sunshine Gram was given to me so that I could give additional positive reinforcement to children in the cafeteria, hallways, and playgrounds, or to parents through telephone calls or conversations at school.

Among the most fruitful events in bridging school and home were neighborhood meetings. Instead of having all PTA-type meetings at the school, families from various areas of the school boundaries were asked to host neighborhood meetings. These meetings became popular and were very well attended. In the intimate and less intimidating setting of a home, many parents expressed feelings and ideas that they normally would not have shared in a larger setting. As the principal, I attended all neighborhood meetings, but teachers were assigned to attend just a few. As information was exchanged, parents felt that their opinions and feelings were valued. As a result, the education of their children became more of a partnership as many helpful suggestions and ideas were exchanged.

To promote more writing at home involving the family, a program called Traveling Tales was adopted in the

primary grades (Reutzel & Fawson, 1990). Every Friday, a backpack containing writing materials was sent home with one child from each class with instructions to involve family members in creating a story of their choice. Over the weekend, families worked to create stories, and on Monday, each class was able to hear a family-written story. Some of the stories were fictional; others were more autobiographical. This activity helped to increase students' writing skills, and also helped teachers learn more about their students' families.

All of these programs and procedures were established and implemented as a result of the expressed needs and wishes of parents. Both parents and teachers became willing to work together in a spirit of shared responsibility.

Through the various assessments, the ad hoc committee found that parents wanted more information about what their children were learning and doing at school and how they could extend the learning at home. Back-to-school nights were held more frequently, and specific information about classroom curriculum was shared. Teachers gave parents suggestions for at-home learning. Bilingual parent newsletters containing tips for parents were distributed monthly. A parent volunteer program was established to allow parents to work directly with children and teachers in classrooms rather than just to perform secretarial activities. Training seminars for parent volunteers provided specific tutoring strategies and suggestions on how to work with children. (An excellent resource on this is Beth Ann Herrmann's *The Volunteer Tutor's Toolbox*.)

In addition to involving parents as volunteers, the whole community was invited to participate. Students from

a neighboring high school (many of whom were siblings of our students) worked once a week in classrooms. A foster grandparent program sponsored by the county government allowed retired volunteers to work with children and provided them with a lunch. Volunteers from church groups, businesses, League of Women Voters, Kiwanis, Lions, Elks, General Federated Women's International, and other community-based organizations read to children, helped them with their writing, and provided general tutoring services. In addition, these volunteers served as great role models and friends to many children. A simple check-in, check-out tracking system was implemented to account for the quality and quantity of volunteer service. This system helped the school be more effective and efficient in using volunteers.

All of these programs and procedures were established and implemented as a result of the expressed needs and wishes of parents. Both parents and teachers became willing to work together in a spirit of shared responsibility. As care was taken to establish and maintain open lines of communication, parents became active participants in making and following through on decisions. With children, parents, educators, and community members willingly participating together in a learning partnership, standardized test scores increased, children read more frequently, and student writing improved. No longer were PTA meetings sparsely attended. Parents at this school demonstrated their long-term, caring commitment to their children's education by becoming involved in the educational programs at home as well as at school.

In reflecting back to the first PTA meeting I attended, I realized that the low attendance by parents wasn't caused by indifference. What was missing were the various vehicles that fostered and facilitated the critically important partnership between the home and school. I learned that an elementary principal

must first desire parent involvement and then become a facilitator in making that involvement happen. ●

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“Best Article” Winner Announced

Kathleen Siegfried was honored at the November CEL meeting in Denver as the recipient of the Conference on English Leadership’s “Best Article” award for items published in the *English Leadership Quarterly* during 1998. Henry Kiernan, editor of the *Quarterly*, presented the author with a plaque during the CEL luncheon.

The award honors the author of the best article, so chosen because of its value to the department chair, the quality of its writing, and its originality. Siegfried, who is the K-12 Humanities Supervisor at Bordentown Regional High School District in New Jersey, addressed the staff development and curriculum implications of implementing block scheduling. In “Breaking the Bonds of Time: Block Scheduling as a Pathway to Change” published in the May 1998 issue, she wrote: “What this plan for block scheduling had given us was time to focus on change, as well as on one other critical element: a felt need for change.”

Honorable mention went to Richard P. DuFour for “The Thunder of What You Do Versus the Whisper of What You Say” (October 1998) and Robert Perrin for “Opportunities to Succeed: Guiding Students through the Process of Scholarship Application” (August 1998).

The judging committee included: Jacqueline Brown Frierson, Maryland; Tohru Inoue, Wisconsin; and Don Woodruff, Virginia.

Call for Manuscripts

Guest editor Timothy Dohrer is seeking manuscripts for the February 2001 *ELQ* issue on Best Practices in Curriculum Integration. In light of recent interest in curriculum integration and interdisciplinary curriculum (including an issue of *ELQ*), it would be useful to explore specific accounts of teachers engaging in integrated lessons, units, and courses. How are teachers and schools turning research into actual classroom practice? What pitfalls should school leaders be aware of in implementing integrated or interdisciplinary curricula? In what ways does English connect with a variety of disciplines or topics? How does integration effect coverage, especially in regard to literature? How are students reacting to our interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum efforts?

Send manuscripts by **October 15, 2000**, to: Dr. Timothy Dohrer,
 New Trier High School,
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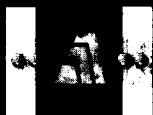
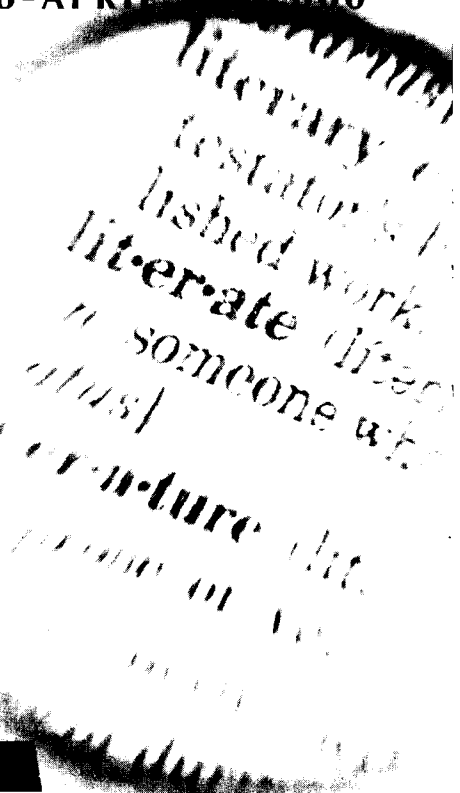
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Call for Manuscripts— Future Issues

The *English Leadership Quarterly*, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

A decision about a manuscript will be reached within two months of submission. The *Quarterly* typically publishes one out of ten manuscripts it receives each year.

Surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

August 2000 (deadline April 28, 2000)

Block Scheduling

Guest editor: Elizabeth Howard

October 2000 (deadline June 15, 2000)

Mentoring New Leaders

February 2001 (deadline October 15, 2000)

Best Practices in Curriculum Integration

Guest editor: Timothy Dohrer (see call, p. 14)

Manuscripts may be sent on 3.5" floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files or as traditional double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to Henry Kiernan, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, West Morris Regional High School District, Administration Building, Four Bridges Road, Chester, NJ 07930; phone 908-879-6404, ext. 281; fax 908-879-8861; e-mail kiernan@nac.net. ●

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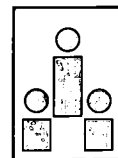
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▷ IN THIS ISSUE

Technology and Leadership

by Henry Kiernan, editor

While serving as your editor for the *English Leadership Quarterly*, I have received the greatest number of manuscripts whenever there is an open call on the topic of technology. I have always maintained that English teachers were long ago on the cutting edge of direct application of technology in the classroom. It seemed to be a natural fit for classroom leaders to use emerging technologies as a tool to increase literacy across the curriculum. Now they are working with colleagues in other disciplines to develop and implement rubrics, electronic portfolios, and other individualized assessments. Inside this issue are the stories from teachers who have influenced the shape of instruction within classrooms, school districts, and universities. The authors provide good theory and practice.

Jeff Golub is a well-respected leader in the use of technology in the teaching of English. He offers a strong rationale for understanding the implications and impact of the growing use of technology in schools.

Susan Golder is the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Peter Grande is the Director of Staff Development for the Rose Tree Media School District in Pennsylvania.

Together they adapt the principles of effective staff development into an approach that best provides technology training for staff.

Frank Mander is an elementary teacher in Illinois, and when I heard his presentation at a national conference last year, I knew I had to get his story published. His enthusiasm for using technology in the classroom can be witnessed on his Web page as well as in the way technology has changed

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his teaching.

The final article is about a Virtual High School, one of the most well-known "schools without walls." I first became aware of this project two years ago and have watched the development of a variety of courses offered online. Liz Pape, who is the Virtual High School administrator, provides insight into the design and evaluation of Net courses used in their curriculum. ●

Thoughts Worth Thinking About:
Reflections, Connections, Projections*

by Jeffrey N. Golub, University of South Florida, Tampa

I remember reading in the newspaper recently that George Mallory's frozen body had been found near the top of Mt. Everest.

This item was accompanied by a recounting of Mallory's famous reply to a reporter who had asked him why he wanted to climb the mountain at

all: "Because it is there." Makes sense, I suppose. It is the most simple and obvious reason, certainly. But then Mallory's statement reminded

me of another reply given by the scientist who had cloned “Dolly” the sheep. A reporter had asked him why he conducted this experiment in the first place, and he said, “Because we could.”

I’m beginning to see a pattern here: an intrepid individual attempts to climb a mountain simply because “it is there,” and a scientist engages in an act of cloning simply because “we could.” No more thought than that. Interesting. And, even more interesting, I am seeing this pattern of thinking yet again—as an accompaniment to the evolution of the tools of instructional technology. And we do have some tools! Computers and videodiscs and digital cameras and digital-everything-else and PowerPoint and HyperStudio and QuickTime and PhotoShop and video and sound editors and . . . well, the list just goes on and on. And the glitz and the glitter and the “beeps” and the “buzz” that these “Star Wars” inventions can produce are truly dazzling to the mind as well as the eye and ear.

Accompanying the growing availability and sophistication of these instructional technology tools is a

drive to persuade teachers to use these tools in their classrooms. Workshops and inservice sessions abound on campuses across the country. “Come one, come all!” The annual Florida Educational Technology Conference draws gigabytes of educators to its sessions, workshops, and Exhibition Hall displays of the latest hardware and software. The National Educational Computing Conference also attracts increasing hordes of teachers and techies.

What’s going on here?

This is where I detect a pattern of thinking similar to the kind of thinking I mentioned previously. I wonder if one unspoken reason for all this enthusiasm—this “push” to instruct instructors in the ways of all things digital and to persuade educators to use these megabyte machines and processing programs—is simply because they are there and because we can.

Oh, I know full well that the conference presenters and workshop leaders wouldn’t really utter these responses if they were interviewed by reporters about the reasons behind their enthusiasm for instructional

technology. What they would more likely say—and I quite agree with them—is that the use of technology serves two purposes: it is more efficient, and it allows teachers to do things that they could not do otherwise; it expands their range of instructional options. These are valid reasons, certainly. Instructional technology does indeed make things happen more efficiently in the classroom. Information is delivered more efficiently, more vividly, in more engaging ways. And technology does open up instructional approaches that were not available previously.

But, still, there is something missing here—a “deeper thinking,” if you will, about the implications and impact of the growing use of instructional technology in the schools. It’s as if we are airline employees so busy making sure that the planes take off on time that we neglect to consider where the planes are headed. In this reflective essay, then, I want to identify some things worth thinking about.

Implications for Students and Teachers

With the increasing availability of instructional technology—both at school and at home—students are becoming active participants in their own learning. No longer do students need to rely solely on the teacher for information; they can simply log on to their computers and search through databases and Web sites for the information and insights they need.

This heralds an important change in the nature of instruction and the presumed roles of both teachers and students. Teachers have traditionally functioned as “information-givers,” mainly through lectures and other forms of “teacher-talk.” Those who still see themselves in this traditional role are using the new technological tools to simply “deliver” course information more efficiently and in living color. But there is a problem here: no matter how well organized and glittery the instructor’s presentation becomes through technological

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) of the National Council of Teachers of English is an organization dedicated to bringing together English language arts leaders to further their continuing efforts to study and improve the teaching of English language arts. The CEL reaches out to department chairs, teachers, specialists, supervisors, coordinators, and others who are responsible for shaping effective English instruction. The CEL strives to respond to the needs and interests germane to effective English instruction from kindergarten through college, within the local school, the central administration, the state, or the national level.

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enhancement, it can't compare with the value and meaningfulness of the students' own information-gathering efforts.

Certainly the use of instructional technology in education can make an instructional approach better, but I think we need to go one step further and visualize how technology can make instruction different. "A boat is safest when it is tied up at the dock, but that isn't what the boat was built for." Instructors are "safest" when they use technological tools to improve their presentations of information. But that's only a small part of what these tools can do, and teachers need to explore the possibilities.

One exciting possibility is for instructors to change from "information-givers" to designers and directors. As noted above, students increasingly have the technological ways and means to find their own information directly, but this doesn't mean that teachers are now obsolete. Students still need teachers to design classroom activities, assignments, and projects that pose problems for students to solve; initiate explorations that invite students to reflect and connect; and engage students in constructing, negotiating, and communicating meanings to real audiences for real purposes. And then, having designed such activities, the teacher acts as a director of instruction, guiding students through the problem or process, serving as a respondent for the students' emerging insights.

Teachers can use instructional technology to design and direct these classroom activities in truly challenging, engaging, innovative, and worthwhile ways. They just need the instructional technology experts to show them how. It's a thought worth thinking about.

