

Time for Teachers

Leveraging Expanded Time
To Strengthen Instruction and Empower Teachers



NATIONAL CENTER ON
TIME & LEARNING



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Introduction

Before our very eyes, teaching in America is undergoing a revolution.

Three distinct, though interdependent, trends have converged to bring momentous changes to the teaching profession.

First, the adoption by 44 states of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—a set of educational benchmarks in literacy and math that are more rigorous than those previously in effect in most states—is beginning to galvanize educators across the country to recalibrate and elevate their instruction.¹ Second, the growth of new teacher evaluation systems—a development spurred in part by provisions in the federal Race to the Top initiative—has produced a focus on the design and implementation of new systems to measure instructional quality.² Third, over the last two decades, the teaching profession has undergone a significant demographic shift to a younger, less veteran core. For the first time in half a century, the majority of teachers now have fewer than 10 years experience.³

Together, these historic changes—a potent blend of more challenging standards, increasing accountability, and shifting demographics—intersect powerfully with the growth of expanded-time schools across America—a movement that has been fueled, in part, by state and federal policies (and funding streams) that encourage school innovation and autonomy. Now totaling over 1,500 nationally, expanded-time schools add hundreds of hours of learning time per year for students in academic classes and in enrichment activities to boost student achievement and provide a more well-rounded education. Yet, students are not the only beneficiaries. The longer days and/or years often furnish teachers in these schools with expanded learning opportunities—time to master new content, plan for and reflect on lessons, and hone instructional methods. In fact, the expanded-time schools that have been most effective at augmenting student learning are precisely those that have focused on optimizing time, not just for students, but also for teachers. The educators in these highly effective schools achieve their goals for student learning because they know that teacher professional growth is, ultimately, the key that unlocks student growth.

These successful expanded-time schools are able to circumvent a well-known problem confronting the vast majority of schools



in America: The conventional school schedule does not allow teachers enough time to work collaboratively to plan and improve instruction and individualize support for students. According to the 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a nationally representative survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, the amount of time teachers are contracted to engage in direct instruction averages 30.8 hours per week. This amount represents about 80 percent of the total weekly time that teachers are contracted to work (37.9 hours, on average).⁴ After factoring in lunch and other duties, there is little time left for teachers to collaborate with peers, during which they plan for and reflect upon that instruction.

At first glance, this 4-to-1 ratio of teaching to non-teaching time may seem reasonable because it means that students have maximum exposure to their teachers. Yet, among high-performing Asian and European nations, so much teacher time spent in front of students is actually unusual. According to available data, the proportion of time American teachers have outside their classrooms to prepare for instruction is much lower



than the international average.⁵ While many other countries have structures in place to enable consistent and frequent collaboration and professional learning for teachers—like regular “research lessons” in Japan and weekly curricular planning sessions in Finland—the United States is notable for the absence of such opportunities.⁶ American teachers simply have fewer occasions during the school week to engage in the types of activities and preparation needed to maximize their time with students.

The lack of collaborative learning opportunities offered within the U.S. educational system comes at the very time when American teachers increasingly appear to recognize the value of, and to crave, these experiences. One recent survey by the National Center for Literacy Education, for example, found that a large majority of teachers believe the most effective form of professional learning is collaboration with colleagues to prepare for, and reflect on, lessons. Yet, respondents reported that they have little opportunity to engage in these activities.⁷ Even more worrisome, as the survey authors note, the frequency of such instances for collaborative planning and reflection seems

to have declined over the last few years.⁸ In other words, teachers’ rising efforts to modify and improve their instruction is constrained by the very structure of the conventional American school schedule that does not provide them sufficient time to meet and learn together.

About this Study

Time for Teachers looks deeply inside 17 schools that stand at the vanguard of the current revolution in teaching. This new National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) report reveals the substantive ways in which these schools are providing their teachers with more time to reflect on, develop, and hone their craft, by very explicitly leveraging an expanded-time school schedule and calendar. These schools’ expanded time—on average, they are in session almost 300 hours more per year than the national norm of 1,170 hours—affords not only more hours and days focused on classroom instruction, but also a full array of professional learning opportunities. (For the list of schools and their characteristics, see Table 3, p. 71.)

While the average American teacher spends less than 20 percent of her time in school outside the classroom—about seven total hours per week—teachers across the 17 schools featured in this report spend twice that proportion (40 percent) in activities that support their instruction—such as planning with peers or individually, reflecting upon their classroom teaching, and/or learning new content or pedagogies.⁹ (See Figures 1.1 and 1.2.)

At the schools examined in this report, teachers spend substantial time collaborating with one another, and also with instructional leaders and coaches, to plan lessons, analyze and respond to student data, develop common expectations for student work and behavior, learn about or observe instructional strategies, set goals for improvement, and give and receive feedback on classroom instruction. (See Table 1, page 6, for the frequency of a variety of professional development activities.) The innovative leaders at these schools prioritize this time for teachers because they understand the intrinsic role it plays in improving learning time for students. And with an expanded-school schedule, the time these teachers devote to learning and improving their own skills does not reduce the time their students spend learning; rather, with more learning time overall, both students and teachers at these schools experience a schedule that more fully meets their needs.

Time for Teachers explores six specific practices—one each in Chapters Two through Seven—that highly-effective schools

have put in place. These practices are: (a) collaborative lesson planning, (b) embedded professional development, (c) summer training, (d) data analysis, (e) individualized coaching, and (f) peer observation. Using examples and vignettes from the 17 featured schools, *Time for Teachers* documents, deconstructs, and analyzes these practices to reveal how educators strive to make the time they allocate for teacher development most effective. Each of the report's practice chapters concludes with a list of four or five *Keys to Success*, which describe the implementation factors that enable the profiled schools to achieve success within these practice areas, as well as a summary chart that educators can use to assess their own implementation of each practice. (See Table 2, page 7, for a summary of these *Keys to Success*.) To lend additional insight and further inform our investigation of how these practices are perceived by educators at the profiled schools, we also draw upon responses from a cross-site survey of teachers that NCTL conducted for this report.

The aim of this report is simple: to present these featured expanded-time schools—or, more precisely, the systems and practices they have implemented—as models that educators at any school can adopt and adapt to achieve similar success with their own students. Through analysis of the six time-use strategies, *Time for Teachers* offers a road map for other educators who are looking to adjust and improve how they are using both the time they currently have in their school schedules



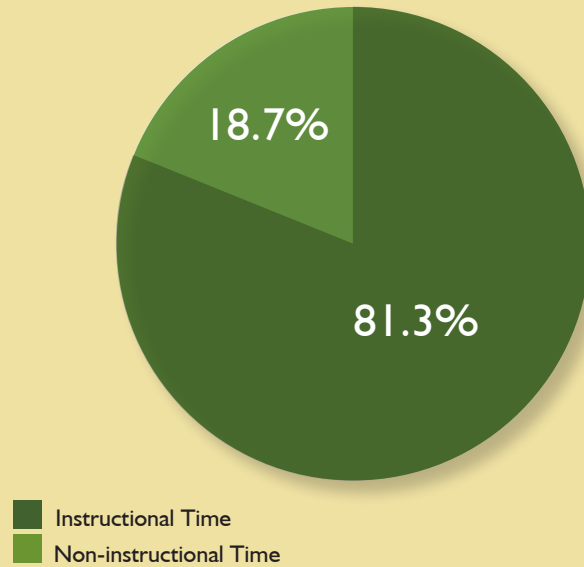
and any time they may plan to add. Individually and collectively, the accounts of these practices offer all educators insights into why this professional learning time is so valuable and also why an expanded-school schedule facilitates the implementation, and helps to elevate the quality, of these opportunities.

Along with the specific lessons learned from each practice, three overarching themes emerge across the *Time for Teachers* chapters—themes that reinforce what other research on effective-practices of teacher development has revealed. Readers of this study will see these ideas illuminated, both through the perspective of practitioners and through the analysis encapsulated in each practice's *Keys to Success*. The three themes are:

- **Professional culture matters** – Educators share a commitment to continuous improvement. Teachers and administrators embrace feedback, reflect openly on challenges, and value the input and ideas of their colleagues. School leaders work to create a climate that fosters professional growth.
- **Teachers as leaders** – Teachers serve as mentors and coaches for their colleagues, lead team meetings, design curricula, model instructional practices, and share their expertise. Teachers are deeply invested in strengthening instruction not only in their classrooms but across the whole school.
- **The school is the locus of learning** – Professional development programs are school-directed, designed strategically to meet the needs of teachers and students, driven by school-wide instructional goals, and coordinated in ways that the variety of activities are complementary, synergistic, and embedded in practice.

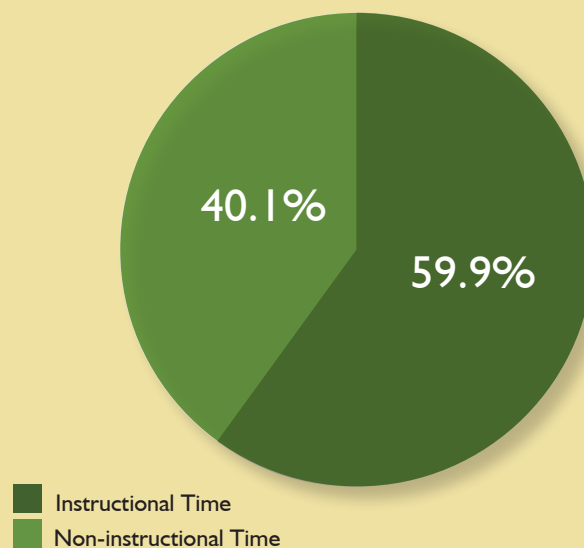
Of course, the effective practices of these 17 schools do not take place in a vacuum. Rather, the professional development goals and methods of the educators at each of the schools are heavily influenced by the broader transformation of the teaching profession. Chapter One of *Time for Teachers* shares some research that places teacher professional development time in context. This initial chapter also describes how the three converging trends noted earlier—the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, the advent of new teacher evaluation systems, and the changing demographics of today's teaching force—should prompt policymakers and practitioners to rethink how time is apportioned for teacher learning in conventional schools. Following the six practice chapters, the conclusion of this report presents several concrete recommendations for policy and practice, leading toward the goal of building a more robust approach to professional learning in all schools.

FIGURE 1.1
*Average Work Week for U.S. Teachers:
Instructional vs. Non-instructional Time*



Source: *Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011-12*, Table 5 (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). Note that the relevant question asks teachers to report on how many hours their contract stipulates time for instruction as distinct from all other time they are required to be in school (including supervisory duties).

FIGURE 1.2
*Average Work Week for Teachers in 17 Study Schools:
Instructional vs. Non-instructional Time*



Source: Analysis of teacher schedules as reported by 17 *Time for Teachers* schools, 2013-14 school year.

TABLE 1. Time Spent in Various Professional Development Activities

Teacher Learning Opportunity	Number of Study Schools With Practice	Average Quantity
Individual planning/ Informal collaboration	17	9.2 hrs/week
School-wide training	16	1.1 hrs/week
Grade-level team meetings	14	1.8 hrs/week
Coaching	9	1.0 hrs/week
Extended summer session	7*	15 days/year
Data analysis days	9	3.4 days/year
School-wide, whole-day workshops	11	2.3 days/year
Peer observation	8	Highly variable

* Data counted only for schools with at least 10 days of summer session. YES Prep's 15-day summer session is for new teachers only; all other YES Prep teachers are required to attend summer session for 5 days.

Through analysis of six time-use strategies, we offer a roadmap for educators looking to adjust and improve the time they currently have and time they might add.



About the Schools

The schools profiled in this report, all of which serve high-poverty populations, are experiencing the same challenges as schools nationwide, including transitioning their teaching to align with the expectations of the Common Core and inducting new teachers to the profession. Additionally, a number of the featured schools are in just the first or second year of implementing new, sophisticated teacher evaluation systems. Yet, despite these challenges, through an expanded schedule that offers a rigorous and well-rounded education and provides teachers with robust professional learning opportunities, these schools are making extraordinary strides in educating their students.

Indeed, the National Center on Time & Learning selected these 17 schools for this report precisely because they all exhibit either high student achievement or strong student growth, particularly when compared to schools with similar demographics. Further, each school offers a substantially longer school day and/or school year, compared to surrounding district schools. Located in 14 different states, these schools all serve populations where at least 50 percent of the students are low-income. Finally, though there are certainly other expanded-time schools that are equally successful in their efforts to strengthen instruction, these 17 schools were selected because they are among those that are purposefully redefining the conventional teacher schedule. (For more on the methodology of selecting these schools and investigating their practices, see page 70.)

Defining Professional Development

Throughout this report, we use the terms “professional development” and “professional learning” synonymously. Both terms here signify the entire set of activities in which teachers engage (especially with colleagues) to strengthen their own instructional practices and enhance their capacity to enable students to learn. While professional development traditionally refers more narrowly to seminars or workshops for teachers, in *Time for Teachers* schools, this term encompasses all the activities explored within the report’s six practice chapters.

A Note to Readers

Even as NCTL presents six discrete teacher-time practices in this report, we recognize that each individual practice is not, by itself, sufficient for improving instruction in specific classrooms, much less across a whole school. Rather, we encourage practitioners to create, develop, and put in place a comprehensive system for teacher learning. Still, we believe it is worthwhile to break this body of work into smaller pieces, so that teachers and principals can understand how to implement particular activities that support and advance teacher learning through professional development and classroom practice. As such, each practice chapter can easily be read on its own, and then used as an ongoing guide by educators who are aiming to implement that particular practice.

Our hope is that once schools build out and hone individual elements of an overall professional development structure, these components will begin to operate synergistically. For example, effective discussions in professional learning communities about curriculum generally should help inform lesson planning more specifically. Likewise, analysis of student data should be an integral piece of coaching. We anticipate that as educators read this report, they will find their implementation of these practices can be improved based on what can be learned from these salient examples, even when they already may have some of the practices in place at their schools. Meanwhile, the information presented in *Time for Teachers* can also generate a starting point for schools seeking to implement other practices that are not yet in place.

TABLE 2. Keys to Success

Featured Practice	Keys to Success
Collaborative Lesson Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, Meaningful Goals and Deliverables • Structures to Support Planning • Leadership Support and Guidance • Results-focused Facilitation • Professional Respect
Embedded Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused Use of Time • Content Driven by School Goals • Peer-to-Peer Learning • Differentiation of Content
Summer Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Foundation for Ongoing Collaboration • Aligned Expectations and Practices • Tailored Support for New Teachers • Teachers as Experts • An Integrated Calendar of Development
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Commitment to Data • High-Quality Assessments • Effective Supports for Analysis • Meaningful Action Steps
Individualized Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Culture of Continuous Improvement • Training and Support for Coaches • Focused, Individualized Goals • Timely, “Bite-sized” Action Steps • Collaborative Problem-solving
Peer Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Culture of Trust and Collaboration • Connections to Other Professional Learning • Focus on Specific Instructional Practices • Protocols that Support Reflection and Growth

Further, as with *Time Well Spent*, NCTL’s 2011 report documenting best practices of expanded-time schools, with *Time for Teachers*, we aim to encourage all educators to look beyond some of the differences between their school and the schools profiled here to focus on the significant commonalities. While acknowledging disparities in school size, operating structure, geographic location, and/or grades served, at NCTL, we believe that educators can still find much that can be learned from the experiences of other schools. Even for those who do not work in expanded-time schools, the practices highlighted here are surely transferrable, albeit more challenging to implement in full. We hope that readers will benefit from the shared opportunities, challenges, and decisions that educators at all schools face regarding how to allocate and leverage teacher learning time.

Research and Emerging Trends

Why Schools Should Invest in Time for Professional Learning



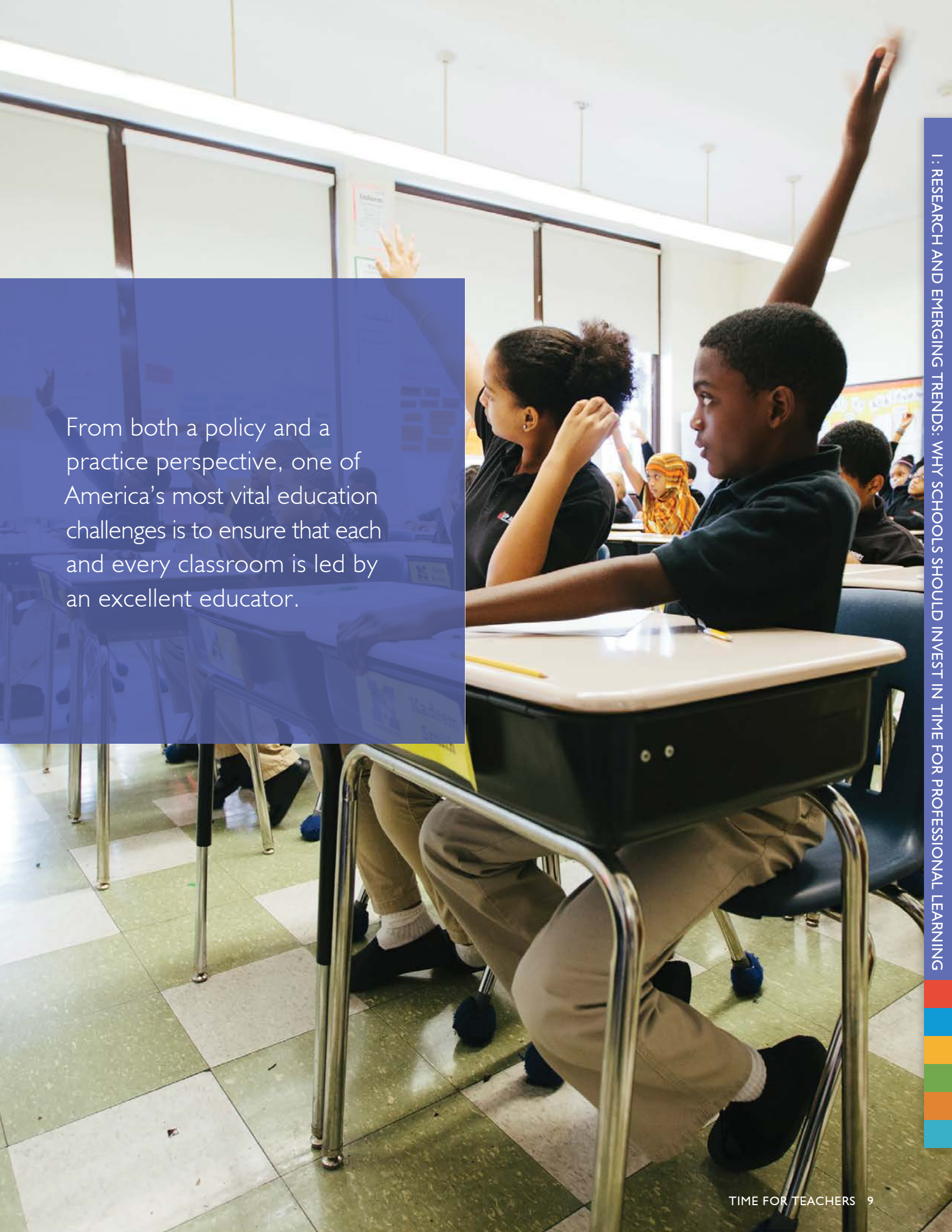
While the magnitude and pace of reforms in American education have accelerated significantly over the last several years, one fact has remained constant: There is no stronger in-school influence on student performance than one's teacher.¹⁰

Since the Coleman Report of 1966 showed definitively the impact of teachers on student achievement, decades of research have confirmed that student outcomes are inextricably linked to the quality of instruction students receive. And some research has found a particularly strong correlation between teaching quality and student outcomes in schools with sizeable high-poverty populations.¹¹

From both a policy and a practice perspective, one of America's most vital education challenges, then, is to ensure that each and every classroom is led by an excellent educator.

Among the many strategies involved in this undertaking, perhaps the most direct path toward developing a stronger teaching force is to provide every teacher with ample opportunities for their own robust professional learning.

So how should schools pursue this path to strengthen instructional practice? First, we must acknowledge that teaching and, more importantly, individual teachers, *can* improve. As the Center for American Progress reminds us in its report on developing strong professional development practices for teachers: "Effective teaching is an activity that can be learned, and the notion that someone is born to teach is simply inaccurate."¹² In other words, teacher capacity—much like student aptitude—is not fixed. And, as the research presented below indicates, professional development can be the key driver of improvement and meaningful change.



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The Research on Professional Learning Time

A meta-analysis of over 1,300 studies linking teachers' professional learning practices to student achievement, published in 2007 by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), offers the strongest evidence to date of the positive effects of teachers' professional development. One of the core findings of the review is the absolute necessity of committing sufficient time to professional learning. Specifically, IES found in its analysis, which focused on nine well-designed research studies, that programs delivering a "positive and significant effect" on student outcomes were those that averaged 49 annual hours in the professional development program being evaluated. Students in the classrooms of the teachers with more professional development time (30 to 100 total hours) scored an average of 21 percentile points higher (i.e., on the assessment[s] used in that particular evaluation) than students taught by those who did not receive professional development. The positive student effect demonstrated was not universal, though; it was concentrated only in those programs that offered teachers at least 30 professional development hours.¹³

As always, it is not only the quantity of teachers' professional development time that matters, but how that time is spent. Professional development must be well-designed and carefully implemented to deliver its intended effect of improving instruction. In its seminal report on teacher learning, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) offers a crisp



Effective professional development should...

- Be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice
- Focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content
- Align with school improvement priorities and goals
- Build strong working relationships among teachers

Source: Linda Darling-Hammond, et al, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad* (National Staff Development Council, 2009), pp. 9-11.

summary of the keys to effective professional development. (See box, above.) According to these criteria, the more valuable programs not only guide teachers to engage in learning new content or skills—the conventional focus of teacher professional development—they also offer teachers opportunities to connect to practice, focus on student learning, align with school goals, and build strong collegial relationships. Schools that concentrate their efforts on these four criteria as they design and implement professional development will likely, in the NSDC's words, "build teacher capacity and catalyze transformations in teaching practice resulting in improved student outcomes."¹⁴

Similarly, the Center for Technology in Learning of SRI International also endorses an expanded approach to teachers' professional development:

Instead of thinking about professional development as a quick effort, think about it as learning and realize that it takes time for learning to occur. Creating and integrating all of the pieces—including enough time—may be a challenge, but by doing so, the results—more knowledgeable teachers and students who learn more—will be well worth the effort.¹⁵

The Need for More Teacher Learning Opportunities

Notwithstanding this compelling body of research, most teachers in American public schools today do not have access to truly effective professional development that embodies the key principles described above and in this report and which, in

turn, have a measurable impact on student outcomes. Indeed, the NSDC has found that, nationally, while a vast majority of teachers (83 percent) participate in learning opportunities focused on academic content, most teachers are not able to commit sufficient time to this endeavor. In fact, less than one quarter (23 percent) of teachers surveyed were found to participate in at least 30 hours of training—the figure identified by Institute of Education Sciences as the minimum for effective programs.¹⁶ Further, a recent survey by the education publishing company Scholastic revealed the paucity of collaborative time—a mere 15 minutes per day on average—in most American schools.¹⁷ Responding to this situation, scholar Linda Darling-Hammond writes:

In fields like trauma care and the building trades that have seen sharp gains in quality over the past generation, the emergence of new standards for professional practice coincided with a focus on improving collaborative decision-making and inquiry to solve problems in real time. If we want to see similar gains in education, we must structure for success by understanding that effective collaboration in schools doesn't occur by happenstance—it requires purposeful action. . . . What is surprising, even alarming, is how rarely collaborative activities that are essential to improving outcomes are supported in our schools.¹⁸

As discussed in the Introduction, American teachers typically spend the bulk of their time with students and relatively little time in activities that will make their time with students more productive, a sharp contrast to teachers in many other high-performing nations.¹⁹ This current lack of overall school time allocated for teachers' learning in the U.S. leads the NSDC to conclude, "Most of their professional learning does not meet the threshold needed to produce strong effects on practice or student learning."²⁰

Educators themselves clearly recognize the insufficient quantity and quality of most of their professional development experiences. Fewer than half the respondents in the national Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) indicated that the professional development they received was useful.²¹ Strikingly, even school superintendents concede that professional development for teachers is lacking. Only 30 percent of 2,500 district leaders in a 2013 survey strongly agreed that "My school district has an effective ongoing professional development program designed for teachers."²² And, throughout the field, there are multiple

Professional development must be well-designed and carefully implemented to deliver its intended effect of improving instruction.



indicators that teachers want more effective professional development and collaboration. For example, the 2013 Met Life survey of American teachers found that in schools where formal learning and peer collaboration opportunities had declined during the previous year, teachers were more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs.²³

Common Core Implementation and Teacher Learning Time

Underscoring the gap between need and supply of high-quality professional development are the large-scale changes in the teaching profession now taking root. Particularly with the advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the instructional shifts necessary to enable students to achieve these higher expectations strongly suggests that teacher training must be intensive and ongoing. Clearly, the conventional mode of teacher professional development—workshops and classes, often with little follow-up or chance for application—is insufficient to the task of implementing CCSS successfully. As Gene Carter, executive director of ASCD, one of the leading organizations helping teachers prepare to integrate the Common Core, emphasizes, extensive training is needed to implement the standards.

