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Focus: Teaching Quality

Three Critical Areas of Professional Development for Teaching in 21st Century Classrooms

by Paula Johnson, M.A.

21st Century Learning

Classrooms designed for 21st century education generate environments that foster the competencies needed for success in today’s world. Headed by the National Education Association (NEA), the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) defines Four Cs of 21st century learning: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity (NEA, 2014). To compete in a global society, students must develop interpersonal and leadership skills. Many careers require individuals to work as part of a team or in partnership with members of other organizations.

Unfortunately, the rapid transformation of campus demographics can leave some students feeling isolated for a variety of reasons. Differences among students (including language, income, race/culture and religion) can leave students feeling out of place. Due to changing dynamics throughout our communities, educators across the country are facing the challenge of incorporating multicultural education without proper preparation.

Creating positive school climates that embrace student diversity reframes perceived barriers into building blocks leading to stronger student engagement and greater success. Providing teachers with professional development focused on cultivating staff and students’ intercultural proficiency is a necessary first step in the process (Grayson, 2016). This article offers pro-active recommendations for advancing empathy and equity in schools.

21st Century Teaching

For students to be successful learners, they must be engaged in the learning process. Much of traditional curriculum does not reflect diverse racial and economic backgrounds, languages, religions, funds of knowledge or family structures.

Moreover, White student enrollment has fallen just below 50 percent, and at least 30 percent of public schools have a 75 percent or higher minority student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2000; 2012). In contrast, student demographics are vastly different from teachers and principals. Approximately 82 percent of all public school teachers and 80 percent of school leaders are White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This cultural and curricular mismatch between students, teachers and school leaders can contribute to educational and racial inequities (Staats, 2014). Furthermore, these conditions often coincide with tension-filled classrooms, lower student achievement, and misguided referrals for discipline, special education and English proficiency testing.

21st Century Professional Development

Teachers and staff are critical players in promoting diversity and creating positive school climates (Smith, et al., 2014). Welcoming schools value and respect student diversity “without fear of threat, humiliation, danger or disregard” (Scott, 2006). Educators who continually expand their knowledge of the students they serve are em-

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“The best, high-impact innovations do not involve stop-gap, slap-dash or silver bullet solutions. Rather, successful innovations include a set of key features that assure student access to quality teaching and a high quality curriculum.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

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powered with the ability to effectively deliver high-quality and inclusive instruction in the 21st century.

Professional Development in Embracing Diversity

Professional training focused on cultural barriers in education is critical for teaching in multicultural classrooms (Johnson, 2016). The IDRA EAC-South's Implicit Bias and Cultural Competency training provides activities designed to investigate and facilitate conversations about societal norms and build cultural competencies to increase our capacity to be more inclusive.

Participants are asked to characterize their own identities to explore where their biases may come from (Staats, 2014). Through reflective activities and conversations, educators dialogue about their own past and educational experiences and the socio-emotional barriers that can prevent positive interactions with individuals of other races or cultural backgrounds. This knowledge increases our ability for making personal connections with all students.

Professional Development in Providing Supportive Instruction for English Learners

Maximizing access and achievement for English learners requires educators to understand and appreciate the different cultural backgrounds of students (NEA, 2011). There are an estimated 4.6 million students (9.4 percent) in the United States being served through language assistance programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2000; 2012).

But, NCES reports that only about 1.5 percent of all public elementary school teachers, and 0.6 percent of all public secondary school teachers are certified in either English as a second language or bilingual education. IDRA's Engagement-

Based Sheltered Instruction technical assistance provides teachers with strategies for meeting EL learning needs across grade levels and content areas. Teachers learn how to integrate techniques, such as building academic vocabulary, critical questioning, and substantive conversations, into their instructional practice to benefit all learners.

