

P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson

FINAL REPORT



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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as restructuring (year 1) under the New York State Education Department (NYSED) differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

About P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson

Located in Brooklyn, P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson (K145) is an elementary school with 851 students from prekindergarten through Grade 5. Nearly all students, 90 percent, are eligible for free lunch, and 3 percent are eligible for reduced-price lunch. Ninety-five percent of the student population is Hispanic or Latino, 42 percent are classified as English language learners, and 13 percent are classified as students with disabilities. The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year was 93 percent. (Accountability and Overview Report 2009–10).

In 2009–10, P.S. 145 did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) for all students, the Hispanic or Latino subgroup, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. In 2010–11, P.S. 145's state accountability status was designated as "Restructuring (year 1)."¹

Audit Process at P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson

The ESCA approach utilized at the elementary school level examines six topic areas related to literacy: student engagement, instruction, academic interventions and supports, professional learning and collaboration, curriculum, and assessments and their use. Data were collected at the school level through teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of documents submitted by P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school at a co-interpretationSM meeting on May 27, 2011. During this meeting, 14 stakeholders from the P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson community read the reports. Through a facilitated and collaborative group process, they identified individual findings and then developed and prioritized key findings that emerged from information in the reports.

¹ <https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/2b/AOR-2010-333200010145.pdf>. Accessed on March 3, 2011

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates has developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings are considered as a group, and the recommended strategies are those that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance at PS. 145 Andrew Jackson.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, co-interpretation participants determined a set of key findings. These key findings are detailed in this section. The wording of the following key findings matches the wording developed and agreed upon by co-interpretation participants at the meeting.

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

The focus of the shared reading, read-aloud, and guided reading is not clear.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by information from classroom observations. When shared reading, read-alouds, and guided reading were observed, the focus of the activities was unclear.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

Stamina and fluency instruction is not always evident.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by information from classroom observations and the review of school-submitted documents. Despite increased reading stamina being one of the school's goals, observers did not notice any systematic plan for helping students accomplish this goal. Similarly, fluency is part of the school's reading curriculum, but there was no evidence of fluency instruction or practice in any of the 19 observed classrooms.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

Students are not always reading at their appropriate reading levels.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by information from classroom observations and the review of school-submitted documents. It was not evident that the books and materials provided at the school, both in the library and through the reading curriculum, matched students' levels or interests. No students were observed reading or checking out books from the classroom libraries.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

Teaching points are not always clear.

Critical Key Finding 4 is supported by information from classroom observations. The teaching points were explicitly stated in only five of the 19 observed classrooms. In one of those five classrooms, the listed teaching point was an activity, not a teaching point. In two of the classrooms, there was no mention or posting of standards or objectives.

Positive Key Findings

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:

Differentiation is evident and practiced consistently with students and teachers.

Positive Key Finding 1 is supported by information from school interviews, classroom observations, and teacher survey results. According to the interview, differentiation is a focus for the teachers. Half of the surveyed teachers indicated that they modify their ELA and mathematics materials and programs to differentiate for students with disabilities. In addition, in eight of the 19 observed classrooms, teachers incorporated students' interests and experiences into the lessons.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 2:

Professional development experiences are closely connected to school and teacher goals.

Positive Key Finding 2 is supported by information from teacher survey results and school interviews. Ninety-five percent of surveyed teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their professional development experiences were closely connected to the school's goals. Eighty-four percent also agreed or strongly agreed that their professional development was sustained, coherent, and addressed the needs of students in their classrooms.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 3:

Teachers have an influence on purchasing, planning, and establishing curriculum.

Positive Key Finding 3 is supported by information from teacher survey results. Two thirds of surveyed teachers indicated that they have moderate to a great deal of influence over establishing their curriculum.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 4:

The school provides opportunities for teacher collaboration to share concerns, knowledge, and strategies regarding English language learners (ELLs), special education, and struggling students.

