P.S. 284 Lew Wallace

FINAL REPORT

New York City Department of Education External School Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of P.S. 284 Lew Wallace conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as in corrective action (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. 284 Lew Wallace

Located in Brooklyn, P.S. 284 Lew Wallace (K284) serves 531 students in Grades PK–8. Approximately 83 percent of the student population is eligible for free lunch. Of the students, 79 percent are black/African American and 20 percent are Hispanic/Latino. The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year was 90 percent.

In 2009–10, P.S. 284 did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) for all students, the black or African-American subgroup, and economically disadvantaged students. In 2010–11, P.S. 284's state accountability status was designated as corrective action (year 1).[1]

Audit Process at P.S. 284 Lew Wallace

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. 284. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

The reports were presented to the school at a co-interpretation℠ meeting on April 28, 2011. During this meeting, 16 stakeholders from the P.S. 284 community read the reports. Through a facilitated and collaborative group process, they identified individual findings and then developed and prioritized key findings based on information in the reports.

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations. The recommended strategies are those that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance at P.S. 284.

[1] https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/8f/AOR-2010-332300010284.pdf. Accessed on March 3, 2011.

Key Findings

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

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:
The school does not have a clearly defined curriculum in ELA.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by information from classroom observations, review of documents submitted by the school, and school interviews.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:
Interruptions cause students to lose focus during teaching and learning.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by information from classroom observations. Interruptions to classroom instruction were observed in 5 of 18 classrooms.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:
The curriculum may not be aligned to the Common Core.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by information from a review of school-submitted documents. According to these documents, some teachers participate in a Common Core study group. Work has begun on all the changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment necessitated by the adoption of these rigorous standards.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:
The gradual release of responsibility model of instruction is not evident in every classroom.

Critical Key Finding 4 is supported by information from classroom observations. Observers saw implementation of the gradual release of responsibility model in 5 of the 18 observed classrooms.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 5:
Students are not involved in “hands-on” work.

Critical Key Finding 5 is supported by information from classroom observations and teacher survey results. Information from classroom observations indicated that most of the classrooms had low student engagement. In 10 of the 18 classrooms observed, there was little student participation. According to the teacher survey results, teachers in this school most often ask their students to answer questions from textbooks or worksheets.

Positive Key Findings

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:
Technology is being used to engage students.

Positive Key Finding 1 is supported by information from classroom observations and interviews. Six of the 18 classrooms observed had a Smart Board. According to interview data, laptops have been ordered for every classroom.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 2:
Teachers have opportunities to collaborate on a weekly basis to ensure curriculum alignment and uniformity.

Positive Key Finding 2 is supported by teacher survey results and a review of school-submitted documents. All teachers reported sharing and discussing student work with other teachers. A large majority of teachers (95 percent) reported that they seek each other out to ask questions and learn new ideas. The majority of teachers indicated that the administration provides support for teacher collaboration. Submitted documents show teachers have a common planning period.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

Participants at the P.S. 284 co-interpretation meeting prioritized some key findings that highlighted the strengths of the school (Positive Key Findings) and others that focused on areas in which the school can improve (Critical Key Findings).

The key findings show that the school has begun to implement the Common Core standards, and that work has begun on aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the standards. This process requires a comprehensive approach that includes all teachers. The first recommendation provides strategies for implementing the transition to the Common Core standards.

Critical Key Findings 4 and 5 address classroom instruction. As the findings report, the gradual release of responsibility model of instruction was not evident in many of the observed classrooms. This model gradually shifts responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student. In addition, students were relatively inactive learners in many of the observed classrooms and were not given the opportunity to learn through hands-on activities.

A recommendation was not developed for Critical Key Finding 2, which states that interruptions cause students to lose focus during teaching and learning, even though this finding received a high number of votes from the participants at the co-interpretation meeting. Being aware of the problem and consciously trying to avoid interruptions can address this finding.

THE THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Develop and implement in Grades K–8 a high-quality ELA curriculum aligned to the Common Core standards.
2. Develop and implement a plan to ensure challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction in every classroom.
3. Develop and implement a multiyear professional development plan that follows a job-embedded and sustained professional learning process and focuses on the ELA curriculum and challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction (topics identified during co-interpretation).

These three 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: Common Core

Develop a multiyear plan to align the school's curriculum, instruction, assessments, and instructional materials to the Common Core 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

The cadre of teachers at P.S. 284 Lew Wallace who were involved in a Common Core study group last year can provide internal expertise to the whole faculty as they work to clearly define their ELA curriculum and ensure that it is aligned to the Common Core.

