

Good Teaching Matters...A Lot

A Research Overview

by Kati Haycock
Director, The Education Trust

The Education Trust has been a leading national advocate for the cause of improving the achievement of poor and minority students. The article below was adapted with permission from *Thinking K-16*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, Summer 1998. To read the entire publication, download it from the Education Trust Web site, at www.edtrust.org.

Teacher Effects: Tennessee

Tennessee is one of the few states with data systems that make it possible to tie teachers to achievement in their classrooms. Moreover, the state's value-added ap-

proach for assessing student achievement allows observers to look at the gains students make during a particular school year.

William L. Sanders, director of the Value-Added Research Center at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, has studied these data extensively. By grouping teachers into quintiles based on their effectiveness in producing student learning gains, his work allows us to examine the impact of teacher effectiveness on the learning of different types of students, from low- to high-achievers.

On average, the least effective teachers (Q1) produce gains of



about 14 percentile points during the school year. By contrast, the most effective teachers (Q5) posted gains among low-achieving students that averaged 53 percentile points.

The Tennessee data show dramatic differences for middle- and high-achieving groups of students, too. For example, high-achieving students gain an average of only 2 points under

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As school boards across Iowa take on the challenge of raising student achievement—and closing the achievement gap that exists for poor and minority students—the logical first question is, where to begin? A number of large-scale research studies confirm that the most significant factor in student achievement is good teaching.

This issue of the *Compass* looks at issues surrounding the challenge of ensuring that every child receives good teaching *and* ensuring that every teacher receives the support needed to provide that teaching.

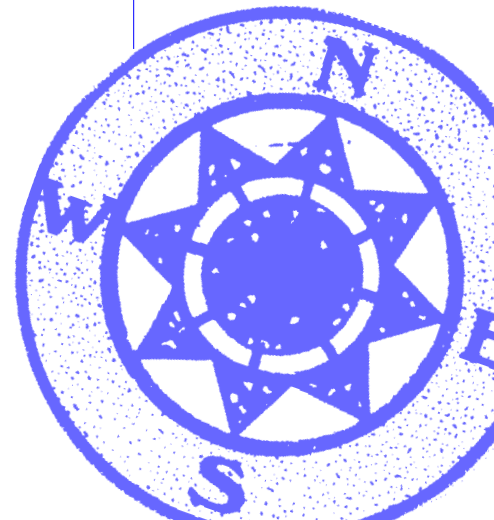


Iowa School Board

COMPASS

A Guide for Those Who Lead

Volume VII, No. 2— Summer 2002



Ensuring Quality in Teaching

Adapted from IASB Position Paper on Quality Teaching, adopted November 2001

School boards have a responsibility to students and the community to create conditions where teachers teach so all students learn well.

Quality teaching is crucial to school district efforts to increase student achievement. Since teaching matters most, policy designed to enhance teacher quality must be based on sound research on what works in improving student learning.

There have been many views on how to identify quality teaching. Is it the years of experience or educational level of the teacher? Is it a teacher's rapport with students? Is quality teaching defined by a teacher's ability to pass a test?

Much of the discussion, however, loses sight of the key goal: whether students learn. Too often, there is a willingness to accept reasons for why students are not learning (such as poverty or lack of parental support), instead of examining how teaching can impact student learning. And, there is a willingness to accept peripheral measures of teacher quality,

Teachers need time throughout their careers to develop professionally, working with other staff and with quality leadership.

rather than focus on the link between quality in instruction and results in student learning.

The related pitfall of efforts to ensure quality teaching is to focus on "getting better teachers" through recruitment, or on "getting rid of bad teachers." While there are times and reasons to focus on those issues, the core issue is not "getting quality people," but in supporting all Iowa teachers. The evidence is clear that the only way to ensure quality teaching for all Iowa children is to provide all teachers with the support and development needed to improve their instructional practice.

Credible research exists to show that if students have teachers with effective instructional practices, there is a much higher likelihood that student achievement goals will be met. (For details, see related article by Kati Haycock, p. 1.)

