



Advance  
ILLINOIS

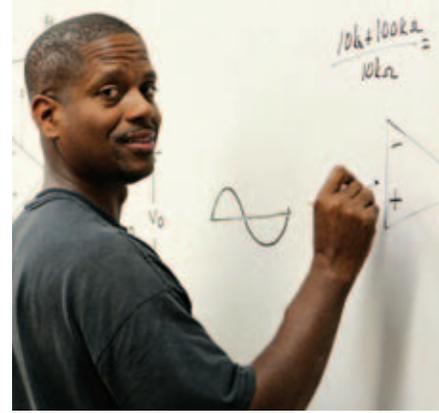
EVERY STUDENT WORLD READY

# Transforming Teacher Work

FOR A BETTER EDUCATED TOMORROW



NOVEMBER 2011



## From the Educator Advisory Council

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Advance Illinois was launched to bring together people—at every level and from every community across our state—who are interested in ensuring a pathway to successful careers and engaged citizenship for each Illinois student.

We recognize and endorse Advance Illinois' mandate to catalyze change. We are teachers and former teachers from across Illinois cities, suburbs, and rural areas. We work with children and young adults of all grade levels and abilities. We believe our schools must change.

At the same time, we speak for a profession that is often underappreciated, undersupported, and, because of its public nature, embroiled in political uncertainty.

This paper provides our vision of teaching and learning, created in collaboration with Advance Illinois and with the support of the American Institutes for Research. It sets out a future where all students—not just the fortunate—in Illinois are assured the best from their teachers.

It sets forth a vision of teachers as nation builders, respected professionals who are entrusted with our country's future.

We believe that the policies that Advance Illinois has promoted during the last two years—including new professional teacher and principal evaluations, a new preparation process for principals, and new teacher certification requirements—will help establish the kind of high-quality work environments we need in Illinois to attract and keep the best and brightest in the teaching profession.

As teachers and educators, we are willing to go the extra mile for our students, step outside our comfort zones, hold each other accountable, identify those who excel at instruction, create and lead teams focused on student and school goals, and build careers in which we continually examine and improve upon our teaching and leadership skills.

We appreciate working with Advance Illinois and hope for more avenues for educator engagement in the development, design, and implementation of policy. Together, we believe we can propel our students and Illinois' education system forward to meet the needs of this exciting, evolving world.

**Join us in making the change possible.**



We recognize and endorse Advance Illinois' mandate to catalyze change. We are teachers and former teachers from across Illinois cities, suburbs, and rural areas. We work with children and young adults of all grade levels and abilities. We believe our schools must change.

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# From Old School...

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## Guideposts to Transforming Teacher Work

In the schoolhouse of yore, teachers were walled off in their classrooms, operating independently of other teachers in the building. Students were expected to master the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The principal presided over the bricks and mortar. That was the old school... a relic of a time when skills remained static and jobs lasted lifetimes.

But the world has changed. Today's workplaces demand creativity and collaboration; are results driven and perpetually evolving. Today's professionals must be flexible and adaptable. If we want to prepare our students to be ready to thrive and succeed in these workplaces, we need to rethink what we ask of our teachers and how we support them.

It is next to impossible for any one teacher to deliver all the knowledge, skills, and guidance needed by every student he or she sees every day. Students have too many varied learning styles, languages, and levels of support at home and in the community. But working together, teachers can prepare our students to face the exciting global marketplace and community that awaits them when they graduate.

# to New School



**Welcome to the New School**—where educators of today are upending not only the teacher as lone ranger model, but also the teacher-as-hero myth. The new school relies on the collective intelligence and ingenuity of teachers, building on evidence that how teachers work with one another is as important to their effectiveness as the knowledge and skill they have as individuals.<sup>1</sup> This kind of intensive collaboration around instruction is at the heart of how the new school works. Throughout this report we are pleased to call out a few examples of places where we see these things happening today—and applaud the many others already engaged in this work throughout our state.

- **In the new school, teachers collaborate effectively.** Shared goals and jointly developed curriculum improve the content and consistency of what teachers deliver. Peer observation, feedback, and support help teachers consistently improve their instructional practice. Collaborative monitoring of student work and progress help teachers identify and address student needs quickly and effectively. Most important, teachers have the time and tools to work together.
- **In the new school, teachers work side-by-side with administrators, taking leadership roles and sharing responsibility for outcomes.** Teacher leaders have the support and authority among their peers to mentor, evaluate, and lead their colleagues. They work with administrators to build targeted supports for teachers and students in order to meet the changing and varied demands of today's more diverse population. They also work with their colleagues to build curriculum and assessments at the school level, because when instructional leadership comes from fellow teachers, teachers listen.
- **In the new school, teachers, like their students, continue learning and evolving.** Teachers don't have just a few days each year set aside to learn. They're constantly learning and growing, bringing in expert help as needed, giving one another feedback, and receiving support from the administration to apply and adapt their new knowledge. Because teaching is more than standing in front of students, teachers need to be empowered and equipped to lead.

