

P.S. 18 John Peter Zenger

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. 18 John Peter Zenger conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as being in 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. 18 John Peter Zenger

Located in the Bronx, P.S. 18 John Peter Zenger (X018) is an elementary school with 485 students from prekindergarten through Grade 5. Ninety-seven percent of the student population is eligible for free lunch, and two percent is eligible for reduced-priced lunch. Thirty-two percent of the students are black or African American, and 66 percent are Hispanic or Latino. Twenty-five percent of the students are classified as limited English proficient, and 22 percent, as students with disabilities. The average attendance rate for the 2009–2010 school year was 90 percent.

In 2009–2010, P.S. 18 did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) for all students, the black or African American subgroup, the Hispanic or Latino subgroup, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. In 2010–2011, P.S. 18's state accountability status was designated as "Restructuring (year 1)."¹

Audit Process at P.S. 18 John Peter Zenger

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. 18 John Peter Zenger. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school during a co-interpretationSM meeting on May 16, 2011. During this meeting, 11 stakeholders from the P.S. 18 John Peter Zenger 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/2010/84/AOR-2010-320700010018.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 P.S. 18 John Peter Zenger.

Key Findings

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

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

There is insufficient evidence of a systematic vocabulary/spelling program.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by information from classroom observations. Although some classes showed evidence of vocabulary and spelling lessons, the school did not appear to have a systematic curriculum for either vocabulary or spelling instruction. The methods and techniques, when present, varied in form and level of use in each of the observed classrooms.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

It is not evident that instructional time is being maximized.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by information from classroom observations. In a number of the observed classrooms, instructional time was lost time due to interruptions, inconsistent transition techniques, and ineffective approaches for keeping students on task.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

There is not enough collaboration across subgroups—general education, English language learners (ELLs), and special education teachers—and across grade levels.

Critical Key Finding 3 is based on information from teacher survey results. Although the majority of teachers agree that there is collaboration across subgroups and grade levels, a significant minority (20–25 percent) reported that such collaboration is limited.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

Student engagement is not consistent and not at an adequate level.

Critical Key Finding 4 is supported by information from classroom observations. In one classroom observed, 50 percent of students were on task during independent reading. In another observed classroom, only half of the class responded to a journal assignment. Teachers did not take advantage of opportunities to increase engagement. When calling on students, teachers called only on volunteers, allowing some students to opt out of participation.

Positive Key Findings

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:

The school is beginning to utilize different technology tools to enhance learning across content areas.

Positive Key Finding 1 is supported by information from school interviews and classroom observations. Teachers were observed using different technology tools, such as a document camera. According to information from school interviews, the school will be receiving more computers and interactive whiteboards.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 2:

There is evidence to indicate the use of the Common Core State Standards.

Positive Key Finding 2 is supported by information from the review of school-submitted documents and interviews. According to interview respondents, the school has developed units of study that connect to the real world and align with the Common Core State Standards. Student work lining the hallways also referenced the Common Core State Standards. The school's documents regarding the Common Core State Standards emphasize the need for curricular and instructional changes, different means of assessment, and ongoing professional development.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

Participants at the P.S. 18 co-interpretation prioritized several key findings that identify where the school's ELA program and instruction can improve, as well as several positive findings highlighting school strengths. The findings point to a need to improve the routines of the classroom. One of the findings is related to low student engagement and the other to instructional time not being fully used. When classroom routines are not in place, instructional time is lost, and students are less likely to maintain their engagement in academic tasks. Improving routines would have a positive impact on subject areas other than English language arts.

Positive key findings include the school's use of the Common Core State Standards. Because New York State has adopted these standards, a recommendation is included that addresses alignment to the Common Core State Standards and may be helpful for the school's ongoing efforts related to the standards.

Any efforts to improve the curriculum and instruction are based on professional development, particularly job-embedded professional development opportunities that allow teachers to support one another's learning. One of the four recommendations provided in this report addresses professional learning, particularly job-embedded professional learning.

THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Develop and implement with fidelity a schoolwide vocabulary program and a spelling program.
2. Develop and implement with fidelity a plan to maximize instructional time and increase student engagement in every classroom.
3. Develop and implement 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: Vocabulary and Spelling

Develop and implement with fidelity a schoolwide vocabulary program and a spelling program.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Vocabulary. One of the most persistent findings in reading research is that the size of students' vocabulary relates strongly to their reading comprehension and overall academic success (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Becker, 1977; Davis, 1942; Whipple, 1925). Although most word learning occurs incidentally through experiences with oral language and wide reading (National Reading Panel, 2000), intentional, explicit teaching of specific words and word-learning strategies can both add words to students' vocabularies (Tomeson & Aarnoutse, 1998; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990) and improve reading comprehension of texts containing those words (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Pople, 1985; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Effective instruction includes opportunities for both incidental word learning and intentional word learning. Vocabulary instruction should address academic vocabulary, which is critical to understanding the concepts of the content taught in school.

Research shows that background knowledge is more important to the understanding of reading than IQ. According to Marzano (2004), the most important factor in ensuring that students have the background knowledge to understand the content they will encounter in the areas of science, social studies, and so on, is the provision of direct instruction in academic vocabulary terms to students. Academic vocabulary is the vocabulary critical to understanding the concepts of the content taught in school. Vocabulary instruction in specific content-area terms builds up students' background knowledge in the content areas. When students understand the academic vocabulary, it is easier for them to understand the information they will read and hear in class.

Spelling. Among the instructional approaches for improving student spelling are the use of self-corrected pretests, the test-study-test method, teaching and practicing a method of studying spelling words, and copying a word no less than three times (Schlagal, 2002). That said, there is no consensus on how best to teach spelling. Researchers have described three major positions on spelling instruction—the incidental approach, the developmental word-study approach, and the basal speller approach.

- Educators supporting the incidental approach argue that a specific spelling curriculum is unnecessary, and that spelling is best learned from reading and writing. Lessons are taught as the need arises through minilessons and editing workshops. Students are encouraged to keep notebooks for study and reference of words they misspell.
- Educators using the developmental word-study approach monitor the progression of students through developmental stages (concrete letter-sound to sound-pattern to meaning-pattern). They focus on what students are “using but confusing.”
- The basal speller approach focuses on a sequence of developmentally appropriate word patterns for students to learn at each grade level. The spelling curriculum is organized around the words and patterns students at a particular grade level need for their writing.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

An online vocabulary game that helps to feed the world's hungry:

www.freerice.com

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Provide opportunities to broaden students' vocabulary exposure.

Vocabulary refers to words students must know to read increasingly demanding text with comprehension. Effective vocabulary instruction includes opportunities for both incidental word learning and intentional word teaching. A comprehensive vocabulary program should include the following components:

- Frequent, varied, and extensive language experiences
- Teaching individual words through explicit vocabulary instruction
- Teaching word learning strategies
- Strategies for fostering word consciousness (Graves, 2006)

Vocabulary can be learned through reading and talking (incidental word learning). To promote incidental word learning, teachers provide opportunities to use oral language experiences at school to promote vocabulary growth. Reading children's books aloud, particularly when accompanied by teacher-student talk, can increase students' vocabularies. Once students are reading on their own, a wide range of reading materials will aid vocabulary growth.

Intentional and explicit instruction of specific words and word-learning strategies also is important. In selecting specific words to teach, teachers should consider two criteria: importance (words that are important to understanding a specific reading selection or concept) and usefulness and frequency (words that are generally useful for students to know and that they are likely to encounter with some frequency in their reading).

Students should be given a student-friendly definition of the words targeted for explicit instruction. They also should be repeatedly exposed to new words in multiple oral and written contexts and provided sufficient practice opportunities for learning words. Researchers estimate that it could take as many as 17 exposures for a student to learn a new word. Repeated exposure will be most effective if exposures occur over an extended period of time. For this reason, a small number of words should be selected for each week and receive attention all week. Teachers should give students sufficient opportunities to use new vocabulary in a variety of contexts through activities such as discussion, writing, and independent reading.