Positive Key Finding 4 is supported by information from school interviews and teacher survey results. The cluster schedule includes daily common preparation for each grade level, providing teachers with daily opportunities for collaboration. According to the teacher surveys, teachers take advantage of this time. More than 80 percent of surveyed teachers reported that they collaborated with one another at least once per week. The majority of surveyed teachers also agreed or strongly agreed that special education and ELL teachers routinely collaborated with general education teachers.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

Participants at the PS. 145 Andrew Jackson co-interpretation prioritized critical key findings that identify areas in which the school's ELA program and instruction can improve, as well as several positive findings highlighting school strengths. Four recommendations are made to address the findings.

One of the recommendations addresses balanced literacy. As noted in Critical Key Finding 1, certain ELA reading components are not consistently focused. Revisiting balanced literacy and its requirements will likely make activities such as read-alouds more purposeful. The recommendation also touches on Critical Key Finding 3, which states that students may not be reading at their level and may not be reading books that appeal to their interests.

A second recommendation addresses reading stamina and fluency. Critical Key Finding 2 states that there is little evidence that reading stamina is addressed in a systematic way across ELA classes. The second recommendation also touches on Critical Key Finding 3.

Recommendation 3 addresses the challenges posed by the implementation of the Common Core Standards, which all New York City schools must address.

The final recommendation addresses professional learning, which is critical to the realization of the other recommendations. The Positive Key Findings note that professional learning is supported in the school and that teachers collaborate with one another on a regular basis. The final recommendation proposes several strategies that PS. 145 might incorporate into its professional development and collaborative sessions.

THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

With these issues in mind, Learning Point Associates auditors developed the following four recommendations:

1. Implement with fidelity the components of the balanced literacy block.
2. Develop and implement with fidelity a schoolwide plan to increase the effectiveness of independent reading.
3. Develop and implement with fidelity a multiyear plan to align the school's curriculum, instruction, assessments, and instructional materials to the Common Core State Standards.
4. Develop and implement a multiyear professional development plan that follows a job-embedded and sustained professional learning process and focuses on content related to the topics identified during co-interpretation.

These four recommendations are discussed on the following pages. Each recommendation provides a review of research, online resources for additional information, specific actions the school may wish to take during its implementation process, and examples of real-life schools that have successfully implemented strategies. All works cited appear in the References section at the end of this report.

Please note that the order in which these recommendations are presented does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Balanced Literacy Block

Implement with fidelity the components of the balanced literacy block.

LINKS TO RESEARCH

Much of the research on effective reading instruction in the elementary grades has focused on the content of reading instruction—teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Research on how to organize literacy instruction is not as clear. NYCDOE recommends the Comprehensive Approach to Balanced Literacy for elementary schools. Phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency and expressiveness, vocabulary, and comprehension are to be taught through daily read-alouds, independent reading time, reading workshops, writing workshops, and systematic word study instruction. Teachers are to use the structures of read-aloud, guided reading, shared reading, interactive writing, and mini-lessons.

During the *read-aloud*, the teacher reads a book, poem, or article to the entire class. Research shows that the read-aloud is the single most important activity for reading success (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Reading aloud builds the students' background knowledge, engages students in reading, models fluent reading, develops students' vocabulary, motivates students to read, and enhances comprehension.

During *shared reading*, the teacher models reading with fluency in a whole class setting. Every student has access to a common text. Shared reading is the time new skills and strategies are introduced. Every shared reading lesson has a planned specific instructional purpose with explicitly identified teaching points. Students have repeated experiences with the same text.

During guided reading, the teacher works with a small group of students who are reading at the same level. Students in a guided reading group read a common text at their instructional level that provides moderate challenge for the students. Each student reads the whole text or a portion of it softly or silently to him- or herself (no round robin reading). Guided reading groups change in response to assessment and student need; they are flexible and fluid.

Research shows that effective teachers provide a balance of whole- and small-group reading instruction (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Taylor & Peterson, 2006).

