

College of Liberal Studies
Received

JUL 31 2007

University of Oklahoma

Richard P. DuFour

Author and Educational Consultant

Nominated by:
Jill Martin



Dr. Jill Martin

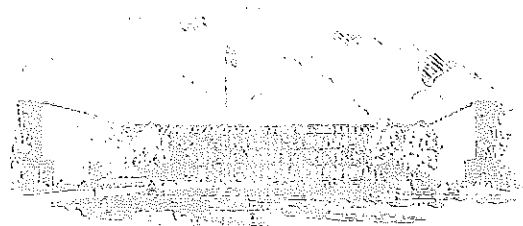
Jill Martin has been an educator for thirty-eight years and a high school principal for the past fourteen, both in Colorado and Ohio. She is currently the Principal of Doherty High School in Colorado Springs District 11, Colorado. She was named as the 2006 Colorado High School Principal of the Year and was recently honored as the 2007 NASSP/MetLife National High School Principal of the Year. These awards reflect her commitment to collaborative leadership and successful efforts to personalize the school environment and increase literacy and academic rigor. Previous professional experiences include teaching English and Special Education, and serving as a Team Leader, Dean of Students and Assistant and Associate Principal. She has conducted numerous workshops on issues and trends in public education and teaches graduate courses for the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and the University of Phoenix. She earned a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and English from Monmouth University in New Jersey, a master's degree in Special Education from the University of Denver, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Northern Colorado.





THOMAS B. DOHERTY HIGH SCHOOL

4515 Barnes Road
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80917
(719) 328-6400
FAX (719) 328-6401



Jill L. Martin, Ed.D., Principal
e-mail martijl@d11.org

July 26, 2007

Dear Brock Committee:

I am honored to be included as a Juror for this award and have given a great deal of thought to my nomination. As the 2007 National High School Principal of the Year, I sincerely believe that the work of Dr. Rick DuFour has been the key to my success. In that assessment, I join my predecessors, the previous principals of the year, who cited Dr. DuFour's work as critical to improving student achievement in their schools.

This summer 1,300 educators were surveyed by "Solution Tree" (one of the biggest providers of professional development). When asked the open-ended question, "If you could have a consultant to work with your staff to help improve your school, who would you select?" the number one choice was Rick DuFour by a large margin. Not only has the state of Ohio adopted new teaching standards requiring teachers be members of a professional learning community, but the state of California has adopted the PLC strategies to implement its Response to Intervention (RTI) program mandated by the U.S. Department of Education through the reauthorization of IDEA.

Dr. Dufour is a prolific author, wonderful presenter, and seasoned practitioner. It is no wonder that the National Staff Development Council described his work as the most important to impact education in forty years. It is a privilege to nominate Dr. Richard P. DuFour for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jill L. Martin.

Jill L. Martin, Ed. D., Principal
Thomas B. Doherty High School
2007 Met Life/NASSP High School Principal of the Year
2006 Colorado High School Principal of the Year

Richard P. DuFour

465 Island Pointe Lane
Moneta, Va. 24121
rdufour@district125.k12.il.us
540-721-4662 (home)
540-440-0054 (cell)

Professional Preparation

- ED.D. Administration, Department of Leadership and Educational Policy Studies
Northern Illinois University, 1981
- C.A.S. Administration, Department of Leadership and Educational Policy Studies
Northern Illinois University, 1975
- M.A. History, Northern Illinois University, 1972
- B.S. History, Illinois State University, 1969

Professional Experience

- Author and Educational Consultant, 1985-present
- Superintendent
Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125, Lincolnshire, Illinois,
1991 - 2002
- Assistant Superintendent/Principal
Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Illinois, 1983 - 1991
- Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Administration

Roosevelt University, 1989 - 1991
National College of Education, 1987 - 1989
Northern Illinois University, 1981 - 1984

Taught graduate courses in school finance, the principalship, curriculum planning and staff development, organizational theory, and critical issues in American education.

In Support of Rick DuFour's Nomination for Brock Award
An Overview

1. **The Widespread Dissemination of His Ideas on Professional Learning Communities**
 - a. Since 2002 he has made presentations on PLCs for **school districts or educational service centers** in all fifty states and every province of Canada.
 - b. Since 2002 he has conducted workshops for **state organizations or state departments of education** in forty-five states and every province of Canada (see Appendix A).
 - c. Since 2002 he has presented keynotes, distinguished lectures, or pre-conferences for most of the major **national educational organization** (see Appendix B).
 - d. Since 2002 he has hosted over **80 regional institutes and national summits** on PLCs that have drawn over 80,000 people to study the concept in depth over three or four days (see Appendix C).
 - e. In the next 18 months he will lead **statewide institutes** on PLCs in partnership with the state departments of education in California, Texas, Michigan, Washington, and Missouri.
 - e. The exploding interest in PLC concepts has led him to create a cadre of **50 PLC associates** to keep up with the demand for training in PLC concepts for schools and districts. Each associate has been successful in implementing PLC concepts in his/her school or district, has been trained as a presenter on PLC concepts, and participates in an annual retreat led by Rick to develop their skills as consultants in the PLC process.
 - f. In partnership with Solution-Tree, Rick has recently created a website called **All Things PLC** to assist educators in their efforts to implement professional learning community concepts in their schools and districts. He writes a blog, encourages educators to submit questions, and responds to those questions. The site includes over eighty articles on PLCs, free tools and templates schools can download, and most importantly, stories and contact information from schools and districts throughout the United States who have increased student achievement by developing the capacity of staff to function as a PLC.

2. **The Widespread Recognition of his Leadership in the Movement to Make PLCs the Norm Rather than the Exception in North America's Schools.**

This recognition comes both from the continent's most respected educational officials and from school practitioners. The nomination includes 42 letters of recommendation for Rick from educators throughout North America. What is noteworthy about the letters is the diversity of the authors. They include teachers, principals, superintendents, regional service center directors, state department officials, university professors, and educational consultants. They come from rural, suburban, and urban school districts and from elementary, middle, and high

schools. They represent schools and districts that are large and small, resource-starved and resource rich, and high-poverty and low-poverty student populations. What unites these diverse educators is the belief that the professional learning community concept espoused by Rick DuFour offers the nation's best hope for improving student achievement.

3. **The Extent and Effectiveness of His Writing Regarding PLC Concepts**

Rick has written nine books and edited an tenth on professional learning community concepts. He has also written and produced seven videos including the seven-part video series on the principalship published by ASCD, published over seventy-five articles in professional journals and served as guest editor when a journal devoted its entire issue to professional learning communities. He has been particularly skillful in applying research from both insides and outside of education in compelling ways that make sense to school practitioners. His writing is highly praised (see Appendix D). The National Staff Development Council included the 1998 publication of his *Professional Learning Communities at Work* among the most significant events in professional development in the past forty years. His recent (2006), *Learning by Doing* has been nominated by Doug Reeves for book of the year and is included on the Top Twenty books on Leadership compiled by Michael Fullan in partnership with Microsoft.

4. **The Widespread Support of PLC Concepts among Professional Organizations and Researchers (See Appendix E).**

5. **His commitment to developing the next generation of school leaders.**

Rick has worked with state departments of education and state principals' organizations throughout the country to assist their efforts in developing the next generation of school leaders. He helped to develop the curriculum for New Leaders for New Schools, a program committed to preparing effective principals for urban schools. He developed the seven-part video series on the principalship for ASCD. He presented a week-long training program for the National Association of Elementary School Principals, has written for principal journals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and presented at national principal conferences at all three levels. Very importantly, the mentoring and support he provides his cadre of PLC Associates has helped them to develop their capacity to impact not only their own schools and districts, but also those around the country.

Recognition of Rick DuFour's Leadership in Bringing PLC Concepts to Life

Perhaps no one has studied the problem of school reform more carefully in the past quarter century than Michael Fullan. In *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, fourth edition (2007), he states, "I believe we are closer than ever to knowing what must be done to engage all classrooms and schools in continuous reform" and "breakthrough forces for educational change now seem in our midst." He attributes his optimism, in part, to the fact that "PLCs are becoming more prominent and more sharply defined." As he writes, "Fortunately the press for PLCs and the resources to aid and abet them are becoming increasingly explicit. The work by DuFour and his colleagues is especially powerful. Having led the development of PLCs in both elementary and secondary schools, and now being associated with pockets of successful examples across all levels, they essentially 'take all excuses off the table' for policymakers and practitioners alike."

In the November, 2006 issue of the *School Administrator*, Fullan writes, "The gold standard for fostering the development of PLCs comes from the activist work of Rick DuFour and his colleagues."

In 2004 the National Staff Development Council presented its Distinguished Service award to Rick DuFour for his contribution to quality professional development in North America.

In 2002 the University of Illinois presented Rick DuFour with its scholar-practitioner award for his "outstanding contributions to and leadership in the field of education."

In 2000 the Illinois State Board of Education presented Rick DuFour with its first "Break the Mold Award" for his successful implementation of innovative school improvement strategies.

In 1989 Illinois State University presented Rick DuFour with its Distinguished Alumnus Award.

In an educational world swamped with slogans, brand names, and passing fads, it is a rare pleasure to see the impact of a powerful idea, such as professional learning communities. While many scholars contributed to the creative vision behind the concept of professional learning communities, the work that has best transformed that vision into action is the work of Rick DuFour and his colleagues. With a mountain of evidence and a wealth of experience, Rick is transforming PLCs from the ambiguous concept practiced in many schools into a practical reality. I know the words, "you changed my life" are meaningful and a welcome antidote to the inevitable criticism that comes with public life. But as I reflect on Rick DuFour's work, I realize there is a better accolade in the field of education – "you changed my system."

Doug Reeves, Chairman, Center for Performance Assessment

For the last decade, Rick DuFour and his colleagues have been developing a body of work that can and is transforming schools across the country. Like other greats who influence a generation, his books form a logical chain, each section adding to the integrity of the whole.

Jonathan Saphier, President of Research for Better Teaching

Rick DuFour and his colleagues continue to push us to new levels of understanding of how professional learning communities work. They then invite us to join them in developing unique frameworks that can be used in our own schools to create cultures of time, feeling, focus and persistence aimed at ensuring that every child will succeed.

Thomas Sergiovanni, Lillian Radford Professor of Education, Trinity University

For additional testimonials regarding the impact that Rick DuFour is having on education across North America, read the words of the superintendents, principals and teachers who have described his impact on their schools and districts. Those letters are included as an addendum to your packet of materials.

Appendix A

Rick DuFour's Work with State Improvement Initiatives, 2002-08

- Alabama Hosted 3-day regional institute on PLCs.
PLC model adopted by the Alabama Best Practices Center to promote school improvement throughout the state.
- Alaska
- Arizona Hosted three, four-day national summits on PLCs.
- Arkansas Presented three, two-day programs for the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators.
Presented two-day program for the Arkansas State Department of Education.
- California Hosted three-day regional institutes on PLCs in San Diego, Los Angeles, Marin County, and Riverside.
Hosted four-day state summit on PLCs (2008).
Conducted statewide simulcast presentation on PLCs to launch California State Department's high school improvement initiative.
Provided keynotes and breakouts at three state conferences hosted by the Association of California School Administrators.
Provided keynote and breakouts on PLCs for conference hosted by WestEd/California Academic Progress Partnership.
Presented keynote and breakouts for conference hosted by the CalSTAT State Leadership Institute.
Presented two-day workshop for the Partnerships in Educational Achievement.
Presented keynote and breakout for the California League of Middle Schools.
Presented keynote and breakout for the California League of High Schools.
Presented keynote and breakout at the Asilomar Conference hosted by the California Department of Education.
Conducted two-year video conferencing program on PLCs for area superintendents hosted by Cal State Fresno.
Presented Keynote for the University of San Diego School Leadership Program.
Hosted four-day national summit on PLCs (2008).

Colorado Conducted annual training program in PLCs for the University of Denver/Front Range BOCES partnership which has made the PLC concept its core strategy for school improvement.
Presented keynote and breakouts for the Colorado Council of the International Reading Association
Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs in Denver and Colorado Springs.
Conducted a series of two-day programs on PLCs in different locations throughout the state for the Colorado State Department of Education

Connecticut Presented two, two-day programs on PLCs for the Connecticut Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Presented keynote and breakout for Capitol Region Education Council.
Presented two-day workshop hosted by Education Connection.

Delaware Conducted two, two-day workshops on PLCs for state department of education.

Florida Presented keynote and breakouts for the Florida Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Presented keynote and breakouts for the Florida Staff Development Council.
Presented keynote and breakout for the regional Title I conference.
Hosted two, three-day regional institutes on PLCs.
Presented two-day program on leading PLCs for the University of Central Florida Leadership Institute.
Presented keynote and breakouts at two regional conferences hosted by the Center for Safe Schools

Georgia Hosted four three-day institutes on PLCs.
Presented keynote and breakouts at two conferences hosted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
Conducted ongoing training program for new principals hosted by Georgia Southern University.

- Hawaii Presented three-day workshop for the Hawaii State Department of Education
Hosted three statewide three-day institutes on PLCs.
- Idaho Presented three one-day workshops on PLCs for state department of education.
- Illinois Hosted five, three-day regional institutes on PLCs.
Presented keynote and breakouts at the annual conference of the North Central Association.
Presented two one-day workshops for the Midwest Principals Center.
Presented keynote and breakouts at conference hosted by the Consortium for Educational Change.
- Indiana Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs.
Presented keynote and breakout at two conferences hosted by the Indiana Principals Association.
- Iowa Presented keynote and breakout to the Iowa Association of School Boards.
Presented keynote and breakout to the Iowa Association of School Administrators
- Kansas The Kansas State Department of Education has created a division of Professional Learning Communities to promote PLC concepts as its core school-improvement strategy.
Conducted two, two-day programs on PLCs for Kansas State Department of Education.
Conducted two-day program on PLCs for Kansas Staff Development Council.
Hosted two, three-day regional institutes on PLCs.
- Kentucky Presented keynote and breakouts for the Kentucky Association of Elementary School Principals.
Presented two-day workshop on PLCs for the Kentucky Association of School Administrators.
Presented two, two-day workshop on PLCs for the Kentucky CEO Superintendents Network
Presented keynote for the Kentucky Association of School

Administrators conference.

Louisiana Created three-part improvement program for the Greater Louisiana Schools Coalition.
Presented two-day program for Louisiana Staff Development Council.
Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs.

Maine Presented two, two-day workshops for the Maine Principals Association.

Maryland Worked with State Department of Education to promote PLCs. PLC concept adopted by Montgomery County Schools which has created a Department for Professional Learning Communities to assist schools in their improvement efforts.

Massachusetts Presented keynotes and breakout sessions for three of the annual conferences sponsored by the New England Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Presented keynote and breakout at the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association.
Presented two-day summer program hosted by the Massachusetts Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs.

Michigan Presented two-day workshop for Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals.
Presented two-day workshop for the Northern Michigan Learning Consortium.
Presented keynote and breakouts for the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals.
Hosted three-day regional institutes in Grand Rapids and Detroit.

Minnesota Presented four, two-day program for the Metropolitan Principals Academy to train principals in PLC concepts.
Presented two-day workshop on PLCs hosted by the University of Minnesota.

Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs.

Mississippi Presented two-day programs for new school leaders for the Mississippi State Department of Education and Millsap College.

Missouri PLC concept has been adopted by the state department of education as its model for school improvement.
Consulted with state department of education regarding its state-wide initiative in PLCs.
Presented two-day leadership workshop for all new principals in Missouri for four consecutive years.
Hosted two, three-day regional institute on PLCs

Montana

Nebraska Provided three, two-day statewide programs on PLCs hosted by Education Service Unit #3
Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs

Nevada Presented two, two-day program on PLC concepts for Nevada State Department of Education in Las Vegas and Reno
Hosted five annual three-day regional institutes.

New Hampshire Presented two-day workshop on PLCs for the New Hampshire Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

New Jersey Presented two, two-day workshop on PLCs hosted by New Jersey Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
New Jersey State Department of Education has adopted PLC concept as its core school improvement strategy.

New Mexico Presented two regional workshops on PLCs

New York Hosted two, three-day regional institute on PLCs.
Presented keynotes and workshops for the New York

Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Presented keynote and breakout at the Schools that Learn Conference.
Presented keynotes and workshops for the New York Council of School superintendents.
Presented statewide two-day program on PLCs for the first joint conference conducted by NYASCD and NY Council of State Superintendents.

North Carolina

The PLC concept has been recommended by the state superintendent as the core strategy for school improvement throughout the state.
The PLC concept has been adopted as the core school improvement strategy by the High Five Partnership serving the five counties in the Raleigh-Durham area.
Provided ongoing annual training for administrators and teachers in the High Five Partnership for three years.
Hosted three-day regional institute on PLCs.
Presented two workshops for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro initiative on school improvement.
Presented keynote and breakouts for conference hosted by the Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory.

North Dakota

Ohio

Consulted with Cleveland State University as they adopted PLC concepts as the core strategy for school improvement.
Presented two-day program on PLCs annually for Cleveland State University.
Presented keynotes and workshops for the Ohio Association of School Administrators..
Hosted two, three-day regional institute on PLC concepts.
Presented two-day workshop on PLCs for the Center for Educational Leadership

Oklahoma

Presented program on PLCs hosted by the Oklahoma Staff Development Council.
Hosting three-day regional institute in Oklahoma, July of 2008.

Oregon

Presented keynote and breakouts to the Oregon School Board Association.

Presented keynote and breakouts to the Oregon Association of School Administrators.
Presented two-day workshop for the Oregon Association of School Administrators.
Presented keynote and breakouts for the Assessment Training Institute.
Hosted three-day regional workshop on PLCs.

Pennsylvania **Presented keynote and breakouts for national conference hosted by TW Branun.**
Presented keynote and breakouts for conference hosted by Learning 24/7.

Rhode Island **The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University has made developing the capacity of schools to function as professional learning communities its core strategy for school improvement.**

South Carolina **Presented keynote and breakouts to the South Carolina School Association of School Administrators.**
Conducted two-day workshop for South Carolina Staff Development Council.

South Dakota

Tennessee **Presented one-day workshops on PLCs in Memphis, Nashville, and Knoxville hosted by the state board of education.**
Hosting three-day regional institute in Nashville in 2008.

Texas **Presented workshops and keynotes for Texas Association of Elementary School Principals.**
Presented workshops and keynotes for Texas Secondary School Principals.
Presented Workshops and keynotes for Texas Association of School Administrators.
Presented Workshops and keynotes for Texas School Board Association.
Hosted three-day regional institutes in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin.

Helped train new principals for Dallas school system.
Presented keynote and breakout for the Dallas Institute for Urban Leadership.
Presenting Keynote at conference hosted by the Texas Reading Initiative.

Utah Conduct annual program on PLCs hosted by Brigham Young University as its core strategy to improve schools.
Hosted two 3-day regional program on PLCs
Facilitated two-day program to help BYU administrators apply PLC concepts to their University

Vermont Presented two, two-day programs on PLCs hosted by the Vermont Department of Education

Virginia Presented two, two-day programs for the Virginia Staff Development Council.
Presented two, two-day programs for the Virginia Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Helped the School-University Research Network of William and Mary University adopt the PLC concept as its core school improvement strategy.
Presented three two-day programs at the Annual Leadership Conference hosted by William and Mary University
PLC concept was adopted by largest school district in Virginia (Fairfax County), provided four-day training program for all principals and teachers from each of its more than 250 schools.
Hosted 3-day regional institute on PLCs.

Washington Presented keynote and breakouts at the Washington State ASCD.
Presented two-day statewide conference on PLCs hosted by Educational Service Center 123.
Hosted three, three-day institutes on PLCs.

West Virginia

Wisconsin Provided annual training for new school administrators at conference hosted by the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators.
Presented keynote and breakouts for 3 conferences hosted by the

Association of Wisconsin School Administrators.
Presented keynote and breakouts for two conferences hosted by the Sally Ride Academy.
Presented two-day conference on PLCs hosted by the State Department of Education.
Presented one-day program on PLCs hosted by the Wisconsin Education Association.

Wyoming

Presented one-day program on PLCs for the Wyoming State Department of Education.



Appendix B

Partial List of Organizations for Which Rick DuFour Made National Presentations Since 2002

American Association of School Administrators
American School Board Association
American Society for Quality
Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development
Consortium for Educational Change
Learning 24/7
Midwest Principals Association
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council of Teachers of Math
National Education Service
National Effective Schools Conference
National Middle Schools Association
National Staff Development Council
New Leaders for New Schools
North Central Association
School-University Research Network
Solution Tree
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Superintendency Institute of America
T.W. Branun
Union Pacific Foundation and Education Partnership



Appendix C

Regional PLC Institutes Hosted by Rick DuFour (2002-08)

The PLC Institutes provide an intensive three or four-day orientation to PLC concepts. Rick and his co-authors, Becky DuFour and Bob Eaker, lead each institute which includes keynote addresses and breakout sessions by Rick, Becky and Bob. Breakouts are also presented by PLC Associates and local schools that have been successful in implementing PLC concepts in ways that bring about significant gains in student achievement. Rick has hosted over 70 of these institutes throughout North America between 2002 and 2008 as illustrated below. Over 70,000 educators have attended the institutes.