Students require strategies that will support them in learning new vocabulary independently. Students can be taught the word learning strategies, such as learning to use context clues to determine word meanings; learning to use dictionaries and other word resources; and learning to use base words, prefixes, and suffixes to figure out meanings for words.

Academic vocabulary should be built throughout elementary school. To facilitate the development of students' academic vocabulary, the school can develop a list of academic vocabulary words and terms by grade level, which all teachers will teach. Marzano and Pickering in their book, *Building Academic Vocabulary: Teacher's Manual* (2005), provide a list of academic vocabulary terms that schools can use to create

their own list of subject-specific vocabulary words. They recommend that teachers teach one word weekly for each academic subject (30 terms per year per subject). They also recommend that all teachers follow the same six-step process to teach the terms:

- The teacher provides a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
- Students restate the explanation of the new term in their own words.
- Students create a nonlinguistic representation of the term (e.g., draw a picture, a symbol).
- Students periodically do activities that help add to their knowledge of the vocabulary terms.
- Periodically, students are asked to discuss the terms with one another.
- Periodically, students are involved in games that allow them to play with the terms.

2. Provide explicit spelling instruction.

Although the research is limited on effective approaches that improve student spelling, the following practices, as noted by Schlagal (2002) ensure that spelling instruction is explicit.

- Have students study the right words: the words and patterns that are used in children's books.
- Pretest students to identify the words students do not know. If students get less than 40 percent of the words on the pretest correct, they will not master the words on the list or internalize the patterns.
- Have students correct their own pretests.
- Teach students a study method that has this sequence of activities: looking at the word, pronouncing the word, visualizing the word with eyes closed, writing the word, and checking the spelling of the word.
- Have students write each word no more than three times.
- Test the students after a study period (test/study/test).
- Have students study spelling patterns systematically through activities such as word sorting.
- Connect spelling to writing.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Text Talk, developed by Beck and McKeown (2001) is designed to increase both comprehension and vocabulary by incorporating word learning in the context of reading new books. The goals of Text Talk are to develop comprehension with open-ended questions and enhance vocabulary development. In order to increase comprehension, the teacher intersperses open-ended questions that require students to explain and describe text ideas and then asks follow-up questions that encourage elaboration of initial ideas. The pictures in the book are presented after students have responded to the text. Discussions are based on the actual text. Students are not permitted to rely heavily on their background knowledge. This aligns well with the expectations of the Common Core State Standards.

Using explicit instruction, three or four vocabulary words are taught after the story has been read. The teacher gives the word within the context it is used in the story and then provides a student-friendly definition. Students repeat the word and then interact with the word in different contexts to assure understanding. The word is then repeated. This process continues with the remaining words. Finally, students are given exercises using the word—including responding to questions, making comparisons, and choosing the correct word within the context of a scenario.

Coolidge Elementary School, part of the Wyckoff, New Jersey, Public Schools, uses Text Talk and posts Text Talk lessons on its website (<http://www.wyckoffps.org/coolidge/site/default.asp>). Text Talk lessons created by Utah educators for more than 100 books are available on the Utah State Office of Education website (<http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/readingfirst/documents/combinedtexttalkLessons.pdf>).

Recommendation 2: Instruction

Develop and implement with fidelity a plan to maximize instructional time and increase student engagement in every classroom.

LINK TO RESEARCH

After reviewing hundreds of studies on teaching effects, John Hattie concluded that “it is teachers *using particular teaching methods*, teachers *with high expectations for all students*, and teachers *who have created positive student-teacher relationships* that are more likely to have the above average effects on student achievement” (Hattie, 2009, p. 126). Decades of research suggest that three behaviors distinguish highly effective teachers: challenging students, creating a positive classroom environment, and being intentional about their teaching.