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson has adopted *Reading Streets*, a comprehensive core program published by Scott Foresman/Pearson. This program is designed for the whole class to learn the same focus skills and address the same essential questions but enables teachers to apply that to reading material appropriate to the different reading levels of the students during small-group instruction.

The *Reading Streets* grade-level anthologies are to be used with the whole class for shared reading, and leveled books are provided for students below level, on level, and advanced for small-group reading instruction. There is a connection between the shared reading done with the whole class in the grade-level anthology and the guided reading done by small groups of students reading materials appropriate to their level.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

My Pearson Training
<http://www.mypearsontraining.com>

The leveled readers provide more opportunities to practice the same skill, strategy, and vocabulary as the main selection in the grade-level anthology. The leveled readers are to be used one or two days per week during the reading block; guided reading lessons for the rest of the week are to use texts from other sources and/or supplemental materials from *Reading Streets* (e.g., selections from *My Sidewalks*). It is important to ensure that the leveled books used for small-group reading instruction are on the appropriate instructional levels for all students but particularly for the students reading significantly below grade level.

The program emphasizes that the small-group reading instruction does not include round robin reading, readers in a fixed group for the year, or just skill work.

Additional professional development needs to be provided to ensure that all teachers have a thorough understanding of the program and how it is intended to be implemented.

The administration can monitor the fidelity of implementation of this program through learning walks and formal and informal observations.

Hundreds of schools across the country are implementing *Reading Streets*. Scott Foresman/Pearson could help P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson identify schools implementing the program with fidelity. These schools could serve as resources to P.S. 145.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

A teacher in the New York City schools for 28 years, Sharon Taberski implemented reading workshop and writing workshop effectively in her diverse classroom of students. In her book *On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3* (2000), she helps others think systematically about the components of balanced literacy. Sharon's blog can be found at <http://allaboutcomprehension.blogspot.com>.

Debbie Miller implements reading and writing workshops in her first-grade classroom. She describes her approach in her book *Reading With Meaning*. Two videos are available showing Debbie in her classroom working with her students:

- Happy Reading Part 1 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ly9cRS4Cm8&feature=related>)
- Happy Reading Part 2 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPPLDIKkRnI&feature=related>)

The videos *Inside Reading Writing Workshops* show a teacher teaching a minilesson and a teacher conferencing with a student:

- Part 1 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=kfkLk9QCn28>)
- Part 2 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMeGgkmhoo4&NR=1>)
- Part 3 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Jl6qcfSkYI&feature=related>)

Recommendation 2: Independent Reading

Develop and implement with fidelity a schoolwide plan to increase the effectiveness of independent reading.

LINK TO RESEARCH

The goal of reading instruction is to have students read with volume, stamina, and fluency.

Volume. The amount that students read in and out of school significantly affects the development of reading rate and fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge of the world, overall verbal ability, and academic achievement. The amount of reading is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, outweighing intelligence, economic background, and gender. The New York City performance standards address volume of reading by specifying that by the end of the fourth grade, elementary students should be reading 25 books per year. The standards for California schools specify that fourth-grade students should be reading 500,000 words per year.

Stamina. Reading stamina is the ability to read for a sustained amount of time without getting distracted or distracting others. Research shows that reading stamina will gradually increase with the amount of time spent reading. Lack of reading stamina is becoming a problem. Students are losing their ability to read for long periods of time. This is important for many reasons but especially when one considers the amount of time students have to read for the state tests.

Fluency. Reading fluency has three components: accuracy, speed, and expression. Fluent readers are characterized by the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel, 2000). In order to build students' reading fluency, teachers model good oral reading through the daily read-aloud, teach students phrasing, offer many opportunities for students to practice with guidance and support (repeated reading, choral reading, echo reading, buddy reading, recorded reading, reader's theater, poetry readings), and assess and track students' fluency over time.

