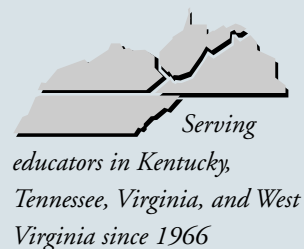


Vol. 21, No. 3

THE LINK

A PUBLICATION FOR EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS



Lesson Study: A Japanese Approach to Action Research

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

By Jenny S. Flannagan

How would you structure a lesson to teach experimental design to sixth-grade science students? How would you help them understand terms such as independent and dependent variables, constants, and controls? Would you ask them to develop experiments *before* introducing the vocabulary?

For four middle school teachers and me, these questions began a journey, and our discoveries have made “all the difference” in the teachers’ perceptions of themselves and the success of their students.

Introducing Lesson Study

The four sixth-grade science teachers at Corporate Landing Middle School in Virginia Beach City love teaching. Although

each has less than 10 years of teaching experience, all are confident in the classroom and strive constantly to improve.

In the spring of 2001, I approached these teachers with the idea of trying a form of professional development called Lesson Study. The term was unfamiliar, and at first the teachers were dubious. “We plan together every week, so how is this method different?” they asked.

I answered by posing questions to them. “How do you know your lessons are *really* effective? Do you take time to observe one another’s teaching?” The second question drew laughter. “Here’s one more administrator from downtown, trying to improve standardized test scores, who has lost touch with the real world of teaching,” they thought.

Again, I questioned: “But what if you *could* improve your teaching by researching

(continued on page 2)



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IN THIS ISSUE

Professional Development

Lesson Study: A Japanese Approach to Action Research, p. 1

Research Notes

Authentic Instruction Is No Trivial Pursuit; Reduce Risk, Promote Learning; How Technology Supports Learning; Connecting with Kids; Forming a Teacher Professional Community, p. 4

Publications of Interest

Achieving Diversity in the Classroom; Teaching Tolerance; Support for Science

Teachers; Technical Assistance Directory; A Lexicon of Learning; Taking Real-World Problems to the Classroom; Reading First Web Resources; Online Professional Development; Family Geography Challenge, p. 6

Resources from AEL

See the catalog insert in the center of this issue

Grant Opportunities

Federal and More; p. 8

ESEA Information

How? What? When? Implementing *No Child Left Behind*, p. 12

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Lesson Study

(continued from page 1)

As the middle school science coordinator for Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Jenny S. Flannagan plans professional development opportunities for science teachers. She learned about Lesson Study from Jim Stigler, who spoke at the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in June 2000. Flannagan's e-mail address is jflanna@vbcps.k12.va.us.

The teachers who have been engaged in Lesson Study for the past two years are Danielle Kreassig, Rachel McMillan, Scott Michels, and Verna Overstreet. They can be reached at Corporate Landing Middle School, 1597 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, phone 757-437-6199.

the effects of your lessons? What if I were to give you the time and a process?”

From that point, the group listened intently to my presentation.

According to a National Center for Education Statistics report based on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, more than 60 percent of U.S. eighth-grade teachers of mathematics and science have never observed another classroom or been observed by other teachers.¹ Yet, the report concludes, observations and critiques of lessons are keys to improving a teacher's content knowledge and understanding of student thinking.

Lesson Study, a comprehensive process widely used in Japan, weaves together content (the *what* of science), context (the mode of professional development), and process (the *how* of teaching). To implement Lesson Study, schools need to make time in the workday for teachers to create professional learning communities. (See related piece on page 11.)

Using Lesson Study, teachers work together (1) to plan an entire curriculum unit that fosters better student understanding and (2) to create a research lesson based on the team's overarching goal. As the lesson is taught, the nonteaching members of the team observe and record student reactions and thinking. After the lesson, teachers debrief the components of the lesson and the reactions of students. The lesson is then refined, retaught, discussed, and refined again (for more information, visit www.rbs.org/lesson_study/journey_beyond_timss.shtml).

