

Learning About and Assessing Standard 5—Professional Development

Effective teachers in 21st century classrooms should have a deep understanding of the knowledge and capabilities of their students. They need to be able to identify the areas of strength and weakness in each student and plan appropriate instruction. Both elementary and secondary teachers must be aware of the content knowledge of the variety of subjects they teach as well as the pedagogical knowledge base for teaching each of those disciplines (Wilson, Schulman, & Richert, 1987). In addition, they must possess the key dispositions of professional educators as outlined by NCATE (2002). Programs for professional development are essential to the creation and development of classrooms where effective teaching is the norm and appropriate strategies and materials are used.

Helping students become proficient readers requires that teachers have not only knowledge of instructional strategies and activities but also the ability to use these to develop skillful instruction that enables students to transfer those strategies and skills to the reading of connected text. The NRP (NICHD, 2000) suggests that teachers must be skillful in instruction and be able to provide individualized instructional feedback to students. In order to accomplish this task, teachers must have a thorough understanding of effective instructional strategies as well as those strategies that enable students to become proficient readers. Once teachers are in the workforce, they must receive well-conceived and implemented inservice education that will build upon the knowledge gained during preservice course work. Funding for teacher professional development programs, which may include signing bonuses or compensation for attendance, is integral to efforts focusing on helping low performing students make substantial gains (Trotter, 2007). In addition to adequate funding, there are many obstacles to the development of effective inservice experiences. Snow and colleagues (1998) acknowledge that programs often flounder because of the following:

- Lack of a strong apprenticeship system
- The highly complex and diverse classroom needs that must be addressed
- The challenge of time to keep abreast of new developments in research and practice
- The complexity of the pedagogical and content area knowledge base
- The difficulty of presenting many of the skills required to enact the knowledge base with children having the most difficulties (p. 279)

Despite these obstacles, Snow and colleagues (1998) believe that continuing to educate teachers through quality professional development programs has netted greater student achievement than any other use of education dollars. Bennett (1987) investigated the effects of theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback on the knowledge and transfer to practice of the content of professional development experiences. Findings demonstrated that combining these components and adding in-class coaching yielded the largest increase in student achievement.

Although content, context, and quality are indicators of successful professional development opportunities, these aspects vary widely from program to program (Snow et al., 1998). Effective efforts should build on the knowledge and skills teachers acquire in their preservice education programs and enable them access to evaluate new knowledge and strategies. This chapter describes successful programs that allow teachers to build on the knowledge and skills of literacy to which they were exposed in preservice education courses. In addition, the issues surrounding the development of these professional development opportunities are discussed.

Darling-Hammond (1997) and Ball and Cohen (1999) indicate that professional development in literacy is constrained by several factors. First is the lack of time most teachers have to devote to anything beyond the tasks of lesson preparation, execution, and assessment, and the endless paper work and meetings required of professionals in 21st century classrooms. In the high-stakes testing atmosphere of today's classrooms, there are few on-the-job opportunities in which teachers can develop and refine new knowledge and skills. There is a lack of support for professional development from both district and state administrators. According to Darling-Hammond, one-shot workshops are the norm and lack the effectiveness of ongoing, longer term events that allow teachers to refine and improve their instructional plans. At the elementary school level, teachers are responsible for so many content areas that there is very little time that can be devoted exclusively to staff development in literacy.

Historically, professional development can be described as a cookbook effort, or one-shot, "here's how to solve your students' reading difficulties" program (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996). However, we believe there has been a recent shift to workshops that deepen teachers' understandings of how students learn as well as demonstrations of how these understandings can lead to increased learning on the part of their students. Feiman-Nemser notes that the descriptors "inservice training," which connotes a deficit model, and "staff development," which connotes instruction in new programs, preceded the more recent designation of "professional development." She states, "professional development means transformations in teachers' knowledge, understandings, skills, and commitments, in what they know and what they are able to do in their individual practice as well as in their shared responsibilities" (p. 1038).

According to Schulte, Edick, Edward, and Mackiel (2004), research regarding effective teachers has moved from exclusively studying teachers to studying their effects on students in order to determine which teacher behaviors result in desirable student performance. Teacher dispositions strongly influence the impact teachers will have on student learning

and development (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999). The research demonstrates a complex picture of effective teaching that includes teacher knowledge, pedagogical skills, and dispositions.

Effective teachers understand the progression of learning to read and how to provide instruction to support this development. Inservice opportunities must give teachers the necessary tools to keep abreast of new research findings and analyze the applicability of new instructional strategies to the context in which they teach. The development and revision of standards for literacy professionals at the state and national levels has recently occurred. One of the most widely known of these efforts is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2007). Although this is a volunteer certification, teachers who successfully work through the process are recognized as accomplished members of the teaching profession in the content areas they select for NBPTS certification. The outcome achievements of NBPTS-certified teachers are a reflection of the effectiveness of their pre-service education and inservice professional development opportunities as well as of the teachers' dedication and commitment to their fields.

Snow and colleagues (1998) emphasize that while preservice and inservice professional development experiences for K–12 teachers are abundant and aligned with state performance standards at elementary and secondary levels, not every state has certification requirements for preschool teachers. Even the highly respected NBPTS standards do not sufficiently address all aspects of reading in early childhood. The performance standards for preschool programs generally focus on adult–child ratio, safety, and health. They seldom ensure the quality of the literacy environment. Preschool level teachers are not adequately served with extensive, systematic, quality professional development. Snow and colleagues find this particularly troubling in view of the dearth of high quality programs for initial preparation of teachers at this level.