Reading is a skill that requires practice. Students need to read in order to become better readers. There is a great deal of research that shows a very strong correlation between the amount of time spent reading and a student's progress as a reader. *Reading for Change*, a report issued by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, states that reading proficiency is closely linked to the amount of time students spend reading in their free time and the diversity of materials they read (Kirsch et al., 2002). The report makes the claim that finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change—to equalize learning across disadvantaged and middle class youth. The report makes the following statement:

Fifteen-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds who read a lot get higher average reading scores than those whose parents are of high or medium occupational status but who have little interest in reading. (p. 6)

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

The 2 Sisters (Website)
<http://www.the2sisters.com/>

Emma Eccles Jones
Center for Early Childhood
Education
www.coe.usu.edu/ecc

Classrooms that provide more reading time yield higher reading achievement among students. The amount of independent silent reading students do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement. It is during successful independent reading practice that students consolidate their reading skills and strategies. Without extensive reading practice, reading proficiency lags. Research has not yet confirmed, however, whether instructional time spent on independent silent reading with minimal guidance and feedback improves reading achievement and fluency. The research of Reutzel, Fawson, and Smith (2008) and Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, and Smith (2008) shows promise in terms of how to structure independent reading so that it does affect reading achievement.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

It is extremely important that students are reading books at their independent reading level.

1. Help students select books.

Teaching students how to select “just right” books using the five-finger rule or a similar technique is critical. Students cannot develop stamina using reading materials that are too difficult for them to read. Book boxes and bins with books at an appropriate level should be easily accessible.

2. Hold students accountable.

Holding students accountable for their independent reading is important. Students should keep reading logs in which they record the number of pages they have read in their book. Teachers should be aware of how long it should take a child who reads at one reading rate or another to read books of different levels. In this way, a teacher has some idea of the progress that a student can be expected to make through books. Another way to hold students accountable for their independent reading is to provide time for them to share with a partner or the whole class what they have read.

3. Monitor student engagement.

Teachers can monitor student engagement during independent reading and help students who are having trouble, perhaps because they are reading a book that is too challenging for them.

4. Communicate purpose and expected behaviors.

Teachers need to teach focus lessons on reading stamina and help students understand what it is and why it is important. The class might use a T-chart to brainstorm what they should be doing during independent reading. Behaviors discussed should include reading the whole time, staying in one spot, reading quietly, and getting started right away. The teacher should model these behaviors for the students, and students should then be given an opportunity to practice these behaviors.

5. Build reading stamina.

The teacher might start with a very short reading session on the first day and then gradually increase the time as students show they are able to read and not get distracted. The goal would be to read at least the amount of time required for the state reading test. At the end of the reading time, students can assess how well they did. Throughout the year, students should review the behaviors using the anchor chart and constantly assess themselves on how well they are doing.

Several conditions or resources have a positive impact on reading stamina:

- *Book selection.* The more interest in the book, the better the stamina. Teachers can administer an interest inventory to the students and then be sure that there are books available in the classroom to meet the interests of the students.
- *Comfort.* Students should be comfortable and free from distractions while reading independently.
- *Teacher enthusiasm.* If the teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about books and the students are surrounded by good books they can read, the goal of increasing independent reading is more easily met.

6. Scaffolded silent reading for students.

Reutzel, Jones, et al. (2008) identify the problems with traditional Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), which is that teachers fail to teach, monitor, interact with, and hold students accountable for their time spent in reading practice. Reutzel, Jones, et al. propose an alternative to traditional SSR—Scaffolded Silent Reading (ScSR). Research on this approach to independent reading has shown promise.

The ScSR model includes support, guidance, structure, appropriate text difficulty, accountability, and monitoring. First, the teacher teaches explicit book selection strategies so that students are able to select books appropriate to their level. Second, the ScSR period begins with the teacher explaining and modeling a strategy for five to eight minutes and then directing the students to read independently for 20 minutes. Third, the teacher conducts individual monitoring conferences with four or five students per day during the reading time. During these conferences, the teacher listens to the student read aloud from the book he or she is reading for one to two minutes. The student retells what he or she has read and then the teacher and the student have a two-minute discussion about the book. The teacher helps the student set a goal for the date to finish the book, and the student also decides how to share the book. Students use a genre wheel to ensure wide reading across different genres.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Joan Moser is a K-2 multiage teacher in the state of Washington. She implemented a structure in her classroom to help her students develop daily habits of reading and writing. Her students have five literacy tasks to complete daily. As students read, the teacher meets with small groups or confers with individuals. These five tasks are (1) read to self, (2) read to someone, (3) work on writing, (4) do word works, and (5) listen to reading.