How We Began

Beginning Lesson Study was not easy. First of all, the concept was new to America and little documentation was available. Using videos and research primarily from Catherine Lewis and Makoto Yoshida, we began to flesh out how to implement it and make it fit the teachers' needs. The science teachers took a

scientific approach, using Deming's PDCA cycle—Plan, Do, Check, Act.²

The Plan

The plan was simple. Everyone—including the administration—agreed on the process. To implement Lesson Study, the teachers and I would meet one day a week for an hour. To allow teachers to observe the research lesson, substitutes would be paid through Title II funds.

Next, teachers developed their vision for sixth-grade science at Corporate Landing Middle School: to help students develop a love for science, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills, while working collaboratively as a team of scientists.

To implement their vision, the teachers researched best practices for science and reflected on the National Science Standards. They felt they must move from teaching all students in the same way to understanding and responding to individual students' interests, experiences, and needs. They also felt it was crucial to provide students with more inquiry activities and more opportunities to share the responsibility for learning. Teachers finalized their plan by creating the activities to implement the research lesson.

Knowing that data were critical to their work, teachers agreed to use the division's pretest to identify the curriculum objectives for the research lesson. Using the division's posttest, teachers would measure student growth over the course of the unit. They would also look at student work, test performance, and the observation notes from the research lesson. Outside observers and the administrative staff would be invited to participate in the research lesson.

The teachers then moved to developing their unit. Planning backwards, they asked, “What do we want students to be able to do?” More questions were generated, including these:

- What did the pretest indicate as areas of weaknesses?



- What would happen if we began with an experiment this year?
- Will students gain a deeper understanding if they try something before we present the content?”

The Do

Pretest results showed the students’ weakest area was vocabulary. Thus, beginning with the first unit in the curriculum guide, the teachers decided to create a better way to teach the terms used in experimental design. They discussed how they taught vocabulary the previous year, reflected on new ways to teach it, and ultimately modified a previous activity into an inquiry-based learning activity. Their research goal was to see if beginning the lesson with an experiment, then using students’ hands-on experiences to teach terminology, would help students develop a deeper understanding of scientific terms. They hoped students would master the content and gain an appreciation for the work scientists do.

The Check

In the research lesson, students were asked to develop experiments to test factors that affect the bounciness of balls. The teacher chosen to teach the lesson helped students to develop their ideas, then the students took over. They could use various sizes of balls, change the surface on which the balls bounced, or try any other idea.

In the science lab, the teachers and I had to work hard not to interrupt and help the students. We recorded student comments, drew diagrams, and took pictures as we tried to capture every detail. Once the lesson was complete, we discussed the results.

The teacher who taught the lesson began by sharing what she felt went well and what could be improved, then the observers joined in. Soon teachers were offering ideas on how to revise the lesson. One result of the debriefing was the creation of a laboratory role booklet to help students plan ways to conduct the experiment. Teacher questions

were also clarified and reworded to see if more ideas could be generated by the students. The revised lesson was taught by another teacher to a different group of students, and the teachers observed and reflected once again. The teachers finalized the revised lesson and, on completion of the entire unit, reflected on it.

The Act

Data from the posttest indicated an improvement of approximately 50 percent for each question specifically targeting the concept of experimental design.

While Lesson Study may not be the only factor that contributed to the improvement in student scores, the teachers gave it a lot of credit. One said, “Without this process we would never have taken time to see our lessons in action. Now, when we begin a unit, we talk about how well it went previously and how we could do it differently.”

A colleague who observed the process commented that the four teachers are not the same teachers they were: “Did you notice that not once did they talk about what students can’t do, only what they themselves could do with their lesson to engage students?” To me, this was the defining moment of our journey.

Through the process of improving lessons and sharing the knowledge acquired with colleagues, a remarkable thing happened to those teachers: they began to view themselves as professionals contributing to the knowledge base that defines their profession. They applied for and received a \$1,000 grant from the school division to purchase materials for a second Lesson Study, and they have submitted proposals to present at national conferences.

I witnessed the difference this professional development strategy can make. In the end, the road these teachers continue to travel may entail many hours of hard work and uncertainty, but they know they are making a difference, one lesson at a time.