Teachers of identified special needs students also require professional development opportunities that enable them to successfully work with special education students, ELLs, and students who have reading difficulties. According to Snow and colleagues (1998), professional development for these teachers should include the following:

- Knowledge of ways to access and evaluate ongoing research regarding typical development and the prevention of reading difficulties;
- Knowledge and techniques for helping other professionals (classroom teachers, administrators) learn new skills relevant for preventing or identifying and ameliorating reading difficulties; and
- Knowledge and techniques for promoting home support (by parents and other household members) to encourage emergent and conventional literacy and to prevent or ameliorate reading difficulties. (p. 297)

Standard 5 ensures that “candidates view professional development as a career-long effort and responsibility” (IRA, 2004, p. 18). The elements that make up Standard 5 include the following:

- Positive dispositions
- Pursuit of professional knowledge
- Effectively collaborating with colleagues
- Participating in professional development programs

Element 5.1

Display positive dispositions related to reading and the teaching of reading.

In *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2003), *dispositions* is defined as “qualities that characterize a person as an individual: the controlling perceptual (mental, emotional, spiritual) qualities that determine the person’s natural or usual ways of thinking and acting” (p. 190). NCATE (2002) defines *dispositions* as,

The values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment. (p. 53)

Effective and ineffective teachers differ significantly in their dispositions toward self, students, and teaching (Freiberg, 1999). With regard to self, effective teachers have positive, realistic self-perceptions and believe that they can help most any student. However, ineffective teachers frequently have doubts about their abilities to reach students and to deal with problems that may occur in the classroom. The effective teachers’ disposition toward students is one which creates within the students a feeling of being worthwhile, cared about, and important. Additionally, the effective teacher has high expectations for each student. In contrast, the disposition of the ineffective teacher is characterized by low expectations for students and negative beliefs about student worth. For example, Waiscko (2004) relates an interesting comment of his own fourth-grade teacher who confided to his mother during a parent–teacher conference, “I was really cut out to teach gifted kids, but they keep sending me kids like your son” (p. 41). Concerning effective teachers’ dispositions toward teaching, much of their time is spent building relationships and pursuing knowledge that will enhance their teaching. Ineffective teachers focus on the short-range aspects of teaching. Again, Waiscko tells a personal story of a high school math teacher who immediately continued working the daily math problems on the blackboard after an announcement that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Rather than asking the question, “How will my students be better 10 years from now because of what they are learning today?” this teacher did not see the larger implications of his teaching.

Stronge (2007) identifies the following as seven indicators of positive qualities or dispositions that characterize effective teachers.

1. Caring—Active listening; concern for students’ emotional and physical well-being; shows interest and concern in students’ personal lives outside of school; creates a supportive and warm classroom climate.
2. Fairness and respect—Responds to misbehavior on an individual level; treats students equally; creates situations for all children to succeed; is respectful to all students.
3. Interactions with students—Friendly while maintaining professional role; gives students responsibility; knows students’ interests in and out of school; values what students say; fun, playful, jokes when appropriate.
4. Enthusiasm—Shows joy in [teaching reading and the language arts]; takes pleasure in teaching and makes the most of “teachable moments”; involved in learning activities outside of school.
5. Motivation—Returns student work in a timely manner with appropriate, meaningful feedback; high quality of work.
6. Dedication to teaching—Possesses a positive attitude about life and teaching; spends time outside of school preparing; participates in collegial activities; accepts responsibility for student outcomes; seeks professional development; finds, implements, and shares new instructional strategies.
7. Reflective practice—Knows areas of personal strengths and weaknesses; uses reflection to improve teaching; has high expectations for personal classroom performance; demonstrates high efficacy.

Schulte and colleagues (2004) assert, “One of the most difficult situations faced by teacher educators is encountering candidates who meet the requirements of content knowledge and pedagogical skills yet lack the dispositions essential to effective teaching” (p. 4). Even with a firm grasp of content and pedagogical knowledge many individuals do not succeed in the role of classroom teacher. Waiscko (2004) believes, “most teachers who do not succeed fail because they do not have the right dispositions” (p. 40).

According to Usher, Usher, and Usher (2003), there are three major issues involved in designing professional development opportunities that foster growth in teachers’ dispositions. The first of these issues is creating an atmosphere that makes involvement and participation possible. Activities attuned to the learners’ needs and interests, setting clear yet flexible limits, and providing a sense of identification and belonging all contribute to an atmosphere that is challenging yet nonthreatening.

The second issue is the need to provide information and experience that is relevant. Usher and colleagues (2003) believe this can be accomplished by a focus on important principles and structures related to the predetermined needs of the group. Providing information on best practices in a variety of formats and diverse approaches ensures the knowledge communicated within the framework of the workshop will be disseminated in the most effective manner.

The third issue focuses on the necessity of professional development participants to develop personal meaning from the understanding gained from each opportunity. Some approaches to promote the exploration and discovery of personal meaning are reflection, discussion groups, and relaxed structure and timing. These three primary learning conditions may serve as guidelines for the development of effective dispositions in a variety of formats: individual projects, lessons, workshops, courses, units, and entire programs of study as each play a role in the pursuit of professional knowledge.