During the “read-to-self” task, students work on increasing their stamina. Students start with three minutes of independent reading and then add one to two minutes per day until they reach the target of 30 minutes per day for primary students and 45 minutes per day for intermediate students.

Moser and her sister, Gail Boushey, who is a literacy coach, have written the book *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades* (2006), which describes this structure for having students read independently in a productive way.

Recommendation 3: Common Core

Develop and implement with fidelity a multiyear plan to align the school's curriculum, instruction, assessments, and instructional materials to the Common Core State Standards.

LINK TO RESEARCH

The Common Core State Standards Initiative coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers with the involvement of 48 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands identified what American students need to know and do to be successful in college and careers. These standards are based on best practices in national and international education as well as research and input from numerous sources including scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, and educators representing all grade levels from kindergarten through postsecondary. These standards are comparable with other countries' expectations and are grounded in available evidence and research.

The state of New York adopted the Common Core State Standards on July 19, 2010.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Align curriculum to the NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy.**

The adoption of the Common Core provides an opportunity for teachers at P.S. 145 Andrew Jackson to work in collaborative teams to identify what they are currently teaching through a curriculum mapping process. It will be essential for teams to identify redundancies and gaps between what they should be teaching according to the Common Core and what they are teaching.

Teachers in teams should look closely at current student work to determine the discrepancy between that work and the level of performance that the Common Core demands, and then plan the steps needed to close any discrepancies.

The Citywide Instructional Expectations for 2011–12 require teachers to work together to engage all students in rigorous tasks, embedded in well-crafted instructional units and with appropriate supports. For ELA, these tasks include:

- Pre-K–2 teachers are expected to engage their students in at least one literacy task aligned to the Common Core Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10 and Writing Standard 2 (written response to informational texts through group activities and with prompting and support).
- Teachers of grades 3–8 are expected to engage their students in at least one literacy task aligned to Common Core Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10 (written analysis of informational texts) or Common Core Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10 and Writing Standard 1 (written opinion or argument based on an analysis of informational texts).

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Common Core State Standards

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

Provides pertinent information about the state learning standards for ELA and literacy and the Common Core standards

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov>

Common Core resources

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary/default.htm>

Resources for strengthening teacher practice

www.arisnyc.org

Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project

<http://commoncore.org>

Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC)

www.parcconline.org

These tasks are to be embedded in Common Core-aligned curricula and include multiple entry points for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Through the work of implementing these performance tasks, teachers will use the inquiry cycle to adjust their curriculum and instruction to help all students meet the expectations of the Common Core. Because standards are not curriculum, teachers will need a curriculum to assist them in helping students meet the Common Core Standards. NYSED is developing curriculum modules to help teachers develop curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core. These curriculum modules will be available to schools during the 2012–13 school year.

2. Align instructional materials to the Common Core.

Another task related to the Common Core Standards is for schools to ensure that the texts for each grade align with the complexity requirements outlined in the Common Core. Schools need to select complex texts that are grade-level appropriate and meet the text complexity requirements of the Common Core. These levels of text complexity are significantly higher than the level of texts currently being used in most schools. The expectation of the Common Core is that students have extensive classroom practice with texts at or above grade level. It is the expectation of the Common Core that students who are not reading at grade level should be given the support they need to read texts at the appropriate level of complexity rather than be given less complex texts. Many students will need careful scaffolding to enable them to read at the level of text complexity required by the Common Core.

The Common Core places a great emphasis on informational text and expects students to read informational text 50 percent of the time and literary text 50 percent of the time. Schools need to ascertain whether enough informational text is available at all grade levels and is being used instructionally.