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James W. Stigler and James Hiebert, *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World’s Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

Makoto Yoshida, “Lesson Study [Jugyokenkyu] in Elementary School Mathematics in Japan: A Case Study” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 1999).



Research Notes

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement funds research through regional laboratories, national centers, and field studies.

Research from the nation's 10 regional laboratories can be found on the Internet at www.relnetwork.org.

The work of the 12 national centers is available at <http://research.cse.ucla.edu>.

Authentic Instruction Is No Trivial Pursuit

School assignments that are intellectually demanding can help students do better on standardized achievement tests, say the authors of a study on Chicago's school reforms. They found that low- and high-achieving students benefited equally from assignments that demanded authentic intellectual work rather than repetition and recall.

Many practitioners, however, remain concerned that intellectually complex or higher-order instruction might keep disadvantaged and low-achieving students from covering "the basics," resulting in low performance on standardized tests. The Chicago study counters this concern and reinforces a body of research previously cited by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning in *Prisoners of Time* (www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/Letter.html).

The study focused on the effects on standardized test performance of students receiving assignments that required more challenging intellectual work (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school or connection to students' lives).

Researchers collected both "typical" and "challenging" assignments from a large sample of teachers in 19 public schools serving student populations that were slightly more disadvantaged than the overall district population. Targeted subjects were writing and mathematics in grades 3, 6, and 8.

Trained raters analyzed the effects of the assignments on students' achievement on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Illinois Goal Assessment Program.

In Chicago classrooms with high-quality assignments, students' learning gains were 20 percent greater than the national average. In contrast, students who received less demanding assignments gained 25 percent *less* than the national average in reading (22 percent less in math). Further analysis showed little relationship between the quality of teachers' assignments and the racial or socioeconomic compositions of their classrooms. That is, the quality of the assignment seemed to depend more on teachers' approach to instruction than on expectations regarding students' abilities to do challenging work.

Messages for practitioners:

- **Seek out professional development that advances teachers' expertise in teaching and subject matter.** Authors of the Chicago study acknowledge that merely introducing classroom and assessment materials that include more authentic intellectual challenge is not enough. Teachers need support and assistance to integrate more challenging assignments with instruction that targets basic skills.
- **Encourage alternative school structures that support improved teacher and student learning.** Schools currently are not set up to accommodate the time required for the level of professional development teachers need to change classroom instruction. Think of ways to

Recently, AEL became the first education institution in the world to use new Digimarc MediaBridge technology, which employs digital watermarks to instantly link printed materials with the World Wide Web. You can recognize an Internet-enabled page by the symbol you see at the right and in the blue bar below.

Most pages of *The Link* contain an image (a star) embedded with a Digimarc. When you hold the star up to a digital camera connected to your desktop computer, the Digimarc MediaBridge software reads the watermark, activates your Web browser, and delivers AEL's Web site to your screen. From there, you will be able to launch related Web sites and access a wealth of information—without typing long URLs.

Please join us in exploring the benefits of this evolutionary technology. Go to www.digimarc.com to download and install the free Digimarc MediaBridge software. This new technology promises to expand the way we read and use printed materials.



develop and test new schedules or structures.

Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence by Fred M. Newmann, Anthony S. Bryk, and Jenny K. Nagaoka is available online at www.consortium-chicago.org/publications/pdfs/p0a02.pdf.

Reduce Risk, Promote Learning: Twin Strategies for Teen Success

Helping teens adjust to middle, junior high, and high school is necessary but not sufficient to raise student achievement, according to a paper published in the *Journal of School Psychology*. Schools must also focus on efforts that promote better academic performance. The most powerful reforms, the authors say, modify the school environment to help students adjust *and* learn. When properly put into place, such reforms promote the highest levels of performance, achievement, and positive social development for all students.

The article presents findings from a series of studies on whole-school change efforts, describing in depth the School Transitional Environment Project (STEP) and High Performance Learning Communities or Project HiPlaces. These initiatives allowed investigators to study both what helps students adjust to key life transitions associated with schools and what conditions create and sustain school transformation that leads to higher student achievement.