Element 5.2

Continue to pursue the development of professional knowledge and dispositions.

The importance of pursuing the development of professional knowledge is supported by the findings of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998):

What needs to be learned cannot be seen as the consummate function of an undergraduate program or a fifth-year credential program.... Instead, teacher preparation must be seen as a long-term developmental process, beginning with undergraduate preparation, continuing with professional schooling in upper-division and fifth-year courses, and field practica and continuing further once teachers are technically credentialed. (p. 284)

Feiman-Nemser (2001) recommends that professional development be a consistent part of every teacher's learning-to-teach continuum. Central to the recommendation is her view of the new reform model of teaching.

If conventional models emphasize teaching as telling and learning as listening, reform-oriented models call for teachers to do more listening as they elicit student thinking and assess their understanding and for students to do more asking and explaining.... Teachers who embrace this kind of teaching must also be practical intellectuals, curriculum developers, and generators of knowledge in practice. (p. 1015)

The two most common forms of professional development are staff development sponsored by school districts and courses offered as part of a university graduate degree program. Both of these experiences provide knowledge in a form that is decontextualized and disconnected from teachers' classrooms. Often there is little ongoing support to encourage a change in teachers' belief and practice. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) and Hawley and Valli (1999) suggest that professional development experiences that build on the needs of teachers can result in a positive and valuable change in beliefs and practice.

McLane and McNamee (1997) describe a Chicago professional development program for participating Head Start teachers that included a 10-month program of seminars and on-site experience. The Erikson Institute provided an introduction to new activities, strategies, and concepts the teachers took into their classrooms. Initially, the institute staff noticed that the information they provided in the professional development workshops was modified in

such a way that much of the effect on literacy development was lost. An example of this type of adaptation was the way in which preschool teachers frequently favored oral over written communication. By turning shared storybook reading into storytelling, group writing into storytelling, and dramatic play into an activity that disregarded the influence of the written word, the teachers made modifications that lost the ability to foster the development of both reading *and* writing. Continued communication with the workshop participants, a hallmark of effective professional development, was the key that empowered these teachers to modify their previous beliefs and adaptations, maximizing the effect of this new learning on literacy development for the Head Start children.

The NRP (NICHD, 2000) searched for experimental studies investigating the qualities of teacher preparation programs leading to improvement in students' reading comprehension. The four programs analyzed were inservice professional development opportunities, rather than part of a preservice, undergraduate program. Although the studies differed along parameters such as teacher preparation method, intervention, and type of student, as a whole they indicated that providing teachers with instruction that helps them create lessons with high levels of student involvement had positive effects on reading comprehension. With regard to teacher preparation the studies, examined questions such as these:

- Can teachers learn to be more explicit in explaining the reasoning associated with using basal text skills as strategies? (Duffy et al., 1987)
- Will instruction for teachers in how to gradually release responsibility for active reading (transactional strategy instruction) be effective in helping severely reading-delayed adolescents take a more active approach to understanding informational texts? (Anderson, 1992)
- Will teacher training in direct explanation, modeling, coaching, and scaffolded practice of Transactional Strategy Instruction result in increased comprehension, strategy use, and more personalized understandings of text? (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996)

The panel concluded that as a result of effective professional development programs, proficiency in teaching comprehension strategies lead to improved performance on the part of their students. However, the panel cautioned that, "Teaching comprehension strategies in the natural setting of the classroom involves a level of proficiency and flexibility that often requires substantial and intensive teacher preparation" (p. 4-126). They suggest further research regarding how much professional development is needed to achieve and maintain proficiency in teaching comprehension strategies.

In addition to these studies, the NRP (NICHD, 2000) analyzed 21 studies investigating the effectiveness of inservice preparation of reading teachers. In order to be included in the analysis, the studies needed to include data on student outcomes as well as data on teacher change. The distribution of studies across the K-12 grade levels revealed a preponderance of studies at the elementary level with only a few studies at the secondary level. The topics investigated in these studies included comprehension and strategy instruction,

general methods, classroom management and improving teachers' attitudes. More than half of the studies (16) provided professional development experiences for an entire school year. There were 6 studies that extended over multiple school years. In every study where teacher outcomes showed improvement there was a concomitant gain in student achievement. However, the panel found no relationship between the duration of the professional development program and student outcomes. Due to the divergent content of the programs studied there were few specific conclusions as to the content of the professional development programs. However, some general implications suggested that extensive support, both in time and money, is essential for effective professional development. Since it is difficult to maintain a change in practice without a change in attitude, the panel was heartened to find that teacher attitudes did positively change as a result of the interventions. It would be beneficial if future research focuses on how to sustain this change in teacher attitude and student achievement.

Element 5.3

Work with colleagues to observe, evaluate, and provide feedback on each other's practice.