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

Research indicates the factors below are characteristic of teachers that positively impact student learning:

- The teacher is continuously learning to improve their practice. Teachers who receive quality, sustained and supported professional development linked to student learning can improve classroom practices. Teachers need opportunities to receive professional development over their entire careers.
- The teacher has content knowledge. The teacher demonstrates mastery of the subject being taught. This is acquired by ongoing study into the content area and often a major or minor in the subject area.



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- The teacher deeply believes in the worth and value of each student. The teacher demonstrates through words and actions the belief that all students can succeed.
- The teacher understands student needs and uses classroom practices that meet those needs. Instructional techniques focus on higher-order thinking skills. The teacher continually assesses students and adjusts classroom practice to enhance student learning.
- The teacher is able to manage the learning environment. The teacher positively motivates students and maintains a safe and productive classroom environment.

Recommendations for State Policymakers

IASB supports the following ways for state policy to ensure high quality teaching in Iowa classrooms.

- Provide districts with money and resources that support effective professional development. Professional development focused on student achievement gives teachers opportunities to collectively learn content and instruction on a continuous basis with teachers fully engaged.
- Give districts time to implement the mandates of the school improvement and accountability law and the teacher quality bill before imposing new requirements. These laws lay the framework for change and improvement in linking teacher quality and student learning, but districts need an opportunity to study, learn and implement changes. Legislators can be open to removing the barriers that are impediments to improvement as they are identified.
- Ensure that state and regional entities have the capacity to assist districts in improving teaching and learning.
- Help schools with resources to address facility needs, allowing district leaders to focus on education and provide tomorrow's teachers and students with a safe, comfortable, and collaborative learning and working environment.



"Iowa teachers are dedicated professionals who are being asked to accomplish new expectations. We can't raise the bar for students without increasing our supports for teachers. There isn't another kind of system that so poorly invests in and supports the learning needs of its employees. Our goal must be retraining and renewing all teachers. We must provide teachers with ongoing opportunities to

develop the knowledge and skills they need to teach so all students learn well. Studies show that high quality, research-based professional development is essential for improving teaching in ways that will impact all students' learning."

—Jane Lichtenstein, IASB President, Durant school board

"Effective teachers are lifelong learners. They understand that all children can learn and are continually learning how to improve their skills to reach all kids. School boards must make sure that teachers have access to staff development that builds their skills around our district goals to improve student learning."

—Jim Tuisl, Clinton school board



"School boards must provide for staff development to retrain or continue training our staff to meet the needs of our students. Boards need to offer opportunities for learning and ensure our staff are empowered to take risks to improve education.

"We can also encourage our human resource officer or administrators to hire staff with a belief that all children can learn, who are certified in their area of teaching and willing to continue to grow in their own learning."

—Valorie Kruse, Sioux City school board

"I believe teachers are the single most important factor in a child's ability to receive a quality education. The school board's role is to create and maintain an environment in which teachers can grow and flourish. The board must furnish the funds to hire, retain and train a quality staff."

—Jon Rowen, Eagle Grove school board



Good Teaching Matters

continued from page 1

the direction of Q1 (least effective) teachers but an average of 25 points under the guidance of Q5 (most effective) teachers. Middle achievers gain a mere 10 points with Q1 teachers but in the mid-30s with Q5 teachers.

There is also considerable evidence that, at least in Tennessee, the effects of teachers are long-lived, whether they advance student achievement or squash it. Indeed, even two years after the fact, the performance of fifth-grade students is still affected by the quality of their third-grade teacher.

As Sanders points out, students whose initial achievement levels are comparable have "vastly different academic outcomes as a result of the sequence of teachers to which they are assigned." Differences of this magnitude—50 percentile points—are

stunning. As all of us know only too well, they can represent the difference between a "remedial" label and placement in the "accelerated" or even "gifted" track. And the difference between entry into a selective college and a lifetime at McDonalds.