Implications for Instruction

Currently there is a lot of talk among the educational community about going back to the "Basics"—those skills deemed most necessary and

fundamental for a student's successful passage through school and survival in the adult world. But the increased use of the Internet and the proliferation of Web sites have brought about a *new* set of basic skills for students (and even adults) to master: Information Literacy skills. Paul Gilster, in his book *Digital Literacy*, defines this kind of literacy as ". . . the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (1997, p. 1). Students need to learn to "read" Web sites and other sources of information on the Internet, determining the "truth value" of the material that appears on their screen. My good

Instructional technology has the potential to fundamentally change—not simply improve—the nature and structure of classroom instruction and to change teachers' roles in this process.

friend and respected colleague, Dr. Stephen Marcus (University of California, Santa Barbara), said in a conference presentation on this subject that, "Literacy is knowing where the truth lies." He deliberately implies two meanings with this statement: people need to develop the necessary "reading" skills to enable them to seek out and identify sources of honest, straightforward, "truthful" information; and they also need to detect and read accurately those electronic texts that distort the truth. The skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation have always been important reading skills for students to master, but now, with the presence and operation of the Internet, these skills have become critical tools for the literate person.

Connections and Projections

I want to return for a moment to my opening observation that the use of instructional technology in classrooms appears to be encouraged simply "because it is there" and "because we can [use it]." These aren't the real reasons, of course, for the current emphasis on instructional technology . . . but the *real* reasons remain invisible; they haven't been made explicit and brought out in the open for discussion and analysis. I have tried to make these invisible reasons visible by identifying some important implications of this movement into the Digital Age. It is these implications that make the instructional technology workshops and courses and conference sessions so compelling and necessary and meaningful.

Instructional technology has the potential to fundamentally change—not simply improve—the nature and structure of classroom instruction and to change teachers' roles in this process. In addition, we are learning new and innovative and exciting and different ways to construct meanings; and we are also learning new and different ways to "read"—not simply left to right from the top of the page to the bottom—but "in" and "out," moving "in" on a passage or point or picture to read details and then "out" again to continue our original textual journey through a series of Web pages. This calls for the mastery of some pretty basic, but still complex, reading skills.

I think that the media technology experts have an important responsibility that is intimately tied to their instruction. Not only should the instructors show their students which buttons to click and which menus to open and how to plug in this and compress that, they should also make explicit and "visible" the impact that the resulting interactive media presentations can have on their own students and on their own role as teachers and, indeed, on the nature of their own instructional approach.

Media technology teachers are the ideal persons to discuss the impact of the various digital media on students and teachers and instruction because they are the people who know best what the various tools and technology can do. "Good teaching is knowing the options," and it is the instructional technology experts who know best what the options are. Sometimes teachers can see for themselves the impact and importance and implications of the technology they are learning to use; others need to have that connection made for them. Without that connection, teachers feel compelled to infuse the technology into

their curriculum simply because it is there and because they can. They will leave the course or the workshop with information, but not insight. With that connection, however, teachers will come to see technology as an agent of change—both for their students and for their role as instructors.

That's a thought worth thinking about. ●

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Guiding Minds on a Global Journey: A Principled Approach to Professional Development

by Susan W. Golder and Peter C. Grande, Rose Tree Media School District, Media, Pennsylvania

Most school districts are challenged as they work to provide professional development that is research-based and comprehensive. This is especially true as educators strive to integrate technology into the teaching/learning process. The principled approach of the Rose Tree Media School District in Pennsylvania provides a model for fostering need-based professional growth, as well as for nurturing teacher collaboration—a critical component for learning organizations of the 21st century.

Remember the anxious anticipation of waiting for a pen pal's letter to arrive? Remember the excitement of opening an envelope and discovering distant cultures and foreign traditions blended with familiar greetings? An enthusiastic group of Pennsylvania teachers and their students are currently experiencing that same excitement as they partner with teachers and their classes across the country. These teachers and their students are "chatting over cyberspace" in the Global Connections project. Through their collaborations,

facilitated by the wonders of technology, they're:

- exploring distance learning and Internet-based approaches to curriculum;
- discovering the importance of a global approach to education;
- creating multimedia technology products; and
- establishing authentic assessment rubrics for their student work.

The project began last year as teachers from Rose Tree Media, Pennsylvania, Wayne Township, Indiana, and West Des Moines, Iowa, were drawn by the prospect of honing their technology skills or, perhaps, by the inspiring notion of connecting themselves and their students with enthusiastic partners across the country. Whatever the initial motivation may have been, the K-12 Global Connections project has become a hallmark of the Principles of Effective Professional Development adopted by the Rose Tree Media School District's professional development program (see Figure 1). Research (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

[NCREL], 1996; Harris, 1998; Rogers, 1995; NSDC Standards, 1995) suggests that effective programs should adhere to the following criteria.

1. *Nurture learning communities by designing instructional environments around collaborative problem solving and cooperative learning.*

In fact, problem-based approaches and professional support networks have proven to be vital components in effecting technology application of skills and integration into the curriculum. In the case of Global Connections, each participating K-12 teacher has selected a different decade over the last 100 years and a focus, such as literature, scientific discoveries, historical events, music/dance, art, daily life, cultural issues. RTM staff have been matched with Indiana and Iowa colleagues with similar grade levels and areas of curricular interest. (See Appendix A.)

Early in the project, the three partnered school districts engaged in an exciting video conference that modeled protocol for conducting distance-learning activities, reviewed procedures for future staff and stu-

dent contacts, and, most important, gave the teachers a chance to see their partners face to face and to begin to sketch preliminary plans for their student technology products. Since then, teachers have gained skills in a variety of areas, including advanced e-mail techniques, multimedia presentation training, and "Internet for instruction" strategies.

Despite a technology comfort range from tyro to technocrat, teachers' project plans have been quite ambitious. Was life much different in Des Moines, Iowa, than it was in Media, Pennsylvania, in the 1950s? One teacher's second graders found out when they compared their interviews of family members with those of their partners. HyperStudio stacks highlighted their findings. Two other

partners, a fourth-grade teacher and a learning support staff member, helped their students create Readers Theater videos of the story "Mr. Popper's Penguins" to send to their partners across the miles. One ambitious fifth-grade class divided their Internet research on daily life in the 1900s among students and created an electronic book based on their discoveries. At the secondary level, topics were quite sophisticated, too. For example, one partner brainstormed the following with her colleague in Iowa:

"Larry, would you consider exploring the Futurists and their short-lived movement? How has the computer affected artists and their work? How do art students see the age of Bill Gates and the Pentium chip? Can we under-

stand the level of risk the Futurists took?"

—Meg Barney, *Penncrest High School, Pennsylvania*

It's difficult to predict who has learned the most through this innovative alliance. Is it the students who are busy sending and receiving letters, e-mails, and videos as they collaboratively investigate their topics? Is it their teachers who are busy brainstorming novel approaches to their projects? Is it the principals who have begun to network with one another about the challenges of integrating technology equitably across their schools? Or is it the project coordinators who are witnessing, through their staff's determination and creativity, the growth of Global Connections beyond their wildest predictions? No one knows for sure, but the spirit of this strand of the district's principled approach to professional development is powerful.

2. Address individual teacher differences and recognize individual strengths, being sensitive to each teacher's expertise, style, experience, and certification.