3. Align instruction to the expectations of the Common Core.

As part of the work outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations for 2011–12, teachers need to begin to adjust their instruction to help all students meet the higher expectations of the Common Core. In order to help students meet the standards outlined in the Common Core, several changes in literacy instruction will be necessary.

Literacy Instruction. One of these changes is the focus of literacy instruction. The focus of literacy instruction reflected in the Common Core is careful examination of the text itself, which requires close and careful reading. Schools must provide all students, including those who are behind, with extensive opportunities to encounter and comprehend grade-level complex texts, as required by the standards. Students can access complex texts through read-alouds or as a group reading activity. Schools should consider carefully their read-aloud selections. Students whose decoding ability is developing at a slower rate also need opportunities to read text that they can read successfully without extensive extra assistance. All students are expected to have daily opportunities for independent reading. Reading materials should include newspaper and magazine articles and websites.

Type of Questions. Another change is the type of questions teachers ask of students. Eighty to ninety percent of the standards require text-dependent analysis.

To help students meet the standards outlined in the Common Core, teachers should ask high-quality text-dependent questions. Text-dependent questions are those that can be answered only by careful scrutiny of the text, with students specifically referring to evidence from the text itself to support the answer and not referring to information or evidence from outside the text. The questions are grounded in the text, and students must think carefully about what they heard or read and draw evidence from the text in support of their ideas about the reading.

Strategy Instruction. Another change in literacy instruction is the role of strategy instruction. The Common Core Standards necessitate a reconsideration of the role of reading strategies. Strategies should be embedded in the activity of reading a text rather than being taught separately from texts.

Writing Instruction. Changes in writing instruction may be necessary to help students meet the Common Core Standards. Thirty percent of writing instruction should be devoted to opinion pieces, 35 percent to informative/explanatory texts, and 35 percent to narratives. Students should be given extensive practice with short focused research projects.

4. Redesign assessment to reflect the expectations in the Common Core.

During the 2012–13 school year, interim assessments based on the Common Core Standards will be administered. In addition, items developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), of which the state of New York is a member, will be field-tested. The PARCC assessments will be operational during the 2014–15 school year. Presently, the PARCC assessments include two summative assessments, which will measure the full range of the Common Core State Standards at each grade level. One required component that counts toward the summative score includes performance-based assessments in grades 3–8 administered as close to the end of the year as possible.

Priorities in ELA/literacy will include focusing on writing effectively when analyzing text. Another component that is required and counts toward the summative score is end-of-year assessments comprised of computer-based machine-scorable items focusing on reading and comprehending complex texts in ELA/literacy. A third required assessment of listening/speaking can be administered at any time of the year. With this in mind, schools need to examine assessments they currently use to determine whether they are aligned with the Common Core.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

The Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project provides teachers with a roadmap for translating the Common Core into instruction and resources for developing more detailed curriculum and lesson plans. For most grades, there are six English Language Arts Curriculum Maps, each of which contains a list of focus standards taken from the Common Core, specific student objectives, an overview of skills and content the unit will cover, and sample student activities and assessments. Each also includes an essential question that frames the unit, suggested texts (including Common Core exemplar texts), a list of key terminology, and links to additional instructional resources. Future iterations of the maps will include sample student work and scoring rubrics to help teachers who would like to use the sample activities as formative assessment tools.

Recommendation 4: Professional Learning

Develop and implement a multiyear professional development plan that follows a job-embedded and sustained professional learning process and focuses on content related to the topics identified during co-interpretation.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Learning Forward (formerly National Staff Development Council), the professional association committed to enhancing educators' professional learning, defines professional development as a comprehensive, sustained, intensive, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (Slabine, 2011).