This professional development cannot be a single meeting that introduces teachers to the standards and explains how they differ from previous state standards, nor can it be one or two workshops that walk teachers through

curriculum resources that will help them align their classroom practice with the Common Core. Instead, the professional development must be sustained, job-embedded, and involve feedback and follow-up observations.²⁴

Unfortunately though, available data suggests that the “quick hit” professional development workshop is the most common mode of preparation. More time- and effort-intensive activities—exactly the types of activities that are necessary to make the transition to the Common Core successful—take place much less often. A survey by *Education Week* conducted in 2013 found that, while a healthy majority of teachers had received some training on CCSS in formal workshop settings, only a minority of educators are benefiting from focused, frequent, and collaborative teacher learning opportunities that are truly needed to achieve significant results. (See Figure 2, below.) Certainly, teachers are well aware that they need more of these robust forms of learning. Indeed, 71 percent of responding teachers indicated in this same survey that they would need more collaborative planning time, for example, to be adequately prepared to shift to the Common Core.²⁵

FIGURE 2. Types of Professional Development Training for Common Core, as Reported by Teachers

Percent of Respondents Who Received Training In...



Source: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, *Findings from a National Survey of Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core* (Bethesda, MD: Author, February 2013), p. 20.

Aligning Teacher Evaluation Systems with Professional Development

Research shows that frequent feedback to teachers on their performance is one of the most significant factors in overall school effectiveness.²⁶ It makes sense, then, that the more comprehensive evaluation systems now being developed in many districts and states should intersect with an agenda to furnish teachers with more feedback. Yet, it is unclear whether these new evaluation systems will have the supports and processes in place to go beyond instruments that simply rate teachers on a “quality scale.” Evaluations should be part of a dynamic system involving frequent observation, formal and informal learning opportunities, and targeted follow-up support. Such evaluations have the potential to provide teachers the tools they need to improve their practice, by delivering valuable feedback and clarifying how they can strengthen their instruction. The question is whether these evaluations will live up to that potential.

One of the early adopters of a more sophisticated evaluation system, the school district of Memphis, Tennessee, conducted research to gauge teachers’ perspectives on how evaluations affected their practice. The district’s survey indicated a fair degree of alignment between its teacher evaluation metric (named the “Teacher Effectiveness Measure,” or TEM) and the objective of improving instruction. In fact, two-thirds of the Memphis respondents (67 percent) believed that the evaluations they received from their principals would provide sufficient feedback to improve their teaching practice, and 58 percent expressed confidence that the TEM would lead to increased student achievement.²⁷ Elsewhere, however, teachers’ reactions to their professional evaluations have not been as encouraging. One small study in another mid-sized district, for example, indicated that teachers were mixed on whether their district’s evaluation protocols were fair and objective.²⁸ And without a basic faith in the evaluations’ capacity to assess their work fairly, let alone a companion feedback mechanism, it seems unlikely that teachers will trust and value these measures as offering a meaningful path toward genuine professional improvement.

Changing Demographics and New Teacher Training

When it comes to training the thousands of new teachers that arrive in the nation’s classrooms each year, the data reflecting how well professional development programs geared to new teachers (known as “induction”) actually fare is complicated. One hopeful trend is the sheer number of teachers who now participate in some initial training. Recent research shows that about 91 percent of the nearly 200,000 new teachers entering the classroom each year (i.e., 179,000) have specialized support in their first year, as compared to just a 50 percent participation rate (i.e., a total of 61,000 teachers receiving induction) of the



120,000 new teachers overall) in 1990. (See Figure 3.) This widespread participation suggests that new teachers value these programs and that district leadership is encouraging (or requiring) their new teachers to take part.

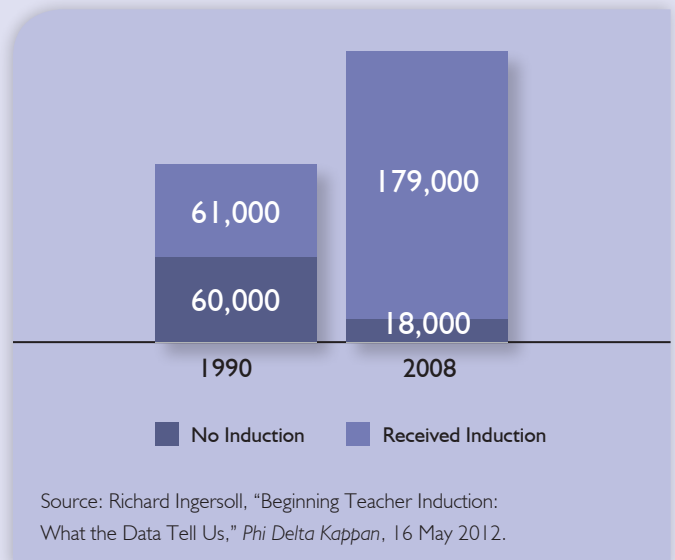
What is less clear is whether these programs are providing the intensive support that research indicates is needed for both retention and instructional quality purposes.²⁹ A recent comprehensive review of the literature by scholars Richard Ingersoll and Thomas Smith found that induction can have an effect on both teacher retention and student performance, and, as with teacher professional development generally, the greater the intensity of the support offered by these programs, the greater the effects. Regarding which induction features were most important, the investigators found that having a mentor teacher from one's subject area and having the ability to collaborate with peers had the greatest impact on both teacher retention and instructional quality.³⁰

How this support for new teachers plays out in the field is uncertain. Consider that surveys of first-year teachers in Massachusetts and Colorado, for example, showed that 80 percent were assigned a mentor. Yet, only about one-quarter of these teachers had the opportunity to observe their mentor teaching or to be observed by their mentor with any regularity (i.e., at least once per month).³¹ And research suggests that if the mentor/mentee relationship does not include classroom observation and instructional feedback, the intended objective of strengthening novice teacher skills may fall short.

* * *

With the paramount goal of achieving high quality in teaching throughout American schools—an aim that is essential in this era of increased rigor and accountability—robust professional

FIGURE 3. Number of First-Year Teachers Receiving Induction 1990 vs. 2008



development must become the norm everywhere. So, what does this professional learning look like, and how do schools find and structure time in teachers' schedules to incorporate strong professional learning systems? Each of the next six chapters of *Time for Teachers* delves deeply into an actual teacher learning practice as it is being implemented in schools across the country. Through this portrayal of best practices, we also illuminate the variety of ways that the 17 diverse schools selected for this report are responding to the changes so many schools are now facing. By deploying their expanded schedules to provide time for targeted professional learning, the educators at these schools are using this additional time wisely and well, yielding far-reaching benefits for teachers and students alike.

Collaborative Lesson Planning

Improving Teaching through Teamwork



Investing time for teachers to jointly plan lessons with their colleagues can raise the quality of instruction because lesson plans are produced through careful consideration by a team of experts who each bring varying, and often complementary, skills and experience to the process.

During a weekly planning block at UP Academy Charter School of Boston, eighth-grade science teacher Carrie Baldwin asks her colleagues for input on a lesson on the respiratory system that each of them delivered in their respective classes the previous week: “Let’s all list one thing to keep from this lesson and one thing that didn’t work so well. I myself loved the exit ticket. It was really creative and gave me a sense of whether the students understood the respiratory system. But the diagram we introduced early in the lesson wasn’t so successful.” Such conversations are typical during the 180-minute weekly planning block for teaching teams at this in-district, charter school that opened in the city’s South Boston neighborhood for the 2011–12 school year. At UP Academy

Boston, the schedule is structured so that each grade- and content-level team has one morning or afternoon a week without classes to meet and work collaboratively and another afternoon for professional development. (See sample teacher schedule, page 16.)

While this ample collaborative planning time is only one facet of UP Academy’s innovative school design, Principal Jamie Morrison believes the investment of time, accompanied by the structures and supports to make the time effective, has had an especially profound impact on instruction. For the past two years, the school has had the highest student growth in math in Massachusetts. Student proficiency has jumped 50 points in math and, again in just two years, 25 points in English language arts (ELA). “Because we have bigger departments and teachers coming from a wide variety of experiences and experience levels, I think the planning block is the equalizer,” Morrison explains. “It’s where expertise is shared, and it raises the floor on the ability of a teacher to understand and really teach the Common Core State Standards.”

Keys to Success

- Clear, Meaningful Goals and Deliverables
- Structures to Support Planning
- Leadership Support and Guidance
- Results-focused Facilitation
- Professional Respect



Teachers in the featured schools spend on average more than 90 minutes per week engaged in collaborative work, and in some schools they collaborate up to four hours per week.

As the principal points out, their weekly collaborative planning block enables UP Academy Boston teachers to share responsibility for developing rigorous lesson plans that are aligned to the Common Core. Teachers who teach the same grade and the same subject deliver the same lessons each week, using content that the teams jointly develop over the course of several planning meetings. At UP Academy Boston, this academic planning process begins the summer before the start of a term, when teams discuss the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and then create objectives for the specific units they will teach over the course of the upcoming year. Each team also creates a detailed calendar and divides responsibility for the development of specific lessons. Then, during their weekly planning blocks throughout the school year, teachers review one another's proposed lessons and provide feedback. Subsequently, once his/her teammates' suggestions have been incorporated, to complete the cycle, individual teachers prepare a teaching packet for the lessons s/he has developed and distributes the packets to his/her teammates, on the week that the lessons will be taught.

Although collaboration on lesson planning is possibly more intense and systematic at UP Academy Boston than it is at other schools the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) visited for this report, nearly all of the 17 schools profiled in *Time for Teachers* are leveraging their expanded-school schedules to provide more structured opportunities for this type of collaboration. Teachers in the featured schools spend on average more than 90 minutes per week engaged in collaborative work, and, at some schools, they collaborate up to four hours per week.

Across many of these schools, time for collaborative planning has been particularly important, as teachers work to significantly improve college and career readiness through the implementation of the Common Core. Teachers use the time to consult with one another on how to address specific standards in their lessons. Because the standards are new and often require teachers to cover material in fresh ways, or to use different texts, teachers find this time with their colleagues invaluable.

For example, at Biltmore Preparatory Academy, a K – 8 expanded-time school that is part of the Creighton School District in Phoenix, Arizona, grade-level teams of teachers meet twice a week, for 45 minutes each, to plan their week of lessons. The teams begin with the state standards—clarifying which standards they will address in their lessons and how they will teach them. After the lessons are taught, Biltmore teachers review how effectively the lesson supported the learning of the particular standard, as well as specific misconceptions their students struggled with during that class. Through these discussions, teachers come to a more complete understanding of the learning expectations and, with this deeper understanding,

FIGURE 4. Sample 6th-Grade ELA teacher schedule at UP Academy

Diagram shows one 6th-grade ELA teacher's schedule. Two other 6th-grade ELA teachers each teach two sections (6C + 6D and 6E + 6F).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1	6A	6A	6A	6A	6A
Period 2	Individual Planning	Individual Planning	Individual Planning	Individual Planning	Individual Planning
Period 3	6B	6B	6B	6B	6B
Period 4	6A	6A	Collaborative Planning Block	6A	Professional Development
Period 5	Individual Planning	Individual Planning		Individual Planning	
Period 6	6B	6B		6B	

Each section meets 8 times per week

All three 6th-grade ELA teachers meet to plan and discuss the week's lessons



they are better able to help their students master the standards. As Biltmore Principal Faith Burtamekh explains: “The planning is the crux of quality implementation. The more that teachers plan and talk and think about what it is we’re asking our kids to do, the better the teaching will be.”

When it works well, providing additional time for collaborative planning makes a teacher’s job both easier and more rewarding. Teachers are dividing up work to reduce the individual burden of lesson planning, and they are also pooling their collective experience and knowledge to share the most effective instructional practices. The division of labor on lesson planning can also be a time saver.

At Newton Elementary School, a K – 3 school in Greenfield, Massachusetts, for instance, a group of second-grade teachers who collaborate regularly were working together recently to plan a unit on colonial times. In advance of their planning meeting, one teacher had reviewed the CCSS and highlighted the standards that this unit could address. Then, the Newton teachers spent their 45-minute meeting discussing how to address the specific standards identified and how to employ “top-down topic webs”—one of the school’s common instructional strategies—in the upcoming lesson. Toward the end of the meeting, the team members divided planning tasks for the unit: One teacher agreed to develop the activities for the lessons; another took on outlining a research component; and the third agreed to focus on selecting specific texts, which they will all use throughout the unit. By sharing the responsibility for developing this unit, the Newton team reduced the amount of time required for preparation on the part of each individual teacher, while increasing the quality and thoughtfulness of the lesson taught by all.

Across the 17 schools featured in this report, the time that teachers spend collaborating on lesson plans and curriculum development would be much more difficult to arrange without each school’s expanded schedule. While collaborative planning can happen without an expanded schedule, schools with conventional school calendars are hard-pressed to find the time needed for meaningful and consistent collaboration. With only a 6.5-hour school day there is more pressure to preserve the time teachers spend with students.

At UP Academy Boston, students are in school for seven additional hours per week, compared to their peers at other Boston Public Schools, and they also have five additional days of school per year. With this additional learning time built into their schedule, the long, uninterrupted planning block for UP Academy teachers does not cut into the total instructional time for students. To make time for this weekly planning block, school leaders have designed a schedule that clusters together specialty classes, such as art, music, and physical education, for different grade levels, so that they take place one morning or afternoon a week. Teachers are able to meet during this time period because their students are engaged in specialty classes with other teachers.

Of course, simply scheduling time for collaborative planning will not transform a school from one where teachers primarily work independently into a school where teachers engage deeply with one another to continuously improve instruction. At each of the schools profiled in this report where teacher time is invested in collaborative planning, teachers and school leaders alike work hard to structure this time so that it is highly effective. On the next several pages, we discuss five keys to organizing and implementing successful common planning meetings.

Keys to Success

1 Clear, Meaningful Goals and Deliverables

The *Time for Teachers* schools that are investing heavily in teacher collaboration time are careful to keep planning meetings focused on specific goals and deliverables. Whenever a teacher team shares a clear and common purpose, the meeting times are most productive. Wide-ranging and unfocused discussions on curriculum and pedagogy are not valuable; focused conversations that result in tangible decisions about what and how to teach, usually in an upcoming lesson or unit, can have a dramatic impact.

For example, at Biltmore Preparatory Academy, in Phoenix, and at UP Academy Boston, team members know the goal of their meeting time is to agree on lesson plans, assessments, and selected texts—tangible products that will help them be more successful in their classes. As a result, teachers at these schools are highly invested in their collaborative planning time. They are motivated to make their meetings productive and to meet their explicit objectives each time they meet. Teachers also realize that their grade-level peers are relying on them for specific, high-quality products—an awareness that raises their collective sense of responsibility for making good use of the time they are provided. UP Academy Boston Principal Jamie Morrison describes the underlying value of collaborating: “Everyone should walk out with a set of deliverable materials, or unit plans, or action plans. That’s how you have to judge the usefulness of the time—not how well the discussion goes, but what things are made, and result from, the discussion.”

2 Structures to Support Planning

When teachers’ collaborative planning time works best, it is not an “add-on” or a “nice-to-have”; instead, it is a core component of how the particular school functions and how work gets done there. Specifically, the school invests time in creating the structures and systems—such as meeting agendas, meeting norms, planning templates, and communications systems—that help ensure the planning time is optimized.

One of the most important structures for successful collaborative meetings is a strong and well-planned agenda that outlines the goals of the meeting, allots specific amounts of time for each topic to be discussed, and, in particular, allows enough time to identify and revisit key action steps at the end of the meeting. At the Frank M. Silvia Elementary School in Fall River, Massachusetts, agendas for the collaborative planning meetings emerge directly from the next steps identified at the prior meeting. Abbie Hamer, a first-grade teacher, believes these agendas ensure that the meetings will be useful: “We know ahead of time what we are going to focus on in the meeting, and we all make sure we bring the right materials so we can be productive,” she says.

Another important structure that supports weekly planning meetings at Silvia is a set of meeting norms that each grade-level team has developed. Every planning session begins by reviewing these norms. For example, Silvia’s fourth-grade norms include: 1) Begin and end on time; 2) Students are the main focus; 3) Try to remain positive; 4) Everyone gives input.

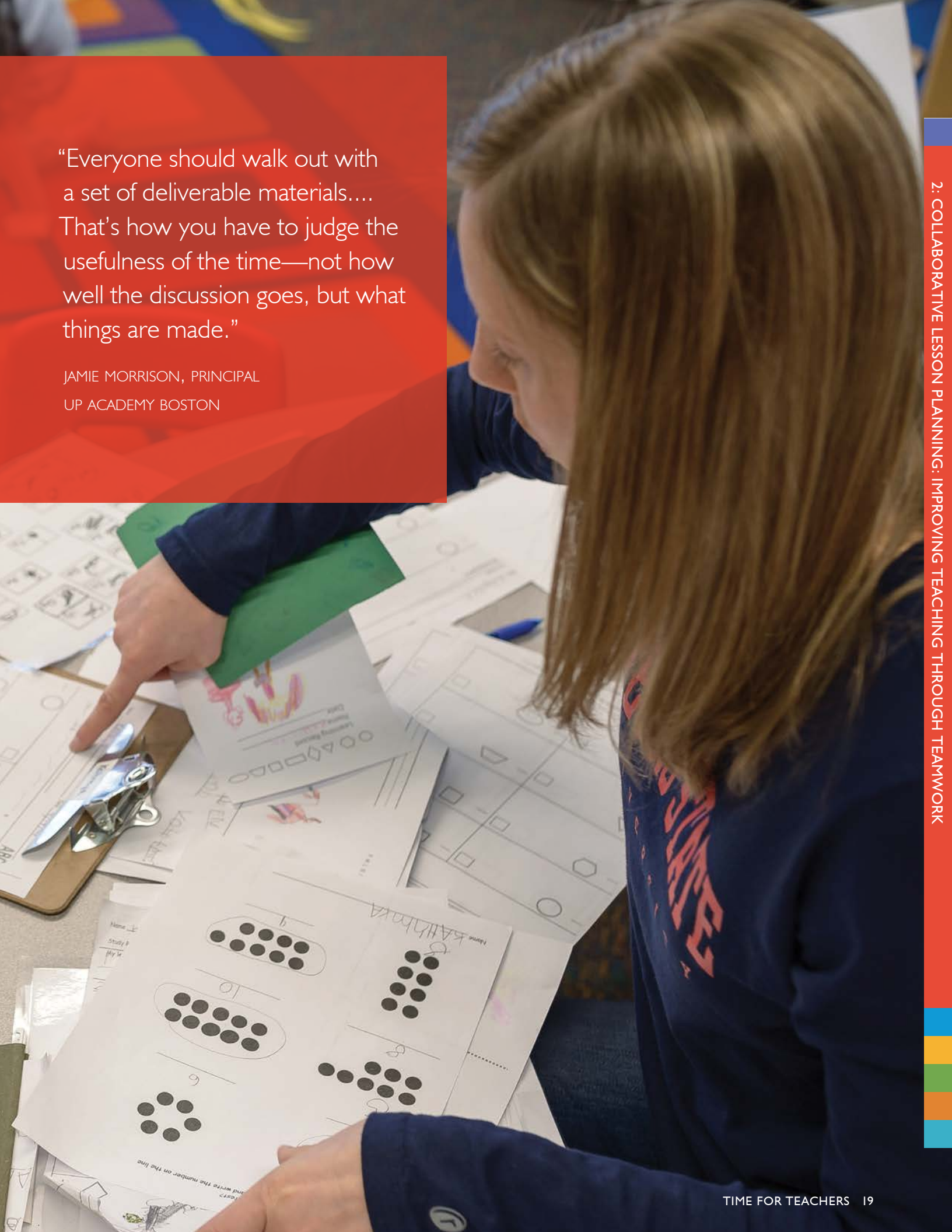
3 Leadership Support and Guidance

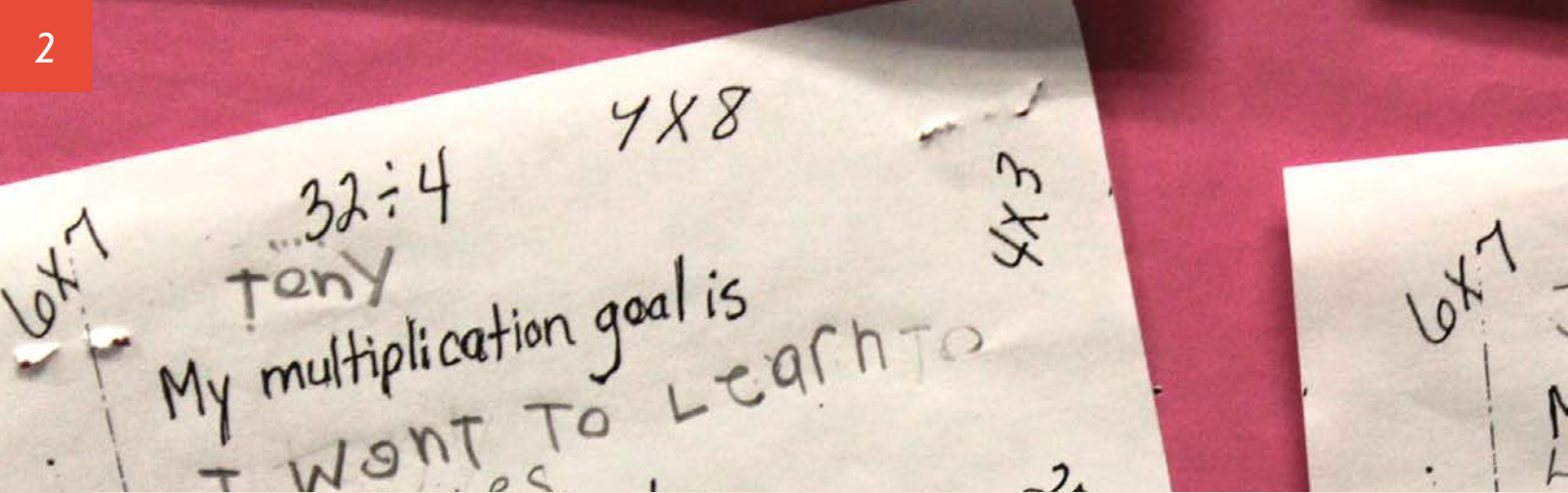
Administrators play a vital role in supporting teachers’ effective collaborative planning time. At the schools featured in this report that demonstrate the highest level of collaboration among their teachers, administrators participate in the majority of the team meetings. The administrator is not always the principal, but may be a director of instruction or an assistant principal. Regardless of their specific title, these individuals are instructional leaders who support teachers in making the most of their time together as they develop agendas, identify action steps, and focus on the most important issues for improving instruction. In most cases, the administrators do not actually facilitate the meeting, but instead provide guidance to the facilitators to help them run the meetings productively and well.