Beginning with existing curriculum and creating teacher-to-teacher linkages with a common instructional focus, offering need-based staff development programs, and capitalizing on peer coaching relationships among the partnering teachers are all ways Rose Tree Media "bridges" the gap between technology acquisition and substantive integration into the curriculum.

As seen in Figure 2, the varied skill levels, learning preferences, and content needs are all factors that must be acknowledged as adults attempt to internalize new learning. The bridge is fortified by equal measures of support and accountability, which are integral follow-up components of the Rose Tree Media model.

3. Recognize that professional development is a process, not an event, and invest time and resources during the three stages of the change process:

Principles of Effective Professional Development

1. Nurture learning communities by designing instructional environments around collaborative problem solving and cooperative learning.
2. Address individual teacher differences and recognize individual strengths, being sensitive to each teacher's expertise, style, experience, and certification.
3. Recognize that professional development is a process, not an event, and invest time and resources during the three stages of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization.
4. Invest in teacher leaders who are experienced in both curriculum and instruction and who can motivate staff to become advocates for continuous improvement.
5. Provide training and related instruction that allows time for ongoing learning and long-term follow-up support to ensure improvement.
6. Support and celebrate teachers' commitments to educational improvement by providing recognition and incentives.
7. Provide sufficient learning time for teachers to work together and to learn new skills to accomplish long-range district and building goals.
8. Offer programs with appropriate reference points for teachers so they can access vital sources of knowledge.
9. Design instruction and activities that provide early adopters with a "think big/start small" perspective.
10. Model effective instruction by allowing flexibility in programming and variety in instructional learning opportunities while maintaining a set focus on classroom application and student learning.
11. Develop an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, and focuses on all levels of the organization.

Figure 1.

initiation, implementation, and institutionalization.

When Global Connections project participants from Indiana and Iowa joined their Pennsylvania hosts in a millennium celebration last June, the student-generated technology projects from every decade of the century were sophisticated and substantive. High levels of commitment and interest by teachers and students were partial reasons for the success of the project. Equally important, though, were the regular doses of support extended by the RTM Staff Support facilitators, called Teachers-on-Assignment (TOAs).

4. Invest in teacher leaders who are experienced in both curriculum and instruction and who can motivate staff to become advocates for continuous improvement.

The TOA structure has proven to be a vital component in district efforts to effect transfer of learning. Chosen from the teaching staff for a two-year rotational position, these master teachers model exemplary practices and positively support the staff in a non-threatening, assistive capacity. Whether project participants have completed a formal training on "Internet for Instruction" or whether they've simply attended a brief, small-group tutorial on attaching student-written documents to e-mail, the follow-up routine is always the same. Upon completion of any training programs, teachers in Rose Tree

Media create an implementation plan, which invites the TOAs to provide non-evaluative feedback.

5. Provide training and related instruction that allows time for ongoing learning and long-term follow-up support to ensure improvement.

This process affords each teacher the opportunity to rehearse a skill learned in a workshop and to reflect on its meaning with a trained colleague. The RTM follow-up process, from which teachers choose one option, is designed to help staff continue to find ways to improve the practice of helping students to learn and to understand.

High levels of commitment and interest by teachers and students were partial reasons for the success of the project.

• **Classroom Visitation.** Teacher invites teacher-on-assignment to observe "rehearsal of the workshop skill" in a 30–45-minute lesson. The classroom teacher will meet with the teacher-on-assignment prior to the lesson to determine what is to be observed and how data is to be collected. After the lesson, teacher and teacher-on-assignment will meet

to collaboratively analyze the data and to discuss next steps in implementation.

- **Videotaped Lesson.** Teacher videotapes the "rehearsal of the skill" during a 30–45-minute lesson. Teacher watches tape, completes a data sheet, and sends both to teacher-on-assignment. Prior to taping, the teacher and teacher-on-assignment may meet to develop the data sheet, discuss the focus of the lesson, and to work out the logistics of taping. Teacher-on-assignment must receive the tape and data sheet four working days before a follow-up conference. Teacher and teacher-on-assignment will analyze the data, perhaps reviewing parts of the tape together, and will determine the next steps in the use of workshop skills.
- **Reflective Practice Groups.** For selected workshops, a group of at least three teachers may agree to meet with the teacher-on-assignment two or three times during the year. The goal of the reflective practice group is to share strategies and provide one another with ongoing support and feedback for implementation of workshop skills.
- **Peer Coaching** (available only to those trained as mentors or peer coaches). Two teachers may choose to coach one another with a focus on the skill learned in the workshop. Each teacher will conduct a minimum of two observations before the end of the year, and a statement of completion and a reflective summary of the experience are forwarded to the teacher-on-assignment.
- **Co-teaching.** The teacher-on-assignment is available to co-design and co-teach a lesson of 30–45 minutes to "rehearse the workshop skill." If the teacher chooses this feedback option, he/she will meet with the teacher-on-assignment to plan the lesson,

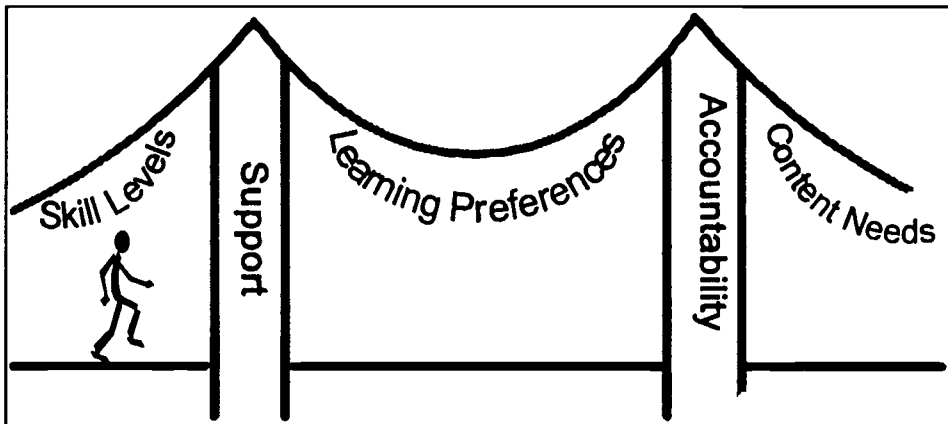


Figure 2. The Rose Tree Media technology training model

to decide how to collect data, and to set up a mutually convenient time for the lesson. Collaborative analysis of the lesson and the collected data will occur during a one-on-one follow-up conference. This will be a mutual rehearsal and reflection process.

Figure 3 aptly illustrates the dramatic effects of a systemic feedback/follow-up program on transfer and application of workshop skills.

6. *Support and celebrate teachers' commitments to educational improvement by providing recognition and incentives.*

Since its inception in September 1999, Global Connections has been a professional development strand rich in recognition and incentives for volunteer participants. First, a natural incentive for high-quality communications and products exists simply because of the caliber of the professional bonds between partners. When interviewed on the progress of their cross-country communications and project ideas earlier this year, teachers responded enthusiastically.