Collaboration with colleagues in order to improve practice is an essential aspect of effective professional development experiences. According to Snow and colleagues (1998), "Professional development includes not only formal meetings and courses but also opportunities for teachers to work with each other and to visit classrooms" (p. 284). Collaborative discussions regarding planning and implementing instruction and collective assessment of student work enables teachers to learn from others' experiences. Langer, Colton, and Goff (2003) present the *Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning* (CASL) as a framework for this type of conversation. The goal of CASL is to help teachers develop a culture of inquiry to result in a deeper understanding of the link between their instruction and student learning. In order to avoid the pitfall of collaborative conversations degenerating into simply sharing anecdotes, the CASL process does the following:

- Focuses on student work samples relative to a particular content standard
- Engages teachers in a study of selected students' learning over time
- Follows a systematic analysis cycle
- Occurs within a collaborative culture for inquiry
- Provides written documentation of teacher and student learning (p. 3)

In addition, using student work samples in conjunction with descriptions of instruction, perhaps supplemented by classroom videos, moves the discussion out of the anecdotal arena into an area supported by evidence.

The descriptive review (Carini, 1986) is a process by which a presenting teacher requests a review by fellow teachers of an individual student's problem behavior or learning

difficulty. After the requesting teacher provides a description of the student's physical characteristics, disposition, relationships with others, interests, activities, and learning, the teacher review group asks questions and provides recommendations for the requesting teacher to consider. Although the discussion that occurs as a result of the descriptive review provides new insights into ways to help the specific student under study, Featherstone (1993) speculates that it may also enrich the knowledge base of all the participating teachers by providing insights on how to help other children as well.

The Community of Learners project (Grossman & Wineburg, 1998; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001) describes the development of conversations within a group of high school English and history teachers as they participated in a monthly book club discussion group. The discussion provided opportunities to practice evidence-based reactions and interpretations of text, which led to more complex and productive discussions as this group of teacher-learners met later to design an interdisciplinary humanities curriculum. Participation in the group allowed the participants to practice the same type of reading and resultant discussion that they hoped to develop in their own students.

In addition to collaborative conversations among teachers at the same site, frequent and open communication with professionals located on other school campuses, university professors, subject matter organizations, and community resource people are needed to offer teachers a more extensive body of knowledge and support (Lieberman & Grolnick, 1996; Vaishali, 2007).

Element 5.4

Participate in, initiate, and evaluate professional development programs.

Beginning teachers need support provided by well-planned mentorship programs and more experienced teachers must continue to receive effective inservice opportunities. Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues that "learning continues for thoughtful teachers as long as they remain in teaching" (p. 1039). According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), the opportunity to participate in both mentoring and inservice programs is essential to the maintenance of a cadre of professional teachers.

Snow and colleagues (1998) suggest that teachers must be prepared in the following areas in order to provide opportunities for children to become readers:

- Linguistic and psychological studies through which they can understand the distinctive features of oral and written language
- Rhetorical, sociological, sociolinguistic, and anthropological studies through which they can understand genres, registers, and functions of texts as well as social and cultural contexts of texts and literacy activities
- Pedagogy of reading through which they can understand how to use a variety of texts, integrate school experience with written language out of school, develop activities to practice letter-sound association, word identification, and comprehension and

develop activities to encourage the cooperation of families and communities in helping children learn to read

- Psychology of reading through which they can understand oral language, phoneme identity, letter–sound association, working memory, and the ontology of alphabetic reading and writing

Can all of this knowledge be assimilated within the one or two courses taken as the reading requirement in most undergraduate, preservice education programs? The likely answer is that teachers must continue to participate in, initiate, and evaluate professional development experiences throughout their careers. Teachers must have ongoing preparation to ensure access to new knowledge in literacy and to provide them with tools to appropriately place this new knowledge into their instructional framework. Schools where teachers have input into the focus and implementation of these efforts result in a healthy workplace culture, empowering educators (Adams, 2007). District professional development programs such as those associated with federal policies (e.g., Put Reading First) should not be undertaken without input from those who will be most affected—the classroom teacher (Jehlen, 2007). Jehlen’s study, conducted in North Carolina, surveyed both teachers and administrators. The study revealed that “nearly all principals reported that teachers are central to educational decisions, while only half of teachers felt this to be true” (p. 11). Clearly, this important issue merits further discussion in the context of individual schools.

Effective models for inservice education include modeling, coaching, and explicit feedback for participants (Winn & Mitchell, 1991). Although these are important considerations, Futrell, Holmes, Christie, and Cushman (1995) suggest that teacher involvement in the planning and development of sessions results in experiences that more clearly meet their needs. A preference for professional development delivered on site is also suggested. According to Showers and Joyce (1996), about 10% of workshop participants actually implement the knowledge they receive. Consequently, care in how information is presented is of great importance in planning a professional development experience. Staff development that focuses on working collaboratively with teachers over time have been beneficial in helping to place new instructional methodologies in the classroom (Foegen, Espin, Allinder, & Markell, 2001). Snow and colleagues (1998) posit that when staff development involves teacher discussion groups as well as school–university partnerships and activities associated with NBPTS certification, a positive form of collective responsibility for student learning develops. They believe that these collaborative partnerships can bring about more lasting change than the common one-shot workshops. Rather than simply sharing personal experiences and anecdotes, in collaborative conversations the focus of the discussion should be specific practices and possibilities for improving instruction and student learning. Care should be taken so that collaborative study and inquiry groups do not become simply emotional support groups (Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). Professional development can take place through serious, ongoing discussions teachers have about teaching,

learning, subject matter, and students. Ball and Cohen (1999) suggest that teachers can develop a deep sense of efficacy as a result of such conversations.