Professional Development in Strengthening School-Family Relationships

Contrary to many myth-conceptions, "regardless of income and ethnic background, families value education" (Montemayor, 2016). IDRA's Family Leadership in Education Model uses a shared leadership approach, linking community-based organizations, families and educators. These groups exchange expertise in a mutually beneficial way. Parents who possess up-to-date information about their children's school experiences can then use that information to strengthen the school-home connection, ultimately benefitting their children.

As educators and policymakers, we must accept responsibility, holding ourselves and others accountable for every learner. Professional development programs offer effective tools and strategies for teaching in the 21st century. Participation prepares educators to facilitate multicultural learning environments that encourage students to learn more about themselves and others. The result is increased student outcomes in achievement, college and career readiness, and global citizenship.

Resources

Grayson, K. "Positive School Climates and Diverse Populations," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, August 2016).
Johnson, P. "Fostering Culturally Diverse Learning Environments," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, August 2016).
Montemayor, A. "Embracing the Culture of Possibility for Student Success – Culture-of-Poverty Thinking Shortchanges Students and Families," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, February 2015).

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National Education Association. (2014). *Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society: An Educator's Guide to the "Four Cs"* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association).
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Listen to Classnotes Podcast #173 on "Skills Needed for Teaching in Diverse Classrooms"
<http://budurl.com/IDRApod173>



Learn about IDRA's Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction Training
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IDRA EAC-South

For more information about the IDRA EAC-South or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or eacsouth@idra.org.

Additional resources are available online at <http://www.idra.org/eac-south/>

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Backward Planning – How Assessment Impacts Teaching and Learning

by Nilka Avilés, Ed.D., and Kristin Grayson, Ph.D.

Assessments are a critical step in the education process as they determine whether the learning objectives of a lesson have been met. By showing students' understanding of concepts taught, assessments enable teachers to see if their teaching has been effective. Assessment affects students' grades, placement, curriculum progress and enrichment, instructional needs, and even school resources and funding.

Assessments must address teaching for understanding through authentic activities that promote higher order thinking and construction of knowledge. Using a backward planning approach to enhance teaching and learning is a renewed approach that challenges the traditional methods of curriculum planning.

In traditional lesson planning, teachers begin with looking at what needs to be taught. They plan lessons, choose activities and teach the material and then give the assessment. Unfortunately, many times teachers don't know if students have mastered the content because they don't seek confirmation of learning and lack evidence to show if students have mastered the content.

Also, the activities may not contain evidence of learning and are not selected to match the assessment. As a result, students do poorly on the test. In the past, teachers have even blamed the students for not learning what they were taught.

In backward planning, teachers focus their attention on: (1) knowing the curriculum standards; (2) creating formative and summative (in-class) assessments and reviewing and analyzing state- and district-required assessments to meet the needs of all students; and then (3) designing lessons that integrate these standards and assessments.

Master teachers know their curriculum standards and are competent in designing formative assessments, understanding state assessments and developing lessons that integrate both. They plan for evidence that truly demonstrates student content mastery and student construction of knowledge. This evidence might be shown in students' oral or written explanations, interpretations, applica-

tions, demonstrations of perspective, displaying empathy, and showing meta-cognitive awareness (Wiggins & McTighe, 2012).

In 1998, Wiggins & McTighe introduced the backward planning approach to curriculum design where the destination is designated before mapping the route to be taken. This approach also is used in other disciplines, such as in one of the "habits of highly effective people" by Stephen Covey (2004) – "Begin with the end in mind."

This planning can occur collaboratively with teachers in their professional learning communities (PLCs) when they are aligning curriculum, assessment and instruction while reviewing student performance data. Principal leaders should establish PLC agendas and protocols so all of this can be accomplished during productive and efficient PLC time periods. Principals and members of the leadership team are the instructional leaders that need to be present at PLC meetings. They need to ensure that they lead and effectively support the full potential of the backward planning approach.

During classroom observations, leaders also should assure that what was discussed in PLCs is implemented during the instructional period. If not, feedback, support and coaching also can assist teachers to enhance their practices.