Karen, from Iowa, and I e-mail daily. We are planning on doing a project linking historical sites. We would like to make postcards using multimedia technology. —Amy Somerville, 5th-grade teacher, Glenwood Elementary

I'd like to request training on WebWorks. Using a Web site would definitely bridge the gap between our states and countries. I am willing to be a trailblazer with this. Might I invite knowledgeable high school students to work with my students to create a Global Connections Web page?" —Terry Haskell, AGP teacher, Indian Lane Elementary

In addition to teachers' and students' innate incentive to stretch and grow in technology integration, project coordinators have also offered recognition throughout the project. To encourage last year's "pioneers" to maintain momentum with the unique needs-based model of development, incentives ranged from stipends for participation in training to opportuni-

ties to attend conferences with fellow Global Connections participants. Recognition to teachers and students came in the form of a dedicated project Web page, periodic public presentations to the school board, a professionally produced video to capture student projects, and a three-district "Futures Fair" celebration where Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Iowa participants were honored for the risks they took and for the quality of the products they produced.

7. *Provide sufficient learning time for teachers to work together and to learn new skills to accomplish long-range district and building goals.*

8. *Offer programs with appropriate reference points for teachers so they can access vital sources of knowledge.*

Throughout the project, participants' enthusiasm has been consistently high. Teachers are typically motivated to escape occupational isolationism and to establish meaningful professional connections and collaborations. A minimum of 20 hours of training and support was afforded to all participants. These programs fortified learning communities and assisted teachers in transitioning from skill acquisition to integration of technology into classroom curriculum. Professional development offerings varied in their delivery and approach. Some teachers chose to learn and utilize techniques

to capture video in multimedia technology through a self-paced, programmed approach; others joined grade-specific team members in a peer-coaching format aimed at honing Internet research skills; still others preferred regularly scheduled "snapshot" training to gather timely and focused support on specific applications. These "byte size" experiences delivered before or after school by teacher trainers included topics such as camcorder tips, digital camera use, focused utilization of search engines, and Internet integration. Jamie McKenzie, a former Pennsylvania superintendent and current technology consultant, says, "An effective staff development program will encourage the development of learning cultures rich with informal, reflective partnerships and supportive relationships" (1995).

Rose Tree Media's varied training offers teachers multiple opportunities to come together as lifelong learners. One of the many exciting results of the Global Connections initiative is the degree to which it extends the synergy and scope of the learning communities outside traditional district boundaries.

9. *Design instruction and activities that provide early adopters with a "think big/start small" perspective.*

This principle is best illustrated by the 1998–99 structure that directed

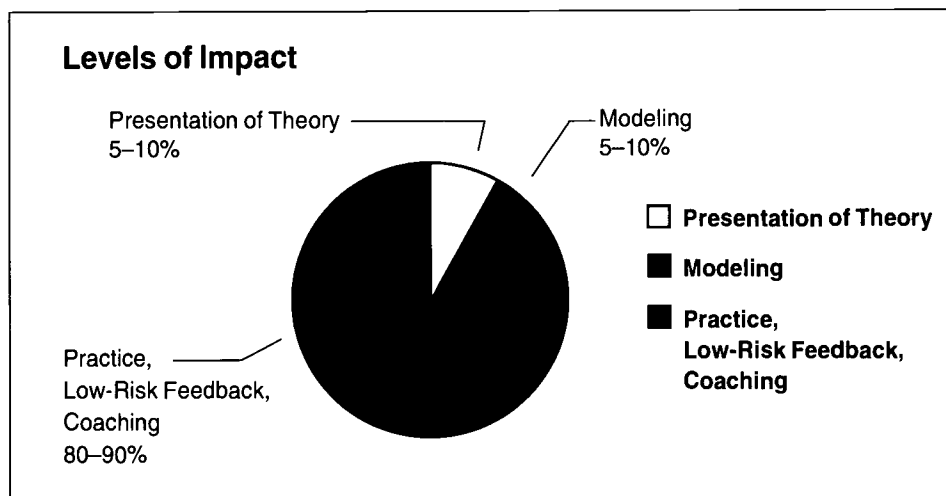


Figure 3: Relationship between levels of impact and components of training (adapted from research of Joyce and Showers)

development of the partnerships and informed teachers' topic choices. Project coordinators anticipated that parameters and established protocols for communications and project design would help participants succeed and technology staff maintain sanity! Confining the partnership to three districts within the United States, assigning participating teachers no more than two partners, and maintaining a set focus on a particular decade of the 20th century all aided in the management of the year-long endeavor. Nonetheless, conference calls among coordinators abounded, and the technology staff was troubleshooting regularly. In the end, the quality of our joint three-district technology projects affirmed the efforts of all involved and inspired the extension of the project for the 1999–2000 school year.

10. *Model effective instruction by allowing flexibility in programming and variety in instructional learning opportunities while maintaining a set focus on classroom application and student learning.*

With this principle at the heart of our mission in technology staff development, the model for the second and current Global Connections year has taken a flexible shape. The project's Core Team determined that those teachers who had completed successful curricular projects during the first year with national partners would have the option of establishing an international alliance this year. Since electronic communications between students are the cornerstone of the project, it was important to find a partner school where technology infusion was a high priority, teacher networks a valued path to professional growth, and the primary spoken language was English.

Fortunately, we found an ideal match in a Department of Defense School in Livorno, Italy. At this writing, we are five months into our international partnership and feel we have a solid start to collaboratively

planned technology products, sustained communications between continents, and the bonus of a highly compatible infrastructure to help effect seamless collaborations.

Rather than confining themselves to the structure of an assigned decade for research, this year's Global Connectors are maintaining a focus on student learning by creating a partnership portfolio. E-mails between teachers during the first semester have frequently focused on the brainstorming of a common banner question to guide portfolio development throughout this year. The following samples illustrate the depth and variety of participants' guiding questions:

How can technology enhance the quality of students' compositions and their motivation and enjoyment of the writing process? —Diane Stern, 6th-grade teacher, Springton Lake Middle School

How can we incorporate multicultural/diversity strands of our curriculum to share cultural backgrounds and differences through the use of technology? —Sue Hendrixson, 4th-grade teacher, Indian Lane Elementary

How can we use technology to learn about historical sites in our own states

and in other countries?
—Amy Somerville, 5th-grade teacher, Glenwood Elementary

How can we incorporate the scientific ideas of Leonardo Da Vinci into our 5th-grade multimedia projects?

—Mark Paikoff, 5th-grade teacher, Glenwood Elementary

In response to adopted banner questions, participating teachers will collect artifacts, select appropriate data for inclusion in the final portfolio, and complete reflective activities designed to assess the 1999–2000 Global Connections processes and products.