The STEP initiative helped students adjust to new academic expectations and social environments as they entered middle, junior, or high school. These preventive efforts helped students stay in school longer, reduced drop-out rates, lowered levels of school violence, and promoted greater safety. However, students did not necessarily make gains in academic performance. Project HiPlaces was designed to focus on questions

about school-related factors that promote student achievement.

Study findings suggest ways practitioners can help teens succeed.

- **Introduce programs that help students make the transition into secondary schools.** The risks of misbehavior and loss of academic focus increase as teens enter secondary schools. These environments can present high levels of change and disorganization, require immediate understanding of complex expectations, and introduce new social demands and context.
- **Fully implement reform or intervention strategies.** School-related components of change are interconnected; the success of one depends on the implementation of others. The full benefits associated with prevention efforts may not be apparent until all school-related factors of the reform have been accomplished and their implementation is mature and comprehensive.

Whole School Improvement and Restructuring as Prevention and Promotion: Lessons from STEP and the Project on High Performance Learning Communities by Robert D. Felner, Antionette Favazza, Minsuk Shim, Stephen Brand, Kenneth Gu, and Nancy Noonan appears in the *Journal of School Psychology*, 39(2): 177-202 (2001).

How Technology Supports Learning

Although our mothers told us watching too much TV could rot our brains, some TV programs have been shown to grow brain power. That's according to a new analysis of research on the power of educational technology to help students create new associations and learn through new pathways, and to make the curriculum meaningful.

Author James M. Marshall, a researcher and educational technologist, reviewed

(continued on page 6)

Connecting with Kids

Helping students feel connected within a school is a key to reducing risky behaviors. That was the conclusion reached by Dr. Robert Blum and colleagues when they analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a federally funded survey of 72,000 adolescents in grades 7-12. Blum directs the University of Minnesota's Center for Adolescent Health and Development.

Read *Reducing the Risk: Connections that Make a Difference in the Lives of Youth* online at http://allaboutkids.umn.edu/cfahad/Reducing_the_risk.pdf.

Research Notes

(continued from page 5)

Context matters, and teachers (or parents) play an important role in facilitating learning when content is delivered through technology.

research from as far back as 1946 to discover that technology-based instruction can and does result in learning.

For example, the report reviews 30 years of research on *Sesame Street*. From 1970 to 2001, various researchers found the

program to have positive effects on general readiness for school; relationships with peers; gains in vocabulary and letter and number recognition; reading for pleasure; and performance in English, science, and mathematics as long as 10 to 15 years later.

Computer technologies and learning have been studied since 1985 through a collaborative effort called Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow. The results of these studies are compiled in a series called *Apple K-12 Effectiveness Reports* (available at www.apple.com/education/k12/leadership/effect.html). These reports show, for example, that children who use computers to study spelling are more engaged and achieve higher spelling scores; that middle school students who use a computer in history class demonstrate increased motivation and recall; and that computers help elementary students

of all abilities learn science content while increasing logical thinking and problem-solving skills.

However, Marshall concludes, Mom was also right (of course). Sometimes—when programs lack instructional foundation, when classroom use of technology is purposeless, or when there's lack of alignment between desired outcomes and the application of technology—no learning results.

Context matters, and teachers (or parents) play an important role in facilitating learning when content is delivered through technology.

Learning with Technology: Evidence that Technology Can, and Does, Support Learning presents a history of technology-based learning, from film to computers, and an overview of the process of learning—from its biological basis to the relationship between multimedia and active learning. The review of research-based evidence on learning with educational technology is followed by a look at emerging technologies.

The report is available online at www.ciconline.org/uploads/CIC_REPORT.pdf.

(continued on page 11)

Publications of Interest

Achieving Diversity in the Classroom

A new guide from the National School Boards Association can help school districts understand the legal issues regarding the use of race in student assignment and how to make decisions that best serve district educational goals while minimizing legal risk.

From Desegregation to Diversity: A School District's Self-Assessment Guide on Race, Student Assignment, and the Law provides information on how courts analyze cases, basic principles and a framework for using race in student assignment, and a useful appendix of research on the value of diversity.