Teacher Effects: Dallas

A variety of recent studies in Texas show similar differences in achievement between students taught by teachers of differing quality. Borrowing from some of Sanders's techniques, researchers in the Dallas Independent School District recently completed their first-ever study of teacher effects on the ability of students to perform on assessments. In sharing their findings, Robert Mendro, the district's executive director of institutional research, said, "what surprised us most was the size of the effect."

For example, the average reading scores of a group of Dallas fourth graders who were assigned to three highly effective teachers in a row rose from the 59th percentile in fourth grade to the 76th percentile by conclusion of sixth grade. A fairly similar (but slightly higher achieving) group of students was assigned three consecutive ineffective teachers and fell from the 60th percentile in fourth grade to the 42nd percentile by the end of sixth grade. A gap of this magnitude—more than 35 percentile points—for students who started off roughly the same is hugely significant.



Student Views

Question: Think of a teacher from whom you've learned a lot. What did that teacher do to help you learn?



"I have learned a lot from Mr. D. because he's really patient with his students and he understands that not everyone learns at the same speed. He's always there for us to come in—in the mornings or after school to practice lessons.

And if we don't all get something then he'll reteach it in a different way or in a different manner to cater to all our different learning styles."

—Kayla Hansen, 12th grade, East High School, Sioux City

The impact of teacher effectiveness is also clear in mathematics. For example, a group of beginning third-graders in Dallas who averaged around the 55th percentile in mathematics scored around the 76th percentile at the end of fifth grade after being assigned to three highly effective teachers in a row. By contrast, a slightly higher achieving group of third graders—averaging around the 57th percentile—were consecutively taught by three of the least effective teachers. By the conclusion of fifth grade, the second group's percentile ranking had fallen to 27th. This time the youngsters, who had scored nearly the same as beginning third graders, were separated by a full 50 percentile points just three years later.

Teacher Effects: Boston

The Boston Public Schools are taking a serious look at factors that influence student learning, including the effectiveness of their teachers. A recently released study by Bain and Company conducted on behalf of the district shows the correlation between high school teachers and their students' academic growth in math and reading. The authors examined classrooms of Boston 10th-graders whose average scores were approximately the same and charted their progress over the year by teacher. The differences were dramatic. In reading, they found that although the gains of students with the top third teachers were slightly below the national median for growth (5.6 on average compared to 8.0), the students with teachers from the bottom third showed virtually no growth (0.3). The math results



were even more striking. The top third teachers produced gains on average that exceeded the national median (14.6 to 11.0 nationally), whereas the bottom third again showed virtually no growth (-0.6).

Altogether this means that one-third of Boston teachers are producing six times the learning seen in the bottom third. As one frustrated headmaster put it, "About one-third of my teachers should not be teaching."

These findings have profound implications for states and communities that are striving to get vastly larger numbers of their students to high standards of achievement. If education leaders want to accomplish this goal in the near term, they are far more likely to do so if they focus, first and foremost, on quality—quality in teacher preparation, recruitment, hiring, assignment and ongoing professional development.



"Mrs. L. thinks of some songs to help us learn so things stick in our memories. Whenever we have a quiz, I think back to the songs and then I sing the songs in my mind to remind me

of the answers. She also has us work in groups and have a lot of social activity, which I think helps me learn better."

—Chris Mahlstadt, 6th grade, Parkview Middle School, Ankeny



"A really good teacher gives me work that challenges me and makes me think. She can expand your thinking—not just about what you're learning but the way you're learning

it. I've been taught many ways of learning things by Mrs. R.... She helped me learn how to learn. I think being able to explain all those ways of learning helps her teach the kids who aren't getting it so easy."

—Amanda Bartusek, 8th grade, Urbandale Middle School

Iowa Redefines Teaching

by Ted Stilwill, Director, Iowa Department of Education



Iowa's Teacher Quality/Student Achievement law, passed in 2001, is reshaping how teachers are compensated and supported. For many, this effort responds to our goal of improving student learning, as well as the critical issues of looming teacher shortages in rural and urban Iowa and a declining comparability of Iowa teachers' salaries with those in other states.