- **In the new school, teachers can advance in their careers without leaving the classroom.** Innovative teachers work with communities and families to respond to local needs and collaborate with district and state policymakers to ground policy in practice. In the new school, these contributions are recognized throughout a teacher's career.

Advance Illinois is looking for nothing less than the transformation of the teaching profession into one that attracts, develops, and recognizes the types of leaders we need to catalyze our children's future. Some of the state's best educators have worked closely with us to help us understand what is necessary to transform teaching and even make it more livable by distributing roles and responsibilities across teams. This paper tells the story of what must be done to make teaching look more like the ever-evolving careers available in today's most innovative industries.

This report was developed in collaboration with Advance Illinois' Educator Advisory Council (EAC)—a group of award-winning teachers who have been recognized for moving Illinois toward such a future. These teachers—and hundreds like them—tell the story of how students benefit when teachers are empowered as leaders, innovators, and avid learners. The old school is obsolete...

**Long Live the New School!**

# Out with the Old School, in with the New

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Transforming teacher work will require thinking differently about how we support teachers. Decades of research and experience demonstrate the positive impact of common goals, shared leadership, and collaboration.

The kind of institutional change we're envisioning here is not easy. Although recent Illinois reforms have focused on accountability and transparency—which are essential also—Advance Illinois believes that transforming teacher work will require thinking differently about how we support teachers.

Decades of research and experience demonstrate the positive impact of common goals, shared leadership, collaboration, and formative feedback on professional growth.<sup>2</sup> International practices clearly highlight the benefits of teacher leadership and collaboration.<sup>3</sup> And there are schools right here in Illinois—both charter and traditional—where these things are happening.

But it's almost as if we are afraid to commit. We know that with the interdependence of the system's parts and decades of rust, these changes will require intense effort and new resources to establish and sustain them.

That doesn't mean we can't get started. This paper opens the conversation on transforming teacher work with a look at how we can make the most of recent reforms. Illinois has laid the groundwork for a lot of this work already, and we need to leverage recent progress to create real, lasting change.

Of course, creating substantive change is neither cheap nor easy. But Illinois has resources available to make a start. The state can draw upon money set aside by the federal government to fund pilots of promising strategies in a small number of districts. All districts in Illinois can then draw upon the experiences of their peers to implement the most effective strategies.

Serious change will require different ways of allocating resources, starting with staff, time, and money. We recognize that there are major systemic barriers to this kind of change. Perhaps those can't be addressed right away, but they cannot be ignored.

For now, let us focus on what can be done in the near term. Our vision relies on four guideposts (shown at right) to transforming teacher work. There are opportunities for immediate policy action in each of these areas.

First, Advance Illinois recommends making the most of recent and pending reforms to teacher and principal evaluations, educator preparation programs, and certification requirements.



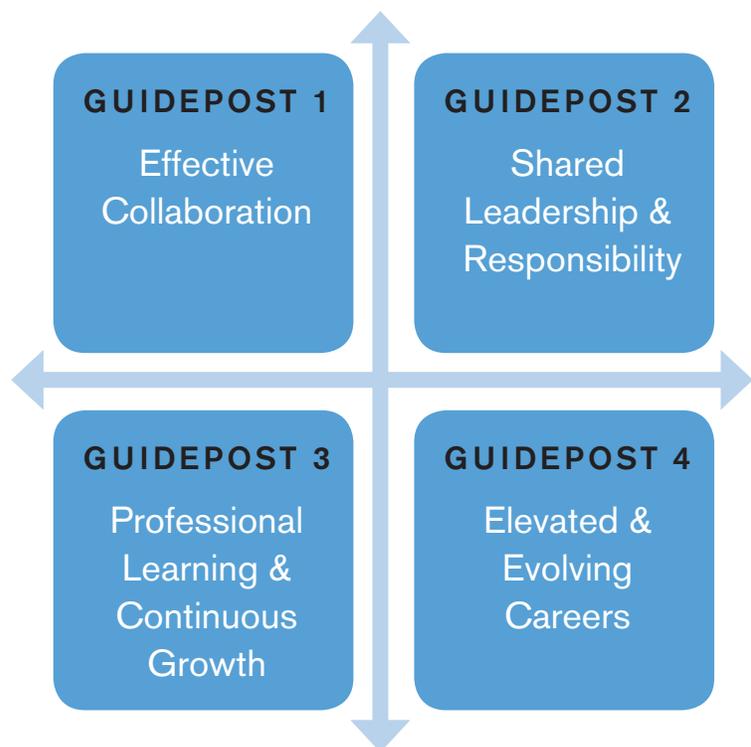


For instance, Illinois' new teacher evaluation systems—with well-defined goals, clear and fair metrics, and aligned professional development—will form the cornerstone of a new approach to teaching. The data from these evaluations—if backed up well with targeted supports—will give teachers a clear tool to examine and improve their own performance in collaboration with their administration and colleagues. Other reforms, if we implement them well, will also help sow the seeds of transformation.