Northeast: New York, Boston, Hartford, Albany (2008)

Southeast: Tampa (2008), Sarasota, Atlanta (3), Raleigh-Durham, Washington, D.C., Birmingham

Midwest: Columbus, Cincinnati, Chicago (6), Detroit, St. Louis (2), Kansas City (2), Minneapolis, Bloomington, Grand Rapids, Nashville (2008)

Plains: Kansas City, Omaha, Tulsa (2008)

Mountain: Denver (2), Colorado Springs, Provo, Salt Lake

Southwest: Austin, San Antonio (2), Houston, Dallas, Las Vegas (4), New Orleans

Northwest: Portland, Seattle (3)

West: San Diego (2), Riverside (2), Los Angeles, San Francisco (2008), Honolulu (3)

Canada: Vancouver (3), Stratford, Winnipeg, Toronto (2), Halifax, New Brunswick (2008), Hamilton, Edmonton, Montreal, Saskatoon

National Summits on PLCs Hosted by Rick DuFour (2002-08)

The PLC Summits bring together some of the leading educational thinkers in North America to discuss their insights on how to improve schools. Participants typically include Michael Fullan, Doug Reeves, Larry Lezotte, Mike Schmoker, Dennis Sparks, Jonathan Saphier, Rick Stiggins, Crystal Kuykendal, Robert Marzano, Tom Many, and Anthony Muhammad. Summits consist of keynotes, breakouts, and panels that take questions from the audience. Over 10,000 educators have attended the PLC Summit since

2005. Summits have been held in: Niagara, Ontario, Scottsdale (3), Anaheim (2008), Toronto, Vancouver, and Victoria (2008).

PLC Coaching Academies

The PLC Coaching Academy was designed to provide ongoing training and support for local educational leaders who hope to coach schools and staffs through the change process as they implement PLC concepts. The Academy provides participants with the knowledge, skills, and tools to serve as change agents in their districts. Coaching Academies have been conducted in the following areas since 2006:

Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools
Chico Unified School District (California)
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Paramount Unified School District (California)
San Bernardino County Office of Education
Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District (California)
Fontana Unified School District (California)
New Brunswick Department of Education
Duval Public Schools (Florida)
Volusia County Schools (Florida)
Quincy Public Schools (Illinois)
Rapides Parish School District (Louisiana)
Rochester Public Schools (Minnesota)
Franklin and Riverside Central (Minnesota)
Wilson County Schools (North Carolina)
High Five Regional Partnership for High School Excellence (North Carolina)
Durham Public Schools (North Carolina)
Broome-Tioga BOCES (New York)
Arlington City Schools (Ohio)
Dublin City Schools (Ohio)
Bowie High Schools (Texas)
Ysleta Independent School District (Texas)
Wyoming Department of Education

Appendix D

Publications

Books by Richard DuFour

- (2008). *Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work: New Insights Regarding Student and Adult Learning* In Press. Bloomington, IN: Solution-Tree.
- (2007). *The Leader's Companion*. Bloomington, IN: Solution-Tree.
- (2006). *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution-Tree.
- (2006). *Professional Learning Communities at Work Plan Book*. Bloomington, IN: Solution-Tree.
- (2005). *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities*. Editor. Bloomington, IN.: National Educational Service.
- (2004). *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- (2002). *Getting Started: Re-culturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- (1992). *Creating The New American School: A Principal's Guide to School Improvement*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- (1991). *The Principal as Staff Developer*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 1991.
- (1987). *Fulfilling the Promise of Excellence: A Practitioner's Guide to School Improvement*. Westbury, New York: Wilkerson Publishing.
- (1989). "Empowering Teachers." In *Winning Ideas for Winning Schools*. Dawn Hansen Heller, Ed. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Publishing.

Note: Rick is the primary author of each of the books presented above. Dr. Bob Eaker co-authored *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, *Creating the New American School*, and *Fulfilling the Promise of Excellence*. Becky DuFour joined Rick and Bob as a co-author of *Getting Started*, *Whatever it Takes*, *Learning by Doing*, *The Professional Learning Communities Handbook*, and *The Leader's Companion*. Gayle Karhanek contributed to *Whatever it Takes*, and Dr. Tom Many contributed to *Learning by Doing*.

Videos by Rick DuFour

- (2007). *The Power of Professional Learning Communities at Work: Bringing the Big Ideas to Life*. Bloomington, IN: Solution-Tree.
- (2004). *Let's Talk About PLC: Getting Started*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- (2002). *Through New Eyes: Examining the Culture of Your School*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- (2001). *Leadership in an Age of Standards and High Stakes*. Sandy, Utah: Video Journal of Education.
- (2000). *How to Build a Professional Learning Community: Passion and Persistence*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Services.
- (1999). *The Principal Series*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- (1999). *Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Articles by Richard DuFour

- (2007). In praise of top-down leadership. *The School Administrator*, In press.
- (2007). What might be: A better future for staff development." *Journal of Staff Development*, 8 (3).
- (2007). Professional learning communities: A bandwagon, an idea worth considering, or our best hope for high levels of learning for all students. *Middle School Journal*, In press.
- (2007). Guest Editor of the special issue of *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*. 24 (1). The issue was devoted to Professional Learning Communities.
- (2007). The power of professional learning communities. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*. 24 (1).
- (2006). Promises kept. *Journal of Staff Development*. 27, (3).
- (2006). Collaboration is the key to unlocking potential." *The Learning Principal*, 2 (3).
- (2006). Leadership is not a solo act. *The Special EDge*.19 (3).
- (2005) A new image of heroic teachers." *Connections*. Fall.

- (2004). What is a professional learning community? *Educational Leadership*, 61 (8).
- (2004). Culture shift does not occur overnight – or without conflict. *Journal of Staff Development*, 25 (4).
- (2004). Are you looking out the window or in a mirror. *Journal of Staff Development*, 25 (3).
- (2004). The best staff development is in the workplace, not the workshop. *Journal of Staff Development*, 25 (2).
- (2004). Leadership is an affair of the heart. *Journal of Staff Development*, 25 (1).
- (2003). Building a professional learning community. *The School Administrator*, 60 (5).
- (2003). Collaboration “lite” puts student achievement on a starvation diet. *Journal of Staff Development*, 24 (4).
- (2003). Ask for more but focus on doing better with what is on hand. *Journal of Staff Development*, 24 (3).
- (2003). If we call ourselves professionals we are obligated to use best practice. *Journal of Staff Development*, 24 (2).
- (2003). Procrastination can sink even the best school improvement plans. *Journal of Staff Development*, 24 (1).
- (2002). How deep is your support system. *Journal of Staff Development*, 23 (4).
- (2002). The learning centered principal. *Educational Leadership*, 59 (8) and *The Best of Educational Leadership*, 2002.
- (2002). Bring the whole staff on board. *Journal of Staff Development*, 23 (3).
- (2002). Pull out negativity by its roots. *Journal of Staff Development*, 23 (3).
- (2002). One clear voice is needed in the din. *Journal of Staff Development*, 23 (2).
- (2002). How to get the best return on the minute, *Journal of Staff Development*, 23 (1).
- (2001). Getting everyone to buy in. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22 (4)
- (2001). How to launch a community. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22 (3).
- (2001). Looking outside. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22 (2).
- (2001). In the right context. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22 (1)
- (2001). That’s our mission? *Journal of Staff Development*, 22 (1).

- (2000). Change that counts." *Journal of Staff Development*, 21 (4).
- (2000). The Superintendent as staff developer. *The School Administrator*, 8 (57).
- (2000). What can I do: voices of advocacy. *Journal of Staff Development*, 21 (3).
- (2000). Challenging role - playing the part of principal stretches one's talent." *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (4).
- (2000). Why teach? *Journal of Staff Development*, 21 (3).
- (2000). School leaders as staff developers: the key to sustained school improvement. *Catalyst for Change*, 29 (3).
- (2000). Clear Connections. *Journal of Staff Development*, 21 (2).
- (2000) Living with paradox - a top 10 list for principals. *Iowa Educational Leadership*, May.
- (2000). Data Put a Face on Shared Vision. *Journal of Staff Development*, 21 (1).
- (1999). The part of the principal is difficult. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (4).
- (1999). Help wanted: principals who can lead professional learning communities. *NASSP Bulletin*, 83 (604).
- (1999). Teacher autonomy in the professional learning community. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (3).
- (1999). Living with paradox: a top ten list for principals. *ASCD Professional Development Newsletter*, Fall.
- (1999). Caution: teams at work. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (2).
- (1999). Overcoming teacher loneliness and building effective teams. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (1).
- (1998). The thunder of what you do versus the whisper of what you say." *English Leadership Quarterly*, 20 (4).
- (1998). Why Celebrate. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19 (4).
- (1998). Relevant data in a learning community. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19 (3).
- (1998). You won't find this on any checklist. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19 (2).

- (1998). Learning communities: Generating heat to forge a professional learning community. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19 (2).
- (1998). Schools as learning communities: learning-centered schools grow from strong cultures. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19 (1).
- (1998). Why look elsewhere: Improving schools from within. *The School Administrator*, 2 (55).
- (1997). Seeing with new eyes. *Journal of Staff Development*, 18 (4).
- (1997). Make the words of mission statements come to life. *Journal of Staff Development*, 18 (3).
- (1997). Functioning as learning communities enables schools to focus on student achievement. *Journal of Staff Development*, 18 (2).
- (1997). Moving toward the school as a learning community. *Journal of Staff Development*, 18 (1).
- (1997) The school as a learning organization: recommendations for school improvement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 81 (588).
- (1996). Creating a culture of collaboration. *School Team Innovator*, December.
- (1995). The role of the principal in effective staff development. *Texas Study of Secondary Education*. 5 (1).
- (1995). The principal as staff developer. *Journal of Staff Development*. 16 (4).
- (1995). Restructuring is not enough. *Educational Leadership*, 52 (7).
- (1990). Addressing The Teaching Controversy by Promoting Educational Opportunity. *NASSP Bulletin*, 74 (530).
- (1990). Clear vision for successful leadership. *NASSP Bulletin*, 74 (525).
- (1990). Nine assumptions for school improvement." *Best of the Developer*. National Staff Development Council.
- (1990). Moving off track. *NASSP Bulletin*, 74 (530).
- (1989). The effective school of the twenty-first century. *Illinois School Board Journal*, Spring.
- (1989). School improvement starts with a vision. *HARDP NEWS*, ASCD. Fall.
- (1988). Leadership strategies for creating more effective schools. *Tennessee Educational Leadership*, Winter.

- (1987). The principal as leader. *NASSP Bulletin*, 71 (500).
- (1986). Adlai E. Stevenson High School: A picture of the goal. *Illinois School Board Journal*, November-December.
- (1986). The principal's role in promoting quality staff development. *The Developer*, November.
- (1986). Must a principal choose between teacher morale and an effective school? *NASSP Bulletin*, 70 (490).
- (1986). A principal returns to the classroom. *NASSP Bulletin*, 70 (487).
- (1985). Learning From The Corporate Giants. *The Executive Educator*, December.
- (1982). Crackdown on attendance - the word is out. *NASSP Bulletin*, 66 (455).
- (1982). Students and the responsibility of decision-making. *Student Advocate*, September.

In 2007 the National Staff Development Council included the publication of *Professional Learning Communities at Work* among the most significant events in professional learning over the past forty years. That same year the Association of Educational Publishers awarded its "Book of the Year" award in the category of School/Classroom Management to the *Professional Learning Communities at Work Plan Book*.

Michael Fullan in partnership with Microsoft has created a list of the "Top Twenty" books on Leadership for Change. *Learning by Doing* is one of only seven books on the list that deals specifically with education. Here is what Fullan writes about *Learning by Doing*:

"The only book on professional learning communities (PLCs) on our list, and a gem consistent with our theme of leading with action and doing... the book is realistic in surfacing the problem that some staff may not support PLCs and what to do in the face of resistance. The authors, rightly, conclude (a) PLCs are powerfully effective, and (b) they are equally complex to create...

Why We Like This Book: It is dead on central to the core of improvement in schools. It lays out the key agenda in key terms. It pushes the "how to do it" challenge to the limit without providing an unrealistic blueprint. This is a book that shows what we need to do to achieve much-needed PLCs on a large scale. It provides all the guidelines and tips we need to accomplish PLCs and their accompanying results. And, it is a book that still says, in the end, "It's going to be hard — hard, but worth it."

Doug Reeves recently nominated Rick's most recent book, *Learning by Doing*, for educational book of the year. Here are comments from some of the nation's most respected educators regarding *Learning By Doing*.

“Indispensable” is an over-used word for books that are merely useful; but this book, is in fact, indispensable for leaders who want to make the right changes and make them endure. When this country gets serious about good schools for all our children the books by Rick DuFour and his colleagues will be the curriculum.

Jonathan Saphier, President of Research for Better Teaching

As professional learning communities become more and more popular, we need more than ever a definitive guide to the whys, whats, and hows of PLCs. This handbook is it: comprehensive, clear, practical and above all demanding for moving forward with deep PLCs. Anyone committed to PLCs must base their work on this powerful standard.

Michael Fullan, Special Advisor to the Premier and the Minister of Education,
Ontario, Canada

This may be the best, most practical book yet written on how to implement professional learning communities. It reaches an important threshold – a greater confidence and clarity about the power and potential of PLCs. It is that rare book about which one can say: If you read it, and put its principles in action, you can expect results.

Mike Schmoker, Educational Consultant

Continuous and sustainable school improvement requires three ingredients: a shared language, an empowered leadership group, and time. *Learning by Doing* provides a compelling framework for continuous and sustainable school improvement. The book offers a clear process for bringing these essential ingredients together. It should be required reading for all professional educators dedicated to the mission of “Learning for All.”

Larry Lezotte, Founder of Effective Schools Products

With this detailed roadmap, no school leader –teacher, principal, or superintendent –will ever again have to say ‘I’m all for building a PLC....but how do you do it?’ I wish I had this book, which is overflowing with concrete ideas, before me during my own turbulent years as a school principal. It would have enabled us to break out of our inertia and create the PLC we all desperately wanted and deserved.

Roland Barth, Founder of the Harvard Principal Center

Many books deserve a glance, perhaps half of them are worthy of a thorough reading, but only a few – and this book is surely in this category – should be devoured.

Doug Reeves, Chairman, Center for Performance Assessment

Rick’s articles have been selected for *The Best of Educational Leadership* (ASCD), *The Best of the Developer* (National Staff Development Council), *The Best of the Executive Educator* (*Executive Educator Magazine*), and the “Hot Topic Series” (*School Climate*) of Phi Delta Kappa. He received a citation from the National Association of Secondary Principals for outstanding contribution to professional literature. Mike Schmoker has described Rick’s article, *The Learning Centered Principal* (*Educational Leadership*, May, 2002) as “the best article on leadership I have ever read” (*Results Now*, 2006). His article, *What is a Professional Learning Community* (*Education Leadership*, May, 2004), is one of the journal’s most requested articles for permission to re-print.



SALESMANSHIP CLUB
YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTERS

June 22, 2007

2008 Brock International Prize Jurors
The Brock International Prize in Education
The University of Oklahoma
College of Liberal Studies

Dear Distinguished Panel of Jurors:

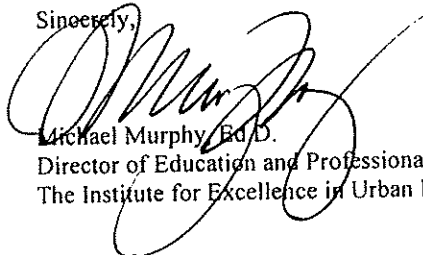
It is my distinct pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Rick DuFour as a nominee of the Brock International Prize in Education. My collegial relationship with Dr. DuFour began several years ago, and we have worked together in a variety of contexts. In all settings, Dr. DuFour has exhibited skill, creativity, and talent worthy of a Brock Prize nominee. I hold that real educational impact is a result of two concurrent efforts: a) the constant building of relationships and connecting with the human side of change and b) the focused work to increase confidence and skill in a much-needed area of school and classroom improvement. This letter will detail how Dr. DuFour uniquely and effectively combines both efforts.

Dr. DuFour has extraordinary talent in creating immediate relationships with educators which spur them to action. His training materials and manuscripts are written from the viewpoint of a practitioner. The carefully chosen words begin to bridge a bond with the reader or participant and instill both the urgent need for change but also practical suggestions to build confidence and embolden the participants. The relationship building for change is dramatically evident, as well, in Dr. DuFour's personal appearances and work with educators. This was first evidenced in my work with Dr. DuFour during my tenure as the director of programs for the National Staff Development Council. As director of programs, I often called on distinguished educators to teach large groups of educators in our conferences or academies. These training sessions were often fraught with the perils of large-scale training resulting in limited action; yet Dr. DuFour was consistently able not only to share knowledge and skills with educators about school improvement but also to instill the idea that participants could indeed translate the training into action and improvement in their schools and districts. This unique ability to concurrently connect with literally hundreds of participants but also to relate to each individual in the audience and build confidence in his or her action positioned Dr. DuFour as a unique practitioner and communicator. Indeed, I have seen literally thousands of training participants in small and large venues voice how they have personally connected with this internationally-known educator. Their warm words of praise are always combined with commitments to action.

In addition, Dr. DuFour's career has addressed a critical area in school improvement; that is, the work to create communities of learners in schools. For years, the focus on school improvement has been on a more "scientific" approach, utilizing data and effective planning and marshalling of resources to address learning needs. Sadly, this focus has often neglected the central notion that the coalescence of people around school improvement goals not only provides focus and clarity, but also builds capacity among the school staff to value continuous learning and improvement. Dr. DuFour's unique approach once again combines practical and research-based strategies for the analysis of achievement but also nurtures positive attitudes toward working together, continuous learning, and inquisitiveness. Literally thousands of educators have been stimulated by Dr. DuFour's suggestion that institutionalized school improvement can only be sustained from the people who breathe the fire of high expectations and the selfless commitment to work together for a greater good.

In all efforts, Dr. DuFour makes improvement accessible to educators—moving them from comprehension of his ideas to personal action. He accomplishes this with huge numbers of school leaders in a personal and practical way; I believe he has almost single-handedly created the international conversation around the topic of learning communities, the topic so critical to learning for everyone within school walls. His talents enable each of us to see possibilities among adults and children, and his work gives us practical ways to make learning happen. He is a unique soul in our field, and I personally hope the Brock International Prize in Education is awarded to Dr. DuFour, honoring his mind and heart.

Sincerely,



Michael Murphy, Ed.D.
Director of Education and Professional Learning
The Institute for Excellence in Urban Education

Dale A. Hair

1069 Ector Chase
Kennesaw, GA 30152

Phone: (678) 797-9736
Fax: (678) 797-9783
E-mail dale@joehair.com

May 28, 2007

Tulsa Community Foundation
Brock International Prize in Education
7020 S. Yale Avenue, #220
Tulsa, OK 74136

Dear Brock Prize Executive Committee:

I am honored to write and provide personal evidence of the wide-ranging impact of Rick DuFour's Professional Learning Communities (PLC) work throughout the southern United States. I will discuss only the states in which I have first-hand information – Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia.

In Louisiana, Rick DuFour's influence on how principals work with their school faculties actually began in the late 1990's when he conducted a workshop with every second-year principal in the state through an induction program for beginning principals that I coordinated at that time. Dr. DuFour's message was so profound that the Louisiana Department of Education requested that he work with all of their Regional Center personnel and other key leaders throughout the state. Rick was still employed through his district at the time and not able to come personally, but his PLC message was delivered through his colleague Dr. Robert Eaker.

In 2004 and beyond, Rick DuFour has worked through the Louisiana Staff Development Council (LSDC) to spread the PLC word throughout the state. The LSDC has used his books as study books for retreats and guides for work with districts. The organizational newsletter highlights schools that make a difference in student learning through learning communities of educators.

The statewide impact has now been so pervasive that a 2005 publication of the Louisiana Department of Education entitled *A Teacher's Guide to Professional Development* and another entitled *Leading the Way: A Principal's Guide to Professional Development* both site PLCs as one of the Six Components of Effective Professional Development and a core expectation. In June of 2007, Rick DuFour will return to Louisiana for a three-day Institute in New Orleans where his "how to" information is most critical to a school district that is still recovering from the ravages of Hurricane Katrina.

In Alabama, three forces combined to create the "perfect storm" to spread the PLC process throughout that state. The first was the work of Cathy Gassenheimer with the Alabama Best Practices Center (ABPC) – a component of the A+ Alabama Foundation. The ABPC promotes quality, standards-based professional learning for all educators throughout the state through its

network of schools and districts. This organization had already been using PLC materials from Rick DuFour and creating study groups of principals and educational leaders from throughout the state to create awareness and begin the PLC process. The work was beginning to take root and grow.

The second “force” that subsequently “hit” Alabama was the opportunity to host a Solution Tree Institute at Mountainbrook High School in Birmingham. That was the tipping point. Key leaders who attended this workshop then encouraged their school-based personnel to participate in a year-long study through the Alabama Best Practices Center using the book *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*.

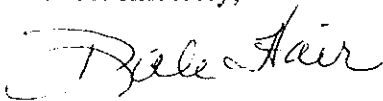
The third “force” was funding. The year-long study for hundreds of educators from school teams throughout the state was made possible by Wachovia grant funds. Wachovia saw the value of partnering PLC concepts with the nationally-recognized Alabama Reading Initiative. Thus, the materials and the personal support of the DuFours have brought foundation funds and the power of partnerships to promote PLCs throughout the state.