Professional Development is a Number One Priority

These critical issues create a unique opportunity for Iowa to define teaching differently. Iowa can now become the state that provides the most effective professional support for beginning teachers and the strongest professional development and continued learning for experienced teachers. Iowa teachers today are among the very best in the country, but without stronger support in terms of both compensation and professional development, our educational system will not be able to meet the challenges that face us tomorrow. Those of us in education are learning what every successful sector of public or private enterprise already knows. The future success of our "enterprise" depends upon investing in the quality of our professional workforce, Iowa's teachers. This law responds by investing \$1.5 million to begin the shift toward researched-based professional development for Iowa teachers.

Statewide Availability of Mentoring and Induction

The TQ initiative also invests millions of dollars in a two-year mentoring program available to all beginning teachers. Districts in the mentoring portion will adopt a formal mentoring program that meets quality standards. The state will pay districts \$1,300 per beginning teacher for each of the teacher's first two years. Mentors would be paid a minimum of \$500 per semester and the district may use remaining dollars to offset other costs.

All Teacher Salaries Can Improve

Improving salaries was the straightforward goal for most education stakeholders involved in this process. Attracting and retaining quality teachers is clearly this state's number one education priority. This law responds to that goal by continuing to appropriate \$31.2 million to improve salaries for all Iowa teachers. The \$31.2 million is allocated to all school districts based upon a formula of 50 percent student enrollment and 50 percent number of teachers. Districts automatically gain access to their district allocation. Some districts may access class size/early intervention dollars to supplement these priorities.



Each district must:

- * First, keep first-year beginning teacher salaries at \$24,500.
- * Second, keep current Career teachers at a minimum of \$26,500. Teachers becoming Career teachers in 2002-2003 will receive \$25,500.
- * Third, distribute remaining funds to remaining veteran teachers.
- * In any case, a teacher may not receive less than they did during this current school year.

This law proposes that salaries for all Iowa teachers can improve next school year. All districts are eligible for their allocation. According to the law, districts must participate by July 1, 2002.

The new law asks the Department of Education to create a pilot program to identify Career II and Advanced teachers. The DE is also asked to study including others with letters of professional recognition. The results of both are due to the legislature on Dec. 15, 2002.

Defining Good Teaching, Setting Aspirations

This law for the first time in Iowa history defines what educators proudly do every day in the classroom. The Iowa Teaching Standards create a framework for local districts and educators to define high quality teaching. Professional development opportunities will need to foster the skills reinforcing these standards as well as respond to the student achievement goals of the local school improvement plan. Beginning teacher mentoring and induction programs will key in on these standards. The annual conference and three-year performance reviews rely on this framework as a starting point for personalization at the local level.

Today, Iowa teachers educate our children using these teaching practices. Check the list below. You will be hard-pressed to find an educator in Iowa who doesn't believe in these standards.

Better Evaluations, Better Feedback, Better Teachers

Iowa teachers are evaluated every year, every 10 years, every 15 years, somewhere in between or not at all. Iowa teachers and administrators alike are frustrated by poor evaluation systems, low quality feedback on performance and the lack of support for struggling teachers. With this law, newly trained administrators will comprehensively evaluate teachers every three years with the focus on providing teachers valuable feedback and support. This law provides \$1.7 million for next school year to complete the research and development and begin training. Successful completion of the evaluator training program nets the individual up to \$1,000. The law sets up an annual review between the teacher and evaluator to check the teacher's progress in meeting his or her individual plan.

Iowa Teaching Standards

1. Demonstrates the ability to enhance academic performance and support for and implementation of the school district's student achievement goals.
2. Demonstrates competence in content knowledge appropriate to the teaching position
3. Demonstrates competence in planning and preparing for instruction.
4. Uses strategies to deliver instruction that meets the multiple learning needs of students.
5. Uses a variety of methods to monitor student learning.
6. Demonstrates competence in classroom management.
7. Engages in professional growth.
8. Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district.