Teachers can improve their practice when they work together by looking at other students' work and observing in one another's classroom. The objective viewpoint of a fellow professional can enable teachers to see strengths and weaknesses in their instruction and give a new perspective to the work students do as a result of that instruction. This working in community encourages teachers to play a more active role by participating in school-based decision making. From a holistic viewpoint, successful professional development should include the collective wisdom that thoughtful teachers can generate by working together. Action research, projects, teacher study groups, and school improvement initiatives are a few of the formats this collaboration can take. Adams (2007) suggests that collaboration is most likely to happen when it is encouraged by building-level administrators. She states, "Forced collegiality, when the principal requires collaboration on a prescribed agenda, often doesn't work. Learning communities work when teachers have an internal commitment to the group and choose the topics themselves" (p. 48). If our goal for students is that they be able to work cooperatively to construct knowledge, this will best happen when their classroom teachers learn to work together collaboratively to produce the very best in collegial, collaborative communities of practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Conclusion

We can conclude that professional development supports teachers in enhancing their pedagogical and content expertise: "An important part of learning to teach involves transforming different kinds of knowledge into a flexible, evolving set of commitments, understandings, and skills" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1048). The use of terms like *deepening*, *refining*, and *extending* to frame these tasks implies that learning to teach involves continuing growth and development in core aspects of teaching.

FURTHER READING

Allen, J. (2006). *Becoming a literacy leader: Supporting learning and change*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

This resource discusses ideas for the many practical challenges literacy leaders face, including how to organize a literacy room with resources for teachers, possible interventions for struggling readers, coaching teachers, and creating model programs for schoolwide problems (i.e., study groups).

Bean, R. (2004). *The reading specialist: Leadership for the classroom, school, and community*. New York: Guilford.

This book discusses the many responsibilities of the reading specialist and provides research-based frameworks for working with struggling readers and their teachers, providing professional development and coaching, planning curriculum, assessment

administration, collaborating with parents and other stakeholders, and writing grant proposals.

Kise, J.A. (2004). *Differentiated coaching: A framework for helping teachers change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This book melds the latest research on personality type, multiple intelligences, experiential learning models, and mind styles models to generate a model for staff professional development.

Langer, G.M., Colton, A.B., & Goff, L.S. (2003). *Collaborative analysis of student work: Improving teaching and learning*. Baltimore: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This text offers a structured framework for working with teachers in collaboratively examining and reflecting upon student work to ultimately affect student achievement.

Robb, L. (2000). *Redefining staff development: A collaborative model for teachers and administrators*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using activities that all educators should be involved with (reading, self-evaluating, discussing, kid and colleague watching, peer mentoring, and collaborating), this book describes how to go about making meaningful changes for teachers and administrators.

Vogt, M.E., & Shearer, B.A. (2006). *Reading specialists and literacy coaches in the real world* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Designed to assist reading specialists and literacy coaches implement reading programs at the school and district levels, this text includes both theoretical and practical information to implement, coordinate, and evaluate reading/language arts programs.

The CaseNEX case study selected for Standard 5 addresses Element 5.3, working collaboratively with colleagues. The content rubric for Element 5.3 allows a high score of 7 and a low score of 0 (see Standard 5 Rubric, Appendix, p. 155).

Case Study for Standard 5: Professional Development

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Pandora's Box, Scene 3

"Mrs. Ferndon," Alexandria smiled at me both shyly and mischievously. "Read the dinosaur book?" She was one of my favorites this year, not only because I was touched by the story of her adoption and prior life as an orphan in Russia, but because I loved to see her sparkle when she opened up a bit. Although she was still hesitant to speak in front of the class or even in small groups of native speakers, one-on-one she was much more conversational, so I usually found time throughout the day to help her individually and regularly paired her with just one peer. Between my class, her parents, and daily time in Judith's class, her English was developing quickly and I knew she could understand most of what went on. I was fairly certain she'd place out of ESOL by the end of second grade.

Alexandria went to the side book shelf, returning with *The Big Book of Dinosaurs* and the plastic baggie of felt dinosaurs that went with it. She had read this book a number of times and had most of the information memorized. I'd shown her a few websites about dinosaurs, and she clearly had prior experience with a mouse, as she negotiated the screen quite nimbly. She was most concerned with how each dinosaur escaped from danger, and after reading the book, she'd quietly stage various predator and prey scenarios with the felt dinosaurs. I sometimes followed up with writing activities and the sentences she was constructing were quite impressive. Last week I transcribed, "I ride *ornithomimus*," one of the fastest dinosaurs, "to escape if *T. rex* come after me."

I must say her parents followed up on whatever we did in class, in this instance, taking her to a natural history museum and buying dinosaur books.

But I still didn't have a SMART Board like Judith.

At parent conferences, we'd talked about ways to help Alexandria, and I'd hinted heavily about how effective technology was at enhancing lessons and providing individualized instructional support. Their response had both puzzled and irritated me.

"Have you used the SMART Board we donated yet?" Her father, Colby, had asked.

“Well, no, it’s in Mrs. Shearborn’s classroom.”

“Can’t you move it to your classroom for part of the day? We really want Alexandria to have access to lessons using it as much as possible. That’s why we gave it to the school.” He sounded a bit exasperated with me.