On the resource front, Illinois will be able to apply federal funds from the third round of Race to the Top, as well as dollars from federal School Improvement Grants, to spur various types of local innovation.

We recommend partnering with innovation zone districts (those receiving Race to the Top money) to test out new structural reforms and quickly identify necessary conditions for change. That knowledge will allow us to set the stage and create momentum for wider change in teacher work across Illinois. Although a pilot approach isn't a perfect model, it can give us a way to work out the "bugs", confront fiscal realities (including models for reallocating existing resources) and create clear, functional guides for how to get there from here.

As we do this, we should be looking to address the kinds of systemic barriers that keep us from fully implementing new approaches to teacher work. In this paper, we hold up models for transforming teacher work that we have found—we know there are other new school models sprinkled throughout our state. But to take these or similar reforms to scale, we must work through the process of change and determine the steps and resources required for success. Tweaks won't be sufficient. Transforming the profession will require a sea change in the systems and structures within which teachers work.



“Let's start a real conversation in every district in Illinois about professionalizing teachers' careers and attracting the best and brightest to our schools.”

—JOE FATHEREE, NEA National Educator and 2007 Illinois Teacher of the Year

# 1

## GUIDEPOST

# Effective Collaboration

Teachers work together to improve instruction and help all students succeed

### Why Effective Collaboration Matters

Teacher collaboration is closely tied to student achievement. Teachers who enjoy regular opportunities to observe, interact with, and trade ideas with colleagues show higher gains in their students' achievement than those who don't have similar opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

What's more, teachers prefer collaborative workplaces. In a survey of teachers across the country, two out of three teachers preferred a school with "a lot of collaboration among teachers and guidance from other instructional experts in developing lesson plans" to one with "less collaboration, but where teachers are freer to design their own lessons."<sup>5</sup>

Changes in expectations for student work are driving us toward collaboration. Take, for example, the ACT College Readiness chart below, which shows a skill ladder for critical reading. It only makes sense that to move students up the ladder; teachers must work together both within and across grade levels, and across subjects, from preschool through postsecondary education.

### ACT College Readiness—Sample English Skill Ladder

| Emerging   | Near Proficient   | Proficient   | Mastery   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the basic purpose or role of a specified phrase or sentence</li> <li>Delete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay<br/>Source: Adapted from ACT's College Readiness Standards <a href="http://www.act.org/standard/pdf/english.pdf">http://www.act.org/standard/pdf/english.pdf</a></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the central idea or main topic of a straightforward piece of writing</li> <li>Determine relevancy when presented with a variety of sentence-level detail</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the focus of a simple essay, applying that knowledge to add a sentence that sharpens that focus or to determine if an essay has met a specified goal</li> <li>Delete material primarily because it disturbs the flow and development of the paragraph</li> <li>Add a sentence to accomplish a fairly straightforward purpose such as illustrating a given statement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an awareness of the focus and purpose of a fairly involved essay to determine the rhetorical effect and suitability of an existing phrase or sentence, or to determine the need to delete plausible but irrelevant material</li> <li>Add a sentence to accomplish a subtle rhetorical purpose such as to emphasize, to add supporting detail, or to express meaning through connotation</li> </ul> |

Source: Adapted from ACT's College Readiness Standards <http://www.act.org/standard/pdf/english.pdf>

Effective collaboration goes beyond friendly cooperation and the informal exchange of ideas and information.<sup>6</sup> Effective collaboration includes:

- Developing common goals for student learning, (shared student goals) and a shared vision of excellent teaching;
- Building and sharing curricular supports (that is, lesson plans) and discussing both the implementation challenges and the rationales behind their design;
- Regularly observing each other's teaching and providing in-depth feedback; and
- Monitoring student work and progress together to decide what went well, what might have been taught better, and what to do next.<sup>7</sup>

Creating and supporting opportunities for collaboration will be hard work even in the new school we envision. In particular, teachers and administrators need more time to work together, and professional discretion in how to use that time. They also need space to meet, talk and collaborate.



## What It Will Take

### Make the Most of Recent Reforms

- Fund implementation of evaluation systems, including training
- Leverage information from school climate surveys to ensure strong professional working conditions and inform instruction
- Ensure teachers are ready for new statewide assessments aligned to the Common Core

### Spearhead Change Through Innovation Zones

- Incorporate team and/or school growth into evaluations to promote collaboration
- Expand school day to increase opportunities for collaborative time
- Limit contractually required time constraints (i.e. instructional minutes)
- Offer teacher leaders extended-year contracts to support leadership activities

### Scale Up Proven Solutions

- Reimagine the school year and schedule to create the optimal balance of instructional and collaborative time for teacher teams

“Teachers should be offered ample opportunity to model lifelong learning and cooperation for their students by working regularly with each other.”