In Georgia, I am currently facilitating the work of the Georgia Professional Learning Advisory Committee which has been charged with revising the present professional development “rules” and policies for the state. This committee has supported PLCs through the policy language in their current Georgia Rules for Professional Learning. However, they are now considering how to strengthen this “support” through language that would require evidence of student learning that is linked to educator learning (DuFour’s “Focus on Student Learning”).

The work of the Georgia committee in crafting language will be ongoing throughout the summer of 2007, with final recommendations forthcoming in the fall. However, the conversation around the table indicates a clear shift from “support only” to “support and expectations”. The impact of the PLC message and process are apparent and dramatic. The impact of this policy change will definitely be statewide – influencing not only how schools “do business,” but also the job descriptions of those in the State Department and the Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) that will play leadership roles in supporting and ensuring implementation.

In summary, I can’t think of anyone more deserving than Rick DuFour to receive an award honoring individuals who have made a significant, positive difference in the practice of education and provided ground-breaking ideas. What is so “ground breaking” about Rick DuFour’s information? It’s not just theory. Imagine that! He actually tells you how to do it! This is a rare gift that so many educators lack the skills to convey. And it is just this difference that has and will give his body of work the long-term impact so deserving of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale Hair".

Dale Hair
Educational Consultant

Dr. Austin G. Buffum
2611 Via Cascadita
San Clemente, CA 92672

June 23, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my great honor to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Richard DuFour regarding his nomination for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. I want to comment upon the tremendous impact of his work on Professional Learning Communities (PLC) from four different perspectives: Senior Deputy Superintendent of California's ninth-largest school district; recipient of the 2006 Curriculum and Instruction Administrator of the Year Award by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA); Adjunct Professor of Educational Leadership, California State University Fullerton; and as an Associate of Solution Tree, the organization supporting the work of Professional Learning Communities throughout North America.

I served the Capistrano Unified School District, California's ninth-largest school district of 51,000 students for over thirty years, the last nine of which I held the position of Senior Deputy Superintendent – the equivalent of Chief Educational Officer. During those thirty years of service I witnessed, participated in, and directed scores of well-intentioned school improvement initiatives. I can state without equivocation that none of these efforts even approached the impact on the Capistrano Unified School District made by Dr. DuFour and his work with Professional Learning Communities. As a result of his work in our school district, thirty-seven of our fifty-eight schools achieved California Distinguished School status, and eleven of our schools received National Blue Ribbon recognition. Student achievement scores showed continuous, if not remarkable, improvement. The district was asked to share its work at national forums such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Additionally, Capistrano Unified received the prestigious Magna Award of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) in both 2002 and 2005. As our district endeavored to increasingly operate as a community of learners, we witnessed an unleashing of human potential and focused energy often hoped for in our past reform efforts, but seldom, if ever realized. All of this was a direct result of the influence of Dr. Richard DuFour, who visited Capistrano Unified on a number of occasions, speaking to both large and small groups of educators and in doing so, made a lasting impact on teaching and learning in our district.

Dr. Austin G. Buffum
2611 Via Cascadita
San Clemente, CA 92672

I believe my selection as the Curriculum and Instruction Administrator of the Year by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) was based in large part upon the results generated by Capistrano Unified School District's (CUSD) implementation of PLCs. As interest in Dr. DuFour's work has grown in California, schools and school districts have increasingly examined both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered and utilized by our district to build a model of continuous improvement through implementing PLC concepts. Because of Dr. DuFour's influence on CUSD, monthly tours are now scheduled in several of our schools because educators throughout California and indeed the entire Nation want to see with their own eyes how these schools have transformed their cultures from giving students the opportunity to learn to ensuring that all students learn at high levels. Further evidence of the impact of Dr. DuFour's work throughout California is illustrated by recent high school accreditation visits by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Several of our recent accreditation visits have included a focus upon the school's implementation of PLC concepts – additional evidence that this deep cultural change is not regarded as just another “reform du jour” by this important and prestigious organization.

As an Adjunct Professor at California State University Fullerton (CSUF), I have the opportunity to teach a course entitled “Organizational Leadership” to candidates seeking a Master's Degree in Educational Administration. My syllabus for this course now includes two class sessions devoted to Professional Learning Communities. It seems to me that the work of Dr. DuFour is so important that it merits a place alongside the contributions of Frederick Taylor, Parsons, Blau and Scott, Etzioni, Mintzberg and Senge. Interestingly, because of the inclusion of Dr. DuFour's work in my classroom, other professors at CSUF have now begun to include his work in their syllabi as well, recognizing the tremendous impact that Professional Learning Communities have had thus far upon school and district leadership in North America.

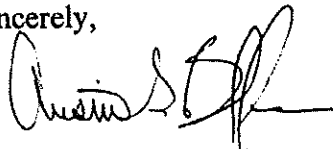
Finally, as an Associate of Solution Tree, I have now had the opportunity to speak in over fifty different schools or school districts throughout the United States, including California, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, Illinois, Tennessee, Alabama, New Jersey, Nevada, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio and Idaho. I am amazed by the unanimity of interest in and impact of Professional Learning Communities in both the United States and Canada today. Dr. DuFour's work has profoundly impacted the structure and culture of districts I have personally visited, including those as diverse as the Combined K-12 School of Jackpot, Nevada (enrollment 250), and the 210,000 student Houston Independent School District. When implemented with fidelity, I have found that PLCs in very different settings consistently lead to

Dr. Austin G. Buffum
2611 Via Cascadita
San Clemente, CA 92672

improved student achievement and teacher satisfaction. Never, in my thirty-five year career, have I seen such universal agreement on best practice in education as I see today in the work of Professional Learning Communities as implemented and advocated by Dr. DuFour. Practitioners and researchers such as Michael Fullan, Rick Stiggins, Larry Lezotte, Roland Barth, Doug Reeves and Mike Schmoker have universally endorsed the tenets of PLCs as best practice in education today.

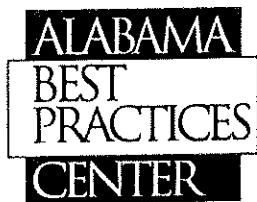
The Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger once said, "Universality is the distinguishing mark of genius." I can personally attest through each of my roles as described above, that I have never witnessed anything so universally effective, impactful and inspiring to the work of educators throughout North America as the development and implementation of Professional Learning Communities by Dr. Richard DuFour.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Austin G. Buffum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "B".

Austin G. Buffum, Ed.D.
Senior Deputy Superintendent (retired)
Capistrano Unified School District, CA
Adjunct Professor, California State University, Fullerton
Curriculum and Instruction Administrator of the Year (2006),
Awarded by the Association of California School Administrators
PLC Associate, Solution Tree Inc.





P.O. Box 4433 - Montgomery, AL 36103
334.279.1886 - 334.279.1543 fax
www.bestpracticescenter.org

June 7, 2007

Tulsa Community Foundation
Brock International Prize in Education
7020 S. Yale Avenue #220
Tulsa, OK 74136

Dear Brock Prize Executive Committee:

It is my distinct pleasure and honor to write about the impact of Rick DuFour's work on teaching and learning in Alabama. The work of Dr. DuFour first came to my attention about seven years ago, just as the Alabama Best Practices Center was established by the A+ Education Foundation – the state's Business Roundtable affiliate with a strong working relationship with Governor Bob Riley, the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education. The mission of A+ is to advance policies, programs, and initiatives in Alabama's K-12 education system that result in high achievement by every child. The Best Practices Center contributes to that mission by helping educators utilize effective professional development to improve teaching and learning in their schools. Our research into best practice led us to the work of Dr. DuFour and the role of professional learning communities (PLCs), and helping educators understand and implement PLCs has become the cornerstone of our work with schools.

To date more than 200 schools have participated in our Powerful Conversations Network - an ongoing training program -- and been the beneficiaries of the concepts and materials that Rick DuFour has created to support schools as they implement PLC concepts. School teams have embraced the three big ideas he presents to clarify the PLC concept. They have discussed the "Knowing-Doing Gap," and they have examined their school's current culture through role-playing (Charles Darwin School, Pontius Pilate School or Chicago Cubs School). They've learned about what a PLC really "looks like" by watching and discussing his *Through New Eyes* video. And, they've been inspired by his *Passion and Persistence* video.

School leaders involved in the Key Leaders strand of the Powerful Conversations Network spent this year studying his *Learning by Doing* with the goal of having them use that book as a professional development tool in their schools. Most participants have already launched a book study on *Learning by Doing* in their schools.

We are now planning the curriculum for the Powerful Conversations Network for the 2007-08 school year. A recent survey of our schools affirmed their desire for a continued focus on PLCs.

In the summer of 2005, we expanded the reach of Dr. DuFour's work well beyond the schools involved in our Network. The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), a comprehensive reading professional development initiative in place in every elementary school in Alabama, asked us to expand our PLC training to their state and regional staff. We designed and delivered a three-day training for the 100 state and regional staff at their week-long summer planning session. We then converted that training into modules that the regional staff could use in their work with ARI schools. As a result, every elementary school in the state has been exposed to the concepts of PLCs.

In the summer of 2006, we led an expanded group made up of ARI staff and school intervention specialists in a two-day study of *On Common Ground*, and, during the winter of 2006-07, we introduced *Learning by Doing* to the same group. ARI leaders believe that the training and information provided on PLCs helps schools understand and confront "adult problems" that often impede a school's efforts to serve all students well and is essential to the effective implementation of the ARI.

Also in the summer of 2006, Rick and Becky DuFour and Bob Eaker brought the Professional Learning Communities three-day institute to Alabama. The conference immediately sold out and exposed even more Alabama educators to PLCs. Inspired participants embraced Dr. DuFour's word and concepts and increased our sense of urgency about helping schools improve student learning by transforming the culture of our schools.

In conclusion, Alabama schools are learning about PLCs and what it takes to provide every student with effective instruction and many are accelerating their progress towards having a true PLC in place. Are we there yet? No, but we're making great progress and teachers are encouraged to work harder based on the initial results of their efforts. None of this would be possible without the concepts and resources developed by Rick DuFour. Moreover, the fact that he has "walked the walk" makes his work even more powerful. No one is having a more powerful influence on Alabama education.

Sincerely,



Cathy Gassenheimer
President



California League of High Schools

6615 E. Pacific Coast Highway • Suite 120 • Long Beach, CA 90803
Voice (800) 858-9365 • FAX (562) 430-5607 • Website: www.clhs.net

May 30, 2007

Committee Member Representing Richard DuFour
2008 Brock International Prize in Education

Dear Committee Member:

Board of Directors

Chair
Don Beauregard
Fresno

Co-Chair
Chris Flesuras
Modesto

Trustee-at-Large
Wendell Chun
Oakdale

Region 1 Trustee
John Curry
Healdsburg

Region 2 Trustee
Chris Adams
Redding

Region 3 Trustee
Kris Hays
Antelope

Region 4 Trustee
Robert Fishstrom
Redwood City

Region 5 Trustee
Ana Lomas
San Jose

Region 6 Trustee
Richard Jones
Oakdale

Region 7 Trustee
Rich Firpo
Fresno

Region 8 Trustee
Susie Shapiro
Van Nuys

Region 9 Trustee
Joe Austin
San Diego

Region 10 Trustee
Duneen De Bruhl
Victorville

Region 11 Trustee
Pat Machado
Santa Ana

Executive Director
Peter F. Murphy

As the executive director of the nonprofit organizations the California League of Middle Schools (CLMS) and California League of High Schools (CLHS), I am writing to inform you of the impact that the professional learning communities (PLCs) model is making and will continue to make on public education.

PLCs could be the most powerful reform tool available to K-12 schools. For teachers, they open doors that are otherwise closed, provide the opportunity to collaboratively discuss individual students, and allow stronger faculty members to share their knowledge and skills with less experienced or less skilled colleagues. By working together, faculty members can improve their own practice, as well as the school's overall curriculum, instruction and assessment, climate, community and more – all the components that impact student learning.

For students, PLCs can counter what current research shows – that students feel disconnected from school and disengaged from learning. By having procedures in place to ensure that multiple adults interact with struggling students to reach specific outcomes, student success rates can only improve in PLC schools.

Schools benefit from PLCs by engaging faculty around the mission and goals of the school and having a structure in place that promotes staff buy-in and school-wide implementation of positive change. Schools that are struggling have the opportunity to systematically and holistically examine their practices for improvement. And, as every organization can always improve, successful schools can do the same.

Richard DuFour's name is synonymous with Professional Learning Communities. He is highly respected among teachers and administrators alike. Word of mouth is spreading and educators of all grade levels are eager to learn from him and implement, or improve their implementation of, PLCs. After all, his message is empowering and makes sense at the gut level to veteran educators.

From board members to panel members and colleagues throughout public education in California and in the nation, I know many educators who are participating in professional learning communities at their school sites and are energized by the process. In the 35-plus years I've been in education, I have never seen a reform offer as great an opportunity to make a difference in student success as the professional learning community concept does.

The fact that Richard DuFour has managed to create, implement and share the success of the collaborative PLC model so broadly shows the strong impact he has made and continues to make on public education.

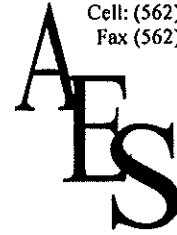
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (800) 326-1880, ext. 26 or p_murphy@clms.net.

Sincerely,


Peter Murphy

Executive Director, CLMS and CLHS
President Elect, National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Judith A. Smith
Educational Consultant
Advanced Educational Services
PO Box 3887, Seal Beach, Ca 90740
Cell: (562) 338-3935
Fax (562) 596-7030



May 27, 2007

To the Distinguished Members of the Nominating Committee for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008:

It is with great pleasure that I write to you regarding the positive impact the work of Dr. Richard DuFour has had on a vast number of schools in the greater Los Angeles area as well as schools across the nation in promoting the concept of Professional Learning Communities. I have had the distinct privilege of working with Dr. DuFour as an Educational Consultant and Associate with Solution-Tree for the last three years. I was inspired to increase my understanding of Professional Learning Communities after hearing Dr. DuFour speak about his work at Stevenson High School in Illinois. At that time, I was a consultant with Los Angeles County Office of Education providing support to principals whose schools were considered "underperforming" by the state of California. My colleagues and I were searching for ways to assist these schools in their quest to increase student achievement. As we implemented the ideas we learned during our journey of growth in Professional Learning Communities, we also found exciting ways to open doors that motivated staff and students to ensure learning for all students – we became engaged in true collaborative processes. By the end of the first year of providing opportunities for school Leadership Teams to learn and grow through reading and hearing about Professional Learning Communities from Dr. DuFour, they were hungry for more....more information, support for implementation, and more opportunities to hear the inspiring words of Dr. Richard DuFour.

Over the last three years, I have witnessed a significant, positive, impact on student achievement in the schools that have implemented Professional Learning Communities. PLCs have become a way of life. These schools have moved from not using data to drive instruction through the process of data analysis as an event and into ongoing, regular collaborative team meetings where the Key Questions: what exactly do we want our students to know, how will we know when they know it, and what will we do if they don't - drive the instructional decisions that are made by teachers, administrators, and support staff on a daily basis.

In thinking about PLCs at work, I picture a K-6 school with whom I have had the opportunity to work for three years. They serve a significant population of English Language Learners and are proud that their state test scores are on the rise. They engage in weekly grade level meetings to make decisions about instruction based on data from common assessments. They are encouraged by each other as they visit classrooms together and talk about the key features that promote learning for their students. Each person accepts responsibility for student learning; teachers state that they have changed the way they think about teaching and learning.

Schools are re-organizing into systems that put student learning at the forefront; the realization that working together to develop common assessments based on key standards is evident throughout department and grade level meetings. The mantra, "No one of us is as good as all of us," is prevalent in achieving schools. PLCs are visible not just in schools, but in districts, where central office staff are partnering with schools to work in new and different ways because they

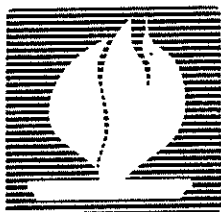
have benefited from the work of Dr. DuFour and his encouragement to challenge belief systems and ensure that "all children learn!"

I continue to remember the first group of principals I took to hear Rick speak. They returned to their schools, established leadership teams to become well versed in the attributes of PLCs, and consistently asked how they could learn more. Together we developed a colloquium where the principals developed a network so their questions could be answered and resources could be shared. Every step of the way, Rick was there when we needed him...not just through his teleconferences, presentations, books, and videos, which were all valuable for implementation, he was also available by email and phone. I continually hear, "I can't believe it, I received a return email from Rick DuFour." That is amazing...a word which describes Rick and the work that is flourishing in schools. Professional Learning Communities are making a difference in the lives of children everywhere I visit.

To honor the work of Dr. Richard DuFour, the person who brings the concept of Professional Learning Communities to life, honors the belief that *all children can learn*; it honors the fact that "all of us," working together as a Professional Learning Community, really do make a difference!

Respectfully,

Judith A. Smith



RIVERSIDE COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

DR. DAVID LONG
Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

June 18, 2007

3939 Thirteenth Street
P.O. Box 868
Riverside, California
92502-0868

To Whom It May Concern:

47-336 Oasis Street
Indio, California
92201-6998

24980 Las Brisas Road
Murrieta, California
92562

Riverside County
Board of Education

Gerald P. Colapinto

Lisa A. Conyers

Lynne D. Craig

Betty Gibbel

Vick Knight

William R. Kroonen

Adolfo Mediano, Jr.

Riverside County, California is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States today. It is quite diverse with schools serving more than 400,000 students in 23 different school districts, including 24% limited English speakers and 26 different home languages. In 2002, our newly-elected superintendent initiated the call that we at the county office of education were to serve our districts *up close and personal*. We were to be more available at school sites, not sitting at our desks planning events. At the same time, the accountability movement hit the state and the country...and we were found *wanting*. Many of our students were not proficient in reading, writing, or math. In particular, our significant subgroups were in danger; the English learners, the children of poverty, and the special education students. We went into the field armed with the traditional means of creating change. But the interesting thing about change is that it is rarely brought about by tradition. We built a good work and called ourselves Riverside County Achievement Team, but there was something missing. That something, we later learned, would be of benefit to all students. That something would ask the questions: *What do we want our students to learn? How do we know they have learned? What do we do if they don't learn?* That something used the keyword "*learning*," not "*teaching*." That something is PLC, Professional Learning Communities. Listening to the words and reading the books, and the articles by Dr. Richard DuFour about his work with professional learning communities, turned our world upside down. We had found the "something" we needed to make a difference in the lives of our students in Riverside County.

Our new vision became: "Every school assisted by RCAT will demonstrate improvement through a sustainable, systematic focus on learning that is grounded in the professional learning community process."

The idea of having a mission, vision, values and goals built on, not rhetoric of years past, but on professional learning communities that advocate for current reality and a sense of urgency has developed. We, as a profession, are not successful if our constituents are failing... and many were. A focus on learning, results, and collaboration around data, gave a name and a need to a before nondescript number on a page of charts and graphs.

In January, 2004, the Riverside County Office of Education held its first DuFour Conference with Dr. DuFour presenting his experience and research in creating Professional Learning Communities. We set a limit to the number of participants we could accommodate, but soon realized we had more interest than the room could hold. The wave of enthusiasm grew and so did additional DuFour conferences. Our 6th upcoming event is scheduled for September 2007 and includes 1,200 registrants and a healthy waiting list. Every nationally scheduled DuFour event is filled. One participant responded that listening to Dr. DuFour speak was like a religious experience—or maybe a better phraseology would be a great awakening to what we as educators need to be doing *to help all students learn*.

Throughout our county, each of our twenty-three districts is working toward becoming a PLC. At our office, the student programs we provide in alternative and special education are using this model to improve achievement. We have been invited to speak at other county offices in California about what we do here that is different, and then the answer to the question: *How do we do it?* We have a partnership with the California Department of Education to focus on the achievement of special education students in sixteen sites throughout California. The resulting data of improvement is leading us to create a certificate program where other county office educators can learn from our experiences and implement their own PLC. All of this work is based on the concepts of professional learning communities. The work of Dr. DuFour has had a tsunami effect in Riverside County and throughout California.

Others could write a much more professional letter than I, but this letter of recommendation about how the Professional Learning Communities have had a significant impact on education comes from my heart. It has changed the way we do business in education. We no longer look to working in isolation as the means to improve student achievement; we collaborate and work together. The research is lined up behind this change agent—PLC. Today's leading educators are proponents and advocates.

It is without hesitation that we recommend Dr. Richard DuFour for the prestigious Brock Prize. To say he has made a significant impact on the practice and understanding of the science and art of education, is at best an understatement. Learning communities are a powerful systems change whose benefits will grow as teams of educators put the learning of our students foremost. We see the results daily at the schools and districts we visit. Student achievement is on the rise in Riverside County. Dr. DuFour has been the catalyst for this change.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nita Grantham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N".