The thought of disconnecting all those cords, transporting the behemoth across the hall, reconnecting everything, and then doing the same process in reverse, all while monitoring students, sent a shudder down my spine. Did he really think Judith and I should and could share?

But he was serious and he obviously had clout. He’d gone to Helen Washington, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the county, who had sent me yet another email regarding the collaboration Judith and I were supposed to be working on, along with a copy of our technology standards for K–2 students and teachers. Helen had even gone ahead and hired a sub for the past two Wednesday afternoons so that I could observe Judith working with Alexandria and her classmates. Our follow-up meeting was scheduled for this Wednesday, when we were supposed to develop a more integrated unit than our usual slapdash “plan.”

It had been an interesting experience sitting in Judith’s room as students I normally saw as shy and silent waved hands excitedly and eagerly participated. But, to be honest, it was the SMART Board that held my attention and not what the students were doing. It was just so *cool*! With its large illuminated screen, it compelled not just my focus, but that of the students as well.

Judith Shearborn’s Reading Lesson (video transcript)

Judith: OK, so today I made some pictures [Pointing to a row of pictures at the bottom of a SMART Board], and we’re going to sort the pictures. [Judith holds up two books, *Arrow to the Sun* and *Moon Rope*.] We’re going to put each picture under the title it goes with and when we’re finished we’re going to talk about characters, setting, problem, and solution. Who remembers what those words mean? Who remembers what *characters* mean?

Student: The people in the book.

Judith: Very good, the people in the book. Who remembers what the setting is. Jose?

Jose: Where it happens.

Judith: Where it happens, excellent. Every book has a problem. Who remembers what that word *problem* means? Nina?

Nina: What is going on wrong in the story.

Judith: What is going on wrong in that story. And what about *solution*? Alexandra?

Alexandra: How do you solve the problem.

Judith: How do you solve the problem, how do you fix it and make it right. This person is a character. Which book do you think that person is from? What do you think Christian?

Christian: Um, *Arrow to the Sun*.

Judith: OK, let's come over here and see if we can move it over there. And if we're having... [Christian walks to the board, selects a picture, and moves it to a location underneath the title, *Arrow to the Sun*.] that's good, good job Christian, nice. So there we have a character for *Arrow to the Sun*. Now, did *Moon Rope* have people in it?

Students: No.

Judith: No.

Students: Animals.

Judith: Animals. Can you see one of the animals that's in *Moon Rope*. Tara?

Tara: A fox.

Judith: A fox. Can you put the fox over to *Moon Rope*? [Tara moves the picture of the fox to a location under the title *Moon Rope*] Nice job. There was another animal in *Moon Rope* but it was a funny animal that dug tunnels. Do you remember what that was called? Do you remember Julio?

Julio: A mole.

Judith: A mole. Is there a picture of a mole there? Where is he? There he is. [Julio moves the picture of the mole under *Moon Rope*] Good job. I'm going to move this over just a little so he doesn't cover Mr. Fox there. [Julio places the picture of the mole too close to the fox so Judith moves it over a bit] So what do I have here? These are the what?

Students: Characters.

Judith: So I'm going to spell characters. [Judith writes the word *characters* on the SMART Board] Good. Now what is the next thing we talked about after characters? Yes?

Student: Where...

Judith: Where... [Leading student]

Student: Where it happens.

Judith: Where it happens. And who remembers what that word is? Nina?

Nina: The setting.

Judith: The setting, excellent. Emmanuel, what's the setting for *Arrow to the Sun*?

Emmanuel: The Hopi Indians.

Judith: The Hopi Indians; very good. Why don't we put him down because we're going to write something next to him? [Judith takes the picture of the Hopi Indians from the bottom of the board and places it under *Arrow to the Sun*] Now the other one, we talked about it took place in a country. You remember? What country are you studying right now in social studies? Zachary?

Zachary: Mexico.

Judith: Mexico. Do you see a map of Mexico up there? [Judith points to the pictures at the bottom of the SMART Board] [Zachary points to Mexico] Good job. They're kind of together. Nice job, Zachary. Why don't we put it down here, right across from this setting so then I can write next to it? [Zachary places the picture under the title *Arrow to the Sun* across from the word *setting*] All right. Good. So we have the characters for both stories, and now we have the setting for both stories. Can someone help me spell *setting*? Who can help me spell *setting*? What's the copy cat letter for "c", the other letter that makes that /sss/?

Students: S.

Judith: S, you got it. S, now what. Set, Set...there's a T but there's a missing letter. Do you know what it is Julio, I mean Christian? Se...e...e...e...

Christian: Y?

Judith: No, but close. Nina?

Nina: E.

Judith: Everybody knew that didn't they. Set...

Students: T, T.

Judith: Good for you, and then, ing...

Students: I, N, G.

Judith: Oh you're such super spellers. Setting, OK.

I left Judith's room abuzz with ideas and full of enthusiasm. If only I had a SMART Board in my room! It just didn't seem fair that she had the only one.