Pilot Team-based Variable Pay Project

In the 2001-02 school year, the law provided a trial opportunity for a few Iowa school districts or school buildings to learn about variable pay. The team-based variable pay was above and beyond the base pay each teacher already received. Student learning goals for the building aligned with the district's school improvement plan set the stage for rewarding the combined efforts of stakeholders in a school building. Achievement toward those building-level goals was the driver for this unique type of compensation. The law provided \$1 million for all participants in this pilot program. The per-educator amount depended upon the number of pilot sites with a limit of not more than \$100 allocated per student.

We Can Make a Difference

The future of Iowa's education system cannot rest solely on our past successes. Real change in the way we support and pay teachers is as imminent as our changing student population. Simply increasing salaries would not benefit teachers, parents or students. Strategies for paying teachers, additional support for teachers and better career opportunities for aspiring teachers are necessary. Both the level of funding and certain particulars in this law are not exactly as many of us had hoped. Policy leaders have rallied around this legislation as a starting point, understanding that we do not have the total or final picture.

Through this process, we must be willing to learn together, be patient with each other, and, above all, communicate with each other. There are not many places in this country or in this world like Iowa where the educational values and dedication are strong enough to move forward with this type of change. I am convinced that Iowa can and will pull together to make this a success.

View from the Front Lines

An Interview with Iowa's Teacher Ambassador



Gail B. Wortmann teaches anatomy and physiology and advanced anatomy at Ottumwa High School, as well as general physical science for the Ottumwa campus of Buena Vista University of Storm Lake.

As Iowa's 2001 state Teacher of the Year, Gail is on a yearlong sabbatical to serve as the state Ambassador for Education.

Q: From your perspective, after nearly a year of traveling Iowa as ambassador for education, what are the greatest challenges facing Iowa teachers today?

A: My greatest concern for education in Iowa is the looming teaching shortage. During my year as Iowa's Ambassador for Education, I sponsored a survey to determine the actual teacher shortage situation in Iowa. (IASB and other educational stakeholders supported this survey.) Preliminary results indicate the shortage does not affect all areas of Iowa equally. Some districts are feeling the pinch more heavily than others. It is clear, however, that the shortage at the secondary level is of far more concern than the elementary level. There were 850 teaching positions unfilled last year in Iowa and 89 percent of them were in grades 7-12.

It is difficult to choose the highest quality teaching candidates from a field of none. Several districts had no applicants for positions that needed to be filled. Those districts are using creative problem solving to meet their needs (ICN classes, shared teaching positions, long-term subs, conditional licenses, etc.), but the bottom line is that we need to entice more postsecondary students into the education profession. It is often stated that it takes a village to raise a child, but someone in the village needs to be identified as the teacher. As communities, we need to be actively seeking individuals interested in teaching and supporting them in that endeavor.

Q: What can school boards do to create an environment that allows quality teaching and learning to take place?

A: We are often asked to recognize and describe our most memorable teacher. I'm going to take this opportunity to recognize and describe my most memorable school board member. Angela Hoff was on the school board when I first started teaching at Ottumwa High School in 1980. She regularly visited my classroom and engaged me in conversation about what was happening with my students and within my sphere of influence. She checked to see

what was on my mind as a teaching professional. She learned to know me personally and sought my input. She visited with my students during those visits as well. She asked her own questions, gathered her own data, and drew conclusions from her own observations. I trusted her to make decisions in the interest of all students based on first-hand knowledge.

Many decisions are made directly concerning teachers without input from them. I implore school board members to directly seek input from the teachers in your district.

Quality teaching and learning are more likely to take place when communication lines are actively nurtured. Each party then knows the needs and limitations of the classroom—whether those needs concern technology issues, student attitudes, teacher morale, the physical plant, or whatever. School boards have finite resources. In order to make the most informed decisions concerning those resources, information should be sought from those who are highly impacted by the decisions—the employees of the district.

Q: Iowa's landmark Student Achievement and Teacher Quality legislation—passed in 2001—embarks our state on far-reaching changes in the way we support and develop our teachers. How is this legislation being received in school districts across the state?