Nita Grantham, Director
Instructional Support Services
Division of Educational Support Services
(951) 600-5625 / FAX: [951] 600-5639

NG:rl





POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

13626 TWIN PEAKS ROAD · POWAY, CALIFORNIA 92064-3034

TELEPHONE (858) 748-0010 · FAX (858) 679-2605

www.powayusd.com

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Todd Gutschow

Jeff Mangun

Andrew Patapov

Penny Ranftle

Linda Vanderveer

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Donald A. Phillips, Ed.D

*All Students Learning
Whatever It Takes*

June 15, 2007

LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

Janet Malone, Director

(858)748-0010 (x2235)

jmalone@powayusd.com

Re: Richard DuFour and Professional Learning Communities

To Whom It May Concern:

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter of commendation for Richard DuFour as a powerful educator whose work has positively impacted the lives of millions of students. I first met Rick 7 years ago when he visited my district to share his story about reculturing Adlai Stevenson High School. Rick's ideas ignited the minds of every person in the room and, simultaneously, touched the hearts of each and every educator. He helped us believe and gave us hope that we could achieve the mission of our organization ~ "All Students Learning ... Whatever It Takes."


Since that time, the seeds that Rick planted have continued to sprout and grow at all 34 schools in our district. Each of the 3 big ideas of a professional learning community have taken root and reaped benefits for students across our system. By focusing on learning, teachers at all levels and in all grades have ensured that their students successfully meet academic standards. The results are evident in the fact that 99.96% of Poway's 2006 graduates passed the California High School Exit Exam.

The second big idea of a professional learning community – collaborative culture – has also taken root. Meetings throughout the system focus on professional learning and collaboration. Classified staff members, certificated administrators, and teachers alike dedicate a portion of every week to learning and continuous improvement. As a result, significant progress has been made towards reaching each of our district's two key goals. Critical to our success is the unique and powerful collaborative relationship that exists between district management and each of the three unions representing teachers and classified staff members.

Finally, because our district has embraced the third big idea of a professional learning community - governing our actions by results - our students continue to excel. Poway is recognized across the state and nation as a district whose students consistently outperform their peers in other districts and states. Another indicator of our success is the fact that at the conclusion of the 2006-2007 school year, 100% of our schools had met all NCLB requirements.

In conclusion, Rick DuFour and the concepts of a professional learning community have had a profound influence on students, teachers, and schools across the continent. Because of his continued efforts, students' lives are being touched in ways that will create more opportunities for their futures than ever before. Without question, Rick is deserving of recognition and appreciation for his work.

Sincerely,


Janet Malone
Director of Staff Development

SERVING THE CITIES OF POWAY AND SAN DIEGO, INCLUDING THE COMMUNITIES OF:

Black Mountain Ranch, Carmel Mountain Ranch, Rancho Bernardo, Rancho Peñasquitos, Sabre Springs, Santa Fe Valley, Torrey Highlands, 4S Ranch



Cunningham Education Consulting
27826 Colonial
Mission Viejo, CA 92692
Phone: 949 837-0223 Fax: 949 837-6939
judycunningham@sbcglobal.net

June 11, 2007

To say that the work started by Dr. Richard DuFour has and continues to change the face of education in America would be an understatement.

The conversation has changed. The questions asked have changed. Expectations have changed, Professional development has changed. Expectations of educators, students and parents have changed. The organization of the district, the school, and the school day has changed. The assessment of student progress and its use has changed. How teachers work interdependently to study student work to inform instruction is changing the work in a way that requires teachers and staff members to design the time and support needed for each child to assure success.

Rick DuFour has brought together current research, building on his own findings. He continues to bring together those in the field, by the thousands, for collegial conversation about this work. Rick and his professional team have provided very valuable tools in the books and video's. They are loaded with "how to" tools. Providing professional associates to schools and districts to support their work is helping districts and schools move faster, deeper and with a clear focus that leads to sustainability.

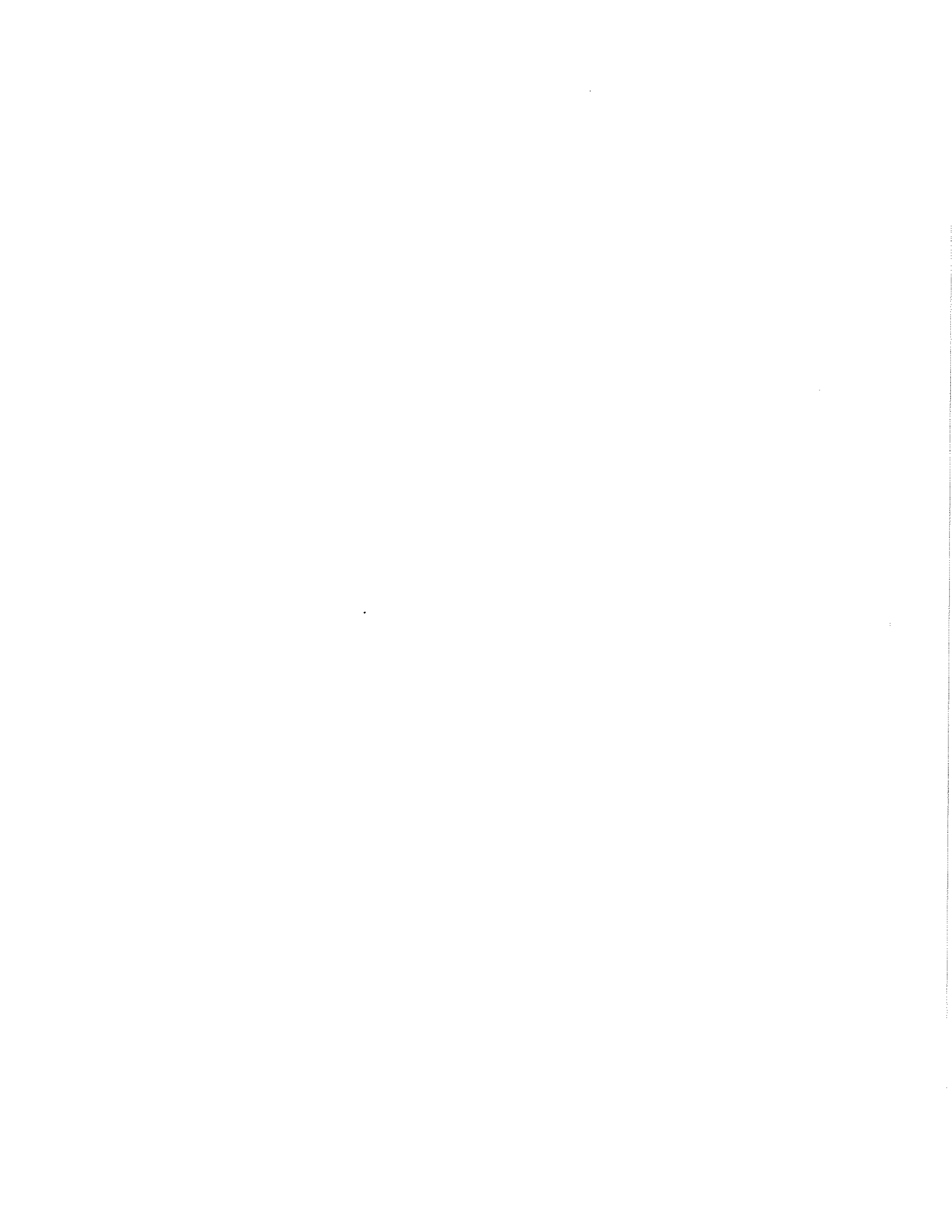
Building a different culture at a school – a real professional learning community is very complex. Rick has guided his associates to support this complex work and focus it down to the basic fundamentals. It is doable! Working with Districts, schools, principals, superintendents across the country, I have found no one who can argue with the concept of a professional learning community. They can support the work because they see student results and see the professionals building their own capacity. When I see an entire 4th grade class go from only 16% being proficient in mathematics to only 13 % not being proficient I take notice. Four teachers worked interdependently to decide what their 120 students would learn, how they would know if they learned it and what they were going to do if they did not learn it.

In my 46 years of education, I have seen nothing else that has the potential to truly change the education system. It is not a new program, doesn't come in a box, isn't something to do on top of what we already do. It is about doing our work differently with a clear focus, no excuses, and non-negotiables about working as teams with common assessments and school wide interventions.

The results that Rick can share from across the country speak to the power of this wonderful work. With out Rick's passion, energy and perseverance we would not have this opportunity to impact the culture of schools. It is essential that this work be supported – our Country's future depends on it.

Respectfully,


Judy Cunningham
President





June 11, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Dr. Richard DuFour and his work with Professional Learning Communities. I am currently the Director of Instructional Service for the Durango School District in Colorado. Previously, I worked for the Colorado Department of Education as the Professional Development Coordinator for the southwest region of the state. The region comprises twenty-three districts and three Boards of Cooperative Educational Services and spans 16,000 square mile. As coordinator of professional development for this large geographic area that included many and varied school districts, I was constantly searching for ideas, concepts, and processes that would guarantee increased results in student learning, be systemic and enduring, and also motivate teachers to improve their practice.

At the NSDC Annual Conference in 2001, Dr. DuFour was a featured presenter. I had heard about Dr. DuFour's work and read some articles he had written in professional journals. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend his session as it was closed due to overcrowding. Fortunately, the NSDC recorded the key sessions so I was able to purchase an audio tape to bring home with me. The first time I listened to the tape I was riveted and immediately understood the potential Professional Learning Communities held for all teachers, students, and the field of education. These and other tapes of the PLC process were my constant companions for the next few months as I traveled across the state doing my work. The more I learned, the more I believed that of all the initiatives in which the region could engage, PLC would be the one that would actually provide educators with the necessary tools they needed to improve their practice while providing the systemic change necessary to sustain the improvement.

After convening a PLC advisory council and developing a strategic plan, we began regional trainings. Dr. DuFour made numerous trips to the Colorado outback to provide training for our educators and has remained an accessible resource as the PLC process has been implemented. Teams of educators from every district and BOCES in the region have attended PLC trainings and have established PLC teams. The southwest region of Colorado is 200 to 400 miles from any major urban centers. To have access to the quality of national expertise provided by Dr. DuFour is not common, especially without traveling great distances at great expense.

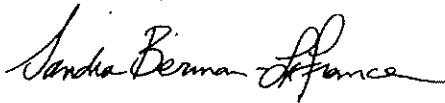
The excitement that this new learning provided educators was palpable. Over the past four years, PLC has been the focus of regional professional development. The structure

provided by PLC has become the framework to integrate the content and pedagogical learning that is essence of improved teaching and increased student learning. Data from districts across the region show increasing scores on state and local assessments. Both teachers and administrators directly correlate these gains to the structures and collaborative processes of PLC. Dr. DuFour's work with PLC has reached into every school in the 23 districts of southwest Colorado and provided support for educators as they seek to improve their teaching and the achievement of all students.

One year ago I accepted the position of Director of Instructional Services for the Durango School District. One of the main reasons for this change in my career was the excitement I felt about being part of a team that facilitated the implementation of PLC. There are many important and competing priorities in educational improvement and it is very challenging to balance the demands for accountability and the imperatives of 21st Century learning. The framework provided by PLC and the widespread dissemination of this work by Dr. DuFour is the best hope of educators as they strive to meet current and future demands for continuous educational improvement.

Thank you for your consideration of Dr. DuFour's work. Educators and students across the country have been positively impacted by the power of Professional Learning Communities and would find Dr. DuFour a most deserving candidate for the Brock International Prize in Education. It is my sincere hope that Dr. DuFour will be the recipient of this award.

Sincerely,



Director of Instructional Service
Durango 9-R School District
201 east 12th St.
Durango CO 81301
slafrance@durango.k12.co.us
970-247-5411 extension 1425

June 3, 2007

Dear Advocate for Rick DuFour and Members of the Nominating Committee,
Brock International Prize in Education for 2008;

I am honored to write this letter of support for Rick DuFour for his contributions to the field of education and to describe how Professional Learning Communities have impacted education in Colorado. I have known Rick for 6 years working with him as Executive Director of the Front Range BOCES for Teacher Leadership in Denver, Colorado. The Front Range BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) serves 19 metro region school districts and the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Science Center. Our mission is to impact student achievement by providing collaborative and quality professional learning for teachers, administrators and faculty. We serve over 25,000 educators in Colorado and over 500,000 students.

In the following text, I will describe how Professional Learning Community concepts have impacted our profession, our practice, our region and state, and most importantly, our students.

Our profession and practice...

Professional Learning Communities are highlighted in ALL the work describing what makes a successful learning environment and what impacts student achievement. The National Staff Development Council has embedded professional learning communities into their 11 standards and innovation configuration maps in the book *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards into Practice Innovation Configuration Volume I*. The map describes what it looks like if teachers, principals, central office staff, school board, and community are engaged in PLC. Pick up any educator's journal or publishing catalogue from Corwin Press, MCREL, ASCD, and Solution Tree and a plethora of titles or descriptions will reference or connect to Professional Learning Communities. Many conferences and gatherings of educators feature PLC as a research-based practice that impact student achievement. Many other providers of educational services take off on the PLC concept by endorsing it and integrating it into their programs. It is widely known and acknowledged that Rick DuFour and his team have solidified the concepts and are the leaders in PLC. The DuFour team has contributed to improving education internationally. I find it remarkable to think about how Professional Learning Communities has changed our messages and support to schools with a focus on student learning.

The metro region and Colorado...

For the past 5 years, the Front Range BOCES has worked closely with Rick DuFour to provide institutes, workshops, study groups, and follow-up support to educators as they implement Professional Learning Communities. We reach 500 teachers, administrators, Board members, and support staff per year in the institutes alone. We also provided on-

to help with. Before it was all logistical, how to set up an exam for common implementation, how to get it graded, how to access the data, what data is available. Now, teams are beginning to ask deeper questions about what the data means about the teaching and learning in the course. We are seeing improvement from year to year on common assessments, implying that the teaching and learning of the course material has improved. We see teachers and students using data to make decisions about what comes next, what to review, what to re-teach, and when to move on. This atmosphere of constant continuous improvement is spreading throughout the student's experience, from the classroom, to state testing, to AP testing, and to college entrance testing. It has even been absorbed into physical performance in PE and health classes. A key shift in thinking seems to have happened. Teachers are thinking about how to use what data to improve teaching and learning, rather than just what data can we get to meet a requirement.

These kinds of shifts are not easy to accomplish. They take time and they take commitment. PLC is not a program that can be implemented. It is an idea for organizing a school in order to focus on what is important. And that is something much harder to accomplish than implementing a program. It requires time for the ideas to take hold, the development of teams and materials to be workable, and the expectation to self-assess and critique. It is not as straightforward as a program, it is as complex as a philosophy. The way our school works is now very systematic. It seems hard to imagine how we did things before without this system. And since it is a systematic not a program, it allows for its own adjustment and improvement. Constant and continuous improvement is now a normal expectation, not a point of contention.

Douglas Dietel
Math Teacher and Assessment Center Facilitator, Legacy High School, Adams 12
School District, Thornton, CO

In summary, the work of Rick DuFour has changed the work in schools. Students are learning and adults are working together and focused on results. In Colorado, the PLC model changed our practices and our educational landscape! We thank Rick DuFour for his leadership and influence!

If you would like more testimonials or examples, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Susan.Sparks@cudenver.edu

Sincerely,



Susan K. Sparks
Executive Director of the Front Range BOCES for Teacher Leadership

GRANBY MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

A Professional Learning Community

Alan Addley
Principal

Kimberly S. Calcasola
Assistant Principal

Patricia Law
Assistant Principal

June 26, 2007

Members of the Selection Committee:

I am delighted to write this letter in support of Dr. Richard DuFour's nomination as the 2008 recipient of the Brock International Prize in Education.

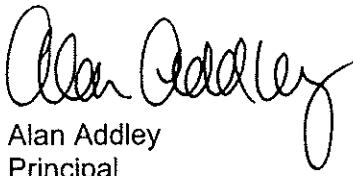
Dr. Dufour's work on professional learning communities (PLCs) assists districts and schools across the country in transforming their cultures into ones where professionals embrace the concept that every child actually can realize their full potential. Dr. DuFour provides schools with the practical strategies that both challenge and empower administrators and teachers to collaborate in creating school cultures that increase student learning. Many reform efforts claim to do so, professional learning communities actually make it a reality.

The failure of decades of school reform has been the inability to impact the necessary change on teaching and learning in the classroom. Dr. Dufour's work on professional learning communities results in district and school level improvement initiatives that are observable in the daily practices of the school and that increase student achievement.

I can attest to the transformational power of professional learning communities. Six years ago, as a newly appointed principal, I staked my professional reputation on it. Simply stated, I requested the board of education's support in creating a professional learning community at the high school as the school's long term process for school improvement. In turn, I promised that they would see increased student achievement. That's exactly what happened, so much so, that in 2006 the school was the first high school in the state of Connecticut to be designated by the Connecticut State Department of Education as a Vanguard School (recognition bestowed upon a school for realizing high levels of student performance through a commitment to best educational practices). Today, schools throughout the state of Connecticut are embracing the PLC model with similar enthusiasm and stories of success.

Not only would Dr. Dufour be a deserving recipient of this prestigious award for his significant contributions to educational reform throughout the United States, but he would also be a wonderful ambassador for the program. I enthusiastically support his nomination; it has been my experience that no other educational reform initiative has ever had the positive impact on improving student learning for all students as that of professional learning communities.

Sincerely,



Alan Addley
Principal



315 SALMON BROOK STREET • GRANBY, CONNECTICUT 06035 • (860) 844-3014 • FAX (860) 844-3026

ACCREDITED BY THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (NEAS&C)

www.granby.k12.ct.us



June 25, 2007

Dear Members of the Brock International Prize in Education Selection Committee:

It is an honor and privilege to submit this letter of recommendation for Dr. Richard DuFour and his work in Professional Learning Communities. I first met Rick in 1993 when I attended the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) national conference in Dallas, Texas. I had just left the principalship for the director of staff development position in my district, and I was especially interested in his topic, *The Principal as Staff Developer*. I was so impressed with his session on principal leadership and the concept of expanding the power of the principalship through powerful, organized teams – the precursor to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). As the person responsible for principal and leadership professional development, I brought Rick into our district in 1994 to give his presentation to 150 Leadership Team members -- principals, Senior Staff, and directors & managers. Little did I know how his presentation would permanently change the lives of our instructional leaders and the direction in which our district was going. Since 1993, the long-term impact of our relationship has been significant and tremendously positive.

Several years ago, I brought Rick and his wife, Becky, back to the district to focus on the importance of vision, mission, values, and behaviors & attitudes as they related to our ever-increasing emphasis on our organizational values and ethics. Presented within the constructs of the Professional Learning Communities, it gave our school-based leaders a foundation upon which they could build their school teams so that values and ethics are embedded into the everyday structure of our schools and not considered as add-ons.

At the state level, I am on the Board of Directors for the Florida Association for Staff Development (FASD). I suggested that we bring Rick and Becky to present at our state-level Fall Leadership Conference a few years ago so that all state professional developers in Florida could hear about the work that they were doing with PLCs. The statewide impact of their work has again been significant and very positive.

Florida is a very unique state with regard to professional development. We have the Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol which is based on the twelve NSDC standards for professional development. To my knowledge, we are the only state that has a statewide professional development system protocol as extensive and comprehensive as ours. All 67 districts are reviewed every three years through a rigorous examination process of their professional development systems. Florida's protocol has 66 professional development standards that are contained in four strands (planning, delivery, follow up and evaluation) and at three levels (district, school, and faculty). The two most challenging standards to systemically implement center on the implementation of Professional Learning Communities at the school and faculty levels. After working with the PLC concepts over the past three years, our district's average rating in the two PLC standards rose dramatically from 2.0 to 3.1 (school level rating) and from 1.8 to 2.8 (faculty level rating). These ratings are based on a 1 to 4 scale with 1 being "unacceptable" and 4 being "excellent". These outstanding results over the past three years are a result of our successful implementation of the PLC concepts. The overall rating for our 2006 protocol results improved 207% over the 2004 results. Our work with PLCs had a great deal to do with this impressive systemic improvement.

Our district recently brought Dr. Terri Martin with Solution-Tree into our district to address our Leadership Team on in-depth strategies that schools need to consider as they develop and form Professional Learning Communities. We have many new administrators who are looking for better ways to leverage their leadership capacity and effectiveness through PLCs. The results of this continued work have provided us

Office of Educational Leadership and Professional Development
Phone: (321) 633-1000, ext. 240 • Fax: (321) 633-3433

with significant improvement in student achievement and in developing quality leadership development at the school and district levels.

Rick and Becky have also been presenters at the Progress Energy/University of Central Florida School Leadership Institute. This institute is comprised of 13 Central Florida school districts. In the three years since the institute began, their presentation on Professional Learning Communities was the only one to be held over a two-day period. Far more local educational leaders attended this institute session than normal because of the interest in PLCs and their impact on schools.

My school district, Brevard Public Schools, was recently awarded the 2007 Governor's Sterling Award. This prestigious award is based on the Baldrige Award Criteria and is awarded to organizations recognized as role models for organizational performance excellence. We are only the second Florida school district in 15 years since the award was established to have received this honor. Several of the recognized strengths and best practices in our application were attributed to Professional Learning Communities and our successful implementation of their concepts.