11. *Develop an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, and focuses on all levels of the organization.*

When teachers from Pennsylvania, Indiana, Iowa, and Italy travel to Atlanta, Georgia in June to meet one another face to face, to showcase their adult learning and student work, to celebrate their commitment to best practices in technology integration, and to present their Global Connections initiative to a national audience, they will carry an invaluable assessment tool with them. Included in the selected artifacts and reflective compositions of their portfolio

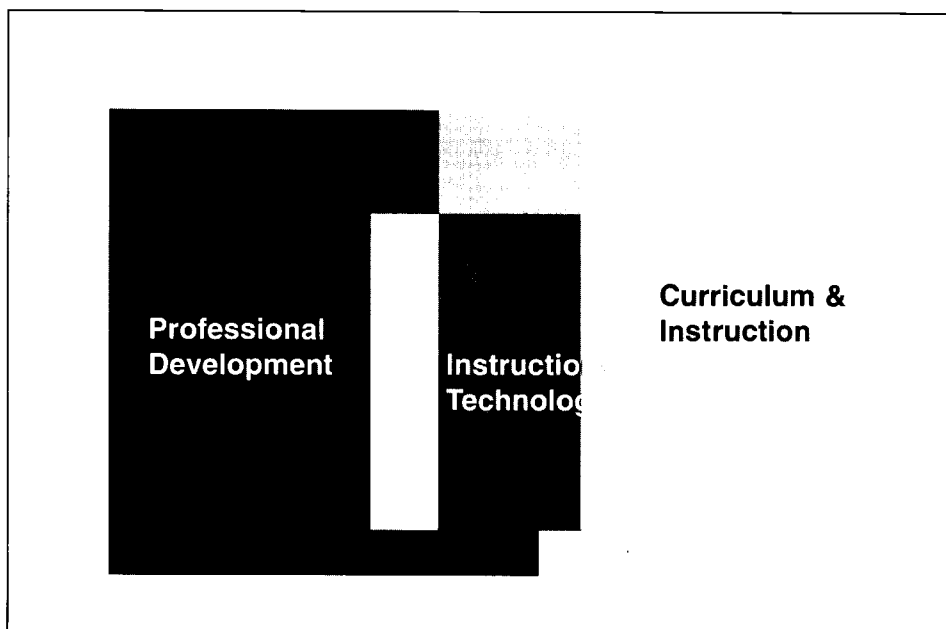


Figure 4: Organizational integration in Rose Tree Media School District

lios will be varied sources of vital information: student work, documented professional dialogues with partners, reflections following conferences with project coordinators, and lesson designs. The Global Connections showcase will indeed be a celebratory look back as well as a productive and formative look forward.

What valuable lessons in systemic professional development have been learned since the inception of the Global Connections project in September 1999? There have been many. First and foremost, establishing extended staff and student learning communities results in powerful educational experiences. Second, a district-wide commitment to research-based practices and substantial funding in professional development are keys to the transformation that technology offers to educators (see Figure 4). Finally, a collaborative administrative organization—one where instructional technology is the colorful extension of a carefully crafted curriculum and where an instructional/professional development infrastructure is a critical component—provides both momentum and meaning for the Global Connections project. ●

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The Project—Global Connections							
1899							
1909							
1919							
1929							
1939							
1949							
1959							
1969							
1979							
1989							
1999							
2009							
2019							
Decades Focus	Literature	Historical Events	Scientific Discoveries	Music/Dance	Art	Daily Life	Cultural/Diversity Issues

Appendix A: Partner Grid

Engaging Students to Learn: A Reflection on IBM's Learning Village

by Frank S. Mander, Jr., Olson Park Elementary School, Machesney Park, Illinois

“Mr. Mander, where can I find information for the five themes of geography of Illinois?” This is a typical question from any of my fourth-grade students. Yet instead of suggesting that the student look in traditional reference

tools, such as encyclopedias, fiction, or expository texts, my reply was, “Our class Web page has many links to Illinois Web sites that will help you with your research.”

This is just one of the many examples of how my teaching philoso-

phy has changed because of a Web-based application called Learning Village. IBM's Learning Village allows educators to expand their communication with students and parents using the Home Page Designer, promote engaging collabora-

tive online activities with Team Projects, and develop instructional curriculum using Instructional Planner.

Communication with One and All: Home Page Designer

By using the Home Page Designer application module, I have created a Web page that is a powerful communication and learning tool. Wherever there is Internet access, I can reach and inform students, parents, teachers, and community members about the important events that are happening in my classroom.

“Mr. Mander’s Fourth-Grade Home Page” is much more than just a place for students and parents to see what’s going on in the classroom. It engages students to use the current technology of the Internet as an educational tool. Before a Web site is linked to our home page, I preview it to make sure it is appropriate for my students. Then these educational Web sites are “linked” into our Web page as a hyperlink for student use. Students have used hyperlinks from our Web site as a source of intrinsic learning and a safe place to “surf the Net.” They can use the Net’s great potential as an educational tool that guides them in our classroom curriculum.

In addition to doing research or corresponding with each other, students have used our Web page to take virtual field trips—interactive, multimedia visits through museums, castles, the human body, and the oceans. This opens a whole new world to my students in which they are allowed to see the finest museum exhibits and journey into the ocean all with a click of a mouse. I have developed Internet scavenger hunts that guide students to look for key facts or elements in a virtual field trip. This increases my students’ store of knowledge when they actually write about their interactive journey. Student motivation to write has increased, and so has their ability to read for information.

My fourth graders are also using our Web page as a place to delve into classroom curriculum. We have researched Harriet Tubman and the history of the Underground Railroad, the Renaissance, Illinois history, government . . . the list goes on. I have found that our Web page serves as a great springboard to the Internet, where students can access the most current information about any topic that arises in class.

Finally, students and parents can use our Web page to communicate with me. I post homework daily. Parents who do not have Internet access at home usually can access it at their place of employment or at the local library. If there is a question about homework or other issues, parents can e-mail me (I am pretty faithful about answering my e-mail daily!). Also, we have established an online homework forum in which students can discuss homework problems with their teacher or with other parents. I suggest parents use our Web page as a “Home” startup page for two reasons: not only have I previewed the material, but the site can become a valuable educational tool. Parents are taking an interest in their child’s education by viewing our classroom Web page, and they are using it to discuss and elaborate on classroom topics with their children.

Collaboration, Problem Solving, and Engaged Learning: Team Projects

I have found that the Team Project application module of IBM’s Learning Village engages my students to be creative, inquisitive, and collaborative. They have enjoyed sharing ideas about project activities and then applying what they’ve learned about a specific topic by creating a product.

Team Projects incorporate a constructivist theory into the application module. A constructivist view of learning suggests an approach to teaching that offers learners opportunities for concrete, contextually

meaningful experiences through which they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models, concepts, and strategies (Fosnot, 1996). The Team Project application allows students to become explorers of information as they gain knowledge through collaborative experiences. Also, I am a strong supporter of Howard Gardner’s “Multiple Intelligences” theory. Along with my team-teaching partners, I infuse our curriculum, including each Team Project, with technology enhancements and activities that represent the seven intelligences, allowing my students to excel in areas that focus on a particular intelligence. I believe that I can reach my students’ strengths, giving them ownership of the product they create in the Team Project application.

Parents are taking an interest in their child’s education by viewing our classroom Web page, and they are using it to discuss and elaborate on classroom topics with their children.

Flexibility is key in the Team Project application. My team-teaching colleagues and I create lessons and activities that follow our own classroom curriculum. Using this application as a problem-based lesson, students at all levels use their higher order thinking skills and expand their knowledge of any topic. We have used the Team Project application to explore the topics of Explorers and Volcanoes; the lessons guided the students through activities that asked them to interpret factual information to solve a problem, thus exercising their higher order thinking skills in an interdisciplinary manner. The collaborative aspect of Team Project

facilitated communication among students, teachers, project mentors, and experts.