Challenging Students. Highly effective teachers set high expectations for all students and challenge their students by providing instruction that develops high-order thinking skills. Rosenthal and Jacobson in their 1965 study coined the term “Pygmalion effect” to describe how teachers’ expectations of students affects the performance of the students. (See Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992.) More than 600 studies conducted since have confirmed that teacher expectations can have a powerful effect on student achievement. Conveying expectations by praising students has minimal effects. Carol Dweck (2006) has determined that praising students by telling them they are smart may actually have a detrimental effect on their achievement.

Positive Environment. Setting high expectations for students is not enough. Teachers must create positive classroom environments and build strong relationships with students. Kleinfeld (1972) identified four types of teachers—traditionalists (teachers who set high expectations for students but offered little academic or emotional support to help students meet those expectations), sophisticates (teachers who were aloof and undemanding), sentimentalists (teachers who were warm but undemanding), and supportive gadflies (teachers who combined high personal warmth with high expectations for students). Researchers since 1972 have used the term “warm demander” to describe effective teachers who set high expectations while nurturing student growth.

Intentionality. Highly effective teachers are intentional about their teaching. They are clear about what they are teaching and have a broad repertoire of instructional strategies to help students accomplish their learning goals. They are intentional in selecting the most appropriate instructional strategy for each situation.

Research suggests that effective literacy instruction needs to be sequenced, systematic, intentional, teacher-directed, and explicit, involving explanations, modeling, and scaffolding. These characteristics are evident in the “gradual-release-of-responsibility” instructional model, introduced by Pearson and Gallagher in 1983 after they reviewed studies on reading comprehension instruction. These researchers found that learning occurred when it happened over time within a repeated instructional cycle that included explanation, guided practice, feedback, independent practice, and application. The gradual-release-of-responsibility model of instruction requires that the teacher shift from assuming “all the responsibility for performing a task...to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility” (Duke &

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

New York City Department of
Education (NYCDOE)
[http://schools.
nyc.gov/Teachers/
TeacherDevelopment/
TeacherDevelopmentToolkit/
PTS/Engagingstudents](http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/TeacherDevelopment/TeacherDevelopmentToolkit/PTS/Engagingstudents)

Pearson, 2002, p. 211). This gradual release may occur over a day, a week, a month, or a year. Pearson and Gallagher envisioned instruction that moved from explicit modeling and instruction to guided practice and then to activities that incrementally positioned students for becoming independent learners.

The gradual-release-of-responsibility model of instruction has been documented as an effective approach for improving literacy achievement (Fisher & Frey, 2007), reading comprehension (Lloyd, 2004), and literacy outcomes for English language learners (Kong & Pearson, 2003).

Related to the gradual-release-of-responsibility model is consistent and active engagement of students in their learning. Student engagement has long been recognized as the core of effective schooling (Marzano & Pickering, 2010). In her framework for enhancing student achievement, Charlotte Danielson (2007) describes exemplary instruction:

All students are highly engaged in learning and make material contributions to the success of the class by asking questions and participating in discussions, getting actively involved in learning activities, and using feedback in their learning. The teacher ensures the success of every student by creating a high-level learning environment; providing timely, high-quality feedback; and continuously searching for approaches that meet student needs. (p. 113)

Studies of effective teachers, effective reading programs, and productive schools show that management at the classroom level is critical to ensuring that time is used well and that reading achievement is maximized (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Samuels, 1981). In classrooms taught by skilled teachers, “more of the time available for learning is spent in activities with academic value” (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 87). There are substantial data that show “that time allocated for academic instruction in a school day can easily slip away when a teacher cannot keep the transitional time, wait time, and behavioral problems to a minimum” (Berliner, 1981, p. 204). In “unsuccessful classrooms time is wasted because routines are not established and there are often interruptions brought about by discipline problems” (Samuels, 1981, p. 271). Even in many average classes, “there is a lack of attention to classroom management that results in considerable inefficiency and reduced achievement on standardized tests of reading” (Berliner, 1981, p. 205).