At UP Academy Boston, an instructional leader is assigned to work with each planning team. As Christine Ranney, a dean of curriculum and instruction, who works with several teacher teams at the school, attests: “I think it is helpful having someone who does have the bigger picture of the school in mind for grade-level planning blocks. I find that I’m able to push a data point or agenda based on what I’m seeing in the whole school.” Jocelyn Coe, the school’s sixth-grade ELA teacher, agrees on the value of having the dean of curriculum and instruction present at the team meetings to offer this larger perspective. “There’s a lot of feedback and advice on what we could be doing differently, but also about what we’re doing well and what we should continue to do,” Coe says.

“Everyone should walk out with a set of deliverable materials.... That’s how you have to judge the usefulness of the time—not how well the discussion goes, but what things are made.”

JAMIE MORRISON, PRINCIPAL
UP ACADEMY BOSTON





The role of school leadership in supporting effective teacher planning time is most important in those instances when teams are not working well together. Indeed, leaders at the schools profiled in *Time for Teachers* recognize how challenging this collaborative work can be. At Silvia Elementary School, for example, Dean of Teaching and Learning Sherri Carvalho attends every grade-level meeting focused on ELA, while Assistant Principal Tricia Whitty attends every grade-level meeting focused on math. Carvalho notes that there are significant differences in how well different teams are collaborating and how productive their time is together. She has had to intervene to help some teams set, and then reach, short-term goals.

4 Results-focused Facilitation

In any setting, strong facilitation is vital to a productive meeting. Effective facilitation is particularly critical in schools, because time is scarce and because many competing priorities and urgent conversations can pull participants in different directions. For this reason, successful school meetings are often led by facilitators who are especially skilled at helping teams stay focused on the topic of planning lessons to improve instruction and achieve measurable student results.

At some schools, a particular team member—usually the most experienced teacher or the teacher with the strongest

content knowledge—is appointed facilitator; at other schools, the role of facilitator rotates among team members. At UP Academy Boston, the facilitator is a lead teacher who prepares the agendas and sends them out in advance. During the meeting, the facilitator makes sure the team follows the agenda, achieves the tasks specified, and stays productive. Because the facilitator plays such an important role in these planning meetings, school leaders at UP Academy Boston provide support and training for teachers taking on this responsibility, with one of the school's deans of curriculum and instruction working closely with each team facilitator to help them develop their skills. When a facilitator is new to the role, the dean will spend more time planning the meetings with him or her—giving feedback on the agenda, and sitting in on the meeting to provide feedback afterward.

5 Professional Respect

A key feature of fruitful collaborative planning is the receptiveness and openness of the teachers to new ideas and suggestions—even about lessons and topics they have taught many times before. As teachers gain experience working together, they begin to recognize that what the group can produce collaboratively is stronger than what an individual teacher could generate on his or her own. This professional respect is an essential component of deep,

collaborative lesson planning: Teachers need to trust that their teammates also embrace similar expectations for student learning and, in turn, that shared lessons will embody common standards of rigor.

First-grade teacher Erica Ash at Biltmore Preparatory Academy emphasizes how much she appreciates her colleagues operating as her lesson-planning partners: “I wish we had even more time together. I really look to my colleagues to validate my ideas. If I want to integrate something into a lesson, I depend on them to help me decide whether my idea makes sense.” A similar atmosphere of collegial support rings out at The Preuss School in La Jolla, California. To support teacher collaboration, the school schedules a daily 90-minute common planning period for all teachers. During one planning period, the *Time for Teachers* team observed a veteran teacher helping to find geometry resources for a first-year math teacher. In another period, the school's English teachers met to review sample passages from prior AP English tests. “Our work is tough,” says Jen Gabay, a Preuss English teacher, “but I've worked here for over ten years, in part, because I know everyone here is working toward the same mission and I can go to any of my colleagues with a problem or question.”

Spotlight:

Lesson Planning at Biltmore Preparatory Academy

On a sunny November afternoon, Mary Sleasman, Laure Blades, and Vanessa Fitch, three second-grade teachers at Biltmore Academy, in Phoenix, Arizona, gather in a classroom for their weekly team meeting to plan their literacy lessons for the week to come. Each teacher brings a binder filled with the district unit plans—the expected curriculum for each grade in each subject, which is based on the state standards—along with the district assessments for each unit. The teachers each have data from their classrooms in the compendium as well. Also participating in the meeting is the school’s instructional coach, Angela Silvas, and Principal Faith Burtamekh, who comes with her iPad ready.

Mary Sleasman begins the discussion by laying out the two objectives: assessing the writing unit of the last week and planning the reading unit for the following week. She then launches into the first objective with a dramatic observation: “This is the hardest unit I’ve ever had to teach—point of view. In first grade, they learned how to write from their own experience, and now they have to totally switch that and write from the perspective of one of the characters in the story we read.” The other two teachers readily agree. “There are so many skills that they need to learn before they can do this,” notes Blades, adding, “We could get them there, but we need more time. We should assess them on this later in the year, not in the fall.” Principal Burtamekh then asks, “Would you feel comfortable giving that feedback to the district?” The three teachers nod.

Next, the group shifts quickly to the second objective—planning the reading lessons centered on identifying the main ideas in both fictional and informational texts for the coming week—and this conversation occupies the remaining 35 minutes of the 45-minute session. Sleasman, whose class is slightly ahead of the others, reports that only 4 of her 25 students were able to locate the main idea in a story after she introduced the topic in her last lesson. “So, I’m going to have these 4 students move on in their own text. And then, I’ll work in smaller groups with the rest until they get it, and keep doing that till everyone understands,” Sleasman says.

At this point, the principal asks the three teachers, “Is this a place where you can use the strategies we learned in PD last week to annotate text?” Vanessa Fitch responds: “Absolutely...we’ll do that, and we are trying to get them in that routine of identifying text features, including the main idea. The tough part about having them report on the main idea, though, is that we’ve trained them to answer in complete sentences, and now we’re telling them that the main idea isn’t necessarily a sentence, but just two or three words, and that’s where the misconception lies.” Sleasman agrees, adding, “Yes, and I also found that they



would end up restating a detail as the main idea.”

In mapping out lessons for the following week, the teachers decide that they’ll spend the next two days delving deeply into text features with their students, as they help them to identify the main idea in a single paragraph. After that, the teachers determine they will have their students move on to describing the main idea in multi-paragraph essays. All three teachers agree to use the same texts, which they can obtain from their shared Dropbox folder. The principal also suggests an online resource as a place to get sample texts and even to view student writing samples, turning the screen of her iPad so the teachers can see the website she’s called up.

With their schedule of lesson plans complete, the three Biltmore teachers spend the last 10 minutes of their time together this week reviewing the upcoming district assessments. As they close the meeting, the teachers also agree to check in with one another, informally, over the following days to see how the lessons they have planned together play out in each of their classrooms.

Key to Success	Evidence of Strong Implementation	How Can My School Improve?
Clear, Meaningful Goals and Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are clear on meeting goals Clear next steps result from each meeting Meetings are more “product-based” than “talk-based” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish team goals and revisit them throughout the year Establish common understanding of meeting purpose and expectations for participation Identify small team deliverables (e.g. open-response question, exit tickets, etc.) Dedicate time to identify action steps
Structures to Support Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants play specific roles (e.g. facilitator, note-taker) Participants understand and follow clear meeting norms Agendas follow a predictable format and capture action steps from previous meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share model agendas, planning templates, and meeting norms Train administrators and teacher leaders on common meeting protocols and structures Have teams agree on meeting norms Assign roles (e.g. note taker, timekeeper, etc.) that help maintain focus during meetings
Leadership Support and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional leaders play an active role in collaborative planning meetings (e.g. developing agendas, supporting facilitation, providing feedback to the team, etc.) Instructional leaders integrate discussion of longer-term, school-wide goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop common expectations among administrators for productive meetings Assign an administrator to oversee and support each team Schedule regular meetings among administrators to review teams’ progress and needs Recognize teacher achievements during collaborative planning
Results-focused Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agendas include clear, achievable objectives Meetings begin and end on time, and objectives are met in allotted time All team members actively participate School provides ongoing support to develop facilitators’ skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train facilitators on developing meeting agendas, establishing goals, and creating an inclusive and collaborative atmosphere Model strong meeting facilitation (e.g. videos, co-facilitation, etc.) Schedule regular check-ins between administrators and facilitators to provide feedback
Professional Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers seek out their colleagues’ input in multiple settings Teachers and administrators regularly display a commitment toward mutual learning Teachers believe their colleagues hold similar expectations for student learning Teachers are recognized for efforts to support their peers’ development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate time for activities that build trust and respect among faculty Engage teachers in discussions on academic rigor and student expectations to build consensus Create opportunities for teachers to share instructional practices and lesson plans Integrate opportunities for collaborative problem-solving in all teacher meetings

Embedded Professional Development

Building Knowledge through Collaboration



By integrating opportunities for high-quality professional learning directly into teachers’ schedules, the 17 schools featured in *Time for Teachers* are at the leading edge of a trend emerging in districts across the country.

Rather than attending a series of loosely connected, one-off workshops that occur mainly outside their buildings, teachers at these schools are instead participating in learning opportunities that are job-embedded, consistent, collaborative, and linked to school-level educational goals.

The contrast between the traditional style of professional development (PD) and this new more engaged, relevant, rigorous approach to teacher learning is, indeed, stark. In the old-style form, which is still the only kind of PD many schools currently provide, teachers gain knowledge and skills to improve their instruction by attending courses or workshops in specific curricular or pedagogical topics, like employing a scripted literacy program or applying certain techniques to differentiate learning in math class. Typically, these workshops are one- or two-day

sessions, or partial-day classes, which take place during the summer, on weekends, or on school days when substitutes are provided to cover their classes. These limited programs are usually fairly self-contained, with little to no follow-up, and designed to fulfill requirements for professional learning, which are set out either in teachers’ contracts or through state and/or district policies.

By leveraging their expanded schedules to structure professional development opportunities differently, *Time for Teachers* schools offer a participatory, productive, and results-oriented alternative to this once-standard routine. With longer days and/or years, the schools highlighted in this report find several ways to build methodical and well-aligned PD sessions into their teachers’ schedules.

One of the most frequent approaches schools take to build in these collaborative learning opportunities is to create a weekly early-release day when students leave school one to three hours before the teachers. Because students have more time overall in class each week, these early release days don’t cut into



Keys to Success

- Focused Use of Time
- Content Driven by School Goals
- Peer-to-Peer Learning
- Differentiation of Content

Time for Teachers schools offer a participatory, productive, and results-oriented alternative to the once-standard form of professional development.

student learning time. Eleven of the *Time for Teachers* schools operate with a weekly student early-release day, which averages 90 minutes. Other featured schools embed professional learning time for their academic teachers into the school day during periods when students are engaged in elongated enrichment or specials classes.

The monthly “professional learning community” meetings (PLCs) at Nicholas S. LaCorte-Peterstown K – 8 School No. 3 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, for example, demonstrate the value of giving teachers continuing opportunities to discuss their instructional practice. In one such recent meeting, 11 seventh- and eighth-grade teachers gathered in the school's well-lit library to discuss how to improve their students' reading comprehension. Whether in eighth-grade algebra or seventh-grade English, the teachers agreed, many students seem to be struggling with vocabulary. In a free-flowing give-and-take, each teacher related their methods for, and experiences with, trying to reinforce vocabulary and help students pick up the meaning of words from context. The team members then strategized around the most promising

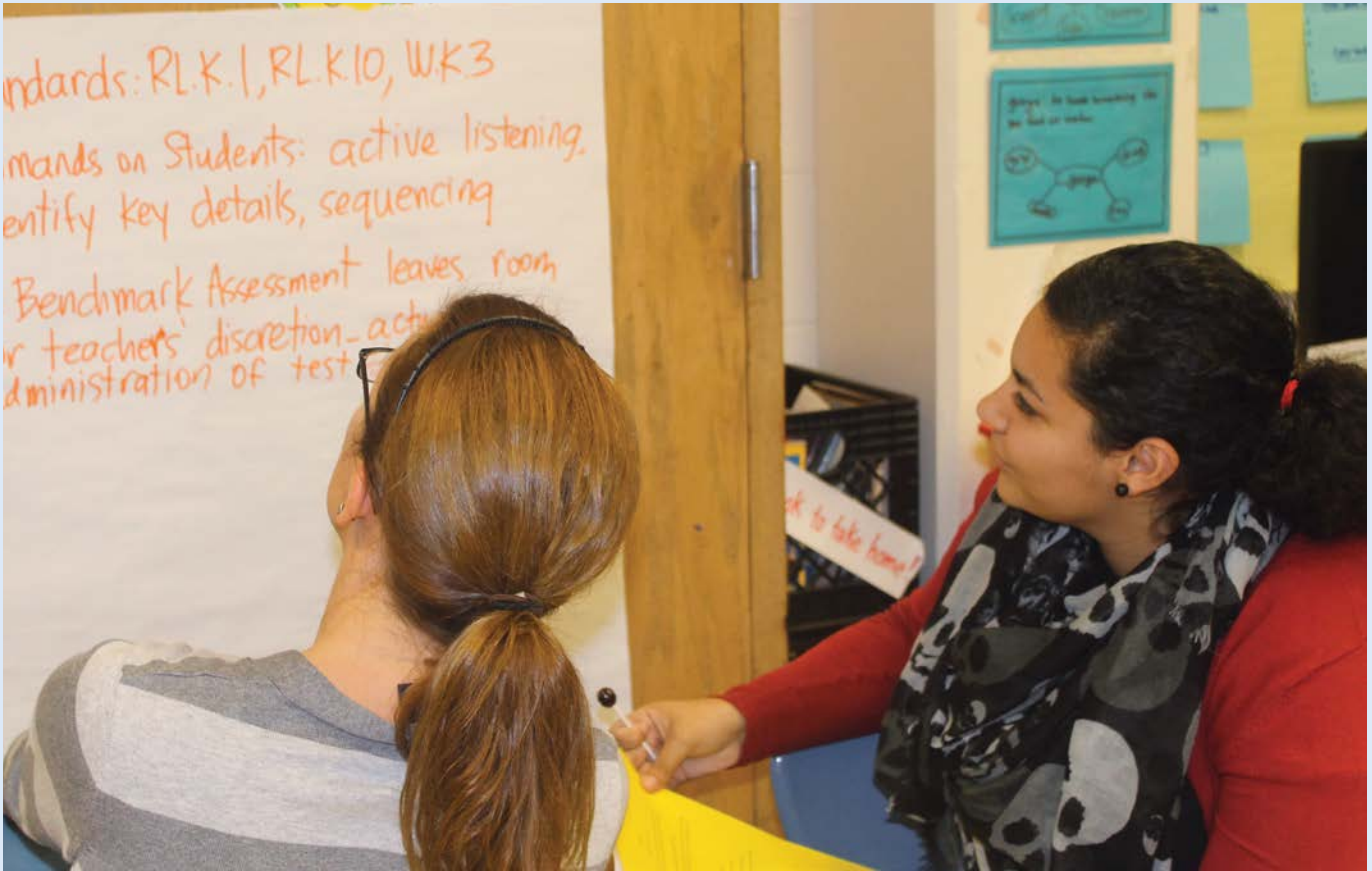
approaches that had been discussed and considered ways they each could adapt their instruction to make it more effective.

PLC sessions at LaCorte-Peterstown (and similar ones at other schools), in which groups of teachers reflect on instructional practices and work together to build their skills, is one of two complementary approaches *Time for Teachers* schools implement to support teacher development. The second approach consists of school-led workshops for the entire faculty, which are focused on specific topics that are highly relevant to the school. These two forms of PD are similar in some ways to the collaborative lesson planning practices outlined in Chapter Two of this report, as they both foster peer-to-peer learning. However, the forms of professional learning explored below do not focus on planning specific lessons. Rather, they help teachers to situate their own instruction within the broader learning goals for the school, while gaining insights on how to improve their instruction to address new standards and better support student learning. Together, the innovative opportunities these schools offer allow their teachers to learn directly from their peers and to focus their learning on the skills most relevant to helping their students to succeed.

School-led Workshops

School-led workshops often focus on specific topics and involve the whole faculty or a particular group of faculty members. Unlike the old-style workshops teachers might attend off-site, these on-site sessions are collaborative in nature, strongly linked to the school's academic goals, and structured to ensure regular follow-up and practice. When they are most successful,





Peer-to-peer learning helps teachers to situate their own instruction within the broader learning goals for the school.

these school-based sessions are not lectures or large-scale productions that function only as one-way communication from presenter to audience; rather, they are engaging activities that deeply involve participants in the learning process.

The Preuss School, in La Jolla, California, schedules a later student start-time each Friday, providing all teachers time to collaborate and learn from one another every week. While the content for these 105-minute sessions varies, the two-part goal remains the same: sharing practices and ideas as the school prepares for the advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and strengthening the school's cultural environment of collaboration. "In our Friday morning sessions, we want to model what we want to see in each classroom," says Preuss Principal Scott Barton, "and it's the idea that we learn more collaboratively than we do individually." During one Friday morning session, Preuss science and social studies teachers modeled lessons that align with the Common Core, as their colleagues played the role of students. Following the lessons, teachers provided feedback to one another, and reflected on ways in which they can each adopt similar instructional strategies in their respective content areas.

On most Wednesdays, the Brunson-Lee Elementary School in Phoenix, Arizona—one of four schools in the Balsz Elementary

District—offers professional development workshops to its teachers. These weekly opportunities were first made possible in 2009, when the whole district converted to a school year of 200 days. Balsz district leaders realized that, with an additional 20 days of instruction across the year, the weekly school schedules could be reconfigured to shorten the student day on Wednesdays, so that they could reserve time for professional development sessions for all teachers then, without adversely affecting the quality or quantity of instruction.

Brunson-Lee has about three of these PD sessions each month, typically led by the instructional coach, who is a content and pedagogic expert. The school principal and the instructional coach, working with much teacher input, have developed a calendar for these sessions, where the topics are tied directly to the school's specific educational goals. For example, the school (and district) have focused on strengthening teaching around "writing what you read," a method to improve both comprehension and writing skills at once, and, notably, an essential building block of the Common Core. During many of the sessions, the instructional coach, Sarah Ravel, models practices focused on teaching writing, while training all the school's teachers together on how to implement these practices in their classrooms. (See "Spotlight," page 31.)

Brunson-Lee also uses these weekly sessions to support teachers in implementing particular classroom management routines. For several weeks, sessions were reserved for training on a new behavior system (called the “Make Your Day” program) that has now been put in place across the school. Requiring all Brunson-Lee teachers to implement common expectations and consequences, in their own classrooms and beyond, the new system promotes consistency that would not be achievable without dedicating time as a whole school faculty to work through the details of this implementation.

Professional Learning Communities

In addition to these “whole school” workshops, many *Time for Teachers* schools, like LaCorte-Peterstown, are also integrating the smaller, team-based professional learning communities, which take the form of discussions among teachers of key topics or pedagogical techniques. The objective for these PLCs is not necessarily to help teachers to integrate a particular piece of content or a fresh instructional method into their classrooms, but, instead, to involve teachers in ongoing conversations about how to improve instruction and understand new content themselves.

Eighty-six percent of teachers in the schools profiled for this report participate in some form of PLC, and, across the board, these educators are enthusiastic about the benefits of the approach. For instance, RaStar West, a fourth-grade teacher at Chicago’s Morton School of Excellence, a Pre–K to 8 Academy for Urban School Leadership school, describes her math/science PLC as “a safe place, not only to collaborate and plan ahead, but also to say, ‘I’m having problems with this, and I need help.’” West adds, “We try to use our PLCs to figure out how to do things better.”

Effective PLCs recognize the important role of reflection in improving teaching practices—specifically, by encouraging teachers to consider how they can continuously adjust and adapt their instruction to better meet their particular students’ needs. Time for reflection is clearly a priority in all of the *Time for Teachers* schools. In fact, 94 percent of teachers who responded to the *Time for Teachers* survey agreed that “teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.”

At the LaCorte-Peterstown School, teachers are organized into curriculum working groups that meet once a month to discuss curricular unit goals and themes. The school’s 8.25-hour day allows for these 45-minute PLC meetings to take place regularly without infringing on instructional time, while students participate in intervention, tutoring, and enrichment classes. Most teachers are actually members of two PLCs, because the teams are organized in dual-grade groupings, participating with colleagues who teach a grade above

and a grade below their own class. Not only has Principal Jennifer Campel established a year-long schedule for these team meetings, she also has provided each of these groups a fixed meeting protocol so that discussions remain focused on the task at hand—namely, to identify areas of overlap and future collaboration across grades and throughout the year. (See sample agenda below.)

The principal attends these PLC meetings, as well, to hear directly what teachers are thinking about their instruction. “Honestly, it took a while to get teachers talking in productive ways about the curriculum, so I had to play more of an active role, at first,” Campel says. “Now, though, I can sit back. I know these sessions are working. . . . And when the teachers disagree over substantive matters, like what the students should be able to do in a certain unit, I know the disagreements mean they’re invested.”

When they share student work from their classrooms—five paragraph essays or math problems, for example—teachers can see concretely what their peers hold out as expectations for learning. Ted Panagopoulos, one of the district coaches at LaCorte-Peterstown, observes: “The thing that these sessions have done, even beyond content exploration, is to build a real sense of trust and teamwork among the teachers. Now that they are able to open up about their instruction, they are at a place where they can improve.”

Grade 7/8 Professional Learning Community (PLC) at LaCorte-Peterstown School

November Agenda

Purpose: The activity will help in planning interventions, small groups, etc. for students in order to address weaknesses found on the NJASK [state standardized assessment]

Guiding Questions:

1. Identify the two cluster weaknesses in the NJASK 7 Math.
 - How often are those content cluster items spiraled through the Everyday Math curriculum?
 - Were students taught the content thoroughly enough in the Everyday Math curriculum to be able to master/secure the skill?
2. Identify the two cluster weaknesses in the NJASK 7 ELA.
 - Compare exemplar 7th and 8th grade writing samples.
 - How can we enhance our 7th-grade writers?
 - Suggestions will be given by the 8th-grade team.
 - Note: Reading comprehension has been identified as a skill in need of improvement. Teams should share strategies that they found that work and share suggestions of other text to have students read.



Effective PLCs encourage teachers to reflect on how they can adjust and adapt their instruction to better meet students' needs.