A: Teachers are very frustrated right now. Many promising changes are coming due to the Teacher Quality legislation, but there is a lack of financial support for those changes. Several parts of the Teacher Quality bill are being developed and implemented without the monetary support to pay for the added time commitment and responsibilities expected from teachers. The Teacher Quality bill was originally advertised by legislators as the cure for low teacher salaries and the vehicle for teacher quality improvement at several levels. For the vast majority (mostly veteran teachers), it has resulted in more work rather than more pay.

Teachers are generally altruistic people. They give of their time and talents to help young people become educated

adults with good decision-making skills. However, like anyone else, they deserve to be paid for their expertise and their time.

I am well aware this is a tight budget year for Iowa. The budgetary picture limits what can be done. If, however, that is the reason for the lack of monetary support for the Teacher Quality legislation, then teachers can expect full support from the state when the budget is flush. Anything less will certainly break the faith—for current teachers and for teacher hopefuls still sitting in middle school and high school desks in Iowa districts.

Q: As part of our publication, we're asking students what makes a good teacher. From your perspective representing Iowa teachers, what makes a good teacher?

A: Engagement. In "teacherese," engagement is the lesson design, the problem proposed, or the educational challenge given which intrigues students and compels them to follow a line of study because they are interested in knowing more. A good teacher can create a classroom-learning climate that results in engaged students. Engaged minds ask thought-provoking questions and confer with classmates to discover answers.

A good teacher is passionate about his or her subject and lets it show! Control of the lesson tempo and classroom management are transparent in the room of a good teacher. Mutual study is the order of the day with the teacher learning with the students as they work together. Research-based instructional strategies are employed along with technologically enhanced tools to bring the best resources for learning right to the student's work station. A good teacher arranges this all in alignment with district goals, standards and benchmarks.

In an engaging classroom, time goes fast, work gets done and students learn information as they learn to think for themselves. The good teacher smiles with satisfaction and gets ready for tomorrow.

Q: Is teaching an art or a science, or both?

A: Is there a "teaching" gene ... a strand of DNA in our genetic make up that preordains that we will make a good teacher? Or is it a learned skill ... with time given to internalize the information and strategies that are needed in a classroom?

If the former were true, then a simple DNA test should indicate who the teachers should be. In remembering your teachers of

the past, I am sure you can identify many good teachers, all of whom approached the profession in a different way, with a different temperament, but with equal success.

For me, teaching was a learned skill. My journey in becoming Iowa's Teacher of the Year was an evolution. I got better from working with students and learning from my successes and my mistakes. I got better from listening to and watching my colleagues at work. I got better from continually seeking additional courses, information and skills. I got better by going through the National Board Certification process. I got better from being Iowa's Teacher of the Year and learning from educational stakeholders all over this state.

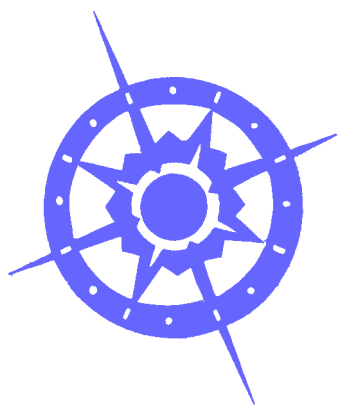
Is teaching an art? Yes. Putting what one has learned about teaching and students to work is a skill. Knowing just what to do and when to do it comes from repeated practice in varying circumstances.

Is teaching a science? Yes. Reflective teachers constantly do scientific experiments. They propose a new way to teach a lesson, they try it, they gather data on whether or not it worked, they evaluate their practice, draw conclusions, and change their teaching as a result of their investigation. They inform their own practice.

There are potential teaching qualities that come to us in our DNA, but what we do with that potential is influenced by those around us and what we learn from them.

Gail Wortmann works hard to create a classroom environment full of hands-on, student-centered learning. If you were to visit room 402 at Ottumwa High School, you would immediately be invited to join a group of anatomy and physiology students working with technology, performing a lab, or working cooperatively to solve a problem.