I slipped back into my classroom to jot down ideas while the sub attempted to finish up the lesson and end the day. Settling into my desk in the back of the room, I opened my notebook and began chewing on my pen as I mulled over what I'd seen. Glancing around the room, I saw that Alexandria had slipped away from the group and was surreptitiously playing with the felt dinosaurs in another corner. As I watched her maneuver the figures, I began to wonder about Judith's lesson. It was great to see the kids becoming more comfortable with the literacy terms we'd been studying and being able to correctly sort the characters from the two stories. But was the lesson really that revolutionary?

Judith and I were supposed to meet next week. I was sure Judith expected the rave reviews and positive feedback she usually got. I didn't want her to get defensive, but I was feeling the pressure from both Helen Washington [the director of Curriculum and Instruction for the county] and Colby Martin [a parent who donated the SMART Board to the school.]. If we really were going to integrate both our curriculums and our technology according to the standards Helen sent me, we would have to do things differently.

As I struggled to muster enthusiasm for working with Judith, I thought back to the arrival of the big box last summer. How little I realized then the problems it would create.

Question for response: As a reading coach, how would you respond to Judith's lesson with the Smart Board? How would you assist Maxie in working with Judith to ensure collaboration and equality in using technology? Be sure to include a rationale for your response.

Context of Administration

The sample responses were elicited as a part of a take-home final exam in a reading seminar course toward the end of a graduate program in reading. The course included several weeks on the topic of leadership and professionalism in reading education as well as the role of a reading specialist in schools. Candidates were provided the case and allowed to read it over to ask any clarifying questions they may have had at the end of class. The responses were due within seven days to be uploaded to the candidates' electronic portfolios for review by the instructor. Collaboration was not allowed and candidates signed an honor statement to verify that their responses were their own work. Before scoring the responses, the instructor and candidates' advisor met to create a list of possible responses based on course objectives and readings to set minimum, but not exclusive, criteria for scoring. The list included addressing the use (low level) of technology and how that might be expanded, practical issues of sharing the SMART Board (an interactive whiteboard), and ways and reasons to effectively foster collaboration to enhance learning for all students.

Responses

The first response mentions positive aspects of the case's lesson, as well as the need to collaborate. There is no mention of the possibility of using a higher level of technology with students (see, for reference, Chapter 2, Element 2.2's literature review regarding this topic) or how to approach both teachers with feedback on how to improve the lesson or foster collaboration; rather, the focus is on how to work around practical issues. Although practical issues are regarded as important, based on the content of the course experienced by the candidates, more could have been written to demonstrate stronger leadership skills, a better understanding of technology use, and how to approach teachers with collaboration strategies. An emerging conceptual understanding is evident in the rationale. (Note that the first response was edited to fit a content score of 3 and a Novice rationale.)

Judith's lesson with the SMART Board was great! It caught the student's attention from the very beginning and for the most part it kept their attention until the end of the lesson. The SMART Board provided the teacher and the students with so many advantages. The students were able to show mastery during the lesson, visual learning students were able to keep up with the lesson with ease, ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] students were able to see different examples on the board that would help them translate in English, the teacher provided a lesson that included technology and was hands on, along with enabling the students to participate in a nontraditional lesson. Judith's lesson showed enthusiasm—the students were eager to learn and eager to answer questions. Using the SMART Board gave the students a lot of motivation—the students wanted to show what they knew.

In speaking with both teachers, I would mention the importance of team work and remembering that the students are our priority. I'd suggest to the teachers that maybe they could move the students and not move the SMART Board as that may be easier than reconnecting the cords each time—that could be very time consuming. The main idea is to help the teachers realize that the SMART Board should be shared and used to the utmost.

The second response scored at the Proficient level. The reasoning behind the response demonstrates a good conceptual understanding of the issues raised, although not all possible issues are mentioned (i.e., the level of technology use), thus the content score awarded was 4. In addition, professional development pertaining to collaboration is suggested, but we (Mary, as the instructor, as well as the remaining authors) would have liked to see more specific suggestions as to actual activities or strategies that might be implemented by the reading coach to resolve the dilemma of sharing the SMART Board and at the same time, move the teachers to a true spirit of collaboration (i.e., team building activities, Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning, learning communities, and so forth).

As a reading coach I would say that this lesson has been taught using effective instructional strategies, it has been designed paying attention to the students' instructional needs and levels of language development. The lesson keeps the students engaged at all times, the teacher provides opportunities for all students to participate. She uses technology to make her lesson creative and motivates the students to learn. She also uses technology to support learner-centered strategies addressing the students' diverse needs, and she applies technology to develop students' creativity. She uses a variety of effective ESOL strategies that help the students to understand and apply grade level material.

In a situation like this the leadership role of the reading coach needs to motivate others to work together to improve students' learning. The reading coach may ask Judith to lead the team as she is the experienced teacher, but at the same time the reading coach should also encourage Maxie to actively participate

by providing feedback and new ideas. As the reading coach, it is very important to establish a clear understanding of the goal to be achieved and a commitment to achieving that goal (Bean, 2004).

Judith seems to be a very good and experienced classroom teacher, but she needs the support of the reading coach in knowing how to collaborate with Maxie. The lesson is effective for meeting Judith's lesson objectives, but the way they are "collaborating" is neither effective nor efficient. Dieker (2005) lists barriers teachers face when collaborating, including shortage of time, grading, student readiness, and teacher readiness. Considering these barriers, it would be effective if the reading coach, in this particular situation, could provide professional development on collaboration and cooperative teaching for these two teachers that would address the barriers mentioned by Dieker. It would also be very helpful to model the process to make sure it is carried out in a smooth and professional way to avoid personal conflicts and to ensure effectiveness. The reading coach has a determinant role in assisting teachers in how to carry out collaboration. This needs to be addressed at school sites to improve student learning and avoid possible professional conflict.