KIPP Central City Academy (KCCA) Principal Alex Jarrell also emphasizes the vital role PLCs play in his school's ongoing improvement efforts. He affirms, "PLCs are the most important piece of our program to get right, because this is where teachers become empowered to change." It was through PLCs, for example, that KCCA school leadership honed the use of the "Mad Minute,"—when students have 60 seconds to do as many relevant exercises as possible—such as, adding fractions in math or defining terms in social studies. During PLC sessions, these teachers continually discussed how they could refine this practice, and teachers now credit their implementation of Mad Minute for enormous gains in their classrooms. The PLC structure also gave the school's science team a forum for figuring out how to integrate more writing—including the completion of a research paper—into their curriculum, as well as how to more effectively teach the seemingly straightforward procedures of note-taking.

The PLC can also be a forum where the instructional practices of individual teachers are addressed in explicit ways. Hilah Barbot, a KCCA sixth-grade science teacher who is also leader of the school's science team PLC, recalls how one teacher was

a bit resistant to the inclusion of "exit tickets"—quick end-of-class assessments to check on students' understanding of the day's lesson. After hearing from her peers on their value, however, this particular teacher gradually came to integrate exit tickets into her classes. Now, Barbot notes, "This teacher has seen her scores go up dramatically, and she knows it's because she is clearer and more concise about what she wants kids to know and how she is measuring it."

Both the PLCs and the broader school-led workshops are essential elements of whole-school designs that invest in and support teacher development. These professional development approaches require that each session's content is carefully planned, highly relevant to the participating teachers, and connected to school-wide goals. Further, when most effective, these sessions are very collaborative in nature: Teachers are reflecting on recent lessons, as they provide feedback to and learn from one another. Following are the *Keys to Success* that NCTL identified, which underlie and advance such embedded teacher professional development efforts at *Time for Teachers* schools.

Keys to Success

I Focused Use of Time

Teachers value professional development sessions when they know that the school's administration and all faculty are committed to using the time as effectively as possible. To optimize time use, school leaders must put in place systems and procedures so that the sessions are productive and meaningful to the teachers. Sessions need to be carefully planned and presented as part of a strategic sequence. Meetings need to have clear agendas and start and end on time. Facilitators need to keep the meetings on track and try to minimize distractions.

At Brunson-Lee Elementary, school leaders develop a quarterly schedule of the content that will be taught during teachers' regular Wednesday PD sessions, in much the same way as teachers themselves set lesson plans for their classes several weeks in advance. While the meetings are spirited and engaging, the sessions have clear learning objectives and are taken seriously by all participants.

LaCorte-Peterstown Principal Jennifer Campel requires that her school's PLC teams employ meeting protocols to structure their sessions. The set agenda includes a clearly stated purpose at the outset, followed by two or three guiding questions (e.g., "Were students taught the content thoroughly enough in the Everyday Math curriculum to be able to master/secure the skill?"). LaCorte-Peterstown teachers are also directed to bring certain materials to each meeting (e.g., grade-level standards or student work samples), and the principal expects teams to take notes at each meeting. After she reviews the notes, Campel reports back her impressions of the effectiveness of the meeting to the team

members. The principal also addresses any concerns or red flags that teachers raise in the meeting minutes.

2 Content Driven by School Goals

Just as student learning requires a carefully planned curriculum with clear learning objectives, so professional learning opportunities for teachers are most successful when they are thoughtfully mapped across the calendar year and aligned to specific school-wide goals. Topics covered both in particular PLCs and larger, whole-school professional development sessions must be connected to the work occurring daily in classrooms, and therefore be highly relevant to teachers' everyday practice. These sessions are most valuable when they become part of a cycle of continuous improvement, with teachers learning new skills, trying them out in class, and then reflecting on their success through conversations with their colleagues.

A particular strength of the professional development opportunities offered at *Time for Teachers* schools is their tight connection to school-wide goals. According to a survey conducted for this report, across the 17 profiled schools, 90 percent of teachers believe that professional development is aligned with their own school's improvement plan. For example, at Brunson-Lee, in anticipation of each academic quarter, the principal and instructional coach establish a schedule for session content around a set of four school-wide academic goals, all related to supporting Common Core implementation (i.e., complex problem-solving, rigorous informational text, close reading, and writing). The PD leaders then translate these larger goals into specifics that support grade-level objectives.

With a similar goal of tailoring their PLC session content to specific challenges teachers are facing in the classroom, the instructional leaders at KIPP Central City Academy often select PLC discussion topics based on their classroom observations. During their regular classroom visits, KCCA administrators use a school-developed observation rubric to assess classroom teachers in six areas: the full lesson cycle, use of data, stimulating critical thinking, clarity of instruction, students on task, and incorporation of literacy practices. Aggregating and averaging the data school-wide, KCCA's instructional leaders work to identify professional development content that would be most appropriate, given the strengths and weaknesses that the data reveal across these six areas.

Because PD workshops and PLCs are focused on what is happening regularly in teachers' classrooms, and because these efforts also forge connections to specific academic goals, teachers at the 17 schools examined in this report find such support both relevant and useful. Eighty-six percent of teachers from these schools who responded to our *Time for Teachers* survey agree that professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.

3 Peer-to-Peer Learning

At its best, teacher professional development is organized to engage teachers in deep collaboration and to stimulate peer-to-peer learning. Teachers are more invested when they have an opportunity to reflect, interact with their peers, and collaboratively problem-solve. Further, understanding how their peers are handling particular challenges in the classroom gives teachers new ideas and stimulates their desire to change. And, as teachers work together to solve problems, they are more likely to begin to see themselves



Topics covered both in particular PLCs and larger, whole-school sessions must be connected to the work occurring daily in classrooms.



as members of a single team, united in supporting the success of all the school's students.

At Morton School of Excellence, in Chicago, teachers take the lead in sharing ideas, resources, and strategies during PLCs and school-wide PD sessions. Inspired by research she was using in her classroom to introduce “performance tasks” more effectively, Morton fourth-grade teacher RaStar West has led two math/science PLCs during the 2013–14 academic year. Following her return from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference, West shared an article with her colleagues that walked through strategies for scaffolding performance tasks and identifying student misconceptions when introducing lessons. Similarly, at one of Morton's five School Improvement Days, which occurred midway through the fall semester, eight teachers shared how they were adapting instructional strategies and using data to ensure that students in their classrooms were learning within the Common Core framework. Kindergarten teachers Deirdre Garcia and Julie Heintzeman described their daily guided reading blocks and how they were utilizing these instructional blocks to support and regularly assess their students' progress.

In the context of these professional learning communities, collaboration becomes an even more significant and powerful vehicle for teacher learning. Geraldine Calhoun, a fifth-grade teacher at LaCorte-Peterstown School, argues that teachers “depend on the open line of communication that comes in PLCs to know where they are coming from and where they are going [academically].” At this school, to prompt collaboration and input from all participants, PLC meeting agendas are structured in ways that specifically require each teacher to report on their practices, and for others to comment. While the tone can be informal, and there is much opportunity for teachers to describe their experiences, the collaboration that takes place should not be mistaken for loose conversation. Rather, this activity demonstrates both intense learning and considerable reflection, prompted by good questions and a strong meeting agenda.

4 Differentiation of Content

With diverse needs and desires for professional growth, teachers appreciate when professional development is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Just as strong teachers work to differentiate their teaching based on student readiness, so schools with strong professional

development programs make every effort to tailor the content of these programs according to individual teachers' strengths and weaknesses.

Kevin Fosburgh, a third-grade teacher at Brunson-Lee Elementary, is appreciative that his school and district no longer require all teachers to attend certain PD sessions, but, instead, offer sessions that are more targeted to the skills he himself is working to build. “The PD that really spoke to me was about how to engage students through techniques like a ‘round-robin discussion.’ I was able to implement that in my classroom right away, and within a few days, it really took off.”

Brunson-Lee school leadership identified teacher interests by conducting a survey at the beginning of the 2013–14 academic year. Additionally, the school's instructional coach asks for feedback on each PD session, as well as specific suggestions for follow-up. The coach also has recognized the need to provide more support to new educators, so she has convened a PLC of first-year teachers in the building, which meets about two times per month and focuses on issues of particular concern to them.

Spotlight:

A Professional Development Session at Brunson-Lee Elementary School

All the full-time teachers at Brunson-Lee Elementary School, in Phoenix, are gathered in the library on Wednesday afternoon at their weekly scheduled professional development workshop. Intentionally, the teachers seat themselves at five specific tables—specialists at one, kindergarten and grade 1 at another, and so on. For the next hour, all these educators become eager students. Their teacher is the instructional coach for the school, Sarah Ravel, who was once a sixth-grade teacher at another school in the district. This group of teachers, like thousands of others across Arizona and, indeed, around the country, are figuring out how to re-configure their instruction to address the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In this context, Ravel begins the lesson with a simple (and fun) task: “I want you to talk in your group for five minutes about what song best represents the transition to Common Core.” After the answers are shared aloud—including one group half-jokingly likening the process to Johnny Cash’s “Ring of Fire”—they begin to dive into the substance of today’s lesson: narrative writing.

Ravel runs the session as she would expect teachers to manage their own classrooms, beginning by setting out the expectations and essential questions for the lesson. Next, she asks teachers to examine their grade-level standards for narrative writing—each has a set at the ready—and to determine “what students need to know; what you are currently doing; and what new you’ll need to do to meet the Common Core standards.” Table discussions follow for the next 10 minutes, and, again, each team shares their key discussion points with the larger group. “Through the experience of getting to interpret the standards ourselves together, we better understand how to teach it to our students,” Ravel says. She also reminds the teachers that this exploration is just the beginning of the process of understanding the CCSS and that they will need to continue their discussions in their grade-level planning meetings during the coming days and weeks.

For the next 40 minutes, Ravel walks through what teachers could use as a potential lesson, including writing a list of some topics on which to build a personal narrative (e.g., three examples of moments when you were proud of yourself or someone else). Then, she takes the teachers through a simple structure on



how to build an essay, using a vivid example from her own experience about once being bitten by a spider, to illustrate how the structure plays out through the piece. After giving everyone a few minutes to practice writing their own stories, Ravel asks a few teachers to share what they have written. The final step of the lesson reveals its purpose, as Ravel asks for everyone to “turn and talk” to share how they will use what they learned in this mini-lesson in their own classrooms.

Throughout the lesson, the mood is relaxed and serious at once. Teachers appreciate that what they just experienced can almost immediately be integrated into their own classrooms, tailored to meet their individual students’ particular needs and expectations.

Key to Success	Evidence of Strong Implementation	How Can My School Improve?
Focused Use of Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators articulate and maintain focus on clear meeting objectives Protocols optimize meeting time for discussion, reflection, and problem-solving Meetings conclude with clear next steps that teachers can implement in their classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop facilitators' skills through modeling and coaching Develop tight agendas with time appropriate to meet the identified objective(s) Establish common expectations around the purpose of meetings and norms for collaboration Assign roles that ensure meetings reach objectives (e.g. facilitator, note-taker, focuser, etc.)
Content Driven by School Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is aligned with school's improvement plan and teacher and student needs PD and PLC content supports and reinforces common school-wide practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess teacher needs and create plans that address specific gaps Communicate priority areas for PD and PLC and their alignment to school-wide goals Create and review rubrics that clarify expectations for effective instruction Gather feedback from teachers to inform future sessions and supports Identify linkages between sessions to create coherence
Peer-to-Peer Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers seek input from colleagues and administrators in multiple settings Teachers have many opportunities to share effective practices and ideas PD sessions are modeled after active classrooms (i.e., not lecture-style) All teachers contribute regularly to discussion Expectations are clear for sharing ideas and determining action steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage teachers in discussions on how to improve collaboration Identify teacher strengths and leverage expertise whenever possible Maximize time for collaborative problem-solving during PD sessions Recognize teachers for adopting new practices learned from others Communicate expectations for active participation and idea sharing Engage staff in key roles to increase participation and teacher leadership
Differentiation of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School has a robust system for identifying and tracking teacher needs PD and PLC content are tailored to support individual teachers' development Teachers have input into the types of training and support they need to be successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage teachers to develop individual goals that align to school-wide priorities and can be addressed in PD or PLC Identify and track teacher needs (e.g. teacher surveys, coaching sessions, informal observations, data analysis, etc.) Group teachers in PLCs based on goals for discussion (e.g. grade level, content level, new teachers, etc.)

Summer Training

Establishing Expectations and Planning Ahead



Summer professional development and planning sessions help schools lay the groundwork for the deep collaboration that takes place during the school year.

For two to three weeks before the school year begins, 7 of the 17 schools explored in *Time for Teachers* convene their faculty for an intensive session of planning and professional development. (Other schools in this study offer their teachers up to one week of summer training.) Leaders and educators at these 7 schools consider this time during the summer, when students have not yet returned to start the new year and the day-to-day demands of teaching are not yet underway, a cornerstone of their school's continuing success.

At these summer sessions, teachers have significant time to collaborate on instruction, build a common understanding of their school's vision and mission, and learn about new tools and systems they will use throughout the course of the academic year. In many ways, summer sets the tone for the year ahead.

Teachers at Achievement First Amistad High School; UP

Academy Charter School of Boston; YES College Prep – Southwest Campus; Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus (RPLS); and Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School (WCCS) (both RPLS and WCCS are part of the Uncommon Schools' network) all begin the school year well before students walk through the doors. As a result of this summertime training, teachers are, simply put, better prepared to teach. And that additional time for teachers impacts students. "Our summer prep, which is aligned with our professional development throughout the year, is terribly important," says Ashley Herring, Dean of Students at RPLS, in Boston. "We all get to practice, plan, and gear up for the year ahead. There's no doubt we are better prepared to teach our scholars when they arrive."

At these schools, the summer weeks provide time for teachers to create and refine unit plans and to align their instructional and classroom management practices. The summer sessions also offer opportunities for teachers to engage in team-building activities, to learn new systems, and to discuss and

Keys to Success

- A Foundation for Ongoing Collaboration
- Aligned Expectations and Practices
- Tailored Support for New Teachers
- Teachers as Experts
- An Integrated Calendar of Development



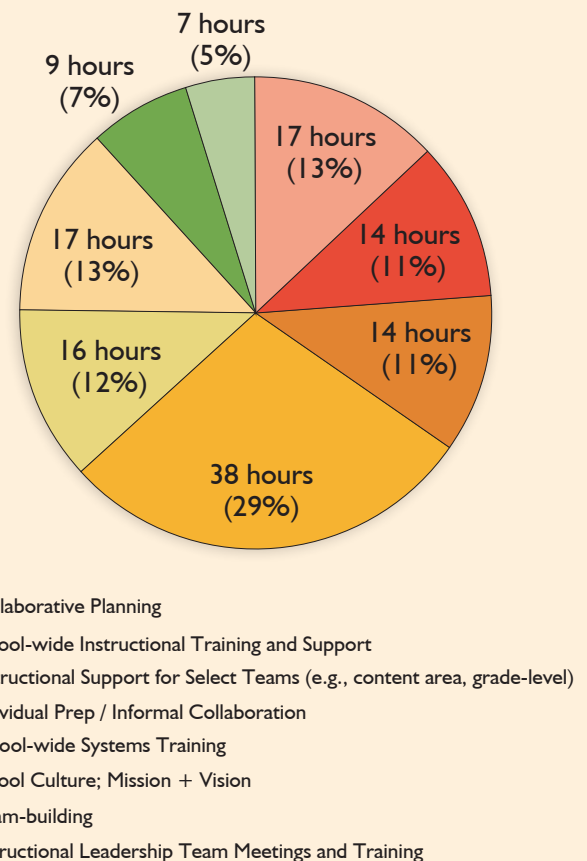
develop common expectations for student behavior and work. Additionally, some of these schools use this time to support new teachers, by teaching instructional strategies and sharing protocols for lesson planning and data analysis. Across these *Time for Teachers* schools, summer sessions create new possibilities for professional learning that are both broad—bringing staff together around mission and vision—and deep—unpacking learning standards and strengthening instructional practice school-wide. School leaders are also careful to allocate ample time for teachers to work independently or in informal collaboration throughout the summer session, so that teachers can immediately begin to plan and apply what they’ve gleaned in group sessions.

Summer sessions are more common in charter schools, and those highlighted in this chapter have been refining their summer programs for several years. Our *Time for Teachers* research reveals that this practice is also emerging at traditional district schools, including Brunson-Lee Elementary School, McGlone Elementary School, and Newton Elementary School. Although these district schools’ summer sessions tend to be shorter than those at the charter schools profiled in this chapter, their teachers are also using the time to share instructional practices and to collaborate in preparation for the upcoming year.

Educators at UP Academy Boston, an in-district charter school that has made remarkable gains in student achievement since taking over an underperforming middle school, attribute this success largely to their work building quality systems and

practices—work that begins during the summer session. As Katy Buckland, a dean of curriculum and instruction at the school, recalls: “The first summer was hugely impactful. We needed that time when students weren’t here, so that we could all implement similar systems [e.g. classroom management, lesson planning, collaboration, parent outreach, etc.] The summer session really sets the stage.” Now in its third year, teachers and administrators at UP Academy Boston still consider the summer session a pivotal learning opportunity, but for different reasons. Principal Jamie Morrison describes how the summer session allows teachers time to begin planning with their grade-level and content teams, jumpstarting the collaborative work that happens weekly throughout the academic terms. In particular, Morrison credits the summer planning work for the progress UP Academy Boston teachers have made in transitioning to the Common Core. “The time over the summer to really examine and discuss the new standards with their colleagues and start thinking about the best ways to teach those standards has made the shift much less challenging than it otherwise would have been,” this principal attests.

FIGURE 5. How Teachers Spent Time During Their Three-Week Summer Training (2013)
Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus



Source: Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus (Boston, MA). Summer PD schedule. Percentages may not total 100, due to rounding.

Every August, Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus teachers gather for three weeks of professional development. “Summer is our touchstone—it really provides the glue that holds our teaching team together all year long,” according to RPLS seventh-grade teacher Marisa Taylor. “Because of our time together in August, I don’t have any questions about our mission, our objectives, or what we are all working toward.” In fact, aligning adult expectations and ensuring consistency among classrooms shape the agenda of RPLS’s three-week summer period. At regular “Power of Practice” sessions, teachers model, role-play, and give feedback on new school-wide practices. In one “Power of Practice” session, for example, a teacher modeled a specific practice called “eyes on the mark”—a signaling activity that RPLS teachers use to communicate to students where they need to focus their attention—on the speaker, the board, or their own work. After watching a teacher model this practice, other teachers shared what they had noticed, and asked clarifying questions. Then, in small groups every teacher practiced “eyes on the mark,” while their peers role-played as students and then provided feedback in the form of “glows” (praise) and “grows” (areas to improve). RPLS Dean of Students Ashley Herring explains why these sessions are so important at her school:

What can be challenging when you bring together a group of teachers is the varying level of experience in each classroom and what people think needs to be happening in their class. Every student needs to know that expectations in my classroom are the same next door. Building a consistent mindset among all of our teachers—and, therefore, all of our students—makes the difference.

At these summer sessions, teachers have significant time to collaborate on instruction, build a common understanding of their school’s vision and mission, and learn about new tools and systems.

Aligning instructional and classroom management practices represents just one strand of RPLS’s summer professional development, which also includes instructional coaching, team planning, and individual preparation. During their summer sessions, RPLS teachers complete their weekly pacing guides for the year, collaborate on unit objectives, complete the first week’s lesson plans, and reach out to the families of students in their advisory cohorts. With these projects completed, the teachers have a head start when the school term actually begins. They can launch right into instructing, reviewing student work, grouping students based on formative assessment data, and crafting lesson plans in response to specific class needs.

Like professional learning time during the school year, these summer sessions for teachers must be thoughtfully planned. At the *Time for Teachers* schools that conduct summer trainings, several themes emerged regarding the most effective uses of this valuable teacher time. The following section explores key components of successful summer planning and preparation programs.



Keys to Success

I A Foundation for Ongoing Collaboration

Summer sessions present an opportunity for teachers to develop and strengthen collegiality and build a shared sense of what it means to be educators at their school. In fact, summer preparation and planning help lay a foundation for further collaboration, by carving out time for teachers to work in grade-level and content-area teams. During summer sessions, the teams develop routines and systems for working together, while simultaneously jumpstarting their lesson planning. As they engage in these joint activities, teachers cultivate a mutual respect, rapport, and camaraderie that facilitates their ongoing work together once the school year begins.

At UP Academy Boston, teachers spend a significant portion of their three-week summer professional development period working in grade-level teams (the same teams they will work with on a weekly basis during the regular school year), guided by instructional coaches. The teachers' shared endeavors—examining Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and crafting lesson objectives to address them—start with a school-wide session on how to “unpack” the standards themselves. After reading an excerpt from *Understanding by Design*, a how-to guide for “backward planning,” teachers break into grade-level and content-area teams to delve into specific standards they will be teaching during the term. After this discussion, teams divide up the standards, and each teacher identifies lesson objectives for their particular set of standards. By the end of the session, grade-level teams have not only determined how they will teach the CCSS that their students need to know; the teachers also have figured out how

to work with one another productively, sharing ideas and dividing responsibilities.

2 Aligned Expectations and Practices

Summer planning, preparation, and training can also help school communities create coherence and consistency across a diverse teaching staff. In summer planning periods, teachers learn and practice school-wide instructional strategies and gain familiarity with updated lesson-planning expectations and resources. Leaders at *Time for Teachers* schools frequently dedicate time to strengthening school operations, by troubleshooting school-wide systems so that every adult in the building begins the year with a common understanding of how the school functions and the role they each need to play to achieve community-wide success.

Summer professional development at Achievement First Amistad High School in New Haven, Connecticut, consists of 13 full days. One of the overall goals of the session is to communicate the underlying priorities and expectations for the year ahead. For example, on one day, Amistad's instructional coach leads a workshop on developing effective lesson plans, introducing new templates for the upcoming school year. Then, she presents the key components of a great lesson plan and also leads a discussion of the new templates, which differ based on the structure of various lessons (e.g. “I do, you do, we do”; seminar; lab; etc.). The coach also shares a rubric for the effective delivery of lessons. “We're focused this year on aligning teacher expectations around lesson planning,” says Amistad Principal Chris Bostock, outlining the broader context. “Over the summer, we have time not only to deliver important new content—like the new templates and rubrics—but also to give teachers time to practice using these tools.”

Teachers at RPLS, meanwhile, have dedicated time during the summer to learn new systems and practice routines for daily tasks like arrival, transitions, lunch, and dismissal. As a result, operations tend to run smoothly once students arrive back to school. Although small adjustments are made in the initial weeks, the RPLS team challenges the notion that it takes the “first six weeks of school” to get systems in place.

3 Tailored Support for New Teachers

The days and weeks before school begins also present a pivotal opportunity to strengthen and support new teachers. Given that new staff members frequently hail from a variety of teacher-training programs and schools, they often arrive with different expectations for everyday practices, such as lesson planning and classroom management. For this reason, targeted professional development can help jumpstart the process of integrating new teachers into a school.

YES Prep, in Houston, runs a three-week summer induction program for its new teachers every year. “The summer is a crash course for our new teachers,” says Logan Quinn, a YES Prep science coach. “We solidify the building blocks of teaching, by breaking down instructional content and giving our new teachers multiple opportunities to practice classroom management strategies.” During induction, workshops are structured to reflect the school's expectations for lesson planning, with the workshop format mirroring what YES Prep expects teachers to use in their lessons. The sessions are also aligned to YES Prep's Instructional Education Rubric, which the Houston network uses to assess instruction and provide feedback to teachers throughout the year.



As they engage in these joint activities during the summer, teachers cultivate a mutual respect, rapport, and camaraderie that facilitates their ongoing work together once the school year begins.