In contrast, teachers in schools with high levels of literacy “maximize every instructional minute” (Briggs & Thomas, 1997, p. 25). Teachers in effective reading programs “are good managers of their classes. Students know and (most of the time) follow classroom rules” (Briggs & Thomas, 1997, p. 22). The classrooms are characterized as “being orderly because less time is wasted on discipline problems and giving instructions on routine matters such as passing out books and transitions from one activity to another” (Samuels, 1981, p. 269) and because there are routines for ensuring that learning activities run smoothly (Anderson et al., 1985; Briggs & Thomas, 1997). Classroom routines can positively affect students’ academic performance as well as their behavior (Vallecorsa, deBettencourt, & Zigmund, 2000). The bulk of the lesson time is devoted to the lesson at hand (Rutter, 1983). Well-managed classrooms are the hallmark of effective teachers. Research shows that students learn more in classrooms that are well organized. Good classroom management results in high levels of student engaged time. The research of Pressley et al. (1996) shows that effective teachers provide effective classroom management.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Student Engagement. In order to increase student engagement, teachers should take the following actions:

1. Teach according to the principles of effective instruction.

Teacher-directed, explicit instruction of literacy skills and strategies involves explanation, modeling, guided practice, feedback, independent practice, and application. The gradual release of responsibility model of instruction enhances effective literacy instruction.

2. Guide students in setting personal goals and in monitoring their progress.

Self-efficacy is possibly the most important factor affecting student engagement. Self-efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. To develop a sense of self-efficacy, students can chart their progress on a specific learning goal. Using percentage scores works well when the assessments address a very specific skill area like spelling or using a specific type of punctuation, but in most situations dealing with literacy instruction, a rubric or scale can be used to help students track their progress. Having students set personal goals for their individual progress and think about what they will do to accomplish their goals influences student engagement.

3. Provide feedback to students that emphasizes the link between effort and improvement.

Because it is important for students to attribute their success or failure to their effort and not luck or ability, teachers can have students use a scale to track their effort and preparation along with their academic progress. Verbal feedback from teachers should focus on the effort students make. It is important for students to see the relationship between effort and achievement.

4. Use active learning strategies.

Teachers can use techniques such as turn and talk or think-pair-share to engage students. Cooperative learning structures described by Spencer Kagan (2010) can engage students. Peer partners can be used to engage students. For example, on-task partners check to see whether their partner is following the direction of the teacher. Response partners can be taught to "look, lean, whisper" when discussing with their partner. Providing students with prepared response cards labeled true, false or a, b, c, and so on helps all students respond to teacher questions. Asking students to write answers on individual whiteboards or slates is another way to engage them.

5. Vary instructional strategies.

It is important to use a variety of instructional strategies.

6. Use interactive reading techniques.

The teacher can use interactive reading techniques to engage students. Examples of these include the following: Say something; Read, Cover, Remember, Retell; Partner Jigsaw; Two Word; Reverse Think-Aloud.

7. Use questioning strategies that make all students think and answer.

Teachers should ensure that students have adequate opportunities to respond. Opportunities to respond are positively related to achievement because the more opportunities students have to respond or practice a skill, the better their understanding. Ways to increase opportunities to respond include making sure all students are called on, not calling on volunteers to respond, using choral response techniques, and calling on students randomly to respond. Teachers can facilitate active involvement by providing cues and prompts that lead students to correct answers, sequencing instruction so that high rates of accuracy are achieved, and asking frequent questions.

8. Provide students with choices whenever possible.

Managed choice is an effective way to engage students. Students should have opportunities to choose books that interest them. Whenever possible, students should have some choice in terms of assignments.

9. Use processing activities.

Instructional strategies such as think-pair-share and quick writes are ways to engage students in the lesson and have them process the content of the lesson.