—CHERYL WATKINS,  
Milken National Educator and Golden Apple Fellow

Refashioning structures to allow schools to find more than a few minutes each day will require new approaches to scheduling and professional development. We also caution that all teachers—including those who teach art, music, career technical courses, and physical education—be included. Collaboration can't be limited to teachers of “tested” subjects if it is truly to enrich student learning.

We provide some suggestions below and in later guideposts to help schools change how teachers work together. But one thing is certain: in places where teacher work is changing, shifting toward collective responsibility, creative collaboration, and a focus on teamwork, students are benefiting.<sup>8</sup>

## NEW SCHOOL TODAY:

### Effective Collaboration in Illinois: STEP

Teachers are modeling the power of collaboration in the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress, or STEP™, program, developed by the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute (UEI) to transform reading instruction in the early elementary grades.

STEP uses research to define the individual steps that make up a successful reading pathway. Individuals and teams of teachers can track student progress via the program's “data walls,” which show at a glance how students are doing individually, as well as at the classroom, grade, and school levels. Teams work together to determine whether students are making sufficient progress.

This kind of data enables teacher teams and administrators to create effective solutions at all levels. For example, at one school, team analysis identified that many teachers were struggling to help students with their silent reading skills. Focused professional development was provided, and student

“I especially like the part where teachers hold one another accountable for student progress.”

—ANNE MCKENNA, Kohl McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Award Winner

performance soared. In another school, a group of students was identified for additional support, and volunteers were brought in to tutor those who were struggling. In a third school, parents were engaged to support their children with skill-building activities in the home. A fourth school identified an issue at the classroom level, and peer observers provided mentoring and coaching to the teacher to get the classroom back on track.

Likewise, exemplary classroom-level progress allows teacher teams and administrators to identify teachers who are particularly strong. These teachers are called upon to model strategies, share expertise with other teams, and provide the leadership needed to run the STEP program independently over time. Some teams have developed their own resources, such as a video library of real lessons that teachers can use as they do their planning. In these ways, STEP promoted adaptations, collaboration and creativity from teachers, rather than allowing instructional tools to be used as one-size fits-all short-cuts.

### **Overcoming Systemic Barriers: Lack of Time**

Because STEP coordinators needed lots of teacher time to get this kind of deep collaborative work going, STEP chose to build its model in charter schools, with their more flexible schedules, before branching out to more traditional schools.

STEP also asked partners to allow themselves to be monitored to make sure teachers were staying true to the model as designed. In return, STEP coordinators listened to administrators and teachers about which modules and monitoring techniques were absolutely crucial to achieving expected results. During the initial two years, pilot teachers really pushed the design process and helped whittle the hours needed to implement STEP from 90 hours to 60.

In STEP's third year, the program expanded to Chicago Public Schools and is now active in more than 80 public schools in Illinois, as well as in Louisiana, Maryland, New York, and elsewhere. For more information, see <http://uei.uchicago.edu/innovation/step/>.

### **Administrators in the New School**

In the old school, principals managed the school while teachers managed the classrooms, but in the new school there is a new shared level of responsibility and leadership.

In the new school, principals still play a core role in organizing and guiding the school. But coordinating and collaborating with a wider team of teacher leaders and innovators, attracting and retaining a variety of teacher talents to ensure strong teams with the right mix of expertise, and creating a synergy between school goals and classroom practice are the new norms for administrators.

Great administrators already know this, and many are already working to implement these strategies, but they do not always have the means to identify potential leaders nor the capacity, flexibility, and resources needed to develop, support and leverage the leadership abilities of staff.

Professional evaluations should help, but barriers remain.

For example, we hear from districts that principals don't have enough time to do the new, richer teacher evaluations that Illinois is phasing in over the next five years. And that's true: principals often are responsible for many times more employees than managers in other organizations and one person can't effectively evaluate dozens of people.<sup>9</sup>

In the new school, where local bargaining agreements permit, excellent teachers take an evaluator role—supporting principals in carrying out rigorous, in-depth evaluations and promoting targeted professional development. These new systems allow administrators to focus more of their time on developing the kinds of professional working conditions that are ripe for teacher collaboration and continuous professional learning.



## Transforming Teacher Work Around the World

There is no single path to bring about the changes we are envisioning. In fact, a quick look at some of the countries lauded for their educational systems shows that each took different roads to transforming teacher work. Illinois can draw from their experiences as it tries to do the same.

**SINGAPORE** clearly articulates three paths for teachers to advance. Those committed to working with students can rise to the level of master teacher by staying on the teaching track. Those interested in education policy and management can follow the leadership track to positions in schools or at the Ministry of Education. And those “inclined towards more specialized areas where deep knowledge and skills are essential for breaking new ground” can opt for the senior specialist track.<sup>10</sup> Each track is compensated through a system of bonuses for roles and performance-linked salary scales.