Rick's impact through his work with PLCs is comprehensive on a national and international scale; however, his influence has been equally significant at the personal level. He has encouraged me to continue my work with PLCs by inviting me to be a member of the Professional Learning Communities at Work Leaders Academy. This year-long academy gave participants first-hand experiences and practice with PLC concepts under Rick's watchful eye. As a result of my work with the academy, Rick also encouraged me to write an article on leadership development as the critical element in sustaining the cultural changes of a professional learning community. With his guidance and mentoring, the article was published this year in a special edition of the *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*.

Dr. Rick DuFour and his work with Professional Learning Communities have significantly impacted individuals, schools, and school systems for a number of years. This work has had far-reaching, positive results in education in our district, our state, and in our nation. It has been my experience and personal observation that the evidence of the impact of this work is clear and convincing – PLC concepts are the future for improving schools and school districts nationwide. As a result of my work, school leadership teams and guiding coalitions have made significant improvement in student achievement and leadership development through the implementation of these concepts.

It is my privilege to enthusiastically recommend Dr. Richard DuFour for consideration for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. Should you wish to discuss any part of this recommendation with me, feel free to contact me at 321.633.1000 extension 240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. B. Hall", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William B. Hall, Director
Educational Leadership and Professional Development
Brevard Public Schools



The Learning Academy at E.J. Swint

500 Highway 138
Jonesboro, Georgia 30238
Phone: (770) 473-2780
Fax: (770) 603-5778

Mr. Kenneth C. Williams
Principal

Mrs. Jeannie Richmond-Lynch
Assistant Principal

June 24, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

Nominating Committee
Brock International Prize In Education

Re: The Impact of Professional Learning Communities

I am writing this letter on behalf of Dr. Rick DuFour and his groundbreaking work with Professional Learning Communities. My name is Kenneth C. Williams and I am an elementary school principal at The Learning Academy at E.J. Swint in Jonesboro, Georgia. I am in my second assignment as a school principal. I had the challenge of leading a school mired in cycles of failure. I believe the reason I was selected to lead our school is because I was able to articulate a clear course for improvement in teaching and learning which ultimately will translate into improved student achievement. The clear course that I passionately advocate for is our school operating as a professional learning community.

The effectiveness of PLC's is as much about what it isn't as what it is...what it isn't is a program, kit, fad, or a trend. It isn't a prepackaged set of answers, attempting to address often the very specific issues that individual schools have. Initiatives like the ones I've described have teachers armed with a jaded reservation that often results in a lack of interest, a lack of buy-in, and a lack of results. This reservation is understandable in this age of one-size-fits-all product approach to school improvement.

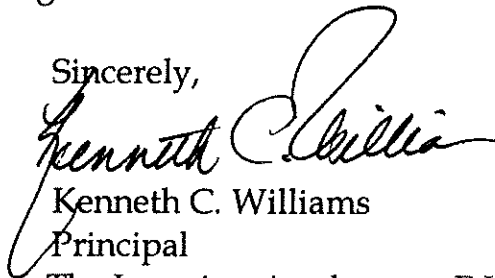
Professional Learning Communities helps to create a culture of teaching and learning that addresses the quest of high levels of learning for all students. For all my years in education, I have seen it written, heard it said, but until PLC's, had never witnessed a way of doing things that tangibly and predictably set a

school on a path of learning for all. With PLC's being an approach and not a product, any and all district initiatives can be funneled through the PLC framework. Taking a systemic approach to addressing the critical questions of a PLC take what are often random acts of improvement and align them to create the learning synergy that results in high levels of learning for all. The more we deepen our implementation of PLC concepts, the more we find ourselves leaving no stone unturned and no student untouched in the learning process. My work with Dr. DuFour and Professional Learning Communities has for the first time empowered me to answer the following questions as the learning leader, on behalf of my school:

1. What do expect students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know when they have learned it?
3. How will we respond when they haven't learned it?
4. How will we respond when they do know it?

My sense of self-efficacy as a leader is limitless. More importantly, our teachers and staff also know of the difference they make. Building a PLC has transformed our school from a place where adults came to work to a place where students come to learn. Ours is a school with no shortage of teachers working hard; we have no shortage of teachers who want students to learn. What we were lacking however was alignment. Our school improvement pre-PLC looked like 55 arrows shot from the bows of many marksmen: aiming at targets from many directions, hitting much of anything predictably. Professional Learning Communities provided us with the blueprints for alignment. We are now capitalizing on a collective effort to move toward shared mission, vision, values and goals. We have moved away from a "hammer and hope" approach to one of results—*planned and on purpose*. It is a distinct honor to pen this recommendation on behalf of Dr. Rick DuFour and his monumental work with Professional Learning Communities.

Sincerely,



Kenneth C. Williams

Principal

The Learning Academy at E.J. Swint



SCHOOL DISTRICT 54

Ensuring Student Success

524 East Schaumburg Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60194

Phone 847/357-5000
FAX 847/357-5006
TTY 847/357-5076
<http://www.sd54.org>

Edward F. Rafferty
Superintendent of Schools

Letter of Recommendation for Dr. Rick DuFour

June 21, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

It is an honor to be asked to write a letter of support for Dr. Rick DuFour and his work in creating and sustaining Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). If you are looking for an outstanding leader in the field of education, whose work has had a significant impact in School District 54 and in other districts throughout North America, your search should stop here! After thoroughly investigating Rick's many contributions, I am certain that you will be proud to add him to your list of distinguished recipients of the the Brock International Prize in Education.

This is my 31st year in public education. No philosophical concept has had as much of an effect on improving teaching and learning as what Professional Learning Communities has to offer. I became Superintendent of Schaumburg Community Consolidated School District 54, the largest elementary school district in Illinois, three years ago. We serve more than 14,000 pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade students in 27 schools. When I was hired, the Board of Education stated that my primary goal was to improve student learning. Prior to my appointment, achievement results had flat-lined and staff had become complacent. Given the high expectations from our community, in addition to the increased accountability requirements from our state and federal government, these outcomes were no longer acceptable.

I was familiar with many of the PLC principles and the long-term success that schools and districts have experienced after working with Dr. DuFour and utilizing PLCs as a framework. Articles or books that discuss school improvement initiatives typically reference Rick DuFour and his involvement in PLCs. In my first year as Superintendent, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop sponsored by the National School Boards Association; Rick was a keynote speaker. During the presentation to more than 2,500 superintendents and school board members, it became readily apparent that Rick DuFour and his extensive experience with PLCs were what we needed to move School District 54 forward.

We have been extremely fortunate to have just completed our second year of work in PLCs. Dr. DuFour has provided ongoing professional development to teams from each of our schools. As his ideas have taken root and our staffs have seen the benefits of the PLC principles, their excitement has spread to many of neighboring districts. In addition to the 750 District 54 staff members who have participated in his two-day workshops, 14 other districts have sent teams and are equally as excited about what PLC concepts have to offer. We currently have requests from an additional six districts to send teams for training during the coming school year. Our district is not the same as it was prior to Dr. Dufour's involvement. We now have become more focused on what we can do to improve student learning.

The PLC philosophy is the framework that is used to guide our district's school improvement efforts. With Rick's support and professional expertise, this framework has enabled us to evaluate and refine our teaching practices. Since our involvement in PLCs, staff members now work collaboratively to analyze student data and utilize the results as they plan instructional activities for their students. This past school year, PLC concepts were used as the foundation for the revised District 54 Mission, Vision, Collective Commitments and Goals that were recently approved by the Board of Education.

Under Dr. DuFour's guidance, PLCs have supported and directed our district's improvement efforts in several key areas. PLCs have helped ensure that our students are learning and achieving at high levels. School structures and support systems that promote a collaborative culture have been created. All staff members now work in grade-level or content-specific teams to analyze their teaching practices and learn from the successes of their colleagues what they can do to enhance student learning. There is a renewed focus on results, with every staff member taking responsibility for student achievement.

Teachers and support staff meet at least two times per week to assess student progress. Through a school-wide coordinated effort, additional time and support for individuals and groups of students are provided. Every school has scheduled uninterrupted instructional blocks, while also providing additional time on a daily basis to assist students as soon as they experience difficulty. Prior to our involvement in PLCs, help was usually offered after a student was unsuccessful over a long period of time. Daily enrichment opportunities are also provided for students who have already mastered the particular concepts that are being taught.

Teachers are involved in daily, proactive, problem-solving, professional dialogue, also a significant change that has taken place. Rather than looking for excuses for why a particular student or groups of students are not learning, they now collectively work to answer what they can individually or collectively do to support high levels of student achievement. PLC teams evaluate their effectiveness through regular feedback and an ongoing analysis of student achievement data.

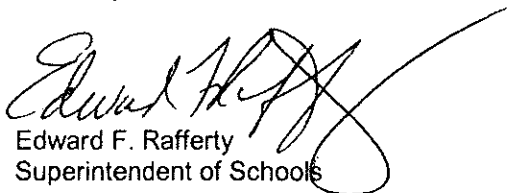
District 54 has already seen strong evidence to support the ongoing implementation of PLCs at the district and school levels. Our action research and data analysis support the growing body of research which has found that the implementation of PLCs has a positive impact on staff and students. Results from staff surveys consistently show that there is greater job satisfaction and increased excitement for teaching.

Students in all 27 schools have demonstrated statistically significant academic gains in math, science and reading. After only one year of working with Rick DuFour and implementing PLCs, District 54 experienced the largest single-year increase in achievement as measured on both state and local assessments. Out of 841 districts that educate elementary-age students in Illinois, our ranking moved from 241 to 143. We are awaiting the official results from the 2007 assessment; however, preliminary data indicates a significant increase will be realized again.

PLCs will continue to be the vehicle that is used as we strive to meet the new District Goals over the next several years. Our district's success is contingent upon every staff member working together to continuously monitor, evaluate and improve teaching practices. The bar has been raised for students, and expectations for our teaching and support staff have increased. Thanks to Rick DuFour and his work in PLCs, we now have the principles and support for ongoing improvement efforts.

I highly recommend Dr. Rick DuFour to be the recipient of the Brock International Prize in Education. His specific contributions to the field of education have a proven record of success. He has assisted us in clarifying our focus and in changing how our schools are structured and operate. He has done this by providing us with the research, systems and strategies to make a significant impact on student learning. We in School District 54 strongly believe that there is no one more deserving than Dr. Rick DuFour to receive The Brock International Prize in Education. Should you have any questions regarding this letter of support or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Edward F. Rafferty
Superintendent of Schools

July 2, 2007

To whom it may concern:

I am honored to write a letter of support for Dr. Richard DuFour. As superintendent of Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated School District 96, I have known Dr. DuFour for more than twenty years and have watched him become a passionate advocate for the development of Professional Learning Communities in schools across the United States and Canada.

Dr. DuFour is a personal and professional mentor to dozens of administrators and teacher leaders across the nation. Many of us regularly attend his training seminars, workshops, institutes, and learning retreats. Each time we work with him we take away new information about how to make our schools better for students. It has been said, "Making everyday things complicated is commonplace, but making complex and complicated things simple is genius." Dr. DuFour has demonstrated real genius by identifying and succinctly articulating the factors that improve student achievement.

District 96 is a school district that has both benefited from and been influenced by Dr. DuFour's work. For years, District 96 was satisfied with the level of student learning. Results of the state assessments routinely showed 75 to 80 percent of our students met or exceeded state standards. Most felt the District was a pretty good place to learn; teachers were comfortable, parents were supportive, and there was little motivation to work differently. The measure of our success changed in 2001, however, when the Board of Education set a goal that 90 percent of all students would meet or exceed state standards in literacy and numeracy.

With no concrete strategy in place for responding to the Board's challenge, we began to consider and apply the ideas Dr. DuFour advocates in the process of creating and sustaining professional Learning Communities. Today, the results of that journey are dramatic. The following paragraphs illustrate the impact of attending to the big ideas of a learning community and demonstrate how good schools or school systems can become even better when they organize themselves around the important ideas of a Professional Learning Community.

Since 2001, student achievement in District 96 has improved annually. The latest data from 2007 indicates that more than 95 percent of all students now meet or exceed state standards. Over the same period, the number of District 96 students placing in at least one advanced placement or honors-level course at Stevenson High School has increased from 24 percent to 49 percent. Further, as many as 80 percent of the District's special education students now are meeting state standards in reading and math. This improvement could not have happened without examining our District in light of the ideas Dr. DuFour has communicated so passionately.

What do these gains in measures of student achievement mean? There is evidence to show the improvement of District 96 schools is significant when compared to other high-performing school districts in Illinois. Using state assessment results as the measure, the District's overall rank has improved from 55th to 9th of the fifteen highest-performing elementary school districts in the state and District 96 has improved more than any other in the previous five years. We believe this success is a direct result of our embracing the important principles Dr. DuFour has communicated so clearly.

Finally, District 96 was recognized by *Chicago Magazine* (October 2006) as one of the highest achieving/lowest spending school districts in Illinois. Likewise, the *Chicago Sun-Times* recognized five of the District's schools as being among the top fifty schools in Illinois and the State Board of Education nominated one of the District's middle schools for a federal Blue Ribbon Award. Again, this recognition is attributed to the District's deliberate and focused implementation of the ideas Dr. DuFour has communicated so consistently.

There is no doubt that Dr. DuFour's tireless efforts to passionately, clearly, and consistently communicate the big ideas of a learning community have made a difference in the way we work in District 96. Our teachers now understand the importance of learning as opposed to teaching. We realize the critical nature of creating a collaborative culture that is results oriented and focused on learning. As a school district, our practice is grounded in clearly articulated standards, sophisticated assessment practices, and systematic intervention programs. Teachers in District 96 are committed to the practices that help all students learn.

It is apparent that implementing the concepts that Rick DuFour advocates has been instrumental in improving learning for thousands of students in our schools. Magnify that local impact by hundreds of school districts and thousands of schools and it is easy to recognize that Dr. DuFour's legacy has been to positively affect an entire generation of students and teachers. I am confident I speak for many when I say that his work to realize the power of Professional Learning Communities has been instrumental in improving schools everywhere.

In short, Dr. DuFour and the clarity of his vision are in large part responsible for the success of our students. District 96 would not be recognized as one of the premier school districts in the state of Illinois without his indisputably significant contributions.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Many, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



ADLAI E. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL

TWO STEVENSON DRIVE • LINCOLNSHIRE, ILLINOIS 60069

Phone (847) 634-4000 • fax (847) 634-0239 • www.district125.k12.il.us



June 20, 2007

To the International Prize in Education for 2008 Awards Committee:

It is with great pleasure I write this letter of support for Dr. Richard P. DuFour and the *Professional Learning Communities* educational reform movement.

As the current Superintendent of Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125 in Lincolnshire, Illinois, and a twenty-one year administrator in the District, I had the privilege and benefit of working with Dr. DuFour in the very “school laboratory” in which he crafted the mission and vision of adults working in schools committed to becoming a professional learning community. When looking for the root causes to why students do not learn, researcher and staff developer Doug Reeves states:

A growing body of research ... makes it clear that poverty and ethnicity are not the primary causal variables related to student achievement. These demographic variables have strength only when researchers fail to measure teaching and leadership variables. In other words, when the adults in the system—teachers and leaders—start to take responsibility for their role in educational accountability, it becomes much more difficult to blame children and parents for poor student achievement.

- Doug Reeves, 2000 -

Dr. DuFour single handedly blasted through the 1980's and 1990's mindset barrier that student learning must be conditional to factors outside of any adult responsibility. Dr. DuFour synthesized research, transformed craft knowledge from industry into the educational genre, and authored or co-authored four groundbreaking books that have become a sustained and systemic part of the staff development curriculum at thousands of school districts throughout the United States. These books include:

- *Professional Learning Communities at Work* (1998 and 2005). This book has been recognized by the National Staff Development Council as one of the essential elements in the historical evolution of professional learning in schools.
- *Whatever it Takes* (2004)
- *On Common Ground* (2005)
- *Learning by Doing* (2006)

Dr. DuFour has also published more than forty educational leadership articles for ASCD, NSDC, Kappan, and NASSP to name a few, that are required reading in most university graduate school educational leadership classes.

In large part, due to Dr. DuFour's passionate vision for and commitment to the ideals of professional learning communities, our school district has been host to more than 12,000 educational leaders representing over 1100 school districts throughout the world during the past five years. An educational revolution that requires adult accountability and responsibility for sustained and significant improvement in student learning has been sparked by Richard DuFour's uncanny ability to lead and teach other school leaders and teachers to explore the barriers of teacher isolation and the inherent inequities caused by such isolation.

Leading educational and "results-driven" authority Michael Schmoker has established an "Iron Clad Case for Professional Learning Communities" and has stated that "*the best, least expensive, most professional rewarding way to improve schools*" is through professional learning communities. Dr. Schmoker joins a chorus of highly recognized educational professionals that can testify to Dr. Richard DuFour's crucial leadership role in serving as the catalyst and bridge of professional learning community theory into practice. The founding father of this educational reform movement, Dr. DuFour has brought coherence to many of the nation's leading thinkers on this issue including: Thomas Sergiovanni, Michael Fullan, Doug Reeves, Dennis Sparks, Richard Elmore, Rick Stiggins, Linda Darling-Hammond, Milbrey McLaughlin, James Stigler, Grant Wiggins, and others.

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins identifies *professional will and personal humility* as an essential trait of top organizational leaders – or Level 5 Leaders. This is the essence of Dr. Richard DuFour. He is a leader that has tremendous will for removing barriers to student learning, holding all adults accountable to a cycle of continuous improvement, and taking personal responsibility for creating hope and high expectations for all students. Dr. DuFour is a window mirror/leader –he looks in the mirror to take responsibility for poor results, and he gives credit to others, and looks out the window when success is to be celebrated.

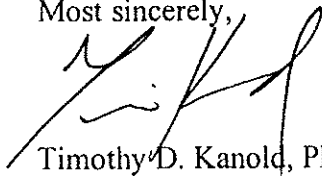
In his book, *Whatever it Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond when Kids Don't Learn*, Dr. DuFour states:

We should indeed promote high levels of learning for every child entrusted to us, not because of legislation or fear of sanctions, but because we have a moral and ethical imperative to do so. We can no longer claim that our [adult] efforts have no impact on the learning of our students. Second, it is possible to help more students succeed at higher levels than ever before if we are willing to change many of our assumptions and practices, most of which draw their origins from earlier times when education was intended to serve a far different purpose. This book rests upon the conviction that test scores will take care of themselves if educators commit to ensuring that each student masters essential skills and concepts in every unit of instruction, align their practices and resources toward that purpose, and discontinue many traditional practices that do not serve that purpose.

Rick DuFour is an extremely talented and gifted leader, and these words capture the fundamental essence of his expectations – and the expectations of a professional learning community. His work has had such a significant impact on my life as a leader, that as President of the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (NCSM), we are creating a National Leadership Standards Framework built upon the tenets of a professional learning community.

I can think of no one more deserving for this prestigious award than Dr. DuFour.

Most sincerely,



Timothy D. Kanold, Ph.D.
Superintendent

TDK:nw





ADLAI E. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL

TWO STEVENSON DRIVE • LINCOLNSHIRE, ILLINOIS 60069

Phone (847) 634-4000 • fax (847) 634-0239 • www.district125.k12.il.us



June 25, 2007

To the Brock International Prize in Education Committee:

It is my sincere pleasure to be writing this letter of support for Dr. Richard P. DuFour as a nominee for the Brock International Prize in Education. I simply cannot think of a more deserving educator and practitioner than Dr. DuFour.

Under Dr. DuFour's leadership from 1983 to 2002, Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, received numerous state and national awards, earning the reputation as one of America's best high schools. As a result of his influence and leadership, the United States Department of Education described Stevenson as "the most recognized and celebrated high school in the United States in the 1990's."

In 1965, at the school's dedication ceremony, Stevenson's first Superintendent Harold Banser, remarked that Stevenson High School was "born out of conflict, nurtured by adversity, and destined for greatness." Although the school had been making progress over the years, it was not until Dr. DuFour's arrival that greatness was realized at Stevenson High School.

After being named Principal of Stevenson in 1983, Dr. DuFour quickly set to work restructuring and reculturing the school as a professional learning community. What was once a culture of low expectations and achievement, under Dr. DuFour's leadership, Stevenson quickly became a national model of excellence in educational reform. The school had come so far, so quickly, that in one of his last campaign stops and speeches on the front steps of Stevenson in 1988, future President George H.W. Bush suggested that if all schools modeled themselves after Stevenson, our national education problems would be solved.

Throughout the 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's, Dr. DuFour has been at the forefront of educational change and reform. While it would be years before the education community at large followed his lead, as Principal of

Stevenson High School, Dr. DuFour was an early proponent of creating strong school cultures of high expectations and ensuring success for *all* students. While detracking the lower level classes at Stevenson in his early years, at the same time, Dr. DuFour removed all the artificial barriers to the college-level curriculum and Advanced Placement classes. While some in the educational community at the time questioned the wisdom of expecting all students to achieve at high levels, Dr. DuFour was insistent that the teachers at Stevenson were working to ensure that all students were held to high academic standards and encouraged to pursue the school's most rigorous curriculum. The results speak for themselves. While less than 100 students participated in Advanced Placement courses in 1984, today more than 1400 students are enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, writing more than 3,300 exams every year. In fact, the College Board has responded to the success that schools like Stevenson are having in educating all students, and has changed its mission from providing college-level experiences for the best and the brightest students, to providing "Equity and Access" for all.