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

   The adoption of the Common Core provides an opportunity for teachers at P.S. 284 Lew Wallace 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:

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

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Common Core State Standards
http://www.corestandards.org/

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
http://www.arisnyc.org

Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project
http://commoncore.org/maps

Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC)
http://www.parcconline.org

These tasks are to be embedded in Common Core-aligned curricula and include multiple entry points for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Through the work of implementing these performance tasks, teachers will use the inquiry cycle to adjust their curriculum and instruction to help all students meet the expectations of the Common Core. Since standards are not curriculum, teachers will need a curriculum to assist them in helping students meet the Common Core standards. The New York State Education Department 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 tests, 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 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 includes 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 if 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 2: Instruction

Develop and implement a plan to ensure challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction 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, however. Carol Dweck (2006) has determined that praising students by telling them they are smart may actually have a detrimental effect on their achievement.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

New York City Department of Education: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/TeacherDevelopment/TeacherDevelopmentToolkit/PTS/Engagingstudents

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. Good teachers 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 & 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)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

In order to ensure challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction in every classroom, teachers should take the following actions:

1. **Teach according to the principles of effective instruction.**

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

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

   Marzano and Pickering (2010) suggest that 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. One approach for developing student self-efficacy is to have students chart their progress on a specific learning goal. Using percentage scores works well when the assessments address a very specific skill area, such as spelling or using a specific type of punctuation. In most situations, however, a rubric or scale is a better way 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 may have students use a scale to track their effort and preparation along with their academic progress. The oral feedback teachers give students should focus on the effort students make.

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) also are effective in engaging students. Other approaches are *peer partners*, where on-task partners check to see whether their partner is following the direction of the teacher; *response partners*, who are taught to "look, lean, whisper" when discussing with their partner; *response cards* that provide students with prepared response cards labeled true and false or a, b, c, and so on, which allows all students respond to teacher questions; and *writing answers*, according to which each student writes answers on a individual whiteboard or slate.

5. **Vary instructional strategies.**

   It is important to use a variety of instructional strategies.

6. **Use interactive reading techniques.**

   Interactive reading techniques are helpful for engaging students. Examples are Say Something; Read, Cover, Remember, Retell; Partner Jigsaw; Two-Word; and Reverse Think-Aloud.

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

   Teachers should ensure that students' opportunity to respond is high. The opportunity to respond is 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 be given opportunities to choose books that interest them, and whenever possible, students should have some choice about 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 a correct level of difficulty.

Recognizing the difficulty of doing this in a classroom of students with diverse learning needs, it still is important to do so 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 possible all the time, particularly with the new demands of the text complexity of the Common Core, but it is critical that students are reading at their independent and instructional levels at least part of the day.

11. Foster a culture of achievement.

A culture of achievement is fostered in classrooms where instruction is challenging, students feel comfortable asking questions, and students are expected to do their best. High-quality instruction—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.

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: Professional Learning

Develop and implement a multiyear professional development plan that follows a job-embedded and sustained professional learning process and focuses on the English language arts curriculum and challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction.

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).

Stand-alone 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 (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 allowing for active teacher participation by focusing the opportunities on teacher practice and content.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

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

1. **Continue to provide opportunities for regular teacher collaboration.**

   P.S. 284 Lew Wallace provides opportunities for regular teacher collaboration (see Positive Key Finding 2). There is ample opportunity for teachers to collaborate on a weekly basis to ensure curriculum alignment and uniformity. The school can build on this strength.

2. **Provide opportunities for 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.

Resources are available to schools through the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE). Citywide Instructional Expectations provide the opportunity for job-embedded professional learning. The 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.

3. **Provide initial training, using outside or local experts.**

   Depending on the topic, either outside experts or administrators, specialists, or teachers at the school could provide initial training.

4. **Continue to provide coaching at the school.**

   P.S. 284 Lew Wallace has a literacy coach available to provide in-classroom coaching. Teacher leaders could be trained to provide instructional support to all teachers. All teachers could be trained to coach each other as part of professional learning communities.

5. **Create a plan for 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.

6. **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 T*echnique #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* 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* by Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan.
- *The Highly Engaged Classroom* by Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering.
- *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement* by Robert Marzano.
- *Better Learning through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility* 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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