Three Teacher Roles in Backward Planning

Lesson planning must be purposeful, intentional and lead to effective teaching. In the Universal by Design approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2012), similar to backward planning, the teacher assumes three different roles. The first is *direct teaching*, which includes connecting and engaging students to the lesson objective that leads to the essential question, exploring students' background knowledge and presenting an explanation of the concepts of the lesson being taught.

The second role a teacher assumes is that of a *facilitator*. The teacher intentionally facilitates authentic student thinking through inquiry-based

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Assessments can occur at various times for distinct purposes, and the teacher should use these assessments to strategically promote and reinforce authentic learning.

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approaches, such as project based learning and Socratic seminars, reciprocal teaching, differentiation of instruction, use of graphic organizers to represent thinking, and other reflective practices (Avilés & Algasem, 2016).

The third role of a teacher is to be a *coach of student learning*. As a coach, teachers provide ongoing feedback and encouragement, prompt students to self-reflect and assess themselves, and provide multiple opportunities for independent practice. If the teacher sees that students have not mastered the content to be learned, he or she employs corrective alternative teaching practices. This does not mean re-teaching in the same way, but rather providing opportunities for learning in new ways that take into account students' different learning styles, preferences and personalities.

Direct teaching, facilitating and coaching all become part of the lesson cycle through planning and implementing presentations, guided lessons and independent practice.

All of the objectives and assessments need to be clarified by the teacher before and during the instructional processes so that the students understand what they are learning, what is expected of them and how they can achieve the goals set by the teacher. This helps students to be successful and demonstrate content competencies by knowing where they're going and the knowledge and skills they need to learn to maximize achievement (Avilés, 2017). They need to know how they will be assessed on what they will learn and how they will demonstrate what the teacher has taught them. This, in itself, can improve student performance.

Three Types of Assessments

When curriculum and assessments are selected and instructional lessons are planned and implemented, it is important for leaders, teachers and students to understand different types of assessments that might be used. Assessments can occur at various times for distinct purposes, and the teacher should use these assessments to strategically promote and reinforce authentic learning.

Assessments of learning include summative assessments that are used to demonstrate student achievement at the end of a lesson or unit, a quarter of the year, the semester, or the full year as is done on the state test.

Assessments for learning happen during the learning process, and happen frequently and more than once during the lesson or unit. Students know what they are to learn and do, and the

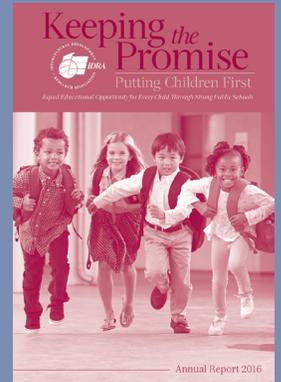
Annual Report Released

Keeping the Promise – Putting Children First

Equal Educational Opportunity for Every Child Through Strong Public Schools

IDRA's 2016 Annual Report, *Keeping the Promise – Putting Children First – Equal Educational Opportunity for Every Child Through Strong Public Schools*, is now available online. Grounded in the promises to children, families and communities that guide our work, the report highlights how IDRA and our partners are building national connections and networks for strong public schools, elevating transformative models for education equality, and crossing borders from research to practice to secure systemic solutions.

The report is online at Issuu at <http://budurl.com/IDRAarr16is> and as a PDF at <http://budurl.com/IDRAarr16pdf>



teacher assesses them as this learning occurs and then redirects the learning as needed while giving students feedback.

Assessment as learning enables students to reflect on their own learning processes. Through this metacognitive process, students understand their own learning and can then take action and ownership for future learning. Teachers support learning when they clarify the purpose of any assessment and select the method that best serves the instructional context (Earl & Katz, 2006).

Thus, assessments are not only used at the end of the instructional cycle, they are to be used intentionally with the curriculum standards of what is to be learned. Curriculum standards integrated with assessments during the instructional process yield assessment results that are more likely to accurately portray the real evidence of student achievement.