10. Select materials and tasks that are at an appropriate level of difficulty.

Recognizing the difficulty of selecting appropriate materials in a classroom of students with diverse learning needs, it is still important to do this as much as possible. Matching the reading levels of the materials students are asked to read and the reading levels of the students is critical. This is not always possible particularly with the new demands of the text complexity of the Common Core State Standards, but it is critical that students are reading at their independent and instructional levels at least part of the day.

11. Cultivate a culture of achievement.

A culture of achievement is cultivated in classrooms where instruction is challenging, students feel comfortable asking questions, and students are expected to do their best. High-quality instruction that is rigorous, aligned with standards, and uses instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students helps promote a culture of achievement in the classroom. Clear, high, yet attainable, expectations for all students ensure that students feel challenged and not bored or discouraged. Students need both high expectations and support for learning.

12. Build relationships with students.

One of the strongest correlates of effective teaching is the strength of relationships teachers develop with students. When students feel valued, honored, and respected, they tend to be more engaged. Teachers should create positive classroom environments.

Maximizing Instructional Time. In order to maximize instructional time, teachers should take the following actions:

1. Establish routines and procedures that minimize disruptions and provide smooth transitions within and between lessons.

In many classrooms, a significant proportion of class time (about 25 percent on average) is spent on transitions, such as collecting and putting away materials, listening to nonacademic directions, and waiting for help or for the next activity to begin. Teachers can minimize the time lost by preparing carefully for transitions and warning students about the close of one activity and the beginning of another, providing brief but clear directions, having materials immediately available, actively monitoring and reinforcing appropriate student behavior, and beginning a new activity quickly and enthusiastically.

Establishing a consistent and predictable routine informs students what to expect, what is expected of them, and what is acceptable behavior. A routine is a set of procedures for handling daily occurrences (e.g., taking attendance, starting a class period, turning in assignments) and minor interruptions of instruction, such as the class phone ringing. Routines facilitate teaching and learning.

Teachers should develop routines for three types of recurring and predictable classroom events. Routines can be established for administrative procedures, such as storing coats or books, using the restroom, sharpening pencils, taking attendance, making announcements, and dismissing students. Routines also are needed to make teaching and learning as effective as possible. These routines include how to get students to pay attention such as a nonverbal signal or a countdown, how students should respond to teacher questions (hand raising or random choice of which students will answer), when and how individual students can get extra help from the teacher, and what to do when students finish tasks ahead of the rest of the class. Routines also should be established for how to participate in discussions, how to behave in groups, and how to work with a partner.

Consistency and practice are critical to making classroom routines effective. Teachers need to actively explain the routines and the reasoning behind them and model them consistently and persistently. Teachers have to teach the classroom routines in the same way they teach academic subjects. Teaching the routines is particularly important at the start of the school year. Teachers need to be proactive and keep students focused on successful routines.

2. Establish structures to foster student self-regulation.

Teachers can help students' ability to self-regulate by providing an organized classroom environment and by removing elements in the environment that can trigger impulsive behavior. Students begin school with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment. Teachers, however, can impact the students who come to school without effective self-regulation. Improving planning and organization, making classroom management more consistent, and facilitating students' independent and small-group work can help students with poor self-regulation.

In addition, teachers can address three factors that create problems for self-regulation: negative emotions, lapses, and cue exposure. Many misbehaviors—fighting, teasing, breaking rules—are associated with negative emotions such as anger or frustration, and negative emotions reduce the ability to self-regulate. Teachers can give students who act impulsively a correction and redirection rather than a rebuke, which makes the students feel bad (negative emotion). Lapses (“falling off the wagon”) can lead to students more or less giving up their attempts to self-regulate. When students have a lapse, the teacher can encourage them to put the lapse behind them and resolve again to behave as they know they should. Cues (subtle or overt reminders of the appeal of the behavior to be avoided) can make self-regulation difficult. Teachers can get rid of the cues by removing the distraction rather than counting on students to ignore it.

3. Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior.