Throughout the summer sessions, new YES Prep teachers are preparing for the first month of school, and also planning units and lessons, practicing classroom management techniques, and participating in grade-level and content area-specific training. As a result, every new teacher leaves YES Prep induction with a full unit plan that will direct their teaching during the first month of the upcoming academic term.

4 Teachers as Experts

Summer sessions at *Time for Teachers* schools are inclusive and interactive forums, where teachers are encouraged to learn from their colleagues. Teachers here are taking on leadership roles—training new faculty, introducing instructional strategies, and helping to unpack and analyze the effects of new standards on what is taught. In fact, 89 percent of the teachers who participated in the survey the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) conducted for this report agree with the statement that “teachers are effective leaders in this school.” And, in these schools, teachers begin to take on leadership roles during the summer sessions.

At YES Prep, the view of teachers as leaders is strongly supported by the central office. “Curriculum decisions cannot be top-down, not anymore. Nothing happens unless you have teachers leading the work,” says Roberto Martinez, YES Prep’s Senior Director of Academics. In accordance with this philosophy, every YES Prep school appoints six teachers to serve as content directors (there is one

director for each subject area) at the school. Among other responsibilities, these teacher leaders help prepare for and deliver content during summer induction; they also model instructional strategies and provide coaching to new teachers during this period.

To maximize the impact of its summer professional development, Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School (WCCS), in Brooklyn, also leverages teacher expertise. At one two-hour, school-wide session held before the start of the 2013–14 school year, for example, a history teacher and the school’s dean of curriculum and instruction co-led a session on balanced assessments. The participating teachers analyzed one of this history teacher’s assessments against Webb’s four Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, which reflect increasing difficulty (recall and reproduction, working with skills and concepts, short-term strategic thinking, and extended strategic thinking). Following this session, Beth Miller, a writing teacher who was about to begin her first year at WCCS, said, “I’ve taught in other schools, and this is unique. Being able to critique a test a particular teacher gave while he is sitting in the room and participating in the conversation is very powerful.”

5 An Integrated Calendar of Development

Successful summer teacher development activities do not operate in isolation. On the contrary, they are part of an integrated plan that is aligned with school-year professional development goals and programs. In planning summer sessions,

school and teacher leaders need to consider how the learning that takes place then will be reinforced throughout the school year.

Last summer, at Williamsburg, teachers used their professional development sessions to focus on how to increase students’ inquiry skills and their engagement with one another, including using the DOK framework, described above. As the teachers worked to deepen their own understanding of the different knowledge levels, WCCS’s dean of curriculum and instruction encouraged them to push their students to Level 3 or Level 4 questions on the four-level spectrum. Following up during the school year, WCCS teachers collaborate with their coaches to continue to define Level 3 and Level 4 questions and to integrate them into their lesson plans and assessments.

School leaders at Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus structure their annual professional development calendar to build on content covered over the summer, through weekly sessions that take place on school-year early release days. “We work backward from what we want to accomplish at the end of the year,” explains RPLS Principal Shradha Patel. “Based on those goals, we build scope and sequence for the summer professional development, and from there we build a scope and sequence for professional development across the school year. Everything we cover in summer cycles is addressed again through the school-year professional development, sometimes repeatedly.”

Spotlight:

Summer at Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus

Most of the three-week summer program at Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone (RPLS), in Boston, happens at the school level, but two full days are dedicated to collaboration across the three Roxbury Prep middle schools that comprise the Uncommon Schools Boston network. This time is dedicated almost exclusively to content-area collaboration, mostly among teachers working within the same grade.

Before teachers break out into grade-level teams, they gather as a content team (all of the English teachers come together, for example). Roxbury Prep teacher-leaders in each content area walk through the network's Curriculum Alignment Template (CAT), which outlines by subject what students need to learn in each grade during the upcoming year. The CAT is developed collaboratively by the principals and content leaders. During the summer of 2013, the CAT was updated by Roxbury Prep network staff to align the school's standards with the Common Core. As part of this process, network staff broke down every Common Core standard and substandard, identifying a clear objective students need to achieve to demonstrate success in each. For example, "*Common Core Substandard 5.RF.4 Accuracy and Fluency: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension*" became "Students will be able to self-monitor and ask themselves, 'Does this make sense?' when reading."

This translation of the Common Core into achievable objectives has emerged as an invaluable tool for RPLS teaching teams. RPLS teachers are ahead of the game because they do not have to unpack what each standard (and substandard) requires of them and their students. Instead, the educators can spend their time figuring out not what, but how to teach their students. "We quickly realized that the Common Core is asking more of us as teachers and of our scholars," RPLS seventh-grade teacher Marisa Taylor recounts:

We were overwhelmed at first. But we had time this summer to sit down with teachers across the [networked] schools and lots of time with our RPLS colleagues. We were able to really dig in and think about how to adapt our weekly pacing guides to make sure they cover all of the content required by Common Core.

In addition to aligning their weekly pacing guides with the CAT, the Roxbury Prep team works to make instructional strategies consistent across their network of schools. Fifth-grade math teachers from the three campuses, for example, focus on "mental math breaks," when teachers lead oral drills of students' foundational math skills. After watching a short video of an Uncommon Schools teacher using this strategy, teachers deconstruct the vignette with their colleagues. Next, a teacher-leader provides content about the



keys to implementing this strategy successfully. Then, teachers identify and discuss types of math problems that work well for "mental math," a core component of every math lesson at Roxbury Prep schools.

Finally, it's time for theory to meet practice. Experienced math teachers share their techniques, including pre-scripting questions and saving them from year to year, plotting out which pre-scripted questions will be asked of which students (to ensure no bias), and planning ahead to determine what to do when a student gives a wrong answer. At that point, every teacher—both new and veteran—role-plays a mental math lesson, while the other teachers act as students. After receiving feedback from their colleagues, the participating teachers are asked what they are going to focus on improving next time. Throughout this process, veteran teachers serve as informal mentors to new staff. "Coaching new teachers is part of our culture," longtime Roxbury Prep teacher Jason Armstrong comments. "The expectations for teachers are high here, and there's a lot to learn, so we all support one another."

Key to Success	Evidence of Strong Implementation	How Can My School Improve?
A Foundation for Ongoing Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and administrators display a commitment toward shared learning and regularly seek peer feedback Teachers rely on and support one another in preparing for the upcoming school year Collaboration occurs frequently in both formal and informal settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer ample opportunities for sharing and collaboration both within and across existing teams (e.g. grade-level, PLCs, etc.) Plan social activities to build collegiality
Aligned Expectations and Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time is devoted to sharing and practicing school-wide instructional practices Expectations for lesson planning, preparation, and execution are clearly communicated School leaders teach systems and share resources that promote a positive school culture and efficient use of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a small set of priority, school-wide instructional practices and dedicate time for teachers to model, discuss, and practice them Dedicate time to introduce, review, and hone expectations for classroom management and school operations
Tailored Support for New Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training prepares new teachers for the first month of school (e.g. classroom management, lesson planning, etc.) Clear expectations are established and communicated for new teachers New teachers have access to individualized supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate time for new teachers to learn school expectations and develop high-priority instructional skills through modeling, practice, and feedback Share rubrics that communicate instructional expectations for new teachers Identify potential mentors (e.g. veteran teachers or coaches) to work with new teachers starting in the summer
Teachers as Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are invested in summer sessions because of opportunities to learn from their peers Teacher-led trainings provide highly relevant learning opportunities for other staff Teacher expertise is leveraged strategically to disseminate promising practices and develop new practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide teachers with opportunities for input on summer professional development sessions and a role in planning Identify master teachers and promising practices they can share in sessions Provide time and support for teachers involved in planning summer sessions Create summer opportunities for sharing practices among all teachers, in a variety of settings (e.g. collaboration, staff PD, etc.)
An Integrated Calendar of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content introduced in the summer is revisited throughout the school year Collaboration structures (e.g. team meetings, PLCs, etc.) introduced in the summer are integrated into teachers' school-year schedules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider overarching professional development goals and full-year program when planning for summer sessions Offer time for teams (e.g. grade level, content, PLCs, etc.) to meet and plan how they will collaborate during the school year

Data Analysis

Examining Student Performance to Tailor Instruction



At McGlone Elementary School in Denver, Colorado, data drives not only lesson planning and instruction, but also the building's décor.

Various types of data can be found in nearly every hallway and on every wall: Graded student papers hang on the bulletin boards inside classrooms, monthly attendance numbers greet students and staff outside the main office, and an avalanche of bar graphs tracks student performance inside the staff's conference room. Inside the main office, a large sign succinctly describes the school's approach to data—"Analyze, Plan, Implement, Evaluate, Adjust." McGlone Principal Sara Gips gives voice to the palpable, school-wide commitment: "We want to be really transparent about how we look at data, why we need to look at data, and what the data is telling us about where we're heading."

In fact, McGlone's data shows the school is headed in the right direction. Over the past three years, school-wide proficiency rates have risen dramatically—18 percentage points in reading, and 28 percentage points in math—a rare phenomenon

among urban schools serving large populations of low-income students. Gips credits much of this success to her teachers' relentless use of data.

Of course, Gips is not the first principal to talk about the importance of data. "Data-driven instruction" has become a widely-accepted approach among educators; data, after all, has been at the forefront of school accountability since 2002, when the federal No Child Left Behind Act became law. However, schools that effectively use data to target and improve instruction don't just talk about it. They gather timely and relevant data on each student, dedicate resources and staff to facilitate data meetings, create clear structures and protocols for data analyses, offer continuous training to interpret data, and establish a data culture that can literally be seen throughout its hallways. In short, schools like McGlone use data effectively by being intentional about its use, and that intentionality is brought to life, in part, through an expanded school day and year. Having more time in school allows teachers to gather, analyze, and respond to student data—without sacrificing the time needed for high-quality instruction.



Keys to Success

- Leadership Commitment to Data
- High-Quality Assessments
- Effective Supports for Analysis
- Meaningful Action Steps

Each week, teachers need time to collect, analyze, and plan around data. In the survey of teachers who work at the expanded-time schools featured in this study, 83 percent report spending between one to three hours each week delivering assessments to gather student data, while 76 percent reported devoting another one to three hours analyzing and responding to data. Significantly, with an expanded school day that also affords teachers expanded planning periods, this considerable investment of time devoted to data does not cut into student instructional time: On this same survey, 70 percent of these teachers agree or strongly agree that they still have sufficient time for instruction.

While all 17 *Time for Teachers* schools dedicate some portion of their teachers' schedules to data analysis, the ways in which each school structures this time varies widely. Many of the highlighted schools schedule weekly data meetings. For example, teachers at Newton Elementary School, a K – 3 school in Greenfield, Massachusetts have weekly data meetings at which grade-level teachers, along with the Title I and Special Education teachers and the principal, use data to group and re-group students, as well as to plan interventions. These weekly data meetings take place in addition to two other grade-level meetings, ensuring that Newton teachers have sufficient time to focus exclusively on data. Similarly, at McGlone, teachers meet once each week for 50 minutes with their grade-level peers and an administrator (typically the assistant principal or an instructional coach). On alternating weeks, McGlone teachers look at reading and math data to identify both the skills and the students to target. During these sessions, they also share assessment and grading practices, as they strive toward achieving consistency across all classrooms.



With an expanded school day that also affords teachers expanded planning periods, this considerable investment of time devoted to data does not cut into instructional time.

Teachers at Frank M. Silvia Elementary School in Fall River, Massachusetts, use data in their common planning meetings to analyze student work, regroup students, and determine how to reteach concepts to improve student understanding. “The data informs everything I do,” says Aura Ryder, a first-grade teacher at Silvia. “For instance, I can use the data to determine how well my math centers are helping students meet the standards and which students need to spend time in each center.”

At Silvia, discussions about data are not limited to teacher meetings; Silvia teachers engage students in goal-setting and regularly discuss assessment data with them. “Letting our students track their own performance and set their own goals gives them a sense of ownership in their learning,” says first-grade teacher Laurie Parker. “Our kids are now really excited to see how they’ve grown.” To further build student engagement, each child’s goals, and their progress toward those goals, are posted throughout the school’s hallways. Because these data displays are public, students are only identified by their ID number, allowing them to see their individual performance relative to their peers without singling anyone out.

At Morton School of Excellence, a Pre-K – 8 Academy for Urban School Leadership school in Chicago, teachers take a slightly different approach to data. Here, they meet monthly for 60 minutes in teacher-led “data clusters”—one cluster includes elementary school teachers (grades 1 – 4), and the other includes middle school teachers (grades 5 – 8). During these meetings, teachers analyze student data from a variety of sources, including weekly teacher-developed interim assessments, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments, quarterly Chicago Public Schools English language arts (ELA) and math assessments, and students’ own work. “We use all of this data to plan small groups and identify students who need individual support,” explains fourth-grade teacher RaStar West, who leads Morton’s elementary data cluster. “The Common Core pushes our students to think critically, and we can only see how well they’re doing on this when we look closely at their work and their assessments.”

In addition to time devoted to data analysis within regular common planning meetings, several *Time for Teachers* schools also schedule “data days”—entire days when students do not have school and teachers meet to analyze and respond to data from recent benchmark assessments. The expanded schedule at these schools enables educators to secure these days of

FIGURE 6. Examples of Student Assessments at McGlone Elementary School

Assessment	Subject(s)	How the Data is Used	Grades	Frequency
Short Cycle Assessment Network (SCAN)	Literacy, Math	Inform plans for re-teaching skills and re-grouping students	K to 5	5x/year
District Interims	Writing, Math	Inform plans for re-teaching skills and re-grouping students; provide comparison district data	K to 5	2x/year
Developmental Reading Assessment – English and Spanish (DRA2/EDL)	Reading	Identify students for further support in reading fluency and comprehension	K to 5	3x/year
Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI)	Math	Identify and group students for math intervention	2 to 5	5x/year
STAR	Reading	Identify students for further support in phonics; provide comparison district data	K to 5	2x/year

“Letting our students track their own performance and set their own goals gives them a sense of ownership in their learning.”

LAURIE PARKER, 1ST-GRADE TEACHER, FRANK M. SILVIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

uninterrupted planning time without sacrificing instructional time.

Teachers at McGlone attend six data days each year. On these designated days, they analyze student data and meet with colleagues to plan for the upcoming weeks, using the data as a guide. As they identify particular standards that students are not mastering appropriately, these educators can structure unit and lesson plans to include a review or re-teaching of those standards. Like McGlone, Mastery Charter School's Shoemaker campus, in Philadelphia, also schedules six data days throughout the year, one after each benchmark assessment. At Mastery, data days provide opportunities to share school-wide successes and trends, reflect and plan, collaborate with colleagues, and conduct one-on-one data meetings between individual teachers and their instructional coach.

While data days typically take place after each benchmark assessment, *Time for Teachers* schools also use additional teacher time to look at non-academic data. At Soulsville Charter School in Memphis, students are dismissed two hours and 15 minutes early every Friday so that teachers can collaborate. In addition to analyzing academic data together, teachers and administrators

identify trends in student behavior and ensure consistent expectations throughout all classrooms. “Rooting our culture conversations in data takes a lot of the emotion out of our discussion about student behavior,” remarks LaMonn Daniels, Middle School Director at Soulsville. “By tracking the number of ‘Grammies’ [Soulsville’s reward system] that each teacher gives out, we can build a clear picture of what behaviors we’re recognizing, what behaviors we need to focus on, and how consistent we are throughout the school.”

Indeed, data permeates teachers’ instruction, planning, and collaboration at each of the schools in this study. It seems, in fact, that consistent, structured time for teachers to engage in discussions of student data helps create a data-driven mindset that carries over into other teacher development activities such as common planning blocks.

Nevertheless, while expanded time has helped lay the foundation from which strong data use can emerge, time alone does not ensure success. To fully leverage the potential of time and data to transform schools, several conditions, described below, are necessary.

Keys to Success

I Leadership Commitment to Data

For teachers to engage deeply and regularly in meaningful conversations about student data, school leaders need to send a clear and explicit message that reviewing and responding to this content is a high priority. Indeed, a school's commitment to data analysis really starts at the leadership level. School leaders set the tone for how teachers and students engage with data—by designating staff as data leads; scheduling time expressly for data discussions; establishing and holding all teachers and administrators accountable to measurable goals; and expressing the importance of student data in conversations, newsletters, and displays.

One or more members of the school's administrative team oversees data activities at many of the schools profiled in *Time for Teachers*—including Williamsburg Collegiate; Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus; and Soulsville. And in other buildings, where there is no designated data lead, school leaders invest significant time and resources to develop the data skills of all the administrators and coaches. Placing designated data staff in leadership positions—or providing leadership staff with extensive data training—signals a commitment to data from the top, while also ensuring that all teachers receive the supports they need to make data-driven instructional decisions.

Commitment to data is also reflected in the time these schools dedicate to data practices. “By scheduling weekly data meetings, we’re making sure that data plays a crucial part in teachers’ work every day,” says Jenn Brooks, one of McGlone’s three instructional coaches. “And we’re continually reinforcing the expectation

that they need to be collecting data and analyzing it—sometimes on their own, and sometimes with their team.” At Morton School of Excellence, Principal Peggie Burnett-Wise is working to increase teachers’ level of comfort in reviewing and sharing data, both with one another and with students. “Everyone can see everyone else’s data... It’s important because we have a lot of work to do, a lot of growth to make, and we all need to see how our students are doing.”

2 High-Quality Assessments

Using data effectively first requires gathering the appropriate data. Assessments must be both timely and aligned to the curriculum in order to meaningfully inform instruction. For teachers to use time effectively for data analysis and discussion, they first need high-quality assessments.

“Our students are assessed often,” says Sara Gips, McGlone’s principal, “but each assessment has a clearly stated purpose. When teachers know why we administer the tests that we do, there are fewer questions and objections about how much we test our kids.” An intentional and purposeful approach to assessments allows school leaders and teachers to select or create assessments that prioritize the needs of their students and support sub-populations of students.

In addition to measuring student progress, many *Time for Teachers* schools also use assessments—in particular, benchmark tests—for unit planning. For assessments to serve this vital purpose, they must align with the standards students need to master. As Claire Hollis, who teaches eleventh-grade math at Amistad High School, in New Haven, Connecticut, explains: “Our students’ performance on previous interim assessments lets me know which skills I have to re-teach or which students to target. And upcoming


interim assessments tell me what I should be teaching and when I should be teaching it.”

3 Effective Supports for Analysis

In addition to scheduling time for data analysis, schools that are effectively using data to improve instruction have also adopted or developed supports to ensure that time devoted to analysis is well spent. These supports are, in part, an outgrowth of a school’s commitment to data—for instance, designated data leads who provide ongoing support to teachers in their analyses. At the same time, supports include other systems, structures, and strategies that help teachers zero in on the most important information, draw conclusions, and translate their conclusions into concrete action steps.

At Mastery Charter School-Shoemaker Campus, administrators generate benchmark data reports for the school’s teachers that reveal how their students performed on tests measuring specific skills and standards. These reports identify whether or not each individual student has met his/her targeted growth over a particular time period. At Silvia Elementary School, meanwhile, teachers receive benchmark assessment reports that include comparison data to students’ performance in the previous year as well as to current, district-wide data.

In the absence of a sophisticated data-reporting tool, Soulsville Charter School’s deans of instruction compile benchmark data for every teacher in each of the school’s academic departments. “Our dean of instruction gets me my data report, and I can see how my classes as a whole are doing on specific standards, as well as how individual students are doing,” says Kalli Harrell, a Soulsville sixth-grade science teacher. Administrators at Soulsville also prepare



“The Common Core pushes our students to think critically, and we can only see how well they’re doing on this when we look closely at their work and their assessments.”

RASTAR WEST, 4TH-GRADE TEACHER
MORTON SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

evidence help me choose supports the answer the correct answer?)

• when done, go back and recheck

• Use transition words

• Create a complete, clear, and accurate paragraphed answer

Class Goal Check In Data Toys Go Out and Coaster History MC

Our classroom goal for multiple choice was that 70% of our classroom would reach a score of 70 or above. Only 59% of our classroom scored a 70 or above. Although we did not reach our goal, we did increase of classroom percentage from 39% to 59% (20% increase).

Class Goal Check In Data Toys Go Out Open Response (Fiction)

Our classroom goal for open response was that 75% of our classroom would reach a score of 3 or above. Only 59% of our classroom scored a 3 or above. Although we did not reach our goal, we did increase of classroom percentage from 30% to 59% (29% increase).

ent News: 30%
scored a 3 or 4 on
response on third grade
Classroom Goal: By December
of our classroom will score
above on open re

non-academic data reports and present these to the whole staff, with the aim of engaging everyone in conversations regarding student expectations.

Along with providing data reports, leaders at many *Time for Teachers* schools structure meetings to facilitate productive conversations about what the data means for student learning. Administrators or lead teachers prepare agendas, activities, and objectives for data meetings, in much the same way a teacher would create a thoughtful lesson plan. At McGlone, the reading and math instructional coaches alternate each week to plan data meetings for each grade level. The content of these meetings varies not only by subject, but also by types of assessments and analyses. During McGlone's data meetings, teachers often look at classroom or individual data from school-wide or teacher-made assessments. Further, teachers may look at the number of correct responses on each assessment, examine questions to gauge their difficulty, and, when applicable, analyze answer choices to identify common errors and other distractors. At one such data meeting at McGlone, teachers collaboratively graded "exit tickets"—a daily assessment given at the end of a lesson—to establish consistent

grading practices and expectations. Such conversations help ensure that all students are accessed with equal rigor.

4 Meaningful Action Steps

The ultimate goal of data analysis is to identify actionable next steps that can improve the quality of instruction each student receives. Conversations about data must translate to actions teachers can take in their classes, whether the action involves re-teaching a particular topic, grouping students for intervention, or adjusting instructional strategies. As Brad Trotter, a dean of instruction at Soulsville, says, "Our work around data matters only if it can accurately tell us what we should keep doing and what we should do differently." Like many other schools, after each benchmark assessment, teachers at Soulsville submit a "Data Day Battle Plan" based on their analyses of their students' performance. This plan includes the following detailed action steps:

- *Select specific skills and standards to re-teach and review*
Soulsville teachers select skills to re-teach and review, based on the following criteria: class-wide performance, whether the skill has already been taught, and whether the

skill is a high-priority standard on the state's standardized test. Typically, skills are retaught or reviewed if class-wide performance falls at or below 65 percent correct.

- *Identify specific students to target for intervention*
For skills and standards in which the class-wide average exceeds 80 percent correct, Soulsville teachers still identify students who have not yet demonstrated proficiency, and then plan ways to support these students, including individualized and small-group intervention.
- *Develop instructional plan for reteaching*
After prioritizing skills and targeting students, Soulsville teachers identify instructional strategies to more effectively re-teach a skill or differentiate instruction for struggling students. They incorporate these strategies into various parts of their lesson plans (e.g., "Do Now," mini-lessons, etc.).
- *Plan how to monitor progress*
Assessment plans are developed to check whether efforts to re-teach the standard or target instruction to specific students had an impact on student learning, and whether further work is still needed.

Spotlight:

Second-Grade Data Meeting at McGlone Elementary School

“I don’t agree,” said Patty Tirone, a second-grade teacher at McGlone Elementary School in Denver, Colorado. “I gave that a ‘3’ instead of a ‘4’ because the student didn’t show all of her work.” Tirone was seated in the school’s conference room alongside the other three second-grade teachers and the school’s assistant principal. Each week, every teacher at McGlone participates with their grade-level colleagues in a data meeting led by an administrator or coach. During this particular meeting, the school’s four second-grade teachers are grading sample “exit tickets”—quick end-of-class assessments to check on students’ understanding of the day’s lesson—which they had created on their own. School leaders at McGlone emphasize the use of these teacher-created assessments because they build teachers’ commitment to using data. “The key is building buy-in and distributive leadership,” says McGlone Principal Sara Gips. “The fact that teachers create their own assessments is a way we empower our teachers.”