School leaders must be facilitators and supporters of learning (Avilés, 2016). They need to have systems and structures in place that advance teaching teams to design and implement instruction, based on 21st century skills, developing reliable and valid assessments that cultivate lifelong learning.

Resources

- Avilés, N. (August 2017). "Unlocking Instruction Through Structured Teaching," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association).
- Avilés, N. (March 2016). "Leaders Turnaround Schools – Transformational Equity Focus Makes College Readiness a Priority," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association).
- Avilés, N. & Algasem, N. (September 2016). "Project Based Learning - Changing Learning Paradigms One Lesson at a Time,"

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 - Covey, S.R. (2004). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, revised edition (New York, N.Y.: Free Press).
 - Earl, L.M., & S. Katz. (2006). *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind – Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning, Assessment of Learning* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Crown in Right of Manitoba).
 - Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2011). *The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-Quality Units* (Alexandria, Va.: ASCD).
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Immigrant Students' Rights to Attend Public Schools – School Opening Alert

This alert is a reminder that public schools, by law, must serve all children. The education of undocumented students is guaranteed by the *Plyler vs. Doe* decision, and certain procedures must be followed when registering immigrant children in school to avoid violation of their civil rights.

In *Plyler vs. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children of undocumented workers and children who themselves are undocumented have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Like other students, children of undocumented workers in fact are required under state laws to attend school until they reach a mandated age.

School personnel – especially principals and those involved with student registration and enrollment – should be aware that they have no legal obligation to enforce U.S. immigration laws.

This decision is vital because **practices that deny or discourage immigrant children and families from public schooling do the following...**

- **...victimize innocent children** – Children of undocumented workers do not choose the conditions under which they enter the United States. They should not be punished for circumstances they do not control. Children have the right to learn and be useful members of society.

- **...are counterproductive for the country** – Denying children access to education does not eliminate illegal immigration. Instead, it ensures the creation of an underclass. Without public education for children, illiteracy rates will increase and opportunities for workforce and community participation will decrease. Research has proven that for every \$1 spent on the education of children, at least \$9 is returned.

- **...waste valuable time while losing sight of principal goals of public education** – Rather than teaching students, school officials would spend their time asking our millions of school children about their citizenship status. States would be forced to spend millions of dollars to do the work of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

- **...promote misinformation** – Incorrect assumptions and inappropriate figures have been used to blame immigrants and their children for economic problems.

- ◆ **Get a copy of this alert in English and Spanish to share with others**

<http://budurl.com/IDRAimmig17>

- ◆ **See our eBook on Supporting Immigrant Students' Rights to Attend Public Schools**

<http://budurl.com/IDRAeBimmig>

- ◆ **See our story with samples: School Districts Pass Resolutions on Responding to ICE**

<http://budurl.com/IDRAakeA17>

- ◆ **Listen to our podcast episode on Immigrant Children's Rights to Attend Public Schools**

<http://budurl.com/IDRApod94>

- **...encourage racism and discrimination** – In turbulent, financially troubled times, immigration often becomes a focal point of public discourse. Many consider a preoccupation with the immigration status of children of undocumented workers to be a form of discrimination and racism.

As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools may not:

- deny admission to a student during initial enrollment or at any other time on the basis of undocumented status;
- treat a student differently to determine residency;
- engage in any practices to “chill” the right of access to school;
- require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status;
- make inquiries of students or parents intended to expose their undocumented status; or
- require social security numbers from all students, as this may expose undocumented status.

Schools should not use Social Security numbers for identification or registration purposes. For those schools that do, it should be clear from the beginning that students who do not present a Social Security number will be assigned a number generated by the school. While schools may request a birth certificate, they may not bar students from enrolling if they do not have a birth certificate. Adults without social security numbers who are applying for a free lunch and/or breakfast program for a student need only state on the application that they do not have a social security number.