Pointing the Way: Waukee Community Schools

"A Celebration of Learning: SMART Goals Showcase" held in April at Waukee High School allows teachers to display the goals they worked on during the school year, along with student artifacts and student performance data.

Teachers Team Up to Improve Student Learning Around District Goals

As a third grade teacher for 30 years at Brookview Elementary School in Waukee, Jan Schirm had always worked on her own to analyze data and create and set goals to improve her students' achievement. For the first time this year, Schirm and other teachers in the Waukee Community School District worked in teams to improve student achievement as part of an intensive, district-wide effort.

Educators in the Waukee district focused on setting goals that are strategic, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time-bound—SMART. This goal-setting process has provided the school district with a measurable way for teachers and administrators to be accountable for student achievement.

"The SMART goals process is helping us become more results focused and data driven. We are truly examining data and making informed decisions about instructional 'next steps' as we set goals for students," said Roxanne Cumings, principal at Brookview Elementary. SMART goals put into practice what is occurring in classrooms in small steps on a daily basis so educators are able to reach the annual and long-range goals in our district's comprehensive school improvement plan.

Setting and Sharing Goals

To set specific student goals for the 2001-02 school year, teachers met once a week with their grade-level team at Brookview and twice a month during early dismissals with the grade-level teachers at the other two elementary schools in the Waukee school district. At these meetings, team members discussed and analyzed student data to determine which academic areas needed improvement and then created strategies to meet their goals and set timeframes for completion.

Schirm and others on the third-grade team saw that their students were struggling with math. "By working with students with flashcards and from previous test results, our team was aware that students needed help with mastery of subtraction facts," said Schirm.

The team decided their first goal for fall 2001 was to have 85 percent of Brookview third graders individually increase accuracy by 25 percent on subtraction fact-timed tests.

While reviewing student data and setting goals was not new to Schirm and many of the other Brookview Elementary teachers, setting specific goals by grade level and determining how to reach those goals as a team was.

"In the past, our students have taken the ITBS and district assessments, but we haven't analyzed the results as thoroughly as we have this school year. By setting specific and measurable goals, we dig in as a group and determine the picture these assessments paint for us," said Principal Cumings.

Goal Results

During the year, Schirm and the building- and district-level teams monitored their students' progress in math subtraction on a weekly basis through timed tests. At their meetings, teams discussed their test findings and determined new strategies to better meet their goal.

From a final post-test given after six weeks, Schirm and the third-grade team found that Brookview third-grade students had met the goal of mastering subtraction. In fact, all Brookview grade levels were successful in meeting every goal they set for their students the entire year.

In April, the school district held "A Celebration of Learning: SMART Goals Showcase" at Waukee High School to allow elementary teachers to display the goals they worked on during the school year, along with student artifacts and student performance data. District administrators, school board members and the media were also invited to the event to see the impacts of their efforts.



"This event gave us the opportunity to show the community what we accomplished during the year," said Schirm. "It also allowed us to see and talk with other teacher teams about what they had done, which provided each of us with new ideas and instructional techniques that could be utilized in our own classrooms."

Learning from Goals

How has goal setting and sharing helped Schirm and other teachers in the Waukee school district?

"What particularly helped me as a teacher in determining and setting goals this year was being able to work together with other grade-level teachers. The study-team time provided by the school district allowed for collaboration with my grade-level team to brainstorm ideas to meet the specific goals we set for our students," said Schirm.

"SMART goals has become another tool to help me further goal set, look at data and work with my colleagues to help meet the learning needs of our students," said Michelle Lettington, fifth grade teacher at Brookview Elementary. "It has enabled me to be more reflective of specific student needs when I plan and teach lessons."

"Our teachers are dialoging more about data with each other—they are putting lots of energy into getting the most impact out of each instructional moment. They know that data tells a story and they want the Waukee story to be one of student success and student achievement," said Cumings.