**CHINA**, likewise, offers well-defined designations and recognitions at the district, provincial, and national levels. Teacher leaders power China’s intensive mentorship system. They also plan how curriculum will be taught and share best practices across schools to create consistency.<sup>11</sup> While **SWEDEN** does not have similarly formal paths, it has instituted individualized and locally-determined pay systems with broad union support that give principals greater discretion in building teams, filling high-demand positions, and rewarding teachers for innovation and leadership roles.<sup>12</sup>

Another variable is how teachers divide their work days. In **JAPAN**, teachers spend the majority of time in planning, collaboration, and individual student assistance with only 40% spent in direct instruction.<sup>13</sup> This is common practice in many OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, where non-classroom time is considered essential to such collaborative work as lesson study, peer observations, and action research.<sup>14</sup> Here in Illinois, teachers are likely to spend 70% of their day in the

classroom.<sup>15</sup> Over the course of a year, this means that the average elementary teacher is spending three to four hundred more hours in direct instruction (with little opportunity to collaborate)—and yet countries like Japan consistently report better student outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

In **FINLAND**, this emphasis on collaborative time is also the norm. Teachers share a strong ingrained sense of mutual responsibility for ensuring equitable outcomes for students across racial, religious and socioeconomic lines. So strong, in fact, that in the early 1990s, the national Ministry of Education abolished its central inspectorate—trusting in teachers and principals to hold each other accountable for student achievement.<sup>17</sup>

Japanese teachers rely on collaboration to improve pedagogy, as well. Faculty members employ a team approach when developing or redesigning classes. One teacher will trial a course with fellow teachers, who will critique and refine the creation until all are satisfied. Those teachers who excel in leading course developments are asked to share their work both within and outside their districts.<sup>18</sup> Teachers become leaders organically, by demonstrating proficiency to their peers and earning their peers’ respect.

There’s no one road to reform. But as the experiences of these countries demonstrate, a broader vision of teaching will allow us to reach our goal.

# 2

## GUIDEPOST

# Shared Leadership and Responsibility

Teachers share responsibility for student growth and school goals with administrators

### Why Shared Leadership Matters

Once teachers have sufficient time and administrative support to work together, the next step toward the new school is shared leadership and responsibility.

Teaching is no longer a flat career, as those who demonstrate excellence take a variety of leadership roles within the school. Teachers are accountable to one another—not just parents or administrators—for the success of their students. Research shows that this is a powerful tool for ensuring that teachers are doing their best work.<sup>19</sup>

In the old school, informal sharing may take place as teachers work side by side in the classroom or in grade-level teams as they review lesson plans and student learning data. But teachers aren't always comfortable taking a stronger leadership stance in schools where everyone is seen as an equal on the career ladder.<sup>20</sup>

In the new school, shared leadership starts with the objective identification of teachers who have the skills to work alongside school administrators to model teaching practice, analyze data,

lead collaborative teams, or observe and coach other teachers. Other leadership roles are described in Guidepost 4.

Teachers around the state—including many of our Educator Advisory Council members—see the potential of the new evaluation systems to help schools identify teachers who excel. Once valid and reliable growth models are in place, we envision the new school lifting up teacher leaders who have the respect of colleagues and who support administrators and teams in identifying strategies that ratchet up student growth.

This will require a significant culture change from the old school. In the new school, proven teacher leaders provide teacher teams with strong internal leadership. Teachers regularly meet to share research and resources. They are given the time to fulfill their expanded roles and are compensated for their leadership. Administrators, in turn, have the time for meaningful interaction where it is most needed, rather than being spread too thin across a school. Everyone works together toward continuous improvement.

### Teacher Leaders in the New School

In the new school, teacher leaders who demonstrate excellence, earn the respect of their administrators and peers take initiative, and lead the way to a more innovative and dynamic learning environment and are valued by their colleagues for their expertise, conscious leadership, and role in moving the entire school forward.

Some roles teacher leaders might take on in the new school include evaluating peers, leading grade-level or subject-level teams, designing and delivering professional development, creating curriculum, and even becoming involved in hiring and personnel management.

And while Illinois has a teacher leader endorsement and even a number of teacher leader endorsement programs at our institutions of higher education, we'd like to emphasize that our vision of the new school depends not only on those teachers who seek and attain teacher leader endorsements,

but also on those identified through Illinois' new evidence-based professional evaluations.

At present, candidates for endorsement must complete a specific strand of courses and either hold a National Board Certification or a master's degree, while presenting evidence of leadership qualifications. There is, however, little coherence in qualifications, roles these teachers play, expectations, evidence that their voices are heard in goal setting or decision making, or how they are evaluated for effectiveness.