To grade the exit tickets, teachers use a rubric developed by the school’s math instructional coach. The rubric guides teachers to score exit tickets based on three components—answer, understanding, and effort—using a four-point scale. “I thought she actually did show all of her work,” says Kena Oguntala, another second-grade teacher, “and she demonstrated strong understanding with different words, labels, and pictures.”

On this day, the vote is split among the four teachers: Two teachers grade the exit ticket a “3”; the other two give it a “4.” At this point, McGlone’s Assistant Principal Priscilla Hopkins interjected: “This one is kind of on the edge, and we included it here hoping it would spark this kind of debate. But we would give this a ‘4’ because the student does show understanding in several ways and is clearly demonstrating strategies that were taught in their class.” Guided by Hopkins, the teachers then grade four more exit tickets, discussing their thinking and reasoning behind each grade and coming to a consensus before moving onto the next one.

Although the objective for this particular week’s data meeting is norming expectations and grading practices for exit tickets, the agenda is packed with other activities, as well. Led by the assistant principal, the teachers began the meeting watching an inspirational video from a former teacher and then offering



some self-reflection on the skills they want to pass onto their students. In fact, none of the teachers identifies skills or standards that are tested on any assessment or standardized test, but choose instead less concrete qualities, such as grit, compassion, and curiosity. The point of this exercise was to couch the data analysis in terms of putting the needs of students first.

After the teachers finish grading each exit ticket and reach agreement on their scoring, they moved on to discuss ways in which they could organize, analyze, and use the data to drive future lessons. The data meeting concludes with the four teachers creating their own exit tickets for their math lessons that day. “We always want to close our data meetings with something that teachers can immediately implement in their classrooms,” says Assistant Principal Hopkins. “That’s how we continue to build buy-in and capacity for using data at this school.”

Key to Success	Evidence of Strong Implementation	How Can My School Improve?
Leadership Commitment to Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations and decisions rooted in data • Measurable school-wide goals beyond accountability measures on state-wide tests • Data posted in classrooms and hallways • Students take ownership in and track their own data • Data shared regularly with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and deliver training for all staff on process for data gathering, analysis, and planning • Designate at least one administrator to oversee data gathering • Devote time for analyzing and planning around data during full-staff trainings and/or meetings • Create opportunities to recognize data successes publicly
High-Quality Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim assessment administered at least once every eight weeks • Interim assessments are aligned to school's pacing guide • Interim assessments inform unit and lesson planning • Clear assessment strategy describes how each assessment should inform classroom or grouping decision(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with district or assign content experts to develop interim assessments, if they do not exist • Create opportunities for staff to provide feedback on interim assessments • Create an inventory of assessments and their purpose • Develop an assessment calendar that delivers frequent and actionable data to teachers throughout the year
Effective Supports for Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate time scheduled for teachers to analyze and reflect on data individually or with a coach • Clear data reports, analysis tools, or structures with which to conduct analyses • Ongoing supports and trainings for teachers to analyze data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate at least one leadership staff person to support data analysis • Devote at least 60 minutes each week to analyze data in teams • Identify existing or develop new tools and protocols for data analysis
Meaningful Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyses directly inform decisions around student grouping and unit/lesson planning • Systems are in place to monitor and support the use of data to drive decisions in classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure assessments deliver timely data from which teachers can create clear action steps • Train coaches, department chairs, and other leadership staff to support the use of data to drive decisions in the classroom • Establish expectations for using data to inform instruction with data action plans • Create lesson plan templates that incorporate actions based on data analysis

Individualized Coaching

Helping Teachers Succeed through Observation and Feedback



At many *Time for Teachers* schools, individual teachers are paired with an instructional coach, who supports their ongoing development through regular observation and feedback.

Inside Academic Dean Jen Caruso's office, at Achievement First Amistad High School, in New Haven, Connecticut, a large sign hangs over the small round conference table where Caruso sits, deep in conversation with Rebecca Taylor, a tenth-grade chemistry teacher. The sign reads: "Teaching is a performance profession' (Doug Lemov) ... and your lesson plan is the script for that performance." The analogy of teaching to an actor's performance—one that is rehearsed, scrutinized, and continuously improved before the show goes on—is fitting for a school that invests in a system of frequent observation, feedback, and individualized teacher support. The investment appears to be paying off: Amistad tenth graders routinely outpace their peers, in both the New Haven Public Schools and across Connecticut, as measured by the number of students performing 'at goal' in reading, writing, math, and science on the

Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). Perhaps even more significantly, 100 percent of Amistad's seniors matriculate to a four-year college. Such metrics stand as a true testament to Amistad's investment in teachers. Notably, Amistad excels with a teaching staff that has many fewer years of experience compared to that of other Connecticut public schools—on average, teachers have just 4.4 years of experience, compared to the statewide average of 13.7 years.

At Amistad, the teacher coaching system forms the backbone for how the school operates and helps to ensure high-quality teaching. Six designated coaches—generally administrators and department heads—are assigned to work with between six and nine teachers (the actual number depends on the coaches' other responsibilities). The coaching load is kept small because the expectations are high for each coach's involvement in the work of their assigned teachers. Every week, coaches observe teachers for 15 minutes and spend a 52-minute planning period with each of their assigned teachers to discuss lesson plans and provide feedback based on the observation. In advance of these

Keys to Success

- A Culture of Continuous Improvement
- Training and Support for Coaches
- Focused, Individualized Goals
- Timely, “Bite-sized” Action Steps
- Collaborative Problem-solving

The teacher coaching system forms the backbone for how the school operates and helps to ensure high-quality teaching.

meetings, coaches also are expected to review a weekly lesson plan submission from each of their teachers. Overall, Amistad's investment of time for coaching is striking. Across the school year, every Amistad teacher will likely be observed on 36 to 40 different occasions and will spend as many as 27 hours in one-on-one meetings with their coach, talking about how they can improve their teaching skills.

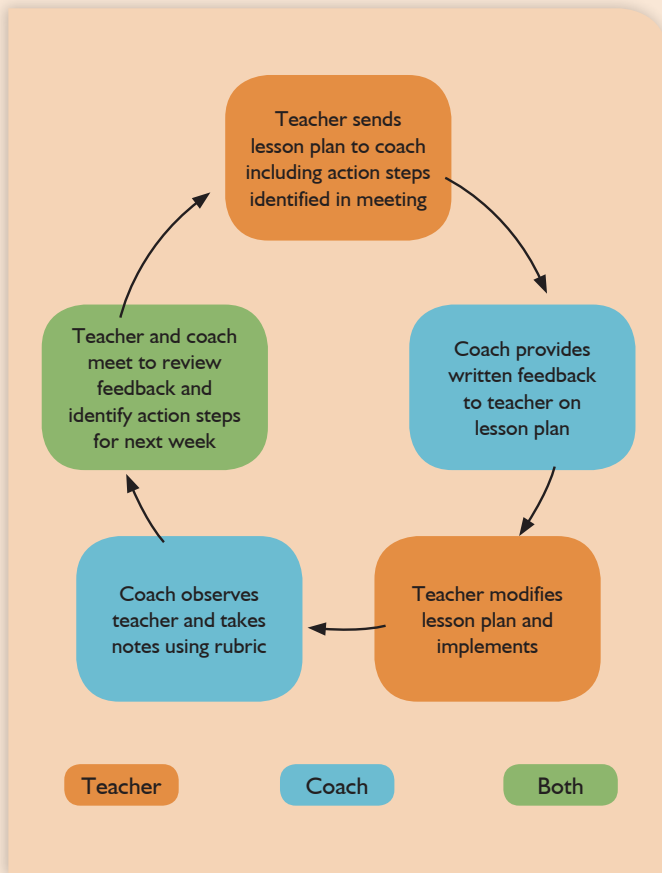
Like Amistad, eight of the other schools studied for this report invest significant time and resources to develop teachers' skills through regular observation and feedback. At many of these *Time for Teachers* schools, the expanded schedule is structured in such a way that each teacher has multiple periods every week when not teaching, which means each has the flexibility to meet regularly with a coach. With a longer school day, there is also more time for coaches to spend in classrooms and in follow-up meetings with teachers.

As Figure 7 illustrates (see next page), in many of these schools, the weekly coaching process is cyclical—starting with the submission of the week's lesson plans to the coach. (Sometimes a teacher also will submit student data from weekly assessments.) The coach then reviews and provides written feedback on the lesson plan, after which the teacher makes modifications. At least once every week, the coach observes a class and then meets with the teacher to: 1) further discuss the week's lesson plans and make suggestions based on data submitted; 2) provide feedback on the observation; and 3) identify concrete action steps for the teacher to incorporate into the following week's lesson plans, at which point the cycle begins again.

Along with these schools, which make observation, feedback, and coaching a weekly activity, National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) researchers identified a significant and growing number of schools that are implementing less frequent, but still highly influential, observation and feedback sessions. At these other schools, the observation and subsequent feedback to teachers takes place through newly-implemented teacher evaluation systems. While often designed and mandated by states or districts, several of these *Time for Teachers* schools have embraced these new systems—not just for evaluation purposes, but also as opportunities to coach and develop teachers.



FIGURE 7. Weekly Coaching Cycle



In Cleveland, Ohio, for example, educators at every district school follow the same detailed, multi-part rubrics to conduct the required “five-touch” Teacher Development and Evaluation System (TDES) throughout the year. While teachers across the district have had mixed impressions of the system, TDES has been positively received at the Pre-K – 8 Douglas MacArthur Girls’ Leadership Academy.³² Principal Victoria King estimates that she spends over 100 hours each year conducting the required two formal, and three informal (or “walk-through”) observations and feedback sessions with each of her 22 classroom and “encore” (or specialty) teachers. At MacArthur, the two formal TDES assessments begin with a pre-observation conversation, followed by the individual teacher being observed by the principal, and then the feedback discussion. As King explains, these sessions allow her to work individually with each MacArthur teacher and delve deeply into that teacher’s development, evaluating both strengths and weaknesses, in four “domains”—Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibility. Informed and inspired by self-reflection, the overall goal of the TDES observation and feedback system is to develop and drive teachers’ own concrete plans for personal and professional growth. “We already have excellent teachers here,” King says, “but the rubrics we use are so rigorous that the process pushes each teacher to really step up his or her game.”

According to both the teachers and school leaders NCTL interviewed for this report, the impact of systematic observation, feedback, and support can be dramatic, particularly for less experienced teachers. “I would never be where I am today if it weren’t for the feedback I have gotten regularly from my coach,” attests Claire Hollis, now in her second year with Teach for America, who teaches pre-calculus at Amistad High School. Hollis recalls that last year her coach worked with her to improve the way she gave instructions to her students when they were moving into small-group work or individual practice, to ensure that they were on-task and understood the assignment. “I used to dive into working with one group right away, and then the rest of the class was off-task,” Hollis says now. This year, Hollis is working on creating a motivating environment in the classroom and engaging the students in setting and meeting class-wide goals. With her coach, Hollis has practiced giving her class feedback after an assessment, as she tries to achieve the right balance between creating a sense of urgency while not discouraging students about poor results.

This type of intensive coaching is not just for teachers who are relatively new to a given school. At KIPP Central City Academy (KCCA), in New Orleans, Assistant Principal Lowrey Crews describes how his coaching of Hilah Barbot, a sixth-grade science teacher who is now one of the school’s more experienced teachers, has evolved over the years: “Six years ago, we worked on lesson planning. Now I’m helping her manage her workload and strategize around specific issues because her skills are so strong.” As Stephanie Hinton, KCCA’s English department head and a veteran teacher, points out: “For more experienced teachers, sometimes the value is just having someone remind you that this is something you said you wanted to work on this year. We can get really busy and so caught up in the day-to-day that we forget about our bigger goals.”

Educators at the *Time for Teachers* schools that have especially effective observation, feedback, and coaching systems identify several features of their school’s culture and their shared approach to this cycle that they believe are critical to the success of the coaching process overall. These keys to success are explored in the following pages.

“I would never be where I am today if it weren’t for the feedback I have gotten regularly from my coach.”

CLAIRE HOLLIS, PRE-CALCULUS TEACHER
ACHIEVEMENT FIRST AMISTAD HIGH SCHOOL

Keys to Success

I A Culture of Continuous Improvement

Giving and receiving constructive feedback can be challenging and, as MacArthur Principal Victoria King acknowledges, this process can also be “uncomfortable.” After all, in most organizational settings, feedback comes only once a year, in the form of annual performance reviews. In high-achieving schools with strong observation, feedback, and coaching systems, however, regular feedback for everyone, even for the strongest teachers, is standard. As a result, the ethos permeating these schools is that everyone can improve. School leaders work to build a professional culture where feedback is seen as the steppingstone to improvement, rather than as evaluative or judgmental, and where everyone is encouraged to embrace constructive feedback.

For example, at the opening 2013–14 all-faculty session at Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School (WCCS), Principal J.T. Leaird stated: “Our goal is to be a place where every teacher gets better at their craft every day.... Teachers should be actively participating in their own development.” Similarly, at Amistad High School, “Feedback is the breakfast of champions,” a quote from well-known management guru and author Ken Blanchard, appears at the top of one of the school’s classroom observation forms. Such words and actions help build a professional culture that values continuous improvement, while the sheer regularity and consistency with which feedback occurs across these schools helps to sustain this focus. As Amistad’s pre-calculus teacher Claire Hollis affirms: “At first, getting so much feedback was challenging, but

now I have come to expect it. I know that every week I will get some really useful input on how I could improve my lessons, and that is just going to make me a stronger teacher.”

2 Training and Support for Coaches

Precisely because giving and receiving feedback can be challenging, instructional leaders need support and guidance on how to conduct effective classroom observation and feedback sessions. Schools that invest time in observation and coaching also invest time in training their coaches on how to best support teachers and create guidelines and protocols for coaches to follow.

At Amistad, for example, over the summer, coaches receive training to help them learn how to implement the school’s weekly coaching cycle and practice important skills, including giving both positive feedback and constructive criticism. Principal Chris Bostock will show a videotape of a coaching session, and then he and the other coaches will discuss what went well and what could have been improved in the session. “Sometimes, for newer coaches, we might even co-observe a lesson, and then plan a coaching session together based on what we observe,” Bostock describes. Amistad also gives coaches a guide for coaching sessions, so there are clear expectations for the flow and sequence of what is discussed. (See “Spotlight,” page 55.)³³ “While every coach has a different style and different skills, we want to norm what we are looking for in our observations and how we are giving feedback,” says Bostock.

3 Focused, Individualized Goals

Coaching appears to be most successful when coach and teacher agree on a narrow set of goals they can work on

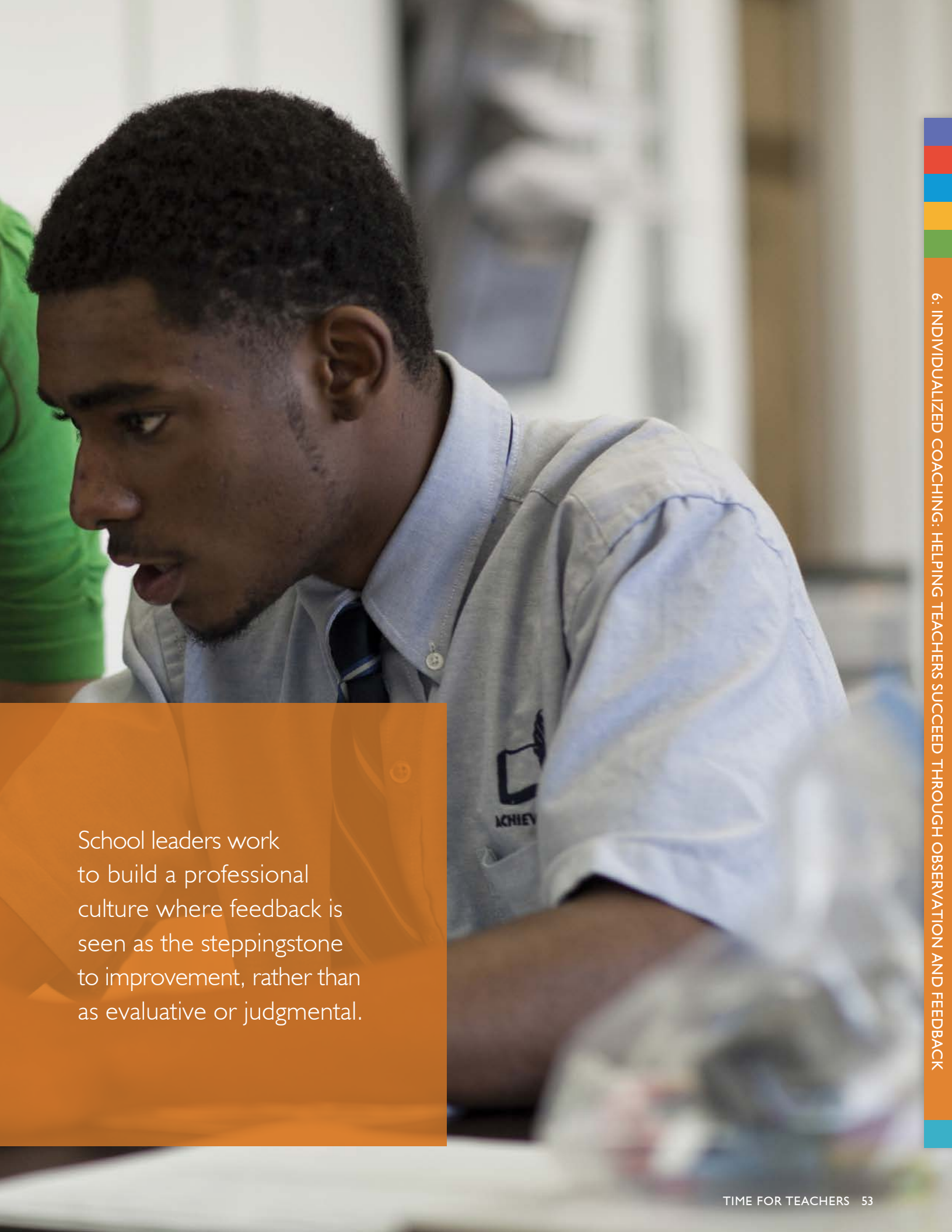
together. Rather than engaging in wide-ranging discussions on instruction and curriculum, or trying to address multiple instructional practices at once, the most successful coaches focus on a small set of goals based on the particular needs of the individual teacher.

Goal-setting starts the coaching process at KIPP Central City Academy. Here, each teacher has one or two goals they are working on over the course of the year, and these goals are set collaboratively with their coach. Teachers’ goals may be determined after reviewing specific student data, or they may be based on feedback from past observations. Progress toward these goals is revisited routinely in each weekly coaching session.

Along the same lines, in collaboration with Principal Victoria King, the teachers at MacArthur Girls’ Leadership Academy frequently choose one area of focus for their series of five observation and feedback sessions that take place over the course of the school year. For instance, fourth-grade teacher Sheryl Egel grappled with how to construct introductory lessons that would engage all the diverse learners in her classroom. As she describes, “I have some students that need to be challenged right away, and others that can feel overwhelmed from day one.” Collaborating with Principal King, Egel has used her observation and feedback sessions this year to brainstorm and develop new ideas and approaches that will enable her to reach all her students during these initial lessons.

4 Timely, “Bite-sized” Action Steps

At schools that have implemented successful coaching systems, every observation is immediately followed by detailed and constructive feedback,



School leaders work to build a professional culture where feedback is seen as the steppingstone to improvement, rather than as evaluative or judgmental.



involving one or two specific action steps that an individual teacher can take to improve his/her instruction. When feedback comes within days of a lesson that was observed and that feedback is specific and actionable, its value is much greater to the teacher, both because the memory of the lesson is crisp and the path toward better practice is clearer.

At Williamsburg Collegiate, coaches send a very short e-mail to teachers on the day of the visit to provide immediate reactions to what they observed. The quick, same-day message allows coaches to convey their thoughts when the lesson and the suggestions are still fresh in their minds. This e-mail is followed by a more extensive conversation within the following week.

At every school, while feedback needs to be timely, it also should be centered on very clear and concrete action steps that teachers can take immediately, in his or her next class. The feedback may focus, for example, on the teacher's use of the "do now"—the warm-up activity assigned as students walk into the classroom—or a different way to conference with students about their work. Sometimes, if a teacher is struggling with a particular practice, the coach might ask the teacher to observe another teacher who is more experienced or skilled in that area. Second-year Amistad teacher Claire

Hollis explains why she feels what she refers to as this "bite-sized" feedback can be so valuable: "I always walk away from my meeting with my coach with one thing I know I am going to do when I go back to class. It's bite-sized—one part of my lesson that I am going to fix—not the whole thing, so it's manageable and not overwhelming."

5 Collaborative Problem-solving

Observation, feedback, and coaching systems appear to be most effective when coaches and teachers engage in collaborative problem-solving. Teachers are most invested when they are active participants in this learning—assessing their own performance and improvement, setting goals, and seeking feedback and support.

Before the two formal evaluations that occur annually at MacArthur Girls' Leadership Academy, teachers fill out the rubrics assessing their own performance in the different domains. Only after teachers have conducted their own self-assessment does the evaluative conversation take place between teacher and principal. As Principal Victoria King explains, the order in which this process is conducted increases teachers' engagement in the process overall; it also helps them to better understand the feedback. "By just seeing the rubrics, teachers understand

what is expected of them," this principal says. And importantly, King adds, "The assessment becomes less personal."

During the two evaluation meetings, after carefully reviewing each rubric and discussing evidence of their strengths and weaknesses as demonstrated in their classrooms, MacArthur teachers collaborate with the principal to develop their individual plans for improvement. By fully involving teachers in the observation and feedback process in this way, the MacArthur system builds their buy-in and support.

Principal Lowrey Crews of KIPP Central City also emphasizes the important role coaches play in facilitating and encouraging self-reflection. Crews suggests that strong coaches make an effort to limit their own talking, while asking many questions, such as: "How do you think you could have improved? How do you think it's going? What do you think you could do differently next time? What particular part of the lesson do you want me to watch next time?" However, Crews also firmly believes: "This collaborative approach doesn't mean the coach shies away from giving constructive feedback and identifying problems. Instead, he or she works to engage the teacher in identifying areas for improvement and possible solutions."

Spotlight:

A Coaching Meeting at Achievement First Amistad High School

At 11 AM each Thursday, Claire Polcrack, the math department head at Achievement First Amistad High School, in New Haven, Connecticut, sits down to coach Emily Yuille, a ninth-grade Algebra I teacher, currently in her first year of teaching. On this particular day, the two begin their session by reviewing a document Emily has sent in advance, which includes data from the most recent quiz and a list of students about whom she is concerned. Claire asks Emily what she learned from the quiz data, and Emily reports that students' responses were varied: "For some scholars [i.e., students], finding the equation continues to be a real challenge. I am using the 'do now' to help with this." Asks Claire, "Are more of them getting it now?" Emily responds, "I think so, but I plan to repeat some of the questions from quiz 1 in quiz 2 to make sure."