The 32-page book was coauthored by attorneys Edwin C. Darden, Arthur L.

Coleman, and Scott R. Palmer and costs \$16 plus \$7 shipping (\$12 plus \$7 for NSBA members). Order online at www.nsba.org/cube, by phone at 703-838-6722, or by e-mail at cube@nsba.org.

Teaching Tolerance

The Southern Poverty Law Center has worked with educators for years to promote interracial and intercultural understanding. Its *Teaching Tolerance* Web site offers lesson plans, activities, news, opportunities to publish, and grants to teachers, parents, and children. Classroom resources include many free and inexpensive publications and videotapes.

Responding to Hate at School: A Guide

(continued on page 7)



for Teachers, Counselors and Administrators discusses guidelines for everyday action, emergency response, and long-range commitment. For example, every day we can

- create an unwelcome environment for hate speech and symbols
- be alert to signs of student alienation

During an emergency, we should

- focus on safety first
- denounce the hateful act and address fears and confusion
- involve everyone in finding solutions

Long range, we should

- create school policies that promote equity and respect
- encourage student activism

The *One World® Poster Study Guide* provides eight posters, each paired with a relevant short text, and discussion and activity ideas for elementary and secondary students.

101 Tools for Tolerance: Simple Ideas for Promoting Equity and Celebrating Diversity suggests things to do, things to think about, and things to remember to help foster tolerance. An individual might learn sign language. A family might invite someone of a different background for a meal or to celebrate a holiday. A school might sponsor a conflict resolution team. A community might create a mobile “street library” to make multicultural books and films widely available.

These resources and more can be ordered (or downloaded free) online at www.teachingtolerance.org, by fax at 334-956-8484, or by mail at Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

Support for Science Teachers

Here are two ways the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) helps educators and parents better understand and present science concepts to children.

In conjunction with the Children’s Book Council, NSTA has released its annual list of outstanding science trade books (books

other than textbooks). A review panel uses rigorous guidelines to select books that meet specific criteria. These include substantial science content; clear, accurate, and up-to-date information; clear differentiation between theories and facts; accuracy of illustrations; and freedom from gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic bias. Titles are sorted by category and annotated for reading level and related National Science Content Standards. The 2002 list has been expanded to include K-12 and is available online at www.nsta.org/404.

Stop Faking It! Finally Understanding Science So You Can Teach It: Force and Motion offers jargon-free background information for teaching physical science with confidence. The book provides concrete examples, hands-on activities, and clear language and diagrams appropriate for grades 3-8. Order online at <http://store.nsta.org> or by phone at 800-277-5300.

Technical Assistance Directory

The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA, formerly NCBE) has released the *2002 Technical Assistance Network Directory*.

Part I of the directory includes information on state- and federally sponsored technical assistance providers. Each listing includes contact information for the state education agency, the state office responsible for ESL/bilingual education, and applicable regional technical assistance centers.

Part II provides a state-by-state listing of grants awarded in 2001-2002 by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement & Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students.

The complete directory is online at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/tan/directory.htm.

(continued on page 10)

Publications of Interest

(continued from page 6)

A Lexicon of Learning

Do parents give you puzzled looks when you use terms like *scaffolding* or *looping* or *authentic assessment*?

Maybe it’s time to turn to *A Lexicon of Learning*, an easy-to-use, online resource developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The Web site, www.ascd.org/educationnews/lexicon/lexiconoflearning.html, provides clear definitions of many educational terms in everyday language parents will appreciate.



Grant Opportunities

For information on grant programs, funding sources, and technology funding, visit the eSchool News School Funding Center at www.eschoolnews.com/resources/funding. Consider also watching the Federal Register, published every weekday, at www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/frcont01.html.

Federal Programs

National Endowment for the Humanities: Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Grants

Purpose: To commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Meriwether Lewis and William Clark expedition by funding projects that address narrow and broad questions about the epic journey via research, instruction, interpretation, preservation, and public programs in the humanities.