As Illinois considers aggressive, proactive changes to its teacher certification system—including pending changes to the teacher leader endorsement—Advance Illinois recommends the establishment of defined core competencies and a separate evaluation system for teacher leaders, as well as systems that ensure the strongest of these be elevated regardless of the endorsements they hold.



## NEW SCHOOL TODAY:

### **Shared Leadership in Illinois: Township High School District 214**

The teachers at John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, Illinois, demonstrate that teacher leaders and teacher teams can support administrators to work toward common goals. When the administration and faculty are united in their purpose, the whole school benefits.

At Hersey, teacher leaders use student gains on common assessments such as the EXPLORE-PLAN-ACT series, as well as results from aligned classroom-based assessments, to collaborate across subject matter and grade levels. Working in teams, Hersey teachers develop curricula and assessments based on national college- and career-readiness standards, share results, and problem-solve—focusing everyone’s work on how to help Hersey students progress.

For example, a teacher team led by Hersey’s Social Studies Department chair Paul Kelly took a hard look at what student skills were required in an Advanced Placement World History course. The teachers then embedded those skills—and their aligned assessments—into the regular history course. This kind of alignment improved teaching and learning for everyone, while offering the added benefit of opening up AP coursework to more students as they became accustomed to the rigor and skills required.

Hersey’s shared leadership and collaborative systems are working for administrators, teachers, and students:

- The school is exceeding its annual student progress goals based on national standards;
- Teachers support one another’s work, lightening everyone’s load; and
- Most important, all Hersey students show gains—even freshmen with the lowest scores entering high school

## What It Will Take

### **Make the Most of Recent Reforms**

- Establish a meaningful teacher leadership endorsement
- Create a model for teacher leader evaluation that takes their new responsibilities into account

### **Spearhead Change Through Innovation Zones**

- Provide incentives for teachers choosing to teach in hard-to-staff schools and/or subjects
- Create schedules that allow teacher leaders to play multiple roles
- Leverage teacher leaders as active participants in teacher evaluation

### **Scale Up Proven Solutions**

- Build smart new compensation systems that recognize teacher leadership and roles that promote student learning

graduate from Hersey with increases in ACT scores that are double or even triple what would be expected.<sup>21</sup>

### **Overcoming Systemic Barriers: Disciplinary Silos**

Achieving such results isn’t easy, of course. Mr. Kelly cautions that “without clear and understood student-centered goals, no amount of shared leadership or teacher collaboration will have any measurable effect on student performance.” He adds that in setting goals, teachers—and high school teachers in particular—need to learn to operate outside their disciplinary silos—like English or social studies—and see themselves as teachers and assessors of skills as well as content. Once teachers are able to recognize that it is the students’ needs that must drive teaching decisions, they are able to lead and purposefully collaborate with colleagues both inside and outside their own curricular area.

# 3

## GUIDEPOST

# Professional Learning and Continuous Growth

Teachers start strong and continue to grow professionally throughout their careers

### Why Professional Training and Continuous Growth Matter

Creating the kind of dynamic learning environments that 21st century students need will require new approaches to teacher training. We want our children to become self-directed, goal-oriented lifelong learners, and we can ask no less of those who teach them.

As part of this shift in focus, new school teachers will be supported and expected to consciously develop their skills, collaborate, contribute to design of curricula and assessments, evaluate peers, and analyze and interpret data.

These aren't intuitive skills. Our new teachers must be prepared to work in the creative, collaborative environment of the new school. To help ensure that teacher candidates are fully aware and competent in these kinds of new school skills, teacher preparation programs will have to embed them into their curricula, along with pedagogical, classroom management, and other skills demonstrated to have impact on student learning.

Although the foundation for these skills can be laid in teacher preparation and early student teaching experiences, ongoing professional development and continuous growth are an absolute necessity in today's ever-changing world.

Meaningful learning opportunities must be held up as a key value in school cultures and built into district schedules. As prescribed in our earlier guidepost, much of this professional learning can be provided by teachers for teachers at a building or district level.

Effective professional development has a few key characteristics:<sup>22</sup>

- Teachers receive expert guidance in learning directly from their practice;<sup>23</sup>
- Teachers receive support to connect the academic theory of how children learn with what works in practice;

- Teachers have opportunities in their classrooms to apply, reflect on, and refine what they've learned;
- Teachers work with peers and other experts to analyze the impact of their teaching on students;
- Teachers have opportunities to observe other teachers; and
- Teachers are given the chance to shape their own professional development activities.<sup>24</sup>

In the new school, this kind of culture of continuous growth occurs as student teachers work alongside a master teacher; novice teachers are supervised and supported by certified teacher leaders; and master teachers, as identified by success in promoting student achievement and innovation, lead district-wide professional development trainings on proven assessment strategies designed by grade-level teams. Administrators and teacher leaders can coordinate to bring in outside expertise as well, but student needs and local goals drive all professional development from the inside out.