The coach and teacher then move on to discuss Claire's observation of Emily's lesson earlier in the week, which included a "mad minute," when students have 60 seconds to do as many relevant exercises as possible. "Two things I really liked were, first, that you were pushing scholars to explain what they did, and, then, I loved that on the mad minute you named that we are doing this because the students had struggled with it on the interim assessment. This really helped raise the stakes for the kids and made it more meaningful," Claire says.

After giving this positive feedback, Claire then turns to review a suggested area for improvement: how Emily was circulating the classroom to check for understanding as her students were doing a problem independently. Claire asks Emily what percentage of the class she thinks she reached, and Emily admits that, in this particular case, she probably reached only about 20 percent of the class.

After agreeing that circulating the classroom can be a very powerful tool for assessing students' understanding, the coach and teacher strategize about how Emily can reach more students during this short window of time. "When you are going around the classroom, what do you really need to look for to see whether scholars are understanding?" Claire queries. They agree that Emily can't simply wait to see what answers the students supply and that she needs to look earlier for other cues, such as whether they have identified a formula.

This focus on circulating the classroom to check for understanding becomes a theme of the coaching conversation, as Claire and Emily turn to discuss the lesson for the following week. Claire asks Emily what she can be looking for while students tackle the practice problems outlined in the coming week's lesson



plan. They agree that Emily should be guided by the following questions as she walks the room:

- 1) Have the students written down an exponential equation?
- 2) Have they circled the y intercept? and 3) Have they started making a table? "How will they know this is what you are looking for?" Claire inquires further, leading the conversation into a discussion of how Emily will model the way to solve one of the problems first, by numbering and circling each of her analytic steps for the students.

Finally, the coach and teacher discuss the list, which Emily has provided, of students who are not doing their homework and/or who are failing the quizzes. The two talk about each of these students, one-by-one, to identify some appropriate action steps: "Have you tried calling Jared's mom yet? She is usually pretty responsive. You could suggest that he goes to homework center after school." The meeting ends with a recap of next steps and a confirmation of what Emily is going to focus on during her next lesson.

Key to Success	Evidence of Strong Implementation	How Can My School Improve?
A Culture of Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and administrators display a commitment to continuous improvement by regularly seeking out and providing constructive feedback Staff (and students) are frequently recognized for improvements Feedback occurs informally, as well as in coaching sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devote time for school-wide discussion of continuous improvement mindset Encourage teachers to share constructive feedback with school leaders Openly share mistakes and challenges to build trust through transparency
Training and Support for Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches have common objectives, expectations, and procedures for coaching sessions Coaches can support a wide variety of teacher needs and experience levels Coaches are continuously supported and developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate time to train and support coaches Develop and share observation rubrics and protocols that can guide coaching Norm expectations on quality instruction by videotaping lessons and discussing instructional quality Model effective coaching conversations, including questions that promote self-reflection Provide opportunities for coaches to practice giving feedback
Focused, Individualized Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals for coaching are aligned with school's priorities for high-quality instruction Coaches and teachers identify individualized goals and track progress throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify individual improvement goals for teachers aligned with school-wide goals Generate resources for each goal that coaches can share with teachers Develop norms for and model goal-setting conversations Review progress toward goals regularly, including an end-of-year meeting to set goals for the next school year
Timely, "Bite-sized" Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed and constructive feedback is given within days of each observation Feedback is actionable and specific—teachers can implement suggestions in their upcoming classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish efficient methods for coaches to give feedback (e.g., short observation feedback forms, etc.) Schedule at least bi-weekly meetings between the coach and teacher for feedback and reflection Train coaches to identify "bite-sized" action steps and follow up on implementation
Collaborative Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are proactive in requesting additional feedback Coaches serve as guides for self-reflection and as thought partners for teachers Teachers regularly conduct self-assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask teachers to share responsibility for setting the agenda and identifying next steps Share instructional expectations with teachers in advance of meeting Encourage coaches to model instructional practices and ask teachers to reflect on observations Train coaches to ask questions that promote self-reflection and collaborative problem-solving

Peer Observation

Sharing and Honing Effective Practices



One of the most powerful ways to learn a skill is by first watching someone who has mastered it in action.

In any arena, it is only through a combination of observation followed by repeated practice that we gradually develop our abilities. Teaching is no exception. Yet, in most schools, teachers are seldom afforded the opportunity to observe their peers instructing students in authentic settings. Recognizing the influential role peer observation can play in improving instruction, leaders at many of the schools featured in *Time for Teachers* are creating diverse opportunities for teachers to observe one another in their classrooms. And indeed, these non-evaluative, peer-to-peer observations are proving an effective approach for enhancing teacher skills across these schools.

Unlike observations that take place as part of evaluation systems, or even observations by instructional coaches (described in Chapter 6), the sole focus of peer observation is giving teachers opportunities to learn from one another. The observer works to improve his or her instructional practices and/or classroom management routines by watching another teacher at work.

The observed teacher has a chance to get non-evaluative feedback and to reflect on his/her practice with a peer.

Currently, eight *Time for Teachers* schools integrate peer observations into their professional development programs. This chapter explores peer observation practices at Morton School of Excellence, a Pre-K – 8 Academy for Urban School Leadership school in Chicago, Illinois; Nicholas S. LaCorte-Peterstown K – 8 School No. 3 in Elizabeth, New Jersey; and Frank M. Silvia Elementary School in Fall River, Massachusetts. While peer observations at these schools vary in their stages of development, structures, and levels of formality, teachers and administrators across all three believe the practice of peer observation is positively impacting instruction and building a culture of trust and collaboration among their faculty.

Often, peer observations take place when teachers themselves identify practices they want to improve. Then, administrators can help identify peers who have relevant expertise and who also teach within the school or district. Other times, a school leader might suggest a specific practice that a teacher might

Keys to Success

- A Culture of Trust and Collaboration
- Connections to Other Professional Learning
- Focus on Specific Instructional Practices
- Protocols that Support Reflection and Growth

Independent 1923

Explain events that contribute to your understanding of Hurricane Hugo.

Unlike observations that take place as part of evaluations or coaching, the sole focus of peer observation is for teachers to learn from one another.

benefit from observing. In still other situations, teachers ask to be observed so that they can then collaborate with a colleague (or colleagues) to problem-solve a challenge they are facing in their classrooms.

At Silvia Elementary, teachers are required to participate in at least two peer observations annually, and many teachers choose to complete additional observations during the year. Throughout, the process is kept simple to encourage participation: Teachers submit a short form requesting an observation to the school's dean of teaching and learning. On the form, teachers describe what they would like to observe (e.g. mini-lesson, student engagement, open response, etc.) and indicate if they have a specific peer or classroom in mind. The dean, Sherri Carvalho, who is familiar with all the school's

classrooms through her own frequent visits and who regularly attends common planning meetings, then suggests a particular classroom for the requested observation. If the visit cannot take place during the observing teacher's planning period, the dean will arrange for coverage.

In advance of a peer observation at Silvia, the participating teachers meet to discuss the lesson plan and to identify what the visitor is specifically seeking to learn. Building on these elements and immediately following the observation, the visiting teacher is expected to complete a simple one-page reflection. On the first half of the page, which is submitted to administrators to demonstrate that the observation is complete, the observer notes the lesson's objective and writes a brief lesson overview. The second half of the page shapes an informal debrief between the two teachers, in which the observing teacher shares three "positives," two "wonderings," and one "takeaway." This portion is not shared with administrators, as peer observations at Silvia are explicitly non-evaluative.

Together, these procedures enable Silvia's teachers to consider peer observations as ongoing learning opportunities and reduce any concerns teachers may have that these observations could impact their job security. Consequently, these teacher-observers are motivated to see what their peers are doing well, so they can replicate effective practices in their own classrooms, while those being observed are motivated to



collect feedback on how they also can improve. As fourth-grade teacher Christine Carvalho explains: “When people observe me...I pay close attention to their questions. I really think about my practice. I find myself asking them how they do things; it’s a learning opportunity for me, too.”

Taking a somewhat different approach, LaCorte-Peterstown teachers often observe their peers in pairs or in groups of three. Administrators at the school have found this to be a helpful way to encourage dialogue about specific practices across and within grade-level teams. The joint observations give teachers a chance to bounce ideas off one another and discuss how they might adapt their own instruction based on what they observed.

By offering teachers an opportunity to learn how others teach the same lesson or implement the same components of various curricula, peer observations can strengthen instruction within the same grade. For example, at Silvia, while upper elementary teachers departmentalize, all teachers lead “calendar math,” a 30-minute segment that reinforces problem-solving skills using the calendar. To ensure that they are consistently meeting the learning objectives in their calendar math blocks, all of Silvia’s fourth-grade teachers have observed the math teacher implement this lesson. Peer observations also can support vertical alignment—allowing, for example, a third-grade teacher to see how foundational concepts are taught in second grade, or how expectations shift as students enter fourth grade. By asking teachers to open their doors to other teachers, and inviting them to observe their peers so they can hone their craft, schools give teachers an array of opportunities to direct their own professional development and build their individual commitment to continuous improvement.

Peer observations help even the most expert teachers to improve, as more experienced educators also receive feedback and exchange ideas with peers who observe their teaching. LaCorte-Peterstown fifth-grade teacher Geraldine Calhoun has incorporated “literature circles” into her classroom—essentially a series of book groups—to keep students engaged, challenged, and on-task throughout the 90-minute reading block. Calhoun, who has been observed several times, feels like she, too, is benefiting from having her colleagues witness her class. “Peer observations keep me on my toes and help me to constantly reflect as a teacher,” Calhoun says. “When I debrief with teachers after an observation, it gets me thinking about what I can be improving in my classroom.... Peer observations allow me to reassess my practices, every single time.”

Teachers at these schools are able to incorporate peer observations into their regular day, in large part, thanks to the flexibility of their building’s expanded-time schedule. With more hours in the day, and more non-instructional time integrated into teacher schedules, spending 15 to 45 minutes of a planning period observing another teacher does not set these educators back in their planning work. In cases where the two teachers participating in the observation are teaching at the same



Exit Slip

Everyday Mathematics – Calendar Routine
October 10, 2013
Presenter: Susan

Name: Isabel Casas

1. Discuss three strategies that you learned that you will incorporate into your classroom in the next week.

1. Add weather graph to the daily routine. (data)
2. Calendar/Days/Dates/Number Grid
Example: How many Mondays?
What are the dates?
What is the 3rd Monday?
3. Use the Interactive Teacher's Lesson guide to Cross reference grades.

2. I would like to learn more about....
different ways to work with elapsed time during the math block. (strategies)

time, coverage is arranged, provided by either full-time substitutes or administrators. Still, it is important to note that peer observations are effective not just because schools make time for them. To be successful, peer observation programs depend upon several conditions surrounding their implementation. The next section describes the cultural and structural elements that contribute to these peer observation programs’ success.

Keys to Success

I A Culture of Trust and Collaboration

At the *Time for Teachers* schools that have implemented strong peer observation programs, educators have worked hard to foster school climates where teachers trust and respect their colleagues and are eager to learn from one another. According to teachers and administrators, this healthy professional culture is essential for peer observations to be effective. Teachers need to feel comfortable opening their doors to their colleagues, and they need to believe they can learn from their fellow teachers.

When Jennifer Campel became principal of LaCorte-Peterstown in November 2010, she spent that first academic year focused on building a positive school climate. Campel started by putting teacher collaboration systems in place—shifting from individual prep periods to common planning time for grade-level teams and implementing professional learning communities (PLCs) that promote vertical alignment (third-grade teachers, for instance, meet with both second- and fourth-grade teams in separate PLCs). The teachers' willingness to participate in peer observations, Campel feels, is directly attributable to the school's collaborative approach, which, since it was established, has continued to strengthen. "Teachers no longer talk about 'my classroom' or 'my students,'" Campel says. "Now, we talk about our children. There is very much a sense in the building that we are all in this together, and we are going to succeed together. With this mindset, it's natural that teachers open their doors to one another."

Silvia Elementary School Principal (and former Silvia teacher) Jean Facchiano also acknowledges collaboration's wide resonance: "I think peer observations

are possible because we have such a collaborative culture, and, in turn, spending time in each other's rooms helps teachers continue to build this culture of support and trust." Teachers at Silvia are not apprehensive about discussing instructional or classroom management challenges with one another, and they do not hesitate to ask the principal or dean to arrange an observation of a teacher who is successfully tackling particular challenges.

2 Connections to Other Professional Learning

Peer observations are most effective when they build on discussions already taking shape in professional development programs, team meetings, and/or coaching sessions. Through a peer observation, teachers can follow up to view a particular practice being discussed, see another teacher's approach to a certain lesson, or observe a new method for teaching a particularly challenging standard. In turn, the observation can inform future discussions at team meetings, giving all participating teachers a clearer understanding of the standards or instructional practices that are under examination.

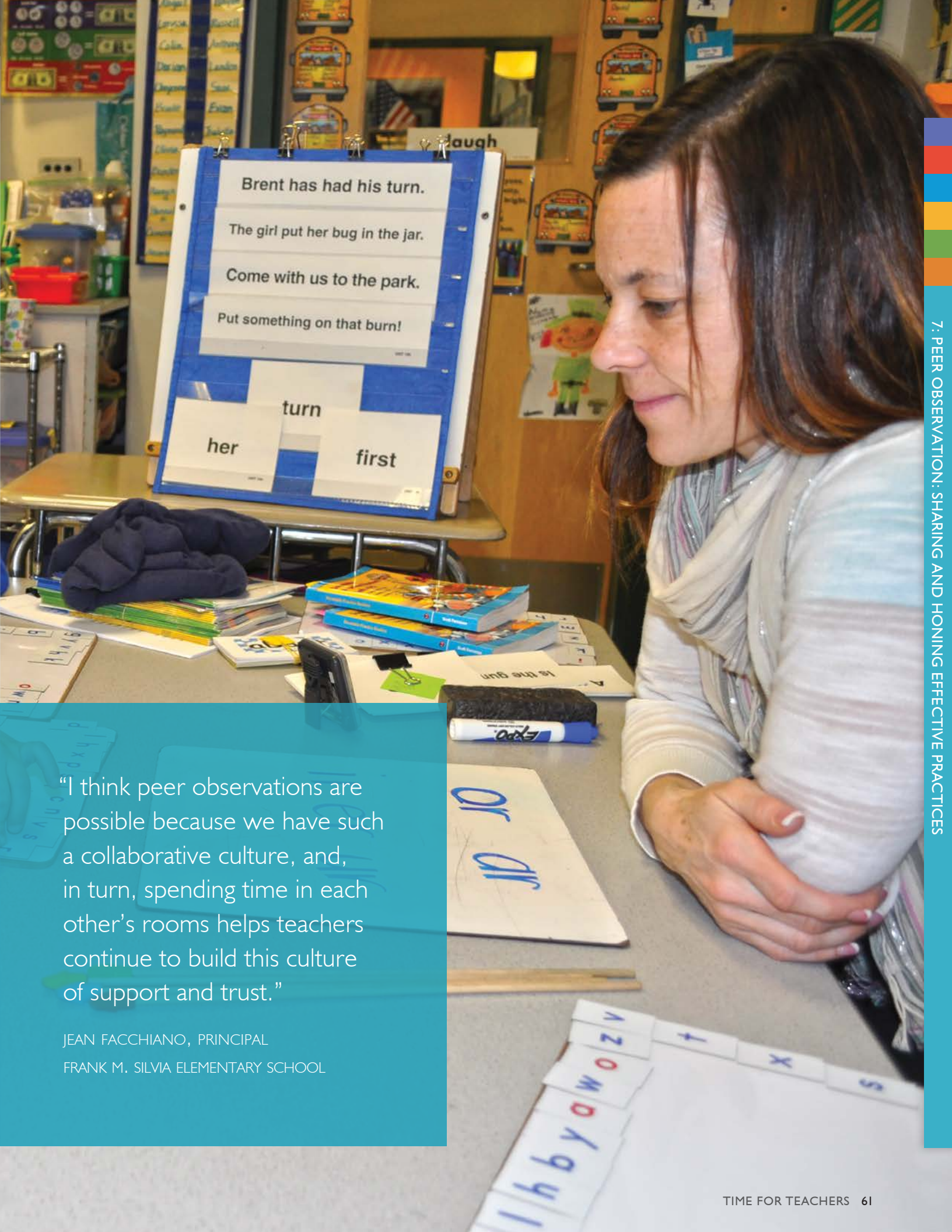
Silvia's peer observations complement the professional development and collaboration efforts, in which these teachers are already engaged, that center on the school's shared instructional focus—growth in reading comprehension skills for all students, across the curriculum, through a set of common instructional practices. Indeed, all professional learning activities at the school support the successful implementation of reading comprehension strategies. At a recent Silvia professional development session, for instance, upper elementary teachers explored and selected common language and practices they could use to teach open-response skills to fourth and fifth

graders, and then considered how they could create a more seamless transition between the grades for their students. After this session, Silvia fourth-grade teacher Christine Carvalho observed an open-response lesson in one of the school's fifth-grade classrooms. "I immediately observed a greater level of independence that's expected at the fifth-grade level. They were working through passages on their own, whereas I do a lot of modeling and group work," Carvalho recounted. "It got me thinking about how I can scaffold instruction so my students are ready to be more independent next year."

3 Focus on Specific Instructional Practices

Meaningful peer observations are intentional in their goal of instructional improvement, prompting teachers to ask a core question: "What can I do differently in my class to enhance student learning and performance?" And the more specific teachers can be in their questioning, the more constructive the likely results. In other words, teachers should identify in advance the particular practices they are seeking to learn about, see modeled, and, in turn, incorporate into their own classroom work.

At LaCorte-Peterstown, teachers use peer observations to strengthen key components of English language arts (ELA) and math lessons: opening and introduction, whole-group instruction, literacy and math centers, interventions, transitions, and closing. Sometimes, teachers may observe an entire lesson; other times, they will observe just a discrete part of the lesson. Principal Campel sets up visits so that a teacher who has challenges around a particular pedagogical method, such as setting up literacy centers, can observe a peer who has mastered that technique. The idea is not to hold one teacher above another,



“I think peer observations are possible because we have such a collaborative culture, and, in turn, spending time in each other’s rooms helps teachers continue to build this culture of support and trust.”

JEAN FACCHIANO, PRINCIPAL
FRANK M. SILVIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



but rather to emphasize that each teacher has something to offer toward achieving the overall, school-wide goal of improving instruction.

Teachers from Morton School of Excellence, in Chicago, approach peer observations from a different perspective: They ask their colleagues to observe them in order to get feedback on a particular instructional strategy. As described in this chapter's "Spotlight" (see next page), Morton teachers request observations to get colleagues' insight on their student groupings, for instance, or on the implementation of a new practice. Following each observation, Morton teachers meet for 30 minutes to debrief on the lesson, share notes and ideas, and consider how their major takeaways could impact their instruction as a team. all-faculty session,

4 Protocols that Support Reflection and Growth

Schools that successfully implement peer observations have developed

protocols for planning and debriefing about the observation visits, with the aim of further supporting teachers' reflection and growth. These protocols—often simple templates and forms—help teachers identify key takeaways and think about how they will follow-up on what they learned. At the same time, school leaders are careful to keep the requirements for documentation and debriefing short and simple: If the procedures around peer observation become unwieldy, the practice is in danger of becoming more burden than benefit.

At LaCorte-Peterstown, teachers complete an "exit slip," a simple accounting of key takeaways, after observing in another classroom. (See sample, page 59.) Exit slips are easy to complete and serve dual purposes—offering teachers a chance to reflect and think ahead, and laying the foundation for an informal debrief with the teacher they observed. On the slip, teachers describe three strategies they learned that they will try to incorporate into their

own classroom and also something they would like to learn more about. Then, after the slips are filled out, the observing teachers share them with the principal, who briefly connects with each observer to see how she can further support them. Gretta Easterling, one of the school's second-grade teachers, demonstrated the value of exit slips after she observed a colleague's "Everyday Math" calendar routine. Following her observation, Easterling planned to implement in her own classroom three strategies that she had seen: Use the calendar to create and identify number patterns; use the calendar to practice giving equivalent names to numbers; and have students write the time in their Everyday Math workbooks, using the manipulative clocks for support, if needed. On her exit ticket, Easterling also expressed that she wants to learn more about how to access higher-order questions on the Everyday Math website and how to fluidly translate and transition these questions into daily lessons.

Spotlight:

Debriefing a Peer Observation at Morton School of Excellence

Given the Common Core’s emphasis on critical-thinking skills, the middle-school team at Morton School of Excellence, in Chicago, chose “close reading” as its primary instructional strategy for the 2013–14 academic year. In October, seventh- and eighth-grade special education teacher Kim Chapman had invited her middle-school English language arts (ELA) colleagues Lucas Smith and Shatara Stokes to observe a lesson centered on close reading of a complex text. Before they observed, Chapman asked her fellow teachers to pay special attention to 1) whether she sufficiently addressed the relevant standards in her mini-lesson and 2) how well the student groups functioned.

During the mini-lesson, the teachers observe Chapman leading a “think aloud” reading of a passage from Loren Eiseley’s essay “Wolf.” Then, students work in small groups to dissect the text’s meaning, using a graphic organizer to guide their thinking. Meanwhile, Smith takes copious notes, and Stokes joins a small group, where she interacts with the students.

Immediately after the observation, Chapman, Stokes, and Smith gather to debrief; the school’s academic director, Sharron Carroll, sits in on the conversation, too. “My biggest takeaway comes from the kids,” Smith says. “Their responses encompassed at least five different reading and writing standards. They were citing relevant evidence; they were making logical claims; it was all there.” Stokes notes something that had stood out for her in one of the groups: “I thought there was equity of voice. Each student needed a different amount of think time, and that helped balance the group.”

The 30-minute conversation is driven by probing questions from Smith and Stokes, based on what they had seen in Chapman’s classroom. For instance, Smith wants to learn more about how Chapman prepares students to engage in analytical conversations in their small groups. To this question, Chapman responds with relief: “I feel like I’ve been saying the same things to them, giving them the same sentence starters and integrating the same skills into every lesson, over and over again, for weeks.” This exchange leads to a rich discussion of strategies for helping students develop critical-thinking skills, more generally, along with the importance of persistence in teaching these strategies.

Halfway through their debrief, Smith and Stokes ask about the graphic organizer Chapman used. “I’m trying to build stamina,” Chapman responds. “I want my students to realize it’s important to write all the time



and to see that they’re reading a text closely and making arguments so they can write their thoughts down. I worry, though, that they’re not building independence.” Specifically, Chapman expresses her concern that organizers are restricting her students’ creativity. Responding to this concern, the three teachers then consider tools for scaffolding their students’ writing. After discussing a number of options—including everything ranging from sentence stems to blank pages—Stokes suggests that outlining might be the best strategy for their students. At first, Smith isn’t convinced, but, after more discussion, the team decides to shift from using graphic organizers to introducing outlines. Together, they come to see outlining as an authentic writing activity, one that will serve their students well in competitive high schools and into college. The academic director suggests that they pilot outlining in one classroom. Stokes volunteers her classroom, and the teachers agree to continue this conversation at subsequent grade-level meetings.