Through the Team Project application module, my role as teacher has evolved—I am now more of a facilitator or “guide on the side,” helping students to explore resources and find information. Best of all, students’ increased motivation leads to their taking a more active role in their own education.

Curriculum Mapping: Instructional Planner

Like many teachers, I have tons of curriculum objectives, state standards, thematic information, lessons, activities, books, and plans all tucked away in a filing cabinet. I used to dig through those files constantly to assemble all the information I needed to present my students with a solid standards-based curriculum. Well, that has changed, too. We started using Learning Village’s Instructional Planner during the summer of 1999 and found that this technology tool really helped us to organize and document our classroom curriculum (units, lessons, activities, and rubrics)

to align with the Illinois Learning Standards. In addition, we found we could upload student examples of activities and provide additional information from other resources using hyperlinked text. We no longer needed endless files of paper because Instructional Planner presented key concepts from each lesson or activity in a concise manner. This benefited teachers *and* students.

Instructional Planner also lets us share published curriculum with other district educators. We shared our curriculum plans from kindergarten through high school, and other teachers adapted them to their own classroom curriculum. I believe that this is educational collaboration at its best: teachers sharing, creating, and developing curriculum with other teachers to increase academic achievement.

The way children are taught in schools needs to be changed. It isn’t until recently that the rest of America has opened its eyes to see a new kind of student, the “multimedia-interactive student.” It is these students who are changing the way America looks at education, who are

pressing schools to become “tech savvy.” They want an engaging educational curriculum that allows them to learn in a variety of ways. As educators, we have to remember the goal of any lesson or activity is to make sure that it is student centered and engages the student to learn. I believe IBM’s Learning Village is a powerful educational tool that accomplishes the goal of creating an online Web-based learning environment where students engage in communication and collaboration, an integral step in the lifelong learning process.●

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URLs of Web Sites

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- Harlem School District #122 Web Site:
<http://harlem.winbgo.k12.il.us>
- IBM Learning Village Web Site:
<http://www.solutions.ibm.com/k12/learningvillage/welcome.html>

Truth or Consequences Evaluating High School Online NetCourses*

by Liz Pape, Virtual High School, Hudson, Massachusetts

Now that many schools have spent a great deal of time, volunteer effort, and money to network schools, questions abound: What do we *do* with the network? Will networks and the introduction of technology into the curriculum make learning easier for students? Will students be better motivated to learn? Will teachers be able to teach better, more effectively? Will schools use technology to make more of the world available to our students?

These are some of the questions that many in school administration

are now being asked by parents, community members, and taxpayers. If technology is the tool, what is it that we are using the tool for?

For the past two and a half years, the Virtual High School (VHS) has been addressing some of these concerns. VHS is using technology as a tool to build online high school courses that are given over the Internet. Our experience has shown that it is possible to effectively use technology to offer high school online courses, and that the VHS is a scalable model. VHS courses have given

students throughout the country the opportunity to take courses that their high schools are not able to offer, to work with students from a variety of locations and cultures, and to use technology daily while in their online NetCourses.

How do we know that these courses are as good as courses being taught in high schools across the country?

Although VHS courses are developed and taught by high school teachers, what additional support is given to them so that they might learn to use this new medium effectively? In VHS,

quality of both teaching and curriculum content is primarily influenced by our training program, called the Teachers Learning Conference (TLC) and by the online standards all VHS NetCourses are measured against. Potential VHS teachers must participate in the TLC, a graduate-level online professional development course developed and taught by VHS faculty. Teachers bring to the TLC their skills as high school teachers as well as online pedagogy and assessment skills. During training, as participants develop their courses, we evaluate the courses against criteria that we have developed. These criteria address areas such as the appropriate use of the LearningSpace technology, appropriateness and organization of content throughout the semester, and use of online assessment techniques.

How is the quality of teacher and student participation evaluated in a NetCourse? Because the NetCourses consist of databases and reside on a file server, the entire NetCourse and all its interactions are archived and reviewed, both while the NetCourse is taking place and after it has ended. While the course is in progress, VHS National Office personnel evaluate teacher and student attendance in the course, making sure that all are fully participating. Assignments and media resources are evaluated. By reviewing Student Portfolios on a regular basis, students always know the status and grades of their submitted work.

Once a course is completed, we evaluate the entire semester's activities, including types of assignments, resource materials made available to students, discussions, and all submitted student work. Without actually participating in classroom discussions, we can review them, evaluating whether there is student-to-student discourse or just student-to-teacher discussion, and checking to make sure that teachers and students are participating on a regular basis and that their comments show an understanding of course content. Students

are also part of the evaluation and review process; they take online surveys at the end of each semester, giving teachers additional feedback about the course and the instructional method.

This year, VHS National Offices worked with professionals from universities and state departments of education to define standards for online courses and to create a NetCourse Evaluation Board. These standards will be used to evaluate courses during their development and implementation, and again after the

By merging the best in instructional practice with the best in current technology, we can demonstrate the potential of network and information technologies in public education.

courses have been completed and archived. The NetCourse Evaluation Board will be reviewing all archived Virtual High School NetCourses to suggest revisions before courses are taught again.

Online NetCourse standards are broken into two main categories: operational and instructional. Operational standards define the environment in which NetCourses are taught as well as the personnel and technology resources that high schools should provide. Instructional standards are broken into three areas: pedagogical, assessment, and curriculum.

Pedagogical standards define how teachers teach in an online environment. Does the teacher work to create a virtual learning environment in the CourseRoom? Are expectations for course work clearly communicated to students? Have course materials and expectations been adjusted for individual learning needs? Does the

teacher incorporate multimedia techniques in the NetCourse?

Assessment standards define expectations for how teachers should communicate to students their grades and the status of submitted work. Are Student Portfolios kept updated? What feedback do students receive about submitted work?

Curriculum standards address course content. Online NetCourses should have the following characteristics: engageability, higher level questioning, critical thinking, problem solving, hypothesizing, reading for comprehension and interpretation, data collection, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Wherever possible, learning objectives should be mapped to national standards, and an interdisciplinary approach is encouraged.

The development of an effective online professional development model, rigorous evaluation of NetCourses before, during, and after their implementation, and effective administration by VHS National Offices assure a satisfactory experience in continuing years.

Virtual education can never replace the social learning environment within a school. However, virtual instruction can become another effective vehicle for strengthening our instructional program and course offerings. By merging the best in instructional practice with the best in current technology, we can demonstrate the potential of network and information technologies in public education. But most important, VHS shows that public education can place students at the forefront of knowledge and experience internationally and prepare them for the demands of either the workplace or further education.

Online NetCourse Evaluation Standards

Course Description/Schedule Standard: Virtual High School NetCourses are clear in their description of learning objectives, and as-

signments in the schedule area are structured to require consistent efforts from students throughout the term.

- The Course Description is understandable to students and parents.
- The schedule includes a clear listing of assignments to be undertaken by the student.
- The schedule includes both online and offline activities, such as lab experiments and long-term projects.
- The schedule includes a statement of expectation that students must be involved in online discussion groups.
- The schedule includes student performance indicators that are linked to the performance objectives listed for the course.