The *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act* prohibits schools from providing any outside agency – including the ICE agency – with any information from a child's school file that would expose the

student's undocumented status. The only exception is if an agency gets a court order (subpoena) that parents can then challenge. Schools should note that even requesting such permission from parents might act to “chill” a student's *Plyler* rights.

The U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education in 2014 clarified the intent of the *Plyler* ruling in a letter advising school officials that activities that deny or discourage students to attend school are unlawful. The letter begins, “Under federal law, state and local educational agencies are required to provide all children with equal access to public education at the elementary and secondary level.”

At IDRA, we are working to strengthen schools to work for all children, families and communities. Help us make this goal a reality for every child; we simply cannot afford the alternatives. **Denying children of undocumented workers access to an education is unconstitutional and against the law.**

You can also visit IDRA's website for a printable flier in English and Spanish as well as a copy of the letter from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education (May 2014). The site also has links to sample resolutions by school districts across the country that are issuing and updating policies to protect students' rights in light of uncertainty regarding federal immigration enforcement activities in their schools.

More Information

For more information or to report incidents of school exclusion or delay, call:

META (Nationwide) 617- 628-2226

MALDEF (Los Angeles) 213-629-2512

MALDEF (San Antonio) 210-224-5476

NY Immigration Hotline (Nationwide)
212-419-3737

MALDEF (Chicago) 312-427-0701

MALDEF (Washington, D.C.)
202-293-2828

ACLU (Nationwide) 212-549-2500

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
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Educators will acquire new understanding to apply in the classroom...

- What breaks down in reading for comprehension and interpretation
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- Explicit instruction in context and its effectiveness as an instructional intervention practice
- The critical relationship between background knowledge, vocabulary and inferencing
- Inference as one of the most critical reading skills
- The viable practices for accessing background knowledge and cultural experiences of students
- The cognitive benefits of bilingualism
- The types of inference that are traditionally tested on standardized tests
- The critical content knowledge and instructional intervention practices to develop inferencing as a “Habit of Mind”
- Lesson study as a collegial practice
- The power of a collaborative and individualized plan of action



Intercultural Development Research Association

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What the Training Looks Like

Optimally, this training is designed for groups of teachers either by grade level or vertical teams who participate in a three-day hands-on and dynamic work session where teachers and presenters problem solve instructional issues in teachers' own contexts.

This learning series can be delivered at one time or spaced out during a semester. We are flexible and work with schools or a consortium of schools and school districts to find the best fit for dates that will ensure that instructional time is not affected. IDRA is happy to discuss other options for delivery of these services.

Educators will be immersed in learning simulations and constructing meaning using questioning, academic vocabulary, content standards and the 13 forms of inferencing.

What Makes This Workshop Unique

The three-day learning series is structured around literacy research, readings, learning protocols, content knowledge and instructional intervention practices, think-alouds, lesson study and Habits of Mind.

Teachers will be equipped to...

- recognize that literacy skills in English learners' native languages have an influence in students' processing of linguistic information in English;
- identify and facilitate English learners' mastery of academic vocabulary; and
- become proficient in metacognitive reading strategies that give the tools to teach, monitor and repair comprehension of text when needed.

The Intercultural Development and Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization with a reputation and solid experience in pioneering innovative professional development that targets the underlying difficulty teachers face when working with struggling learners. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research; evaluation and frameworks for action; timely policy analysis; and innovative materials and programs.

IDRA has researched the root causes for schools' insufficient success in reaching students' learning needs and addresses these causes through professional development activities. We customize to a school's contextual needs, and we encourage, equip and join teachers in becoming strategic problem solvers in their particular classrooms.

This learning series addresses the knowledge that we must teach: the craft of inference granted that this foundational skill is required to answer the high percentage of questions in a standardized test, which some researchers calculate at about 60 percent to 90 percent of a test. IDRA also provides teacher coaching services onsite or online, upon request by school or school districts.

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