Support from the District

Supporting teachers in improving student achievement has meant a significant change in the district's focus on staff development, said Edie Eckles, Waukee director of curriculum.

"Our approach to staff development now is that teachers need time to engage in professional problem-solving, to look at student learning data and analyze where improvements are needed," said Eckles. This time to study data, set goals and adjust their teaching strategies has come through a dozen early dismissals for staff development during the year.

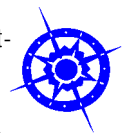
"It's clear that professional development needs to be timely—applying to real-

*Waukee
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Supporting Quality Teaching: The School Board's Role

School board members want their school district to recruit, hire, retain and support the best teaching staff available. How do they fulfill that responsibility?

- Establish clear personnel policies and criteria. A policy on guiding principles for employees may contain a general statement of goals ("In striving to achieve a quality education program, the board's goal is to obtain and retain qualified and effective employees....") Your administrative policies should clearly delegate personnel responsibilities for most positions to the superintendent and principals.
- Clarify priorities for improving student learning and ensure that instructional initiatives are selected and implemented because of their potential and documented success for increasing student performance. Set the expectation for teacher and administrator responsibility for student learning and regularly ask what supports are needed in order to get results. Evaluate instructional initiatives regularly to determine whether they are making the desired improvements in student achievement.
- Develop understanding within the community that improving teaching is the most powerful strategy for improving student learning. Help the community understand the learning goals and initiatives taking place in your classrooms.
- Give teachers both the responsibility and the support needed to improve classroom instruction and student learning. Encourage teachers to implement innovative approaches, without fear of failure, and provide them with the time and resources needed for planning, data analysis, collaboration, professional development, instruction and research.
- Support a research-based professional development program around your district learning goals. Allocate time for all members of the school staff to meet weekly for sustained, in-depth, collective study of teaching and learning. The built-in weekly time is used for the collective study of student learning, training, and for peer coaching teams to meet. Evaluate the effectiveness of professional development efforts by changes in student learning.
- Work to build an environment where teachers feel appreciated and supported as professionals. Work in partnership with teachers to identify and solve problems related to student achievement; place priority on instructional needs when making budget and other decisions; provide teachers with the time and resources needed for instruction and planning; include teachers in school-improvement decision making; hear reports from staff at the board table on instructional initiatives and their results; and respond to teachers' suggestions for research-based school improvement strategies.
- Ensure that teachers are fairly compensated in salary and benefits. Among other steps, that means advocating with the legislature and other policy leaders the need to adequately fund the 2001 teacher quality/student achievement bill, adequate annual allowable growth, and staff development resources.



Want to know more?

How Teaching Matters: Bringing the Classroom Back Into Discussion of Teacher Quality; Educational Testing Service; October 2000. Copies can be downloaded from the ETS Web site at www.ets.org/research/pic/teamat.pdf

A Talented, Dedicated, and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom; U.S. Dept. of Education; September 1999, www.ed.gov/teacherquality/invest

Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement, by William Sanders and Joan C. Rivers. University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, 1996.

Teacher Quality and Equity in Educational Opportunity: Findings and Policy Implications, by William Sanders and Joan C. Rivers. University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, May 2000.

Iowa Department of Education
www.state.ia.us/educate/index.html

The DE Web site includes details of Iowa's teacher compensation law, including a summary of policy, links to legislation, schedules, funding and other resources.

American School Board Journal, April 2002, includes articles entitled "Who Will Teach Our Children?" and "Improving Teacher Quality," and "A Modest Proposal: The Case for Radically Overhauling Teacher Licensure."

Sparks, D. "Focusing Staff Development on Improving the Learning of All Students." In *Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement*, second edition, Gordon Cawelti, Editor. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service, 1999.

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life instructional situations based on student needs—not all in August or May," said Eckles. "This is a very different way of working."

In order to set specific goals, teachers needed data for their own students, plus other students in the building and the district. "We made it a priority at the district level to get data from district assessments to the teachers' desktops in a timely manner and in a format they could use," said Eckles. "Teachers don't normally get complete data in time to change instruction."



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