Research shows that when there is a mismatch between a student's ability level and the difficulty and/or length of an academic task, inappropriate behavior is more frequent (Umbreit, Lane, & Dejud, 2004). Teachers should increase opportunities for academic success (e.g., answering questions correctly). Teachers should pay careful attention to the difficulty of reading assignments and support students as they are learning to read. Every student has an independent, instructional, and frustration reading level, and teachers should ensure that students are not being asked to read materials at their frustration level. Literacy activities should be challenging but attainable with effort.

Teachers can boost students' confidence, which increases students' intrinsic motivation to read by working with students to set goals, monitor their progress toward those goals, and provide frequent positive feedback on their performance.

Engaging instruction is a prevention tool for problem behavior. Adapting or varying instruction to promote high rates of student engagement and on-task behavior can decrease problem behavior. Instruction delivered at a brisk pace contributes to higher levels of student engagement. Instruction that includes modeling, guided practice, and independent practice also can increase student engagement.

Positive relationships with students is another prevention tool for problem behavior. Students need to know the teacher cares about them and their learning.

As part of the NYC Citywide Instructional Expectations for 2011–2012 for strengthening teacher practice, many schools will be using Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (2007). Danielson divides the complex activity of teaching into 22 components clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility. One of these domains is instruction, which includes the component of engaging students in learning. Representation of content, activities and assignments, grouping of students, instructional materials and resources, and structure and pacing are components of engaging students in learning and can provide guidance for teachers to improve that aspect of their teaching.

The Teacher Development Toolkit provided online by the NYC Department of Education addresses the Professional Teaching Standard of Engaging and Supporting all Students in Learning by helping teachers consider five areas: (1) connecting students’ prior knowledge, life experiences, and interests with learning goals; (2) using a variety of instructional strategies and resources to respond to students’ diverse needs; (3) promoting self-directed, reflective learning for all students; (4) facilitating learning experiences that promote autonomy, interaction, and choice; (5) engaging students in problem solving, critical thinking, and other activities that make subject matter meaningful.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Catalina Ventura in Phoenix, Arizona, is a K-8 school with more than 1,300 students. The school is an inner-city school with a 75 percent poverty rate. During the past five years, teachers at Catalina have been trained in using Kagan cooperative learning structures in their classrooms. Dr. Spencer Kagan devised several generic, content-free cooperative learning techniques that can be used to increase student engagement. Numbered Heads Together, Corners, Think-Pair-Share, and Line-up are examples of these structures. At Catalina Ventura School, a new Kagan structure was taught monthly to the entire staff at staff meetings. The principal attributes the dramatic improvement in test scores at the school to teachers using these structures in their classrooms and having students more engaged as a result. (More information about the Kagan structures is available at www.KaganOnline.com. The video *Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures for Success* is available on www.youtube.com.)

TESA (Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement) is a professional development program designed to help teachers interact equitably with all students. TESA raises the awareness of teachers about how their expectations affect student performance. Teachers reflect on their interactions with their students in their questioning and feedback and the effects on student self-esteem. Teachers observe each other to provide feedback on whether they treat some students differently from others. Results of the program include improvement in student academic performance, increases in attendance, decreases in discipline problems, and improvement in classroom climate. Information about the professional development program is available from the Los Angeles County Office of Education at <http://www.lacoe.edu/orgs/165/index.cfm>.

Recommendation 3: Common Core

Develop and implement 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

Positive Key Finding 2 highlights the evidence that indicates the use of the Common Core Standards at P.S. 18. The school has developed units of study that align with the Common Core, and student work lining the hallways of the school referenced the Common Core. This initial work of the staff at P.S. 18 provides a strong foundation for the school’s further work on implementing the Common Core.

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. 18 John Peter Zenger 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).

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

- 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).

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 (ELA) 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 p. i).

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 on 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.

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.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Learning Forward (Website)
www.learningforward.org

- **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 the NYCDOE. Citywide Instructional Expectations provides 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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