NetCourse Content

Standard: VHS NetCourses are developed and clearly matched to the performance objectives outlined in the National Models for each given content area. Interdisciplinary Objectives are encouraged.

- The Performance Objectives for each NetCourse are clearly stated.
- The Performance Objectives for each NetCourse are clearly matched to the National Model for the corresponding content area(s).
- The Performance Objectives for each NetCourse are grade-level appropriate for the intended student population.
- The Performance Indicators are clearly matched to the listed Performance Objectives.

NetCourse Characteristics

Standard: VHS NetCourses will maintain high levels of engaged learning and focus on the development of critical thinking skills. Every course should be an opportunity for the student to master a limited number of concepts in-depth, rather than many concepts at a minimal level.

- Each NetCourse facilitates “engaged” learning.
- Each NetCourse requires student/student and student/teacher communication and collaboration.
- The NetCourse facilitates learning of course content. (Knowledge)
- The NetCourse requires students to apply critical thinking skills. (Comprehension)
- The NetCourse requires students to demonstrate higher order thinking. (Application)
- The NetCourse facilitates the development of problem-solving skills. (Analysis)

Every course should be an opportunity for the student to master a limited number of concepts in-depth, rather than many concepts at a minimal level.

- The NetCourse requires the development of research skills. (Synthesis)
- The NetCourse requires students to function at the evaluation level. (Evaluation)
- The NetCourse effectively uses multimedia as well as text-based presentation.

Assessment and Student Portfolios

Standard: VHS NetCourses clearly describe how student performance will be assessed. VHS teacher maintains current assessment results that are accessible to students.

- Weights of various assignments are clear to students.
- Student Portfolios are up-to-date.
- Students are given criteria (rubrics) related to the perfor-

mance indicators of the NetCourse.

- Students will be assessed by several different methods over the duration of the NetCourse.

NetCourse Communications

Standard: VHS NetCourses are structured to encourage frequent communications in the CourseRoom.

- Teachers will have a frequent presence online.
- Teachers will use appropriate communication and feedback strategies.

NetCourse Pedagogy

Standard: VHS NetCourses are structured to foster community building within the NetCourse. VHS NetCourses use innovative instructional strategies to facilitate online learning.

- Teachers will work to build a virtual learning community among the students.
- The NetCourse will help equip students with strategies for evaluating the quality and authenticity of materials used in the NetCourse (i.e., Web-based materials).
- Teachers will provide a variety of activities for diverse students and adjust materials and expectations according to individual student needs.
- Teachers must have expertise in the subject matter of the course.
- Teachers will be well equipped to teach in an online environment (e.g., they will understand the nature and the application of a variety of multimedia strategies).
- Teachers will provide timely feedback to students that will help them to understand what is needed to improve their work (e.g., an essay should be returned with more than just a grade).●

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Call for Nominations: CEE Richard A. Meade Award

The Conference on English Education is now accepting nominations for the 2000 Richard A. Meade Award for Research in English Education. Given in honor of the late Richard A. Meade of the University of Virginia for his contributions to research in the teaching of composition and in teacher preparation, the award recognizes an outstanding piece of published research in either preservice or

inservice education of English/language arts teachers. Eligibility extends to published research of any length that investigates English/language arts teacher development at any educational level, of any scope, and in any setting.

For the 2000 award, studies published between January 1, 1998, and December 31, 1999, will be considered. Nominations may be made by

any CEE member or by self-nomination. Send nominations, with three copies of the published material, **not later than June 1, 2000**, to Meade Award Committee, c/o June Jones, NCTE Headquarters, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Results will be announced at the 2000 Annual Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

New CEL Award Announced

We are seeking nominations for the CEL Award for Exemplary Leadership. This award will be given annually to recognize an outstanding English Language Arts educator and leader who has had an impact on the profession through one or more of the following:

- work that has focused on exceptional teaching and/or leadership practices (e.g., building effective department, grade-level, or building-wide teams; developing curriculum or processes for practicing ELA educators; or mentoring);
- contributions to the profession through involvement at the local, state, national, or international levels;
- publications that have had a major impact.

Please address letters of nomination to:

Louann Reid, CEL Chair
English Department
Colorado State University
359 Eddy Hall
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1773

Letters are due **July 15, 2000**, and the first award will be given at the Annual Convention in November.

Call for Manuscripts

Guest editor Timothy Dohrer is seeking manuscripts for the February 2001 *ELQ* issue on Best Practices in Curriculum Integration. In light of recent interest in curriculum integration and interdisciplinary curriculum (including an issue of *ELQ*), it would be useful to explore specific accounts of teachers engaging in integrated lessons, units, and courses. How are teachers and schools turning research into actual classroom practice? What pitfalls should school leaders be aware of in implementing integrated or interdisciplinary curricula? In what ways does English connect with a variety of disciplines or topics? How does integration effect coverage, especially in regard to literature? How are students reacting to our interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum efforts?

Send manuscripts by **October 15, 2000**, to: Dr. Timothy Dohrer
New Trier High School
385 Winnetka Ave.
Winnetka, IL 60093
Phone (847)446-7000, ext. 2671
e-mail: dohrert@nttc.org

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NCTE's 90th Annual Convention

November 16–21, 2000

The Midwest Express Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

"Teaching Matters"

NCTE's Annual Convention in Milwaukee will enrich teachers' professional repertoire, will provide concrete assistance in meeting the learning needs of students, and will renew teachers' commitment to the profession and to their important work.

Milwaukee Convention Specifics

Major Speakers:

- **Frank McCourt**, author of award-winning novels *Angela's Ashes* and *'Tis*.
- **Margaret Edson**, playwright and award-winning author of *Wit*.
- **Yvonne Thornton**, author of *The Ditchdigger's Daughters*.
- **Anthony Browne**, one of Britain's most accomplished picture book authors; author of *Voices in the Park*.

Registration Information:

The fee is \$105 for members or \$145 for nonmembers. The registration deadline is **Friday, October 13, 2000**.

NCTE

For more information, visit our Web site at www.ncte.org or call 1-800-369-6283, ext. 3642.

Call for Manuscripts— Future Issues

The *English Leadership Quarterly*, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

A decision about a manuscript will be reached within two months of submission. The *Quarterly* typically publishes one out of ten manuscripts it receives each year.

Surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

August 2000 (deadline April 28, 2000)

Block Scheduling

Guest editor: Elizabeth Howard

October 2000 (deadline June 15, 2000)

Mentoring New Leaders

February 2001 (deadline October 15, 2000)

Best Practices in Curriculum Integration

Guest editor: Timothy Dohrer

April 2001 (deadline December 30, 2000)

Teachers as Scholars

Manuscripts may be sent on 3.5" floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files or as traditional double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to Henry Kiernan, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, West Morris Regional High School District, Administration Building, Four Bridges Road, Chester, NJ 07930; phone 908-879-6404, ext. 281; fax 908-879-8861; e-mail kiernan@nac.net. ●

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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP Quarterly

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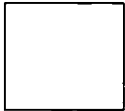


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