While Dr. DuFour's accomplishments as Principal of Stevenson High School were significant, it was as Superintendent that he cemented Stevenson's future as a world-class high school, and became a national leader in education reform along the way. Dr. DuFour was one of the very first practitioners to take the lessons from Senge's seminal work, The Fifth Discipline (1991), and apply them to schools.

Dr. DuFour led the effort at Stevenson to restructure and reculture the school from a teaching institution to a learning organization. To do so, he led the creation of curriculum teams in which teachers worked collaboratively to develop curriculum, plan lessons, create and implement common formative and summative assessments, and analyze student learning. While in the traditional school, teachers have worked in silos of isolation, Dr. DuFour described a more attractive future in his groundbreaking work, Professional Learning Communities at Work (1998). Nearly ten years later, our profession expects, and the research has demonstrated, that the collaborative teacher teams are *the* fundamental components of successful school improvement.

Dr. DuFour has also led a local and national movement to insist that schools respond to Larry Lezotte's belief that "High expectations for success will be judged not only by the initial staff beliefs and behaviors, but also by the organization's response when some students do not learn." At Stevenson, Dr. DuFour worked with the faculty and staff to develop school-wide interventions and systems of support for students who were not learning. Nationally, once again, the education community has followed Dr. DuFour's lead, and our profession now insists that

schools develop comprehensive organizational systems of support for students.

Today, Dr. DuFour's strong belief that the collaborative teacher team must be seen as the catalyst for instructional improvement, and the school must provide an organizational response when students are not learning, is widely accepted and agreed upon. Interestingly, the educational research community is "catching up." In her research, Milbrey McLaughlin has noted that:

"Throughout our ten-year study, whenever we found an effective school or an effective department within a school, without exception that school or department has been part of a collaborative professional learning community."

Additionally, in an amazing convergence of clarity and coherence around the ideas that Dr. DuFour has been espousing for years, noted educators, researchers, and practitioners have all come together in On Common Ground (2006), in complete harmony and agreement that the school as the *professional learning community* is our best hope for significant and substantive school improvement.

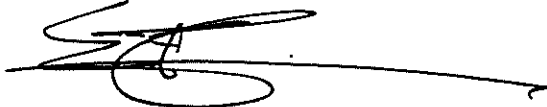
As an educator, practitioner, author, and national consultant, Dr. DuFour has been at the forefront of the movement to redefine the fundamental purpose of our schools as learning rather than teaching. In Learning by Doing (DuFour, et. al., 2006) he writes:

"Whereas many schools operate as it is their primary purpose to ensure that children are taught, the school as a Professional Learning Community is dedicated to the idea that their organization exists to ensure that all students learn essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions. All the other characteristics of a PLC flow directly from this epic shift in assumptions about the purpose of the school."

At no point in the history of western civilization has a society attempted to do what we are doing now – working to ensure high levels of learning for *all* kids. If our nation's schools are to reach our full potential for educating all students as scholars, artisans, and citizens, it will be because we have followed Dr. DuFour in creating schools that understand and assume learning as the fundamental purpose.

While there are many talented and competent educators across the country, I firmly believe there is no one who is more responsible for our profession's current insistence to reculture our schools as professional learning communities. As such, I am certain that Dr. DuFour will serve as an excellent representative of the Brock International Prize in Education, and he will continue to be relentless in his efforts to ensure learning for all our students.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eric Twadell', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Eric Twadell, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
for Leadership and Organizational Development

ET:nw

RIVERSIDE | BROOKFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

DISTRICT 208
FIRST AVENUE & RIDGEWOOD
RIVERSIDE, ILLINOIS 60546-2408

TEL: 708.447.6733
FAX: 708.447.5570

JACK BALDERMANN
SUPERINTENDENT

To the Brock International Prize for Education Committee:

The Professional Learning Community initiative, led by Rick DuFour, is certainly the most powerful and positive movement in American education today. I have visited over 100 high schools throughout the country and presented at conferences throughout our nation. I cannot think of an idea or thinker that have had a more meaningful or significant impact.


Since I first met Rick DuFour eleven years ago, I have worked with my school improvement teams to implement the Professional Learning Community model at two different high schools. At both schools, the lives of our students were dramatically improved.

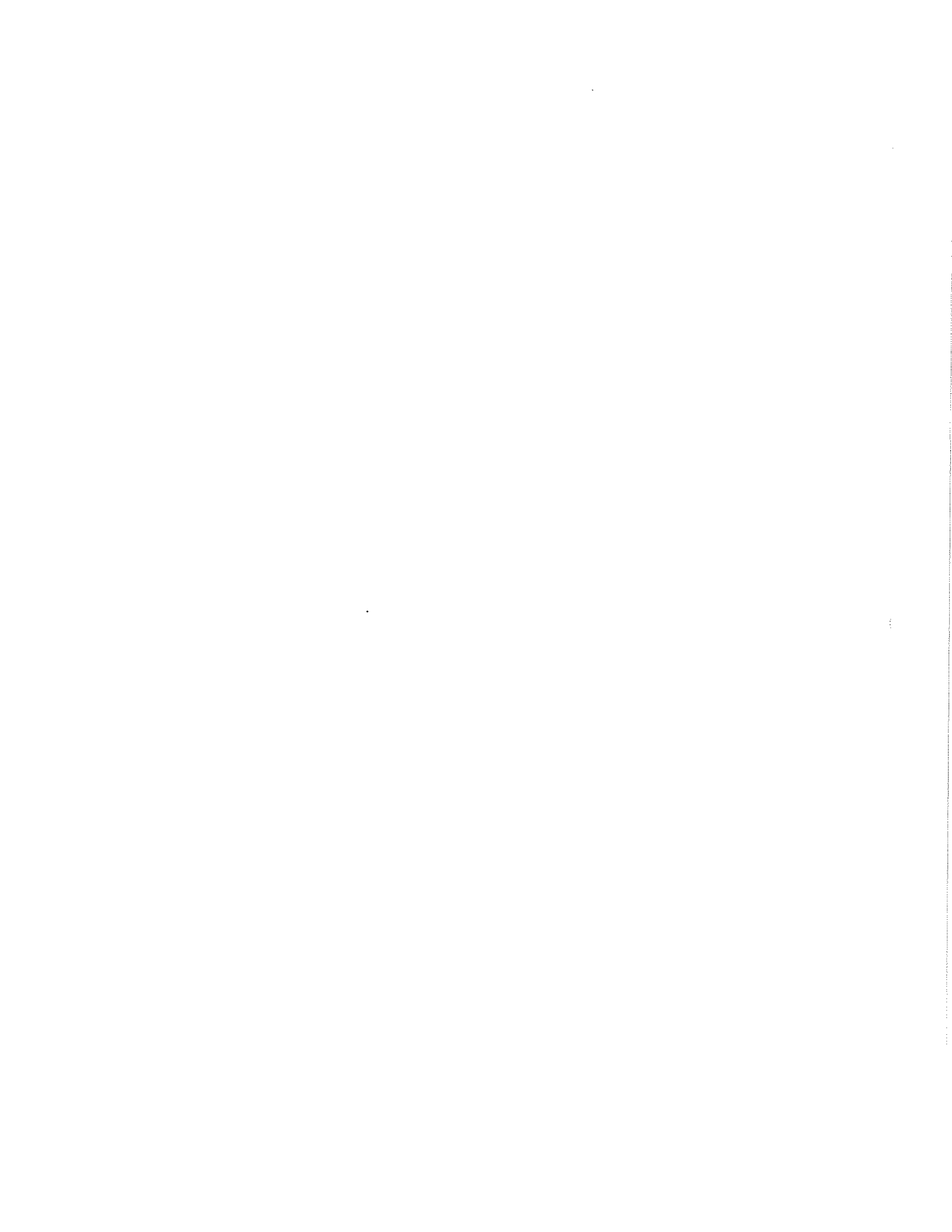
At Riverside Brookfield High School (Illinois), our graduation rate increased from a ten year average of 91% to 99% (including a 100% graduation rate for our Hispanic and African-American students), and our student achievement scores saw impressive gains. Before we implemented the Professional learning Community model, our school was not ranked in the top 1,000 high schools in the nation according to *Newsweek* magazine. Last year, Riverside Brookfield was named one of the 100 Best High Schools in America. We have also realized significant gains in the tests mandated by our state. This would not have occurred without Rick's influence and the Professional Learning Community concepts. Our staff has unanimously employed the PLC model and the quality of education at our school has improved because of it.

Beyond the numbers, statistics and rankings, I am most impressed by Rick's work that encourages that we demand success for every student and do "Whatever it Takes" to see that our students learn.

Rick DuFour has influenced my career more than any other educator, and the Professional Learning Community model is embraced willingly by quality educators throughout this country because it benefits students, schools and teachers.

Sincerely,


Jack Baldermann
Superintendent/Principal





To: Selection Committee
Brock International Prize in Education for 2008

From: Dan Neuenswander
Director of School Leadership
Lawrence Public Schools
110 McDonald Drive
Lawrence, KS 66044

Re: Nomination of Rick DuFour

It is indeed a privilege to have the opportunity to urge your consideration of the nomination of Rick DuFour for the 2008 Brock International Prize in Education. I have been a teacher and administrator in the public schools since 1960 and while I have seen many innovative ideas tried in the public school arena very few have had a lasting effect on improving the performance of professional educators and students alike. The work of Madeline Hunter to bring focus to the science of effective instruction continues to live in many classrooms across the country. The research of Larry Lezotte, Wilbur Brookover and Ron Edmonds in identifying the lead indicators of effective schools commonly known as "the correlates" continues to be the standard for evaluating a school's potential for meeting the challenge of "learning for all." And, most recently, the work of Rick DuFour in developing and demonstrating the power of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and its impact on student performance has provided the practical knowledge and tools to move from knowing to doing, from theory to practice, from discussion to results.

The power in Rick's work with PLCs is derived from several sources. First, the "big ideas" of Professional Learning Communities communicate clearly. While implementation of these big ideas is hard work, understanding the task is not complicated. The big ideas include a focus on learning, creating a collaborative culture and attention to results.

Second, the effective use of PLCs has given the Lawrence Public Schools a common language with which to discuss and collaborate about the improvement process. Not only do we use this common language to communicate within the district but the PLC concepts have been so widely accepted that the language is rapidly becoming common at both the regional and national level. Virtually every practicing school leader knows the critical questions related power standards, common assessments and interventions which provide the basis for a "focus on learning." Universally, agreement is being reached about the need for, and the appropriate and effective use of collaboration time. And in this day of No Child Left Behind, who can argue with the demand for attention to results?

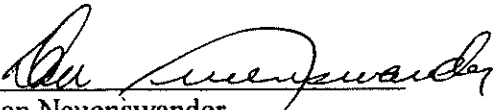
Finally, because of the long-term success of Stephenson High School under DuFour's leadership and the ever-growing number of schools and school districts that have demonstrated the value and power of the work of PLCs, school leaders across the country have a greater sense of hope. We know the job can be done because it has been done and because we are seeing the gains in student performance in our own schools.

Teachers are also more hopeful and are gaining a greater sense of efficacy because they know that they are not required to solve in isolation every learning problem they face. As they experience improved student performance, even with the most challenging learners, they are gaining confidence in the power of teams and their ability to be instructional leaders.

The Lawrence Public Schools have not mastered all of our challenges. Lawrence has an increasing percentage of students with environmental delay and a rapidly growing number of students without English language skills. In spite of this fact, the evidence is clear that we have an increasing percentage of students who can demonstrate proficiency in the core areas of reading, writing and math, and at the same time, we have a growing percentage of students who are reaching the Kansas Standard of Excellence.

The message of effective use of PLCs as delivered by Rick DuFour resonates with practitioners in part because he is a practitioner who understands our challenges and speaks our language, and in part because it just makes sense. Even casual "attention to results" makes it abundantly clear that the effective use of PLCs is making a difference for our kids. We believe and are demonstrating that we can reach the lofty goal of "learning for all."

The work of Rick DuFour has had a tremendous impact on both our professional staff and our kids. I cannot imagine a more worthy recipient for this prestigious award than Rick DuFour. Associating your organization with Rick DuFour will always be a source of pride for the Brock International Prize in Education.


Dan Neuenswander

Haysville Unified School District # 261

1745 W Grand
Haysville, Kansas 67060

May 30, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the professional pleasure of working with Dr. Rick DuFour since 2004. I took my entire administrative team to one of his conferences in order to learn all we could about Professional Learning Communities from Rick and his colleagues. My administrative team was immediately struck by the potential power of these concepts to transform teaching and learning in our school district.

We were able to have Rick and Becky DuFour come to our school district to provide two days of inservice about PLCs in 2005. Because we understood the power of PLCs, we offered the opportunity to attend this conference to school districts across the state of Kansas. Over 200 out of district teachers and administrators attended the conference from forty different school districts. This helped the Professional Learning Communities concept to expand in Kansas.

The results in our school district have been sensational! Our entire community understands the PLC questions. Our staff has created an electronically available curriculum mapping process that empowers all staff members to know what we expect all students to know and be able to do. The teachers have created common, formative assessments in order to ascertain where students are in the process of acquiring the knowledge and skills. A pyramid of interventions has been established to assist students who did not acquire the knowledge and skills. The teachers have created activities so that students who already had acquired the knowledge and skills would have access to compelling learning opportunities. In our school district student achievement is increasing at a faster rate than ever before.

The effects upon teachers have also been tremendous. Teacher-leaders have emerged among building staffs. Teachers feel empowered as they meet in collaborative teams, solve problems, create products and share the success they are having with students with other teachers. This has enabled best practices to proliferate throughout our district.

This whole district transformation is not just happening in Haysville, Kansas. It is difficult to find districts in Kansas that have not embraced Professional Learning Communities and they are also achieving the same spectacular results. The Professional Learning Communities processes have transformed teaching and learning in the Haysville School District and beyond.

Our district was one of the first in Kansas to embrace PLC concepts and processes. The Professional Learning Communities concepts are sweeping the nation and improving





**EDUCATION CABINET
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Ernie Fletcher
Governor

Capital Plaza Tower
500 Mero Street
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Phone: (502) 564-4770
www.education.ky.gov

Kevin M. Noland
Interim Commissioner of Education

June 11, 2007

Dr. Richard P. DuFour
465 Island Pointe Lane
Moneta, VA 24121

Dear Rick:

We are celebrating the success of your two-day workshop with us!

As you discovered, the members of our Kentucky CEO Superintendents Network are experienced superintendents who serve high-achieving districts. The Network was initiated four years ago by then Kentucky Commissioner Gene Wilhoit. Their mission is to create, participate in and sustain professional development that centers on the stated needs of Kentucky superintendents relative to the question: What much high-performing superintendents know and be able to do to accelerate and sustain a professional culture of innovation focused on high levels of student achievement?

In September 2006, the Network needs assessment indicated that you were the most requested speaker. During the year superintendents and their district leaders read your books, *On Common Ground* and *Learning by Doing*. Approximately 300 Kentucky school leaders attended your workshop on June 5-6. Network members have now requested that their 2007-2008 Network retreats be focused on in-depth, ongoing discussion of issues of implementation focused on building professional learning communities. The evaluations for your workshop were the highest anyone has ever received.

Thank you for your thoughtful work based on learning and focused on students. It is making a difference in Kentucky!

Sincerely,

Steve Schenck
Associate Commissioner
Office of Leadership and School Improvement

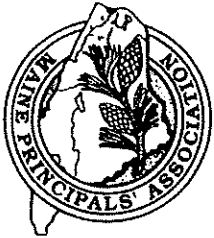
Nawanna Privett
Director, Kentucky CEO Superintendents Network



MAINE

PRINCIPALS'

ASSOCIATION



50 Industrial Drive
P.O. Box 2468
Augusta, Maine
04338-2468
(207) 622-0217

Fax: (207) 622-1513

E-Mail: mpa@mpa.cc

Website:
<http://www.mpa.cc>

Harriet C. Trafford
Albert S. Hall School
President

Thy Doak
Fort Kent Community
High School
President-elect

Robert E. Stevens
York High School
Past-president

Jeanne Crocker
South Portland High
School
NASSP State Coordinator

Carl J. Lusby
Moore Elementary
School
NAESP State
Representative

Richard A. Durost
Executive Director

Lawrence A. LaBrie
Assistant Director

Phyllis A. Deringis
Assistant Director

Jeffrey D. Sturgis
Assistant Director

is an Equal
Opportunity Organization

June 27, 2007

Dear Nominating Committee for the Brock International Prize in Education:

I am thrilled to write this letter on behalf of Dr. Richard DuFour, who has been nominated for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. Without a doubt, his work in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) has captured the hearts and minds of the Maine Principals' Association (MPA) and its members. Before I describe the impact of the PLC concept on the MPA and its member schools, it might be helpful to know a bit about us.

The MPA is a private, non-profit association representing Maine's 900+ K-12 principals, assistant principals, and career and technology center directors in the Professional Division and 155 high schools in the Interscholastic Division. Each division is comprised of standing committees, which support the work of the association. The MPA dates back to 1921 and focuses its work on promoting the principalship, supporting principals as educational leaders, and administering interscholastic activities in grades 9-12. In fact, the PLC concept resonates with the MPA's mission: "To assure a quality education for all students, the Maine Principals' Association will ... support principals as educational leaders ..."

That said, I first became aware of Rick DuFour through his regular columns in *The Journal of the National Staff Development Council*. His writing intrigued me because it was visionary, positive, and practical. The implications for principals were always common threads. I can remember thinking, this is someone whom we should consider bringing to Maine. Since I am the lead planner for professional development in our association, I attended the National Staff Development Council's annual conference in Denver in 2001 -- specifically to hear Rick DuFour. By the break, when I introduced myself to Rick and Becky Burnette, it was clear to me that we would invite Rick (and ultimately Becky) to present at one of our conferences. Because of scheduling conflicts, we were not able to make this happen until April 2006. Little did I know at the time what impact PLCs would have in Maine.

In retrospect, a proverbial perfect storm was brewing. The impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) combined with Maine's unwieldy system of Learning Results (state standards) and an even more unwieldy state comprehensive assessment system left many educators at best wary of national and state mandates and at worst downright cynical. In the spring of 2004, the MPA's Curriculum and Instruction Committee published recommendations for revising NCLB and then took on the task in 2004-05 of answering two questions: 1.) What are we doing to address students who aren't learning? And, 2.) What interventions hold the most promise? An important resource for the committee was *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn* (2004), specifically the definitions of "intervention" and "remediation." Because our members are by nature practical people as well as problem solvers, the result was a compilation of K-8 and 9-12 best practices in remediation and interventions in Maine schools, *Learning for ME* (June 2006), which was sent to all our members. This was our first step as an association into the domain of PLCs.

Learning for ME coupled with the DuFour's presentation at our 2006 Spring Conference (a first ever, sold-out spring conference) marked a turning point for the MPA and for our members. Because of the DuFours' message of hope and inspiration, which honors the collaborative work of teachers and principals while pushing them to address the learning needs of individual students right now and without excuses; clarity regarding what PLCs are and are not; the focus on school culture which gets to the essence of schooling -- learning for and by all; the DuFour's experience as successful K-12 principals leading PLCs; and the availability of resources to support PLCs, our members took action -- both within the association and in their schools and school districts.

AFFILIATE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

MEMBER: NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

MEMBER: MAINE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM

Nominating Committee for the Brock International Prize in Education
Page – 2 –
June 27, 2007


The MPA immediately recognized that we needed to support our members in this endeavor. To this end, we designed and implemented in the fall of 2006, a three session series, *Let the Conversation Begin! Using Protocols to Promote Professional Learning Communities Focused on Student Results*, for principals and school teams. Within three weeks, we sold out this series. Led by Dr. Catherine Glaude, the principal of Yarmouth [ME] Elementary School and the author of *Protocols for Professional Learning Conversations* (Merville, B.C.: Connections Publishing, 2005), the series answered the question, "How do leaders foster a culture for conversations and actions focused on improving student results, while at the same time supporting individuals as they develop their skills in learning from colleagues? This series was so successful that we will be offering it again in the fall of 2007. Likewise, at committee meetings; elementary, middle level, and high school discussions and a special concurrent session on PLCs at our Fall Conference in November 2006; and at elementary and middle level discussions at our Spring Conference in April 2007, the MPA provided vehicles for our members to share, problem-solve, and network regarding implementation issues they were living.

We are pleased that the DuFours will be joining us again for a two-day workshop, *Assessing and Advancing Progress on the PLC Journey*, in mid-September 2007. This follow-up to the 2006 Spring Conference promises to further PLC implementation in Maine. We have already registered 500 participants (and are keeping a waiting list), who make up school and district teams as well as a team from the Maine Department of Education. The Maine Principals' Association is committed to "whatever it takes" to ensure that the PLC journey continues in our state.

Without a doubt, the PLC concept is impacting the culture of the MPA and the services we offer. Likewise, the PLC concept is impacting Maine schools and districts from Fort Kent to Kittery and from Bingham to Harrington (check this out on a map!).