Proposals will be accepted beginning in 2003 through 2006, and may take the form of educational projects for grades K-16. Projects that use the Lewis and Clark expedition for a starting point to look at other topics are welcome. Applicants are urged to discuss proposals with a NEH program officer or send a preliminary proposal by mail or e-mail.

Deadline: Applications must be submitted to one of NEH's existing grant programs at its regular deadline.

Application information available at www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/lewisandclark.html. To ask questions, call 800-NEH-1121 or send e-mail to education@neh.gov.

Foundations

Braitmayer Foundation: Enhancing Education

Purpose: To support organizations and programs that enhance the education of K-12 children.

The foundation's interest areas include curricular and school reform initiatives; teacher preparation and professional development, particularly for recruitment and retention of people with high ability and diverse backgrounds; and community efforts, including partnerships, that increase educational opportunities for students. Maximum awards are \$10,000.

Deadline: November 15, 2002
Information available at www.braitmayerfoundation.org.

Ezra Jack Keats Foundation: Minigrants to Libraries

Purpose: To encourage literacy and creativity in children.

School and public libraries may apply for these \$350 minigrants.

Deadline: September 15, 2002

Information and application available at www.ezra-jack-keats.org/Programs/minigrants.htm.

Corning Incorporated Foundation: Education and Quality of Life

Purpose: To support educational, cultural, and community projects that improve the quality of life.

Selected elementary and secondary schools and colleges consistently receive foundation grants. Areas of involvement have included student community service programs, curriculum enrichment, student scholarships, facility improvement, and instructional technology projects for the classroom.

Deadline: Open

Requests must be made in writing in a two- to three-page letter of inquiry signed by the organization's senior administrative officer. Mail inquiries to Mrs. Kristin A. Swain, President, Corning Incorporated Foundation, MP-LB-02, Corning, NY 14831. Information available online at www.corning.com/inside_corning/foundation.asp.

Other

Southern Poverty Law Center: Teaching Tolerance Grants

Purpose: To support K-12 classroom teachers and other educators, including community and church leaders, in implementing tolerance projects in schools and communities.

Awards of up to \$2,000 support projects that are small-scale, resourceful, student-focused, and promote acceptance of diversity, peacemaking, community service, or any other aspect of tolerance education.



Deadline: Open, but allow 10-12 weeks for processing.

Information and application available online at www.tolerance.org/teach/expand/gra/guide.jsp or from Grants Administrator, Teaching Tolerance Grants, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

Prudential: Spirit of Community Awards

Purpose: To recognize middle and high school students who have demonstrated exemplary community service.

Students in grades 5-12 are eligible. At the local level, honorees receive a certificate of recognition. State-level honorees receive \$1,000; an engraved medallion; and a trip to Washington, DC, for national recognition events. National honorees receive additional awards of \$5,000 and trophies for their schools.

Deadlines: October 31, 2002, for students to submit applications; November 7, 2002, for schools and other sponsoring organizations to select and submit local honorees for state judging.

Information available online at www.prudential.com/productsAndServices or from Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, P.O. Box 297, St. Peter, MN 56082.

Cingular Wireless: Community Involvement

Purpose: To support community-based programs and organizations that address educational, cultural, and social issues affecting the quality of life.

Grantor gives emphasis to project-specific proposals that (a) convincingly address self-expression through human needs, arts, or education; (b) inspire creativity in youth and adults or focus on teaching/developing modes of expression; or (c) stimulate partnerships among various organizations to work for lasting solutions.

Deadline: Open

Information available online at www.cingular.com/about/charitable_contribution_guidelines.

IBM: Reinventing Education Program

Purpose: To work with school partners throughout the world to develop and implement innovative technology solutions. These solutions should spur and support fundamental school restructuring and broad-based systemic change aimed at raising student achievement.

IBM contributes more than just money; it also commits researchers, educational consultants, and technology.

Deadline: Open

Nonprofit or educational institutions with unsolicited proposals should make an initial inquiry in a two-page letter.

Information available online at www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives/grant/education/programs/reinventing/ or from Vice President, Corporate Community Relations, IBM Corporation, New Orchard Road, Armonk, NY 10504.