References

Bean, R. (2004). *The reading specialist: Leadership for the classroom, school, and community*. New York: Guilford.

Dieker, L. (2005). *An introduction to cooperative teaching*. Retrieved April 28, 2007, from www.specialconnections.ku.edu/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/specconn/main.php?cat=collaboration&ion=coteaching/main

The third response indicates a deep conceptual understanding of the issues raised and provides specific examples of how the reading coach would work with the teachers to facilitate collaboration and expand the use of the SMART Board with students. The response shows continual questioning of practice and student outcomes, pointing to modeling and scaffolding by the reading coach to initiate teacher reflection and discussion. The response received a content score of 7 with a Distinguished rationale because strong and appropriate leadership skills are evident.

As the reading coach at Gloucester Elementary School, I have various responsibilities to the school and the staff. Among my assignments, I work with teachers on a one to one basis to help assist them by providing them with additional support in their classrooms. This year, one of our student's parents donated a SMART Board to our school to facilitate their daughter's learning. The board is being used by Judith, the ESL teacher. However, the parents would like for their daughter to have as much access to the SMART Board as possible. This means that Maxie, her first grade teacher, and Judith need to develop a way to collaborate on their lessons and use the technology together.

While observing Judith's lesson, I noticed that there were many positive aspects of using the SMART Board in the classroom. It allows the students to participate actively in the lesson and work with technology. During the lesson, Judith incorporated many useful strategies to teach her ESL students. She is careful to use repetition of vocabulary and key terms. She also incorporates phonics instruction to help the students develop their spelling and decoding skill. The classroom also appears to be a safe learning environment. The students are obviously very comfortable with Judith and their lesson. Judith is very supportive and is consistently praising the students for their answers and participation.

After the observation, I would arrange to meet with Judith to discuss her lesson and additional suggestions for using the SMART Board. I would ask her some questions for reflection and to see how content she is with her lesson. Also, I would like for her decide in which areas she may need added support from me. Some of the questions that come to mind are:

- Are your students demonstrating growth in the use of oral language?
- Are they stating their ideas orally in complete sentences?
- Do they have an appropriate grasp of vocabulary?
- Are they capable of following oral instructions?
- Do they participate actively during instruction?
- Are they differentiating and using phonemes appropriately?
- Can they identify parts of the plot?
- Do they have strong decoding and spelling skills?

As Judith reflects and responds to questions about her lesson, we can talk about specific aspects of the lesson and brainstorm strategies that can complement her instruction. We should also discuss the students' progress and how the SMART Board impacted their progression. Following reflection, we need to discuss how to use class time more effectively and develop appropriate instructional activities to fit the need of the ESL students.

The SMART Board needs to enhance the students' lessons. Judith needs to develop lessons that use the board at a higher technological level. The lessons must facilitate the students' ability to interact with technology, while providing the students with opportunities to learn and discover new ideas. Examples of suggestions include the use of the SMART Board for interactive writing, language experience approach, or accessing the Internet to take a shared Google Lit Trip (a virtual field trip based on a book or novel).

Judith's job is directly related with the general classroom teacher, Maxie. Judith and Maxie share the same students and should collaborate for more effective instruction. Until now, there has been very little collaboration between

the two teachers. However, with the addition of the SMART Board, they need to find a way to plan their lessons more carefully and share the new technology.

First of all, I would recommend that Judith and Maxie attend professional development workshops together. They need to make sure to make the most of their time planning together and attend technology workshops to facilitate their use of the SMART Board.

As the reading coach, I would meet with each teacher individually and establish the goals and objectives that each teacher would like to achieve. Then I would hold a group meeting with Judith and Maxie, after they have attended their collaboration workshop, to help them with their joint lessons and provide them with support. In a sense, I would become a mediator between the two in an attempt to help them begin working together comfortably.

During the group meeting, Maxie and Judith should use any skills or strategies that they acquired during the teacher collaboration workshop. I would encourage the teachers to work on certain areas that may help them improve their planning time and lessons. I would suggest that they develop a schedule that is convenient for both of them to share the SMART Board. They can set aside time for Maxie to bring her class into Judith's room so that she too can use the SMART Board. I would also provide some suggestions on how they can develop lessons across the curriculum. They can complement each other's math, science, language arts, and social studies lessons to enhance student learning.

Both Judith and Maxie need to observe each other teaching. They should be aware of their teaching styles, the materials they are using, and the lessons being taught. Once both teachers have had an opportunity to work with the SMART Board they can meet to reflect on their experiences. The SMART Board has a very useful function, in that you can print all the lessons that are written on the board. Judith and Maxie can bring their print out and review the information that was taught, the strategies used, and develop ways to enhance their work. They can also reflect on each other's lessons and provide positive feedback for planning future lessons. In this case, I would continue meeting with Judith and Maxie during their planning time, but begin taking a more passive role. I would offer them any assistance they may need and gradually decrease my involvement in their collaboration.