Standalone workshops and courses have been shown to have little effect on teacher practice (Guskey, 1999). Job-embedded approaches that incorporate professional learning activities into the daily work of teachers are more effective. Research has found that professional learning for teachers is most effective and boosts student achievement when it is embedded in their daily work and sustained (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Steiner, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

Effective professional learning provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration, coaching, and peer observations—opportunities that allow teachers to be actively involved in their own development and practice learned skills (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Schools can improve teacher practice and student achievement by refining the process by which professional learning opportunities are offered, ensuring that these opportunities are embedded and sustained and allow for active teacher participation by focusing the opportunities teacher practice and content.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following suggestions can be used to implement job-embedded, sustained professional learning opportunities focused on school needs:

- 1. Provide opportunities for regular teacher collaboration and job-embedded professional learning.**

When planning professional development, consider the numerous formats that might be used to focus teacher collaboration and learning. These include action research/inquiry cycle, case discussions, coaching, Critical Friends Group, data teams/assessment development, examining student work, lesson study, mentoring, portfolio reviews, and study groups.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Learning Forward (Website)
www.learningforward.org

Other approaches for job-embedded professional learning include the following:

- **Providing initial training, using outside or local experts.** Either outside experts or administrators, specialists, or teachers at the school could provide initial training.
- **Coaching at the school.** Teacher leaders may be trained to provide instructional support to all teachers. Another option is for all teachers to be trained to coach each other as members of professional learning communities.
- **Peer observation.** A feedback form can be created, and a schedule for peer observation can be developed. Expectations for peer observation can be set and clearly communicated.

Resources are available to schools through NYCDOE. Citywide Instructional Expectations provide the opportunity for job-embedded professional learning. NYCDOE has provided resources to help educators unwrap the Common Core State Standards and begin to make the changes in curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve and meet the high standards. Resources include video, interactive modules, tools, articles, and podcasts to support professional development at the school.

2. Identify Books for Study Groups.

An effective way to share learning and apply new knowledge and skills is to engage in book study, with study groups meeting at regular intervals in organized sessions. Topics should be relevant to school and teacher needs. A starting point might be topics addressed in this set of recommendations.

A book possibility for a study group that we recommend as a way to focus professional learning is *Teach Like A Champion: 49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College* (2010) by Doug Lemov. The book is a collection of instructional techniques the author gleaned from years of observing outstanding teachers in some of the highest performing urban classrooms in the country. The book is accompanied by a DVD of 25 video clips of teachers demonstrating these techniques in the classroom. Other videos of the techniques are available on www.youtube.com. The book discusses the following:

- Setting high academic expectations
- Planning that ensures academic achievement
- Structuring and delivering your lessons
- Engaging students in lessons
- Creating a strong classroom culture
- Setting and maintaining high behavioral expectations
- Building character and trust
- Improving your pacing
- Challenging students to think critically

An example of an effective teaching practice described in the book is *Technique #1—No Opt Out*. When a student does not respond, the teacher moves on to another student. When a student gives the correct response, the teacher returns to the first student who did not respond and insists that the student repeat what the student just heard. Another technique is *Technique #22—Cold Call*. In order to make engaged participation the expectation, the teacher calls on students regardless of whether they have raised their hands.

Other books that might be the focus for study groups are as follows:

- *Teach Like a Champion Field Guide: The Complete Handbook to Master the Art of Teaching* (2011) by Doug Lemov is another resource. It has 30 additional video clips of teachers using the techniques in their classes. These techniques could be part of an ongoing cycle of observation, feedback, and debriefing.
- *Bringing Words to Life and Creating Robust Vocabulary* (2002) by Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan
- *The Highly Engaged Classroom* (2010) by Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering
- *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools* (2004) by Robert Marzano
- *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility* (2008) by Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey

Free study guides for the last two books are available from ASCD at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/study-guides.aspx>.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Memphis City Schools serves a student population that is 92 percent minority and among the poorest in the nation. Despite this, student achievement is improving. District administrators attribute the improvement in part to effective professional development. The district developed a five-year comprehensive professional development plan that has incorporated characteristics and formats that research has shown to be effective. District administrators consider quality professional development to be an important factor contributing to the increase in student achievement. They are now compiling data to track its impact (Slabine, 2011).

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