AACTE and Microsoft: Innovative Teachers Program

Purpose: To establish a national network of Communities of Practice & Expertise (CPEs) that work together to improve teacher education and student learning through the use of technology.

A CPE is a partnership between a school, college, or department of education and a professional development school and/or a K-12 school district. CPEs organize around an area of interest and develop curricular, training, and professional development materials that use technology to enhance the teaching-learning process.

Grantees will receive tools to help them design, implement, and foster their programs. These include Microsoft software licenses, access to professionally designed online support, and online collaboration and community-building tools.

Deadline: October 31, 2002

Application and information available online at www.aacte.org/Research/innovative_teachers.htm.

Salute to Educators

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the Families and Work Institute has created a nationwide initiative to recognize educators who have made special efforts to help children cope with this national tragedy and contribute to the healing process.

Through its "Salute to Educators" program, the Institute is collecting stories from educators who have responded to the events of September 11 with strength, perseverance, and creativity.

Inspiring stories will be published in print and online to give teachers tools and strategies for future situations that require new responses. For more information or to submit your story online, visit <http://salute.familiesandwork.org>.



Publications of Interest

(continued from page 7)

Taking Real-World Problems to the Classroom

Home improvement retailer Lowe's allows educators to use most education content from its Web site at no charge. This includes more than 500 how-to articles useful in a variety of classes. Lowe's simply requires educators to send e-mail to content@lowes.com requesting articles by title, then credit Lowe.com for the information. For more details and to review the topics available, visit www.lowes.com/content and the online How-To Library.

Reading First Web Resources

The Reading First initiative sets a clear goal: all students must read at grade level by grade 3. To help teachers meet this challenge, the Regional Educational Laboratory at Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) has developed the earlyreading.info Web site. Reliable information for prekindergarten to grade 3 teachers is available, along with resources for grant writers, state education officers, and other school personnel.

Created collaboratively with the U.S. Department of Education, the site is part of the initiative's support to states and schools. Links to government, research laboratory, and other nonprofit Web sites provide access to research-based information to help improve children's skills. The PREL site acts as a referee for these materials, ensuring that they have undergone a thorough review process and meet Reading First criteria for quality, validity, and appropriateness. In addition, publishers have provided access to online books by key early reading researchers.

Without the delays and costs of shipping and handling, users gain access to research, curriculum and policy materials, and classroom strategies and activities. In evaluating the site, one teacher commented, "The amount of information on this Web site is tremendous." Another noted that activities are referenced, making it easy to demonstrate that lesson plans incorporating them are research-based. Still others appreciated finding brochures, pamphlets, and flyers they could print out and give to parents.

earlyreading.info organizes content by category for quick, efficient retrieval. Categories include grade level (prekindergarten through grade 3), reading component (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension), and resource type (knowledge/research, materials/resources, strategies/activities, assessment, policy/standards, and family/community). Information can be located through both browse and search functions.

Online Professional Development

Two resources, which have been around for a while, have a lot to offer teachers and professional development facilitators.

TappedIn is a real-time online professional development experience. Membership (or participation as a guest) is free. Anyone new to the environment is encouraged to visit www.TappedIn.org. Help Desk staff are plentiful and helpful, and the entire experience is friendly and positive.

The Knowledge Loom is hosted by the LAB at Brown, a regional educational laboratory. The site provides free research-based information on best practices and a forum for discussions at <http://knowledgeloom.org>. The LAB recently created a companion guide for professional development. *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* is free at <http://knowledgeloom.org/guidebook/index.jsp>.

Family Geography Challenge

There has never been a better time for families to learn together about world events. Through its Family Geography Challenge program, National Geographic trains teachers to recruit families to pursue geography at home and discover more about the world through current events.

Teachers host a one-hour family workshop to explain the program and provide materials. Families read or watch the news together over a period of several weeks, use a world map to locate events, keep a journal of their discussions, and return a summary of their work to the teacher for a prize and certificate.

Participating teachers need a handbook (\$30), which includes tools for administering the family workshop and program, and at least one family giveaway pack (\$65). Each giveaway pack serves 20 families.

For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/challenge.