Key to Success	Evidence of Strong Implementation	How Can My School Improve?
A Culture of Trust and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and administrators display a commitment to continuous improvement and shared learning Teachers are involved in school-wide decisions and are invested in the school's success Leaders and teachers seek out and respond to feedback from multiple stakeholders Teachers recognize one another's strengths and expertise Collaboration is actively encouraged and facilitated by school schedule Peer observations are non-evaluative and encourage teachers to be honest about areas for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include teachers in the creation and sharing of the school's mission and core values Identify and create opportunities for teachers to collaborate Identify teacher strengths and leverage expertise whenever possible in staff development Dedicate time during staff meetings to recognize teacher successes and engage in collaborative problem-solving Plan social activities outside of school to build collegiality Emphasize an open door policy among teachers and administrators
Connections to Other Professional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer observations are an outgrowth of formal and informal teacher conversations Peer observations are used as an extension of staff trainings Peer observations are aligned with individual teachers' goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify priority skills that can be further developed through peer observations Encourage peer observation whenever specific instructional strategies are discussed Track teacher strengths and areas for growth to create potential matches for peer observations
Focus on Specific Instructional Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The goals and objectives of a peer observation are narrowly defined Teachers involved are clear on the practices to be observed and discussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a simple pre-observation form that identifies the practice(s) to be observed Train teachers on participating in peer observations (both observing and being observed) Schedule time prior to observation to clarify goals and expectations of the observation
Protocols that Support Reflection and Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers use a common structure and vocabulary in discussions around peer observations Clear protocols, systems, and tools are used to facilitate constructive feedback and self-reflection and to apply new learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a post-observation form for participating teachers to identify lessons learned and action steps Schedule time for teachers to share findings and reflect on next steps, post-observation

Conclusion

Recommendations for Policymakers and Practitioners

To prepare all students for success, American public schools need to commit to a culture of continuous improvement.

No set of activities expresses this commitment more than when schools provide their teachers with high-quality professional learning opportunities. Evidence continues to demonstrate the ongoing and growing need for consistent, collaborative, and job-embedded development programs for teachers. Only through such opportunities will America's teachers, in turn, be able to provide today's students the rigorous, creative, and enriching education they need to thrive in the 21st century.

The need is especially great in this period of significant transformation in the teaching profession—a change spurred by the challenging Common Core standards, an era of greater accountability for individual teachers, and a cohort of educators with fewer years of experience. Teachers want and require better training and support, and they are also ready for leadership opportunities within their schools and districts. We must acknowledge that a talented teaching force spends time not only teaching, but also collaborating, planning, leading, and learning. The challenge for policymakers and practitioners (defined here as district staff, school leaders, and teachers themselves), therefore, is three-fold: to implement robust, effective professional development systems; to empower teachers to continually strengthen their instruction; and to ensure that teachers' schedules and job expectations prioritize time for their professional learning and development.

At the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL), we recognize that rethinking professional development within a district or a school is no small task. The pressing question for many readers, then, may be “So where do we begin?” In the following pages, we identify key recommendations for policymakers and practitioners seeking to strengthen and better support teacher learning, broadly defined. The need for sufficient time underlies all of these recommendations. As teachers throughout this report attest, additional time is a lever that allows them to collaborate with their peers without sacrificing instruction. More time, quite simply, enables teachers to do more.

That said, we offer these *Time for Teachers* recommendations, along with the practices profiled in the previous chapters, both for schools with and without expanded schedules.



By maximizing the time they currently have, schools may be able to implement aspects of these six professional learning practices within their existing schedules. Indeed, high-performing schools across the country are making every minute count—for teachers and for students—whether or not their schedules extend beyond the traditional school day.

Policy Recommendations

Teachers have a major role to play in addressing our nation's education challenges, and policies that empower teachers to expand and deepen their professional learning will go far toward advancing our national agenda of boosting student success. Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels, thus, have a vital role to play in helping to transform teacher development through the strategic allocation of education funding and requirements for how resources, including teacher time, are invested.



1. Advance policies that enable schools to implement an expanded school schedule that offers teachers additional time for professional learning. NCTL has identified at least 1,500 schools nationwide that have an expanded school day and/or year. The additional time at these schools can be leveraged in powerful ways to provide students with a more rigorous and well-rounded education and teachers with more time for collaboration and professional development. To implement their expanded schedules, these schools are using federal funding (such as Title I allocations, 21st Century Community Learning Center funds, and School Improvement Grants); state and district funding (such as budget line items that directly support schools to expand learning time); and/or budget and operating autonomies. Policymakers can support increased access to such funding and encourage high-quality implementation of expanded learning time. When teachers' schedules are structured so that the vast majority of their working hours are spent in the classroom, it is nearly

impossible for these educators to find the time they need to work with colleagues, coaches, and administrators to plan, reflect, and improve their practice. An expanded school day and/or year, as implemented at the *Time for Teachers* schools profiled in this report, provides more time overall for student learning and enables schools to expand time for teachers' professional development as well. Quite simply, these schools are better able to carve out windows of uninterrupted and dedicated time for teachers to collaborate, such as when students are engaged in enrichment activities with other staff members or partner organizations.

2. Incentivize and fund high-quality, school-embedded professional learning opportunities. In most school districts across the country, incentives and professional development funding focus heavily on courses, workshops, and external professional development sessions. Too often, such an approach overlooks the tremendous value of providing

Policies that empower teachers to expand and deepen their professional learning will go far toward advancing our national agenda of boosting student success.

more job-embedded and teacher-led professional learning opportunities, such as individualized coaching, peer observation, collaborative planning, and professional learning communities. Policymakers need to consider how current policies and existing resources can better support the full range of learning that is occurring in the high-performing schools documented in this report. This could mean providing school leadership teams with increased decision-making, funding authority, and responsibility for professional learning, so that school and teacher leaders could then design professional development programs that best meet their individual school, teacher, and student needs. District leaders can also take advantage of the flexibilities afforded by Title II funds to integrate professional learning opportunities into the structure of the school day. For example, these funds could be used to pay lead teachers to take on coaching and professional development responsibilities or to pay specialist teachers and external partner organizations to provide high-quality educational programming for students while teachers

are engaged in professional learning sessions. Identifying and repurposing resources that will free teachers to engage in deep and regular collaborative learning opportunities is an essential step in creating a skilled and effective teaching force.

3. Support job-embedded professional development as part of the training for Common Core. States have been fairly responsive in organizing opportunities for teachers to learn about the ways in which classrooms will have to change in the Common Core framework, but, as national survey data show (see page 12), most of these opportunities are limited to traditional settings. States also should provide districts and schools both resources and guidance to support ongoing, job-embedded learning opportunities (e.g., professional learning communities, coaching, etc.) that support teachers' transition to Common Core-aligned instruction. Because the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are new to most schools, there are few experts yet. On the frontlines of both unpacking and applying the standards, teachers are becoming the experts, and job-embedded professional development is proving an effective strategy for them to learn both from, and with, one another.

4. Integrate and emphasize teacher feedback and development in new evaluation systems. As described in Chapter One of this report, in many districts around the country, new teacher evaluation systems are emerging to comply with new state regulations. Policymakers should strive to ensure that these systems provide teachers with frequent and constructive feedback, along with clear action steps—not just evaluation ratings. That is, professional learning should be a core focus of these evaluations. A 2012 study by the Center for American Progress found that many teachers





On the frontlines of both unpacking and applying the new standards, teachers are becoming the experts, and they can learn both from and with one another.

are not receiving targeted feedback, more observations, or meaningful suggestions regarding how to teach differently as a product of their evaluations. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, teachers did not report changing their instruction as a result of the evaluations.³⁴ For evaluation systems to be successful, observations should inform and shape teachers' professional growth. As part of this process, evaluative feedback needs to be shared regularly and progress toward goals should be routinely discussed. (These observations are entirely separate from peer observations, described in Chapter 7, which are not connected with any evaluation component.) In particular, as state and district leaders continue to design these evaluation systems, it will remain important to train school administrators on how to leverage evaluations as a professional development tool and a starting point for conversations about instructional improvement.

5. Incentivize and fund efforts at the school and district levels to support and retain new teachers. Given the large numbers of new teachers entering the field, programs that support these beginning professionals must become a high priority for policymakers and practitioners alike. Policymakers can direct resources to mentoring or induction programs, funding not just the training itself, but also the time involved

for veteran and new teachers to give and receive coaching. Providing new teachers meaningful opportunities, early and often, to work with their colleagues is an effective retention practice. In fact, research shows that these occasions for support must be consistent and frequent in order to increase instructional efficacy and job retention. For this reason, policies should mandate an ongoing, job-embedded system of supports. Devoting resources to new teacher training and support will likely help to reduce the high cost of teacher turnover in the long term.

Practitioner Recommendations

We focus here on a few priority actions that districts and schools can take as they work to implement a more robust system of teacher development. The following recommendations, like the *Keys to Success* embedded in chapters two through seven of this report, are intended for school leaders and teachers and presume that they have a high degree of ownership and significant autonomy in managing their professional development programs. To improve school-based professional development structures and practices, in other words, practitioners themselves must lead this vital work.

1. Assess current professional development practices and teacher time use. Administrators and faculty must first take a careful look at the ways in which teachers at their school currently spend their time—including scheduled time for student instruction, for individual preparation, and for other duties. Based on this data, school leaders should then strive to find times in their existing schedule when there might be additional opportunities for professional development. It is worth noting that starting to integrate more collaborative practices may not require additional time. A school might, for instance, turn one weekly individual prep period into collaborative lesson planning by shifting teacher schedules so grade-level or content-area faculty have common planning blocks. The rubrics provided at the end of the six *Time for Teachers* practice chapters can serve as useful tools in helping educators to identify areas where their school’s implementation of each particular practice can improve. As they identify areas for improvement, educators will need to set priorities regarding which practices to hone first. Feedback on professional development opportunities, gathered from teacher surveys and focus groups, can help with this prioritization.

2. Consider program models that enable additional time for teacher collaboration. In addition to identifying times in the current schedule for teacher collaboration and learning, school leaders should also explore how more substantial

Effective professional learning presumes a high degree of ownership and autonomy at the school level. Practitioners must lead this vital work.

programmatic changes might open a greater number of such opportunities. For example, many schools have integrated a “blended learning” structure, whereby students gather in a computer laboratory to engage in software-generated fluency or problem-solving exercises (usually in math or reading). Because fewer adults are generally required to oversee and manage students in these settings, as each student uses a computer for individualized work, classroom teachers are “freed up” during these blended learning periods to meet with colleagues for planning and/or reflection. Similarly, bringing external, often community-based, partners into the building to engage students in robust enrichment courses can afford teachers more time to collaborate. A third option is to build a regular early-release day into the student schedule so that teachers have certain afternoons dedicated to professional learning. This arrangement should be considered, however, only if the reduction in students’ school hours will not reduce their overall learning time.



3. Align benchmark assessments, standards, and curricula, and share relevant, timely data with teachers. In order for teachers to be most effective, they must have a deep understanding of each of their student's strengths and challenges. Teachers must have ready access to periodic individual student performance data—information that precisely reflects how well students are meeting expected standards and curricular objectives. For this process to work as intended, a district's or network's central office must, first, develop or adopt sound benchmarks that are keyed to the knowledge and skills that each student needs to know, and, second, collect and process data from these assessments in a timely and user-friendly way. These data reports can then inform teacher lesson planning and reflection. Districts also can support school practitioners by delivering training on how to interpret and act upon formative assessment data.

4. Support the development of a cadre of instructional leaders and coaches in schools. Instructional leaders—whether they are administrators, department heads, coaches, or master teachers (classroom teachers who take on additional coaching responsibilities)—support the development and implementation of professional learning programs and systems. While the principal need not—and should not—assume all responsibility for instructional leadership in the school, he/she must play a lead role in identifying and developing qualified team members to facilitate collaborative planning sessions and professional learning communities. Leaders should also be sure that the following take place: the design and delivery of workshops on targeted topics, the establishment and oversight of processes for analyzing and responding to student data, and the observation and providing of actionable feedback to teachers on instruction. District leadership and expert partners can provide training for school leaders to help them better understand their responsibilities and develop their skills in this arena.

5. Expand opportunities for teachers to develop and share expertise. Teachers have much to contribute to the learning of their peers. Indeed, at the schools featured in this report, there is an abundance of opportunities for teachers to become leaders within their schools and, in some cases, in the district or school network. Furnishing teachers with opportunities to lead and support their peers positively impacts both instruction and school culture overall. Districts and networks can encourage school leaders to identify teachers who can take on new roles, such as leading presentations on instructional strategies (both in person and through online forums like webinars), coaching their fellow teachers, and opening up their classrooms for observation. Districts and collective bargaining units can also work together to develop systems for appropriately compensating teachers who take on such leadership responsibilities.



The teachers and leaders at the 17 schools profiled in *Time for Teachers* are impressive in their dedication and commitment to improving instruction. They recognize that strong teaching is the product of an ongoing cycle of planning, reflection, and adaptation. The testimony of these educators demonstrates that strong systems for teacher improvement are the result of thoughtful planning and continuous adjustment. It is important to remember that their collaborative planning procedures, data analysis protocols, and professional learning communities were not built overnight. On the contrary, school leaders and teachers have developed such innovative and valuable approaches and programs over time, in response to teacher and student needs, through observing and adapting successful systems at other schools, and by experimenting with new ideas and building on the ones that proved effective.

At the National Center on Time & Learning, we believe that policies impacting teacher development should support school-level decision-making and effective classroom practices like those documented in this report. We encourage policymakers to support practitioners who are working to leverage time to improve instruction. Our hope is that *Time for Teachers* can inform schools' work to foster high-quality professional learning opportunities that are essential for our nation's teachers to meet the ultimate objective—the best possible education for today's young people.

Teachers have much to contribute to the learning of their peers and should have an abundance of opportunities to take on leadership roles.

Methodology

The 17 schools included in *Time for Teachers* were selected from the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) Database of Expanded-Time Schools. This unique resource provides information about approximately 1,000 of the U.S. public schools across the country that operate with substantially more hours per day and/or more hours per year than national norms. For this study, the NCTL research team identified schools from this pool that met a number of key criteria, based on the following rationales:

- Because we were interested in learning from schools that had significantly expanded their day and/or year, NCTL focused only on schools with schedules that are meaningfully longer for all students than the schedules of geographically surrounding schools. The *Time for Teachers* schools examined in this report have at least a seven-hour daily schedule, and/or at least 20 more days per year than those in surrounding districts.
- Because NCTL wanted to better understand how ELT supports low-income students in achieving at higher levels, we limited our *Time for Teachers* research to schools where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- Because we were looking to study high-performing schools, NCTL examined data from state standardized tests and then selected schools that met at least one of two performance requirements:
 - The school's average proficiency rate in math and/or English language arts (ELA) was at least 5 percentage points higher than the average proficiency rate of the surrounding district.
 - The school has demonstrated significant growth in student performance outcomes since it began operating with an expanded-time schedule.

Although more than 17 schools in NCTL's database fit this profile, we narrowed our selection to a group of schools that represents geographic diversity; a balance between charter and traditional district schools; and a roughly equal number of elementary, K – 8, middle, and high schools.

At each school, NCTL researchers conducted an initial round



of data collection, and we held a one-hour phone interview with the administrator(s). For this purpose, we used a common interview guide to capture information on time use, instruction, teacher leadership, and teacher collaboration practices.

Following this preliminary research, NCTL conducted site visits at 16 of the 17 schools. (The exception was Mastery Charter School - Shoemaker Campus, which we had recently visited for another project.) During these visits, we observed key teacher development activities, as well as classroom instruction, and we interviewed teachers and administrators. In some cases, follow-up interviews were scheduled. The schools were provided a small stipend in recognition of their efforts in arranging the logistics of the site visit.

NCTL also invited teachers to complete a brief survey in order to understand teacher perceptions on time use, teacher and school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, teaching conditions, and support for new teachers. In all, 272 teachers from 12 schools participated in the *Time for Teachers* survey.



TABLE 3. Schools featured in Time for Teachers

School Name	Location	School Type	Grades	Students*	% Low Income*	Hours/Year*
Achievement First Amistad High School	New Haven, CT	Charter	9-12	373	75%	1,511
Biltmore Preparatory Academy	Phoenix, AZ	Traditional district	K-8	386	49%	1,326
Brunson-Lee Elementary School	Phoenix, AZ	Traditional district	K-6	510	93%	1,320
Douglas MacArthur Girls' Leadership Academy	Cleveland, OH	Traditional district	PreK-8	320	100%	1,425
Frank M. Silvia Elementary School	Fall River, MA	Traditional district	PreK-5	810	71%	1,485
KIPP Central City Academy	New Orleans, LA	Charter	5-8	434	97%	1,530
Mastery Charter School - Shoemaker Campus	Philadelphia, PA	Charter	6-12	721	82%	1,307
McGlone Elementary School	Denver, CO	Traditional district	K-5	686	97%	1,440
Morton School of Excellence	Chicago, IL	Traditional district	PK-8	403	98%	1,267
Newton Elementary School	Greenfield, MA	Traditional district	K-3	218	78%	1,380
Nicholas S. LaCorte-Peterstown School No. 3	Elizabeth, NJ	Traditional district	K-8	658	95%	1,485
The Preuss School	La Jolla, CA	Charter	6-12	846	93%	1,352
Roxbury Prep, Lucy Stone Campus	Boston, MA	Charter	5-7	240	80%	1,375
The Soulsville Charter School	Memphis, TN	Charter	6-12	531	81%	1,503
UP Academy Charter School	Boston, MA	Charter	6-8	460	87%	1,412
Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School	Brooklyn, NY	Charter	5-8	315	83%	1,554
YES College Prep - Southwest Campus	Houston, TX	Charter	6-12	808	85%	1,413

*from most recent data available, as of March 2014

End Notes

¹ Sheila Byrd Carmichael, Gabrielle Martino, Kathleen Porter-Magee, and W. Stephen Wilson, *The State of State Standards—and the Common Core—2010* (Washington, DC: Fordham Institute, 2010). See also *Seeing the Future: How the Common Core Will Affect Mathematics and English Language Arts in Grades 3-12 Across America* (Princeton, NJ: The Center for K-12 Assessment & Performance Management at Educational Testing Service, May 2013).

² See, for example: Kathryn M. Doherty and Sandi Jacobs, *Connect the Dots: Using Evaluations of Teacher Effectiveness to Inform Policy and Practice* (Washington, DC: The National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013).

³ Richard Ingersoll and Lisa Merrill, “Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, Canada, 2012.

⁴ *Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011-12*, Table 5 (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). Teachers are contracted to work 37.9 hours and report that they spend an average of 52.2 hours each week preparing for their teaching in some manner.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators* (Paris: Author, 2011), Table D 4.1. The international average for countries reporting data is 67 percent.

⁶ Linda Darling-Hammond, et al, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*, (Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council, 2009), pp. 15-18.

⁷ National Center for Literacy Education, *Remodeling Literacy Learning: Making Room for What Works* (Urbana, IL: Author, April 2013). Only 32 percent of teachers have a chance to frequently co-create or reflect with colleagues about particular lessons, 21 percent are given time to examine student work jointly and consistently, and only 14 percent dependably receive feedback from colleagues.

⁸ *Ibid.* Compared to its findings on time allocated for collaboration, NCLE notes that the Met Life teacher survey from three years earlier showed a much greater portion of respondents with at least two hours per week for collaboration (24 percent vs. 41 percent) and a doubling of the portion with fewer than 30 weekly minutes for collaboration (28 percent vs. 12 percent).

⁹ The data represent an analysis of teacher schedules of the 17 subject schools. Teachers in these schools spend an average of 12.4 hours

per week in instruction-related preparation activities. They also spend another 3.7 hours per week for other supervisory duties for a total of 16.1 hours per week of non-instructional time, all while students are spending an average of 8 hours per day in school. It should be noted that the charter schools in this report average proportion of teachers time spent in instruction per week is 50.3 percent, while district schools average percentage spent in instruction is 72.3.

¹⁰ For an effective summary of the research see Eric A. Hanushek, Steven G. Rivkin, “Generalizations about Using Value-Added Measures of Teacher Quality,” *American Economic Review*, May 2010, 100:2, pp. 267-271. As scholar Dan Goldhaber wrote, “[I]t appears that the most important thing a school can do is to provide its students with good teachers.” (Dan Goldhaber, “The Mystery of Good Teaching,” *Education Next*, Spring 2002.)

¹¹ See, for example, Barbara Nye, Spyros Konstantopoulos, Larry V. Hedges, “How Large Are Teacher Effects?” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Fall 2004, 26:3, pp. 237-257.

¹² Jenny DeMonte, *High Quality Professional Development for Teachers: Supporting Teacher Training To Improve Student Learning* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, July 2013), p. 2.

¹³ Kwang Suk Yoon, et al, *Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education), October 2007, pp. 7-8. Study authors calculated the using formulas of the What Works Clearinghouse. Specifically, they compared the effect sizes (i.e., change in achievement) of the group of students who had teachers with the intervention to a group with teachers who lacked the intervention. The difference between these two effect sizes is called the “improvement index.” Authors then averaged the improvement index across the nine studies to determine a 21 percentile gain in achievement. In classrooms with teachers who participated in programs that involved considerably less time (5 to 14 hours), there was no statistically significant effect on student performance.

¹⁴ Darling-Hammond, p. 27. A similar summary of research, with much the same list, appears in Sarah Archibald, et al, *High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers: Effectively Allocating Resources* (Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2011).

¹⁵ Center for Technology in Learning, *Systemic vs. One-time Teacher Professional Development: What Does Research Say?* Research Note 15 (July 2009).

¹⁶ Darling-Hammond, et al, p. 20.

¹⁷ *Primary Sources: America’s Teachers on the Teaching Profession* (New York: Scholastic,

2012), p. 132.

¹⁸ Linda Darling-Hammond, “What Teachers Need and Reformers Ignore: Time to Collaborate,” *Washington Post*, 11 April 2013.

¹⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators* (Paris: Author, 2011), Table D 4.1.

²⁰ Darling-Hammond, et al, p. 20.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²² Gallup-*Education Week Superintendent Panel – Inaugural Survey Findings* (Washington, DC: Gallup, June 2013).

²³ *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2013*, p. 6.

²⁴ Gene Carter, “Maximizing the Impact of the Common Core,” Downloaded June 10, 2013 at: http://www.ascd.org/news_media/lis_it_good_for_the_kids_editorials/lis_it_good_for_the_kids_-_july_2010.aspx

²⁵ Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, *Findings from a National Survey of Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core* (Bethesda, MD: Author, February 2013), p. 20.

²⁶ See Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr, “Getting Beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City,” NBER Working Paper, No. 17632, December 2011.

²⁷ Lisa Watts, et al, *Lessons from the Leading Edge: Teachers’ Views on the Impact of Evaluation Reform* (Boston, MA: Teach Plus, 2013).

²⁸ Morgaen L. Donaldson, *Teachers’ Perspectives on Evaluation Reform* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2012).

²⁹ Richard Ingersoll, “Beginning Teacher Induction: What the Data Tell Us,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 16 May 2012.

³⁰ Thomas Smith and Richard Ingersoll, “What Are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?” *American Educational Research Journal*, 41:3, September 2004, pp. 681-714.

³¹ Data from the Teaching, Empowering, Learning and Leading Survey. Massachusetts in 2012 at: <http://2012.tellmass.org/reports> and Colorado 2013 at: <http://www.telcolorado.org/results>.

³² For information on how Cleveland teachers perceive the new evaluation system, as reported in Spring 2013, see: <http://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/Page/2798>.

³³ This guide is adapted from one created by another high-performing school, North Star Academy in Newark, New Jersey.

³⁴ Donaldson, *Teachers’ Perspectives on Evaluation Reform*.

Time for Teachers: Leveraging Expanded Time to Strengthen Instruction and Empower Teachers **A Publication of the National Center on Time & Learning**

The National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) is dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education. Through research, public policy, and technical assistance, NCTL supports national, state, and local initiatives that add significantly more school time to help children meet the demands of the 21st century and prepare for success in college and careers.

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