I am honored to write this letter on behalf of Rick DuFour. He epitomizes the intent of the Brock International Prize in Education – to honor an individual who has made a specific contribution to education that has had a significant, positive impact. The PLC movement is about hope and trust in the work of those who lead our schools and classrooms. If I can provide further information, please contact me at 207-622-0217 (o); 207-786-4342 (h); or deringis@mpa.cc.

Sincerely,



Phyllis A. Deringis, Ph.D.
Assistant Executive Director

/tjm

wddata\deringis\2007\dufour

June 15, 2007

To whom it may concern,

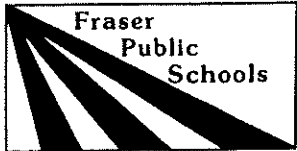
I hope that this letter finds you enjoying the best of health and spirit. I am very pleased and honored to recommend the work of Dr. Richard DuFour and the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model for your prestigious Brock International Prize in Education award.

I served as the principal at Levey Middle School in Southfield, Michigan USA from the year 2001-2005. The student population at Levey is 97% African-American and nearly 80% of our students live at or below the U.S. national poverty line. When I arrived at Levey Middle School, the school had many problems, including those associated with the well-documented **U.S. Achievement Gap** between black and white students. Some of those problems included low achievement on our state's academic assessment, which were far below state averages, high teacher employment turnover, poor student attendance, and huge school culture issues, including over 3000 student disciplinary suspensions during the 2000-2001 school year.

My tenure as principal at Levey began in 2001, and we started to implement the PLC model of school organization, and the results were phenomenal. We organized our teachers into academic teams who focused on identifying the most essential elements of our curriculum and they agreed to focus on assuring that each student mastered those elements. This structure also allowed our teachers the opportunity to share their knowledge and mentor one another so that each teacher had a wealth of pedagogical knowledge and teaching resources. This aspect of the PLC philosophy enabled our teachers to guide our students to much higher levels of achievement on academic assessments. **Our students' performance increased 58% in Reading, 45% in Math, 35% in Science, and 64% in Social Studies between 2001 and 2005 on our state academic assessment, the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP).** This growth allowed us to far surpass state averages in each academic area and it earned our school state and national acclaim for high achievement and closing the racial **Achievement Gap**.

In addition to the growth in student achievement, we witnessed many other benefits from implementing the PLC model. By engaging in the PLC process of ongoing, site-based professional development, our teachers became experts in every aspect of service for our students. One of the most notable areas was school climate. **Through an in depth, school-wide study of urban culture and urban school classroom management, we were able to significantly decrease our student suspensions from 3,000 in the year 2001 to 148 in 2005.** Through the process of action research, our staff was able to establish several national models of creative programming. Teachers at Levey created a nationally acclaimed **Hip-Hop Literacy program**, which takes advantage of the student's prior knowledge of rap music and the hip-hop culture in order to teach students high levels of literacy, a **school-wide business program**, which focuses on preparing students for entrepreneurship, and a **filmmaking class** which fosters a love for writing and theatre through writing and producing films.





June 21, 2007

Rick Repicky
Superintendent

Brock International Prize in Education Committee

c/o Dr. Rick DuFour
465 Island Pointe Lane
Moneta, VA 24121

Dear Brock Award Selection Committee:

As the superintendent of Fraser (Michigan) Public Schools, I am writing to support the nomination of Dr. Rick DuFour as a candidate for the Brock International Prize in Education.

I strongly support Dr. DuFour because he has made a profoundly positive difference in the way Fraser Public Schools educates its 5,000 students. Our former mode of student instruction was often based on what resembled a lottery. Trapped in a tradition of teacher isolation, students in the same grade, in the same school were subject to different educational paths based on their assigned teacher. Those assigned to Teacher 1 would learn A, B, & C, while classmates assigned to Teacher 2 would often learn D, E & F. Thanks to adapting the DuFour professional learning community (PLC) framework, our students now receive an education based a defined set of common essentials selected by a grade level teacher team. With a curriculum centered on these essentials—which the teachers commit to teaching and reteaching until students reach mastery—teachers blend their collective strengths to move each student toward mastering the essentials. This is far different, and much preferred, to the former approach of each teacher selecting individual points of emphasis in isolation and relying solely on their own knowledge to achieve learning.

While Fraser has a tradition of great state assessment scores, the PLC approach has helped organize and spread the best practices in our district to the point where our elementary schools dominated the state assessments among the 21 districts in our county. Fraser was #1 in Macomb County on all elementary state assessments in English language arts and math in 2006. While it would be a stretch to attribute all of this success to PLCs since Fraser has a tradition of high state assessment scores and pockets of our elementary teachers were informally using many of the PLC practices before hearing of DuFour, formally adapting the his framework has spread best practices from pockets to all corners of our buildings. Dr. DuFour's model has created improvement from the inside out.

In April of this year, the ABC affiliate in Detroit televised a live town hall meeting on educational issues. One part of the program featured local districts that achieve at higher levels

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Deborah M. Prentiss
President

Timothy A. Bahorski
Vice President

Gerard W. Gauthier
Secretary

Lesley A. Trevorrow
Treasurer

Carole E. Bannister
Trustee

Michael J. DeBruyn
Trustee

Joseph R. Kosmala
Trustee

than surrounding districts. Fraser Public Schools was selected as such a district. Broadcast on the show was a Fraser elementary principal and teacher stating the reasons for their school's success. They both responded in PLC terms: defining team essentials, creating team common assessments, analyzing results as a team, and creating team interventions specific to the analysis. These words can be directly attributed to Dr. DuFour and the impact he has made in the Fraser.

While we still have far to go in our journey towards becoming a PLC, the impact of DuFour's model is already showing. At Fraser High School, a team of teachers has identified a problem with freshmen failures (50% of the school's failing grades) and disciplinary referrals (39% of the disciplinary referrals) and collectively designed a program that reduced these numbers to 38% and 30%, respectively.

While Fraser was one of the first districts in southeast Michigan to begin the PLC movement, I would estimate that nearly half of the 86 districts in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties are in the process of converting to the DuFour model. For the last two school years, Fraser has conducted monthly, county-wide PLC meetings that attract ten districts to discuss PLC building. This forum provides an opportunity for participants to share their successes and seek solutions in their district PLC building efforts. I personally have assembled a guide book to building PLCs that we often use at these meetings. Nearly half of this document comes directly from DuFour teachings and articles. Dr. DuFour has graciously honored my request to use several of his articles, charts and writings in this manual. I asked to use the DuFour materials because, like all Rick DuFour presentations, they are informative, clear and concise.

I am also participating in a Michigan superintendents' certification group called the "Courageous Journey." This effort, sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Administrators—the state's superintendent professional organization. In fact, I was actually recruited to join the group due to the PLC background I gained from Dr. DuFour. There are about 25 superintendents in our cohort and we met for two days in April to discuss growth plans for both ourselves and our districts. Not surprisingly, one of the featured speakers, Brian McNulty (formerly with MCREL and now vice president of leadership development with the Center for Performance Assessment) used DuFour's name several times in describing school improvement strategies that make a difference.

Because of his impact on Fraser schools which has spread to Macomb County, because of his impact on the Detroit area where nearly half of the 86 districts are moving toward a PLC model, because of his impact on the state-wide "Courageous Journey" superintendent certification program, I see Rick DuFour's influence on education and strongly his candidacy for this award.

Sincerely,


Rick Repicky

Terri Martin
8050 S. Smith Hatchery Rd.
Columbia, MO 65203

6/29/2007

To Whom It May Concern:

It is not often that we are given the opportunity to be a part of monumental positive change in the world of education. We tend to view incremental changes as acceptable and the norm. The contributions of Dr. Richard DuFour, and his work with Professional Learning Communities, have made it possible for educators to advocate for and realize positive educational change like never before. While time has proven that this is not a "flash in the pan" phenomenon, it is the realization of results that has proven its worthiness. Individual buildings, entire districts, and even state departments are able to prove the difference that becoming a Professional Learning Community makes through both quantitative and qualitative data.

As an elementary principal, I experienced what becoming a Professional Learning Communities does for a building. It was through embedding this process that one school went from being an at-risk school to one that was considered most improved in the state. On the other end of the continuum, an affluent school already considered Top Ten Highest performing in one content area became Top Ten Highest Performing in all state tested areas two years after becoming a Professional Learning Community.

As a regional professional developer, I worked with over 50 schools in a region. These schools varied in demographics (urban, suburban, and rural) and size. For each of these schools three areas of data were studied: student achievement data, perception data and school process data. Within one year of implementing the three big ideas of Professional Learning Communities, over 80% of these schools showed student achievement increases. Within this time period, all schools also reported an increase in teacher satisfaction. Within a two year time frame, teachers were able to recognize and report process changes that were positively impacting the school environment and the students in attendance.

And most recently, as Director of School Improvement Initiatives for the education department in Missouri, I have observed the positive impact that occurs when the characteristics of Professional Learning Communities are practiced at a state level. Out of all elementary schools ranked highest performing in the 2006-2007 school year, 75% attributed their success to becoming Professional Learning Communities. Our lowest performing schools are now being offered support through the PLC process. Many aspects of leadership development, both teacher and administrator, are tied to PLC concepts. Collaborative teams are folded into our accreditation criteria. Collaborative structures are being built within the department to move the department from a compliance agency to one of support for our schools. At no time in the history of the state has there been an effort that has been so integrated throughout the education system.

Dr. DuFour has shared with the education world a structure that has a systemic impact from students to policy makers and everyone in between. In some regions it is a grassroots effort, in others it is a top-down mandate. The incredibly unique understanding is that it does not matter how it begins or is known; the realization of results is so quick, that it brings hope back to teachers, progress to students, and joy to the education system.

Sincerely,



Terri Martin



June 2007

To the Brock Prize Committee,

It is my honor to write a letter of support on behalf of Dr. Rick DuFour. I am currently the principal at Stanton Elementary in the Rockwood School District in St. Louis, Missouri. I have had the pleasure of watching Dr. DuFour's ideas transform schools, transform one of the largest school districts in Missouri, and has had a significant impact on the entire state of Missouri. The following paragraphs will provide evidence of my experiences.

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. DuFour when he spoke to all Rockwood administrators in August 2000 on the topic of professional learning communities. I was the principal at Kellison Elementary at the time. Dr. DuFour focused his presentation on ensuring students learn, creating a culture of collaboration, and a focus on results. These three big ideas would lead to significant change in student achievement across our school district.

After Dr. DuFour's presentation to administrators, we took our Kellison teacher leadership team to hear Dr. DuFour speak in Columbia, Missouri. Our leadership team was so inspired by Dr. DuFour that they hit the ground running with his ideas. Kellison went from having 36% of their kids proficient/advanced on the State assessment to an increase of over 60% the next four years. This transformation took Kellison Elementary from being one of the lowest performing schools in the Rockwood School District to being named a Top Ten school in the State of Missouri in 2004. Kellison was the first school recognized in their quadrant for this award.

In the Fall of 2004, I became the principal at Stanton Elementary. Our leadership team studied Dr. DuFour's ideas of teachers working in professional learning communities. In two years, Stanton went from one of the lowest performing schools in Rockwood to being named a Top Ten school in the State of Missouri in 2006. Stanton followed Kellison Elementary in becoming the second school recognized in the quadrant. If you talk to teachers in these two schools, they would point to Dr. DuFour's ideas and concepts that made the difference. It not only raised student learning, it raised adult learning.

Since Dr. DuFour's presentation in the year 2000, Rockwood School District has become the highest achieving school district in the state of Missouri. This past year, Rockwood had 44 mentions on the Top Ten schools list which was twice the number of the second highest mentioned school district. This list represents the ten highest performing schools in the state at elementary, middle and high school levels as documented by the state assessment. Every school in the District has built a culture of collaboration that is focused on the big ideas that drive professional learning communities.

I am currently the President of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals and the Missouri Council of School Administrators. In leading these organizations, I have watched first hand as Dr. DuFour's ideas have spread across the entire state. Both organizations continue to center their staff development on Dr. DuFour's ideas and both organizations will use Dr. DuFour's professional learning communities model this year to train all new administrators.

I have attended many presentations by Dr. DuFour. What impresses me the most is his attention to people. I have watched him spend countless time with someone who has a question, I have personally experienced his quick replies to email, and he is constantly teaching to educators through his many articles and recent "allthingsplc" website. There is no one in the field of education who has had or is having a greater impact on schools than Dr. DuFour. He is truly making a difference for all kids.

If there is further information I can provide, please contact me at the information below. Thank you for allowing me the time to express my appreciation for the work Dr. DuFour has done for the many kids across the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt W. Miller", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Miller
751 Muirview Drive
Ballwin, MO 63011
(314) 324-4637



INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 196
EASTVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

6200 - 140th Street West
Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124-6912

Phone: (952) 431-8900
FAX: (952) 431-8911
E-Mail: j.richard.dewey@district196.org

■ DR. J. RICHARD DEWEY
Principal

June 25, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

Dr. Richard DuFour is a shining and monumentally deserving star in your pool of finalists for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. You will not find a more deserving honoree whose specific contribution to education certainly has and will continue to have long-term and profound impact on teaching, learning, and the schools and systems that support and enable educational equity and excellence for our young people.

I share this unequivocal conclusion from my context as a practicing educator since 1973 and high school administrator since 1981. For the past half-decade, I have also been a teacher and assessor in the Principal Licensure programs at the University of Minnesota and the University of St. Thomas (MN). And, I have more recently had the distinct pleasure of working with schools and school districts across the country in my role as an educational consultant.

In these roles over the past 34 years, I have interacted both widely and deeply with vast bodies of knowledge, research and experience directed toward highly effective education. Dr. DuFour's work with Professional Learning Communities is THE singular contribution that has been both consistently in the mainstreams of discussion and application for two decades, as well as extraordinarily effective in producing greater results toward educational equity and excellence. And, keep watching; our students and schools will continue the successful pursuit of excellence and equity as Professional Learning Communities continue their important work.

I began my association with Dr. DuFour's work at Adlai Stevenson High School at the same time I began my first high school principalship in the mid-1980's. I have read every one of Dr. DuFour's books and publications, many of them multiple times. I have had the pleasure of actively participating in many of Dr. DuFour's workshops on Professional Learning Communities at work. His work has shaped both my "attitude and my agenda for action" (DuFour) as I have served for 20 years as principal of two large suburban high schools in Minnesota's highly recognized School District 196.

The oldest, flagship Rosemount High School was recognized as a *National School of Excellence*. When I was given the opportunity to bring the newest-built Eastview High School to life, our collaborative leadership team led the design and building of the school, and its structure and programs, as well as the hiring and development of staff around best practices for professional learning communities.

Still quite young, yet a thriving PLC, Eastview High School has appeared on five consecutive *Newsweek* lists as one of "America's Best High Schools." The Eastview learning community is also one of the few high schools in Minnesota to earn the "Ten Star Rating" (top rating) in multiple years for routinely producing top reading, writing and math test scores in the state. Eastview High School has the well-known and deserved "brand" for both excellence and equity for all students.

(Continued on Backside)

Educating our students to reach their full potential

Dr. Richard DuFour recommendation

Page Two

June 25, 2007

In 1999, I was asked to re-write curriculum for and teach the *K-12 Principalship* course at the University of St. Thomas (MN). This new and very well-received curriculum thoroughly revolves around the wonderful work of Dr. DuFour and his colleagues, with respect to Professional Learning Communities at work. This course is now a required course for all graduate students seeking principal licensure at UST, Minnesota's largest private university.

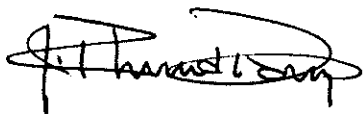
In 2001, I was asked to re-write curriculum for and teach the Master Schedule Building Course at the University of Minnesota. This new and very well-received curriculum now addresses both the science and art of (what we now call in Minnesota) *Master(ful) Scheduling to Support and Enable Professional Learning Communities*. Once again, this is a required course for all graduate students seeking principal licensure at Minnesota's largest public university.

Dr. DuFour, his team, and his wonderful work have and will continue to positively and profoundly impact schools, school systems and students across North America. Dr. DuFour visited Quincy, Illinois last fall to speak to the entire district staff about the work of Professional Learning Communities. Tom Leahy, the Superintendent of Schools in Quincy, is quick to point out that, in the post-visit surveys, 96% of the teachers were resounding in their support of embracing Dr. DuFour's work as the framework for their forward moving district.

I just returned from Quincy, Illinois, after conducting a 4-day follow-up PLC Coaching Academy with a district leadership team laden with Pre K-12 principals who currently have less than 4 years of experience in this important school leadership role. These excited, young school leaders entered the academy willingly open about their need to grow both their confidence and sense of direction for their schools. Four days later, they are embracing the very common sense that is at the heart of the Professional Learning Community journey. They have the passion; they know where to start; they know what the framework of their journey looks like; they are excited to collaboratively work with their staff, students and communities as they "Quincy-ize" the journey; and they are confident that they will make excellence and equity happen for their students. I, too, am confident.

These kinds of transformations for leaders, staffs and students are becoming very commonplace across North America. No other contribution to education in the past three and one-half decades of my experience has had such profound and consistent impact. At the heart of these results is the simplicity and common sense that is Professional Learning Communities at work. Dr. DuFour's work is so grounded in what is right for our young people in schools; and, our students are and will continue to be the winners !

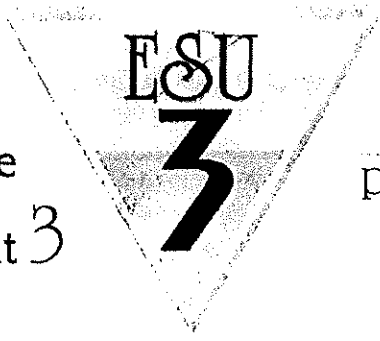
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Richard Dewey". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "R".

J. Richard Dewey, Ph.D.

Principal - Eastview High School

Educational
Service
Unit 3



6949 South 110th Street • Omaha, NE 68128 5722
Phone: 402-597-4800 • Fax: 402-597-4808

June 5, 2007

Dr. Rick DuFour
465 Island Pointe Lane
Moneta, VA 24121

Dr. DuFour and Nominating Committee Member,

I am grateful for the opportunity to share the impact that Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have had on the way we do business at Educational Service Unit #3 (ESU#3). Our service area includes 18 member districts; representing over 61,000 students and more than 5,000 teachers in a four-county area in eastern Nebraska. We have worked with Dr. DuFour over the past five years and have continued to sustain PLCs in our region; with no doubt, PLCs have positively changed districts in our area. This structure is the framework we use to implement any of our professional development initiatives. We would highly recommend Dr. DuFour for the Brock International Prize in Education because PLCs have helped to reorganize our schools to be more efficient and effective.

Dr. DuFour's leadership and availability to answer questions has helped us apply what we have learned into DOING PLCs. I have assisted in the implementation of PLCs in many of our districts; but it is the motivating message that pushed districts to "we need to be doing this". It is the stories from various leaders in several of our districts that can best share the impact of PLCs:

Millard Public Schools

The PLC initiative has significantly impacted how we do business in Millard Public Schools. Our PLC teams are analyzing the data from common formative assessments for the first time ever. Due to this new knowledge of their students' assessment data, teachers are actively seeking more effective instructional practices because they have a better awareness of the specific needs of their students.

In the past, most teachers were not given time or the expectation to have professional dialogues with each other to improve instruction. PLC teams are now implementing new teaching strategies based on the conversations they have had with their colleagues in their collaborative teams. They have identified areas in the MPS written curriculum that they need to focus on more due to the results of their common formative assessments.

Administration has seen great growth in our staff and only 1/5 of them have even attended a workshop with Dr. Rick & Becky DuFour. All 1750 Millard Public Schools certified staff will attend a two day conference in October 2007 with Dr. Rick & Becky DuFour and we feel this will significantly benefit our entire staff and subsequently our students.

MPS elementary principal, Matt Rega, shared that, "Every one of my staff members who have had the opportunity to hear Rick and Rebecca DuFour speak about Professional Learning Communities have made the comment, 'This makes sense. This is what we should be doing.'" I believe elementary schools are notorious for using subjective information and making hunches in order to make decisions about kids. The PLC concept as explained by the DuFours creates a framework for all staff to make objective decisions and answer the questions we have been desperately trying to answer for years.

Kim Saum- Mills, Ed.D.

Director of Staff Development, Millard Public Schools

Elkhorn Public Schools

Spring Ridge is our largest elementary, but has very few students who qualify (for remedial reading services). Other smaller buildings with similar demographics have many more students who are behind. I asked the question, "What are we doing right at Spring Ridge?" The answer from the reading specialist was that the principal is vigilant in the use of PLC practices and Smart Goals. Her primary teachers have developed a strong team with a results focus and it shows.

Cindy Gray, Ph.D.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Elkhorn Public Schools

Papillion-La Vista South High School

Teachers appreciate the collaboration... and it has eliminated the feeling of isolation. Teachers...learn from each other. This collaboration has helped teachers in pacing and curriculum content coverage which ensures that every student is getting the same education. This collaboration time has also allowed us to keep up on current topics in educational research via articles followed by group discussion. Teachers have created formative and summative assessments...where additional instruction is needed, content that has been mastered, and sometimes problems within the assessment itself. Students... have felt more prepared and succeed more often when summative assessments are preceded by the formative assessments.