Research Notes

(continued from page 6)

Forming a Teacher Professional Community

The authors of *What Makes Teacher Community Different from a Gathering of Teachers?* draw on their experience with a professional development project to propose a model for studying the formation and development of teacher community. The project was supported by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy and the Center on English Learning and Achievement. It brought together 22 English and social studies teachers, a special education teacher, and an ESL teacher from an urban high school for two and a half years. The teachers met twice a month to read together in the fields of history and literature and to work on an interdisciplinary curriculum.

In this account, the authors describe the challenges of maintaining diverse perspectives within a community and how familiar fault lines, in society and in schools, threaten the pursuit of community. The paper includes a model of the markers of community formation (see below) as manifested in participants' talk and actions. A discussion on why we must care about professional communities highlights the importance of their contributions to intellectual renewal, new learning, and leadership cultivation. Equally important to these teacher benefits are those gained by students who witness lifelong learning, study enriched curricula, and enjoy new classroom cultures.

What Makes Teacher Community Different from a Gathering of Teachers?, by Pamela Grossman, Sam Wineburg, and Stephen Woolworth, is available at <http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/Occasional.html#Community>.

<h3>Model of the Formation of the Teacher Professional Community</h3>		
Beginning ➡	Evolving ➡	Mature ➡
<h4>Formation of Group Identity and Norms of Interaction</h4>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification with subgroup Individuals are interchangeable and expendable Undercurrent of incivility Sense of individualism overrides responsibility to group's functioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pseudocommunity (false sense of unity; suppression of conflict) Recognition of unique contributions of individual members Open discussion of interactional norms Recognition of need for regulation of group behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification with whole group Recognition that group is enriched by multiple perspectives (sense of loss when member leaves) Development of new interactional norms Communal responsibility for and regulation of group behavior
<h4>Understanding Difference/Navigating Fault Lines</h4>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denial of difference Conflict goes backstage, hidden from view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriation of divergent views by dominant position Conflict erupts on main stage and is feared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and productive use of difference Conflict is an expected feature of group life and dealt with openly and honestly
<h4>Negotiating the Essential Tension</h4>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of agreement over purposes of professional community; different positions are viewed as inherently antagonistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begrudging willingness to let different people pursue different activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition that teacher learning and student learning are fundamentally intertwined
<h4>Taking Communal Responsibility for Individuals' Growth</h4>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belief that teachers' responsibility is to students, not colleagues; intellectual growth is the responsibility of the individual Contributions to group are acts of individual volition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition that colleagues are resources for one's learning Recognition that participation is expected for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to colleagues' growth Acceptance of rights and obligations of community membership



How? What? When? Implementing *No Child Left Behind*

Every educator has questions about the provisions of this legislation, and many organizations and technical assistance providers have begun offering workshops to explain it. To help schools sort out the requirements and implications, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has dedicated a section of its Web site to “a one-stop resource” for information and best practices.

When you visit, you'll find six areas of information.

1. **Overall resources.** Links to the actual legislation and U.S. Department of Education Web sites; reports and policy briefs from AASA, the Education Commission of the States, American Federation of Teachers, Civil Rights

Project at Harvard, and others; and a section on scientifically-based research

2. **Adequate yearly progress.** General resources on school improvement, as well as information targeted at school improvement plans, district report cards, and other provisions in this area
3. **Educator quality.** Information on alternative certification, professional development, strategies for building capacity, and planning tools
4. **Reading.** Links to literacy information from research and practice
5. **Rural schools.** Information about funding and achievement
6. **Other.** Resources and best practices on 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Comprehensive School Reform, and flexibility

You can find the site at www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/ESEA/ESEA_best_of_web_index.htm.

AEL serves as the regional educational laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. For these same four states, it operates the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center and operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. AEL houses the Institute for the Advancement of Emerging Technologies in Education (IAETE) and the Institute for the Advancement of Research in Education (IARE). The REL contract includes a Technology Specialty for the nation's system of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories. This publication is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, contract number ED-01-CO-0016. The contents herein do not necessarily reflect AEL or OERI policies or views.



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