It's worth noting Educator Advisory Council members strongly advocate that each teacher's professional learning plan and contributions flow from strengths and needs identified through new evaluation systems. Evaluation without support or recognition is meaningless.

### NEW SCHOOL TODAY:

#### Professional Learning and Growth in Illinois: ICLCS

Teachers love to learn, too. "What is more exciting for a teacher than to be on the cutting edge of her specialty?" asks Sheila Stephens, a high school science teacher at the Illinois School for the Deaf in Jacksonville. Sometimes, however, getting access to new technology and recent research can be tough. For example, in far-flung rural districts, a science teacher may be the lone expert in a building (or even within a 50-mile radius), with little opportunity to enhance his or her teaching practices.



## What It Will Take

### Make the Most of Recent Reforms

- Strengthen teacher certification and recertification
- Require teacher preparation programs to regularly and publicly report out on success of their graduates, as well as actively partner with school districts to meet local needs
- Set meaningful, high expectations for teachers who supervise clinical practice

### Spearhead Change Through Innovation Zones

- Use data systems to identify key takeaways from evaluations and help districts align supports for improved instruction
- Engage local teacher leaders in designing and delivering professional development

### Scale Up Proven Solutions

- Re-think preparation, mentoring and induction, certification, and recertification to align with the needs of classrooms and schools

### Overcoming Systemic Barriers: Lack of Technology

At the Illinois School for the Deaf, a lack of adequate technology could have represented a barrier to implementation. But administrators were willing to install the necessary equipment and Internet access teachers needed to take full advantage of the ICLCS on-line materials. Not all teachers are so lucky. Broadband access is an issue for many rural schools and can make participation in this kind of virtual professional learning community impossible. For more information about the ICLCS program, see <http://iclcs.illinois.edu/index.php/home>.

To keep current, Ms. Stephens relies on an innovative professional development program—the Illinois Institute for Chemistry Literacy through Computational Science (ICLCS.) ICLCS takes a rigorous approach to professional learning and growth—using a curriculum designed in collaboration with teachers themselves. A partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, ICLCS helps rural high school chemistry teachers stay current in their fields by giving them access to new technologies and up-to-date scientific research.

At the heart of ICLCS is the summer institute, involving three two-week training sessions over three consecutive summers. Teachers at the institutes learn in teams using cutting-edge computational science tools, which they then use to open up new avenues for student learning.

Teachers also refresh their knowledge of chemistry, plan lessons, and learn new modes of instruction to prepare their students for the demands of 21st century careers. After the summer institutes, teachers participate in on-going distance learning activities, keeping in touch via a virtual environment. In exchange, teachers receive a \$2,000 stipend and three credit hours every year for three years.

The results are big gains in both student and teacher learning. Students of ICLCS teachers outperform peers in chemistry content knowledge (as measured by the American Chemistry Society examination). They also request and enroll in more honors-level and AP chemistry courses. In fact, since ICLCS started, such course offerings have doubled in schools with teachers involved in the program.<sup>25</sup>

“We must move away from professional development that is geared solely toward meeting a requirement or filling a time slot.”

—CAROL BROOS, Golden Apple Fellow

# 4

## GUIDEPOST

# Elevated and Evolving Careers

Teachers have access to meaningful and differentiated career ladders

### Why New Teaching Careers Matter

In the old school, teaching is still, for the most part, a somewhat static career. Teachers may well end their careers with the same title with which they began—that of “teacher.” It’s a noble title, but it doesn’t allow for official recognition or encouragement of career advancement and growth.

In the new school, all our prior guideposts—collaboration, shared leadership, and continuous learning—rely on recognizing our best teachers and empowering them to lead and support others. As individual teachers spend more time in their profession and develop specific areas of expertise, we allow them to draw upon that experience and expertise to innovate and lead.

Such leadership opportunities allow teachers to create a positive impact beyond the walls of their classroom. They use their energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to create entirely new models for teaching and learning; models that can then be scaled up elsewhere. That is highly motivating for talented teachers who care deeply about the quality of education that all students receive.

Opportunities for ongoing professional growth, career advancement, and leadership are key to attracting and retaining talent. Among college graduates in the top third of their class, only 35 percent believe that teaching offers “opportunities to advance professionally.”<sup>26</sup> One in five under the age of 32 said that “lack of opportunity for advancement” is one of the most difficult things about being a teacher.<sup>27</sup>

Advance Illinois sees evolving teaching careers as the key to elevating our most innovative, creative, and forward-thinking teachers—those who continuously reexamine goals for student learning, emerging research, and innovations in pedagogy—as resources for district and state decision making, contributing their knowledge to high-level policy conversations. Some might develop curriculum and student assessments, others consult on how to use cutting-edge technology to engage students in new ways.

Advance Illinois’ Educator Advisory Council members suggest that care must be taken not to strip away innovation while our schools move toward stronger accountability. We should continue to encourage teachers to innovate within their evolving careers, build course offerings that are relevant to community needs, and give our students the time and space to explore and develop their learning trajectories.

As we reference earlier in the sidebar about Administrators in the New School, having a strong mix of talent and varied expertise sprinkled throughout buildings on teacher teams will lead to stronger staff development across the board. But, in any event, to ignore the opportunity to build upon the capacity and experience of our teaching workforce in transforming our schools is nothing less than folly.

### NEW SCHOOL TODAY:

#### Evolving Careers in Illinois: Creating Innovative Paths in Chicago and Effingham

In Illinois today, there are teachers who are enabling student learning outside their classroom walls. These teachers are using their expertise and experience to help students achieve real-world results and are creating programs that can be replicated in other schools.

“The one-size-fits all model does not work. Giving voice to teachers and empowering them to use their talents to progress in the profession makes sense.”

—KEVIN RUTTER, 2010 Illinois Teacher of the Year



## What It Will Take

### **Make the Most of Recent Reforms**

- Formalize teacher engagement in policy implementation discussions at the state level
- Use teacher evaluations to identify teachers who consistently excel in certain areas and encourage them to develop that expertise

### **Spearhead Change Through Innovation Zones**

- Involve innovators in local district and school goal-setting
- Leverage innovative teachers as active participants in curriculum development and data analysis
- Compensate teachers fairly for the additional roles they play

### **Scale Up Proven Solutions**

- Establish clearly defined expectations for teacher roles and career milestones that encourage leadership and innovation

### **Overcoming Systemic Barriers: Student Scheduling**

By refusing to settle for static teaching careers, these outstanding teachers have taken student learning into the real world. But, like their peers, they have encountered barriers. According to Mr. Fatheree, “New mandates make it more difficult for students to take a class like CEO. Over the last couple of years, I have heard more and more students complain about not having enough room in their schedules to take elective classes.” Mr. Rutter is likewise frustrated that motivated students have a hard time squeezing in Finance Academy courses; he sometimes finds that an antiquated scheduling system leaves students in the wrong classes for weeks on end.

For more information on CEO, see [www.effinghamCEO.com](http://www.effinghamCEO.com). For more information on Schurz High School Finance Academy, see <http://bit.ly/ucfwCk>.

Kevin Rutter of Carl Schurz High School in Chicago has taken his career to the next level through his leadership of the school’s Business, Finance and Careers Academy. Mr. Rutter began his career as a social studies teacher. In addition to that role, he now coordinates the work of three other teachers in a small learning community; recruits students for the three-year program; and manages employer partnerships that result in paid internships and job shadowing opportunities for students. We should also mention that he was named Illinois’ 2010 Teacher of the Year.

In downstate Effingham County, a high school course called Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) has transformed teacher careers through the efforts of two other award-winning teachers, Joe Fatheree and Craig Lindvahl. While on a one-year sabbatical as 2007 Illinois Teacher of the Year, Mr. Fatheree, together with a local businessman, launched a hands-on business course that is now available to every 11th and 12th grader in Effingham County. That course is taught by Mr. Lindvahl.

When Mr. Lindvahl was recruited to become the instructor, he was given the leeway to shape the course. Local businesses fund the program and support students as they visit dozens of area businesses, learn from professionals, write business plans, and start their own businesses. Last year, the 25 student businesses included wholesale purses, portable fire pits, and a business that converts vehicles to run on natural gas.

“When you create an environment where students are excited about learning, where they participate in the learning, where there is a compelling need to learn, the results are far beyond anything you could set as a goal,” says Mr. Lindvahl. Mr. Lindvahl is actually in front of students 90 minutes per day, with the remainder of his day spent coordinating class activities and working with the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship to replicate CEO in other school districts.

“When teachers have multiple, innovative opportunities to lead, they feel respected and empowered as professionals.”

—JAKE GOURLEY, Golden Apple Fellow

## Conclusion

In this report, Advance Illinois and our Educator Advisory Council promote a vision of a school culture where teaching is—in the words of Linda Smerge, 2009 Illinois Teacher of the Year—a “team sport.” To achieve this vision, we suggest that Illinois make the most of recent reforms, spearhead change through innovation zones, and scale up proven solutions.

Attracting and building the capacity of truly great teachers and teacher leaders will require the intense focus on goal setting and staff development that is the hallmark of great organizations. The new school does this through well-developed structures and systems of scheduling, effective collaboration, accountability, expectations for continuous professional learning and growth, and progressive career opportunities.

In Illinois, work has begun to improve these systems. But the transformation of teaching from a solitary profession to one that is based on mutual support and accountability will be difficult. It will require administrators, unions, policymakers, and teachers themselves to alter the perception of their work and to work together to transform the systems within which that work takes place.

Only a true professional workforce—with a team at its center—will succeed. Benjamin Franklin is reported to have said, at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, “We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.” This is as true of education today as it was of the new and fragile union then.

In today's changing world, our students deserve no less.

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