Enid Schonewise,

Principal, Papillion-La Vista South High School; Papillion-La Vista Public Schools

Wildewood Elementary School

PLCs serve as a way for team members to support each other as they work toward school improvement through increased student achievement...we have kept a regular focus on school improvement. Teachers are regularly talking about student learning, assessing programs, analyzing data, and adjusting instruction as needed. It has brought school improvement to the classroom level.

Janell Shain,

Principal, Wildewood Elementary; Ralston Public Schools

This positive effect is seen in classrooms across ESU#3. Teachers are happier, kids are happier. We have districts presenting at national conferences, including the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) to share their PLC successes; one of our districts' story was recently published in the Journal of Staff Development (NSDC). The impact is statewide as well; I have worked with Math & Science Partnership grants (MSP) on functioning as "virtual" PLCs statewide using ANGEL software. These PLCs are networking hundreds of algebra and geometry teachers with other teachers statewide in districts where there may be only one secondary math teacher.

Our school improvement processes will progress forward as we continue to collaborate in our PLCs. The learning of EACH student is the focus as we, together, look at the consistent responses we can provide to not only the struggling students, but to those that are ready to advance their learning. Our biggest "aha's" have come when we take collective responsibility, share ideas, and decide where we need to be going based upon where we are. As professionals, we all have a professional obligation to make sure ALL schools are functioning in Professional Learning Communities. We will continue on this journey and hope the positive effect of PLCs in the educational field is validated by Rick DuFour receiving the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008!

Thank you so much for your passion and persistence!

Sincerely,



Debbie Schraeder

dschraeder@esu3.org

Staff Development Consultant

ESU#3, Professional Development Department

6949 S. 110th Street

Omaha, NE 68128

402-597-4865

FAX: 402-597-4812



Cleveland State University

College of Education and Human Services
Greater Cleveland Educational Development Center

June 26, 2007

265 Island Pointe Lane
Moneta, VA 24121

To Whom it May Concern:

Professional learning communities have greatly impacted northeast Ohio school districts over the past seven years. Schools all over our region have reorganized themselves into PLCs, and the results are dramatic. Since our first learning community presentation by Rick DuFour in 2000 through our most recent workshop in 2006, over 1,000 teachers and administrators shifted from the traditional approach of working in isolation to working together to achieve a common goal, the education of all students. These 1,000 teachers and administrators have worked with another 1,000 + educators back in their buildings and districts to create cohorts of highly functioning teams, teams that can answer the question, "What do we do when kids don't learn?"

The language of professional learning communities is spoken in 52 area districts – urban, suburban and rural. Educators report increased student learning, increased confidence by team members, and increased opportunities to build on each teacher's strengths. Four critical questions have become part of all of our teachers' vocabulary:

1. What is it we expect students to learn?
2. How will we know when students have learned it?
3. How will we respond when students don't learn?
4. How will we respond when students already know it?

Teachers understand the difference between intended, implemented and attained curriculum and are not afraid to test themselves by stating, "What is most important is not what we intend for students to learn or how we implement the lesson in our classroom but whether or not the learning is attained by all of the students." *Essential learning outcomes* are designed by teacher teams across content areas because all of the teachers in one department believe that every student should understand the same agreed upon concepts. This collaboration leads to common assessments, concrete and measurable goals that allow teachers to gage exactly what the students have learned. And when they don't learn? Schools have built systems of intervention that offer strategies for students whose measured progress on common assessments does not meet the benchmarks of what the school deems proficient.

How do we know that this is going on in the 52 school districts that have sent teachers and administrators to Rick DuFour's *Building Professional Learning Communities at Work* presentations since January of 2000? In order to enrich the understanding of workshop participants, The Greater Cleveland Educational Development Center formed a School Transformation Network. In its second year of operation, the network has doubled its membership and will sponsor its first conference on August 1st which will feature exemplary practices by learning community teams. Led by Doug DeLong, principal of Chardon High School and an exemplary learning community leader in his school and the region, this network is proof positive that PLCs are working in our region because more and more teachers and administrators want to share their results with one another.

It is without hesitation that I recommend Rick DuFour and the contribution he has made to education for the recipient of the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. Nothing in the 24 year history of the Greater Cleveland Educational Development Center has made a bigger impact on schools and students than Dr. DuFour's Professional Learning Communities. No one is more deserving of this award.

If I can be of any further help, please don't hesitate to call me at 216-523-7109 or b.m.jenkins@csuohio.edu. I love sharing the impact that PLCs have made on our greater Cleveland schools.

Sincerely,



Barbara Jenkins
Program and Professional Development Coordinator
The Greater Cleveland Educational Development Center @ Cleveland State University



Freeport Intermediate School

"The Place Where Great Things Happen!"

May 31, 2007

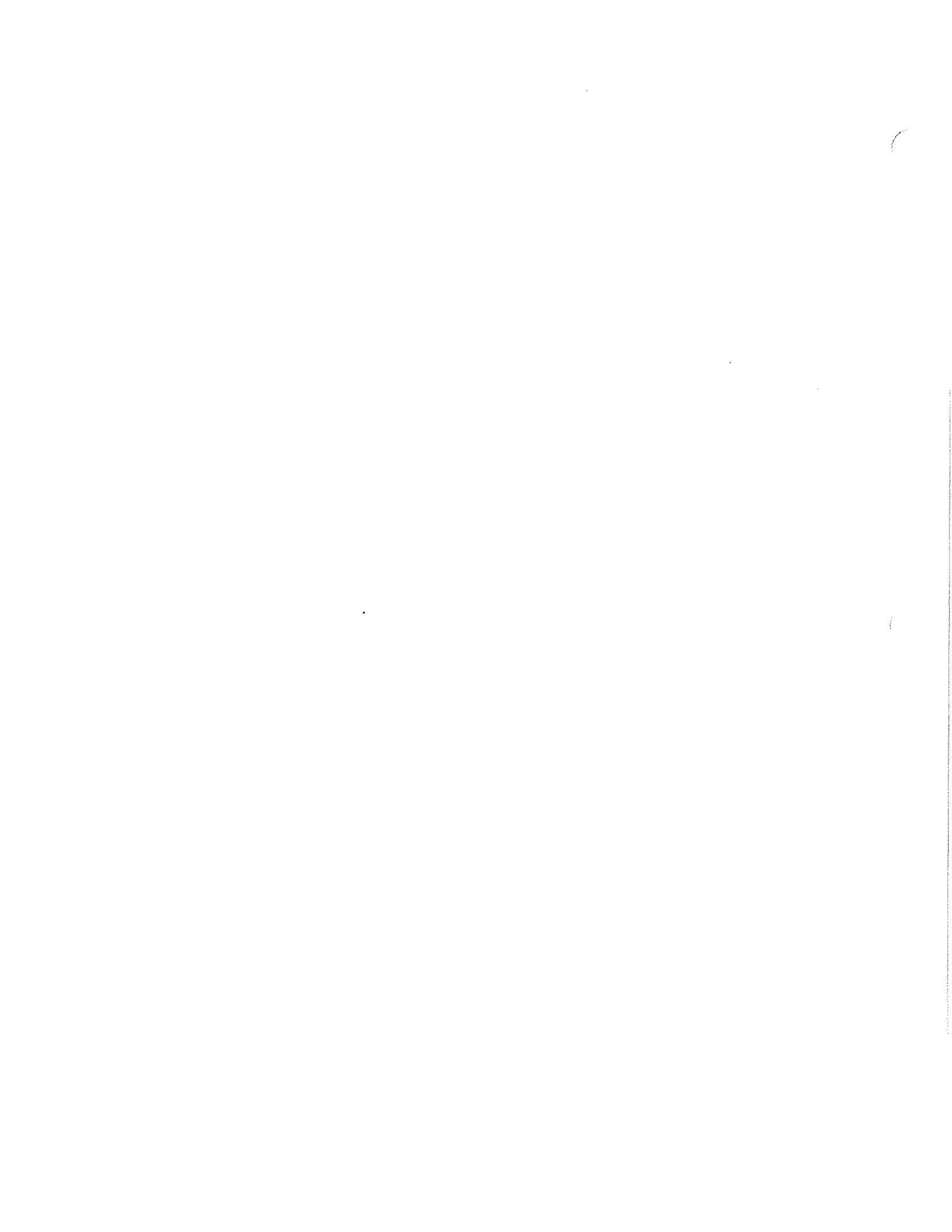
To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Dr. Rick DuFour, it is with pleasure that I offer a professional and personal reference in support of him receiving the prestigious Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. I am a middle school principal in a suburban high-poverty school that has been a part of an exciting transformation, thanks to the implementation of professional learning communities in our school. The PLC concepts were embraced at our school, which at one time was low performing in student achievement with teacher morale at an all-time low. Using Rick's ideas, our school has transformed into an award-winning school that serves as a model for professional learning communities and high academic achievement. We have been the recipients of numerous awards, one being the National Blue Ribbon Award (2001). In 2002 we were designated as a National School To Watch by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform.

Dr. DuFour has continued to support our efforts as a PLC school. His work was not a "drive-by" staff development. His teachings, research, and presentations helped our campus sustain success. I remember a 10:00 p.m. phone call with Dr. DuFour conveying ideas about pyramids of intervention for students not learning. His "Whatever It Takes" attitude kept us talking until midnight about transforming the culture of schools. His work continues to permeate the culture of our campus as we now assist other middle schools across the nation in demonstrating what PLC's look like in a middle school setting. The support of Dr. DuFour and his work is unending. Not only do we seek knowledge through his books, but we seek the network with other schools and people that demonstrate the same passion and persistence as we continue our pathways to professional learning communities. Thanks to his teaching and leadership, we have touched the lives of not only our professional colleagues, but have made a positive impact on the lives of our children. Through the work of professional learning communities, there is hope for all children, regardless of skin color or socioeconomic status, to attain high levels of learning that lead to their success.

Respectfully,

Clara Sale-Davis
Principal, Freeport Intermediate School





May 30, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Letter of Recommendation for Dr. Richard DuFour

It is our pleasure to recommend for your consideration Dr. Richard DuFour for the Brock International Prize in Education in which he has been nominated. We have had the privilege to work with Dr. DuFour in several capacities, the most important of which has been with the Brigham Young University Principals Academy. The BYU Principals Academy is a developmental opportunity for school principals to engage in learning how to develop professional learning communities (PLCs) within the culture of their schools.

Dr. DuFour has influenced the leadership and teaching practices of hundreds of principals and thousands of teachers in the BYU Principals Academy. These principals and teachers are now equipped to improve teaching and learning in their schools. Specifically, Dr. DuFour has done more than any other expert to develop these educators to lead their schools in the cultural shift from the entrenched norms of isolation to norms of interdependence and collegiality. The principals and teachers are focused on providing high quality learning for all students through systems of preventions and interventions. Dr. DuFour has helped these educators to develop the deep knowledge and leadership practices that unite everyone in the community in this cultural transformation.

Particularly, Dr. DuFour has played a significant role in helping principals and teachers make two fundamental cultural shifts that are integral for schools to function as PLCs: the development of educators to focus on learning for all students; and collaboration among all educators on issues related to improving teaching and learning. The following are documented results that we have collected on the BYU Principals Academy that Dr. DuFour has helped develop:

- Schools have observed initial improvement in student learning as measured by end of level testing and teacher-made assessments.
- Several schools have emerged as high functioning PLCs that serve as models for other principals and teachers throughout the area who observe the PLC processes such as, teams collaborating to improve student learning, data drawn from common assessments to identify students who need extra help and resources.

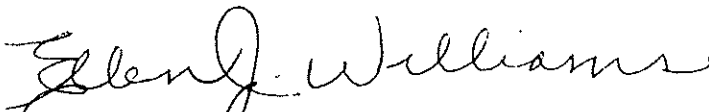
- Groups of principals in two districts have spontaneously started collaborating regularly to solve problems they encounter and to strategize ways to build stronger support at the district level for PLCs. These administrators are creating a ground swell that may ultimately influence the way the work of education is conducted throughout their districts.
- In one small district, all of the principals succeeded in persuading their Board of Education to provide early out days once a week so that teams of teachers could collaborate during contract hours to improve student learning.
- In another large school district, all schools use early out Mondays to conduct teacher collaboration on student learning.

Another substantial area of influence that Dr. DuFour has on educators in our area and throughout the world has been his writings. Too numerous to list, but of great influence has been the books that he and his colleagues have published. In the BYU Principals Academy and in our course work, we have used these books as the core for the development of pre-service and in-service principals and teachers.

We have also observed that Dr. DuFour communicates exceptionally well with others. As we have observed his work with professors, practitioners, and others, we have been impressed with the positive relationships he has developed. We have observed by his interaction with others that he is an effective communicator that can diffuse any conflictual situation. Perhaps, his greatest skill lies with his ability in communicating well with others.

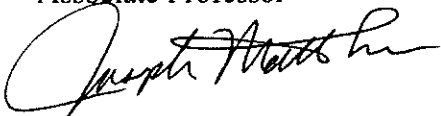
We would be hard pressed to recommend a more deserving person for this honor. Richard DuFour is likely the most influential educator in America today and perhaps internationally as well. We hope you give him every consideration.

Sincerely,



Ellen J. Williams

Associate Professor



L. Joseph Matthews
Associate Professor

June 22, 2007

Dear Members of the Selection Committee for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008:

Each year--in schools throughout Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Fairfax, Virginia--principals, teachers and students reunite for an exciting journey of literacy, collaboration, growth, and a human experience that is unique within the educational environment. A Chinese philosopher once said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. It is with that knowledge that I take great pride in supporting the nomination of Richard DuFour, and his work in Professional Learning Communities (PLC), for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008.

My journey with Dr. DuFour began when I was an Assistant Superintendent for Cluster II responsible for twenty-nine schools (K-12) in FCPS. The Division Superintendent directed the Assistant Superintendents to improve the academic performance of all students. To accomplish that, I believed that an instructional focus was needed to help principals build capacity for increased and sustained learning in their schools. After reading Professional Learning Communities at Work I thought this might be the answer to moving schools from a focus on *teaching* to a focus on *learning and achievement* at all levels--both in high achieving schools and in schools struggling to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. The results far exceeded my expectations.

Our first step in transforming schools into Professional Learning Communities (PLC) was to invite Dr. DuFour to meet with principals and teacher teams from Cluster II, and other district principals, and introduce the PLC concepts. Principals and teachers were inspired and energized by Dr. DuFour's presentation and enthusiastically embraced the thought of their schools becoming a PLC. As Dr. DuFour continued meeting with principals and teacher teams in Cluster II, word of his work spread throughout the entire school system. As a result, a district-wide commitment was made to train all 200 school staffs over the next three years to help schools "reculture" to become PLC.

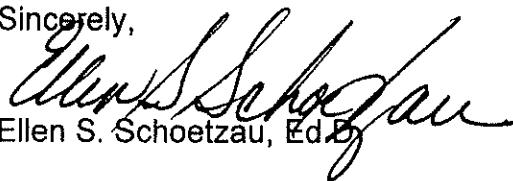
Through Dr. DuFour's vision, leadership and guidance FCPS schools have transformed into places of learning for staffs and students. As a direct result of PLC, schools have embraced:

- Setting team norms and collaboration
- Differentiated instruction
- Remediation and extended time for learning
- SMART goals, power standards, continuous assessments, benchmarks and rubrics
- Discussion of assessment data across teacher teams, grade levels and departments
- Action research
- Job-embedded staff development
- Elementary school schedule that provides collaboration time for teachers
- Discussions about what constitutes good formative assessment
- Pyramid approach to interventions at all levels.
- Changing the focus of faculty meetings from management to instructional issues

In FCPS, Dr. DuFour inspired our leadership team, principals, and teachers to believe in the possibilities, to commit to the effort and to make the possibilities a reality. His work with Professional Learning Communities has had a profound and long-lasting impact, not only in FCPS, but in the entire field of education. His legacy continues in FCPS through the increased level of professional dialogue that takes place in our schools every single day and in the way teachers collaborate for better instruction. It is exciting to watch as teachers now function as high powered teams to create common assessments, differentiated instruction and high expectations for all students. The core values shared and the high level of professionalism have become the foundation for the culture of all FCPS schools.

The entire education community owes Dr. DuFour a tremendous debt of gratitude for his passionate and innovative approach to raising the academic performance of all students by creating Professional Learning Communities—school by school. I know that I echo the sentiments of the entire FCPS community by enthusiastically supporting his nomination for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008. There is no one more deserving for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,



Ellen S. Schoetzau, Ed.D.

Elizabeth Vaughan Elementary School

2200 York Dr. • Woodbridge, VA 22191
703.494.3220 • FAX 703.497.4774 • www.pwcs.edu/Vaughan
Lillie Jessie, Principal
Stefanie Sanders, Assistant Principal

June 18, 2007

Dear Members of the Brock International Nominating/Selection Committee:

I am honored and somewhat mystified that a man of such a renown status, who has made such a national impact in the field of education, would ask a person like me, whose only claim to notoriety is her desire to have a positive impact on the learning of students of all races, economic class and ethnicity, to write a letter recommending him for the Brock International Prize in Education. After reflecting on this request I concluded this respect for people speaks to who Richard DuFour is. He is a man dedicated to the educational success of all students who finds success and affirms these practices when he sees them; an *uncommon* man who is a voice for children in *common* places. You see, I have had very little personal contact with Dr. DuFour but I have known him and implemented his practices by way of his video tapes, books and workshops for a number of years. I know that this is not a letter about him as an individual but I am convinced the personal vision and mission must precede the vision and mission of a school or organization. In order for the two to permeate and become a working part of the culture requires the dedication and personal commitment from an individual. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is more than a concept; it is a way of life. It has become that because of Dr. DuFour's personal mission and vision.

I was pleased to note the purpose of this award and to see the list of highly esteemed individuals who have received this honor. Each of these individuals, such as, Douglas Reeves, Beverly Tatum, John Goodlad, David and Roger Johnson has made a national and long-lasting impact on the sustainability of learning of children in this nation. Dr. DuFour will make an excellent addition to this gallery of great educators. He has introduced and nurtured a concept that not only has roots in our field but in the business industry as well. I am a reader of the research and seeker of practices that work. In pursuing this desire of confirmation of my belief that all children could learn I read the works of many successful business entrepreneurs. The need to create a collaborative culture in order to be successful is documented by some of the most prominent and notarized business leaders of our time. The concept of the Master Mind principle was introduced by Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnet. It is not surprising that in order to be a PLC the element of a collaborative culture is considered the most pervasive and is one of Dr. DuFour's "Three Big Ideas".



Prince William County

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Providing A World-Class Education

www.pwcs.edu

I have read Dr. DuFour's books and listened to his first tape numerous times. As indicated earlier, I am a reader of the research and an individual who attends workshops and conferences on a regular basis. I have done this because of my personal belief in the abilities of all children. This too is a result of my personal mission. I knew from personal experience that low income children of African-American descent could learn because of my upbringing in the segregated south during the era of Brown Vs the Board of Education. When I viewed the tape, *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, I was so excited that I shared it with my curriculum services associate superintendent. I then shared it with other principals in my school system (Prince William County Public Schools, Manassas, Virginia). Parents and staff members (Parent Advisory Council) in my school met for a full day, reviewing the tape and writing a mission statement based on the PLC concepts in the tape. Our beginning as a PLC was a rocky one. The demographics of my school changed but we failed to change our practices as outlined in Dr. DuFour's research and that of Dr. Douglas Reeves, your 2005 recipient. Originally, we were the "Lucky School" described by Dr. Reeves. We were a middle class school with students who came from homes of educated, middle-class parents. Boundary changes and the building of a new school resulted in our becoming a low income school with more children from other ethnic backgrounds. As stated earlier we did not change our practices and the outcome was disastrous. The poor performance resulted in my school being listed in the local newspapers as having the "lowest math scores" in our county. Presently, we are not only one of the highest performing schools in the county but a two time recipient of the county's School of Excellence Award. We have also received national recognition by Standards and Poors as one of only 69 schools in the state of Virginia that significantly closed the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students.

The above testimony highlights the effectiveness of PLC practices in schools of all income levels and ethnicities. PLC is not a program, it is deeper and more pervasive. It is a way of thinking about learning. The core is the belief that all children "must" learn and that it is your responsibility as an educator to see that it happens. It makes you search for alternatives for children that others write off. I live very close to the Washington D.C. area. Much has been written about the D.C. school system and similar low performing schools in urban schools. This school division and others like it need just a *pinch* of PLC. I have found that you do not need to change everything at once. Making small changes in how teachers perceive and respond to children can have dramatic and long-lasting positive impacts. Dr. DuFour has created a process that can ***change the world as we know it***. When we change how educators see themselves and their roles in the "learning" not "teaching" of students we change the outcomes of students in their educational environment in a positive way.

I have alluded to the power of collaboration in a PLC environment. We have been able to achieve "school-wide" collaboration in my school. A teacher had a medical situation this year. It was necessary for her to take pregnancy leave much earlier than had been anticipated. Unfortunately, she had to leave about one month before administration of the Standards of Learning tests, which are Virginia state-wide assessment measures. This teacher's team members, who are featured on Dr. DuFour's

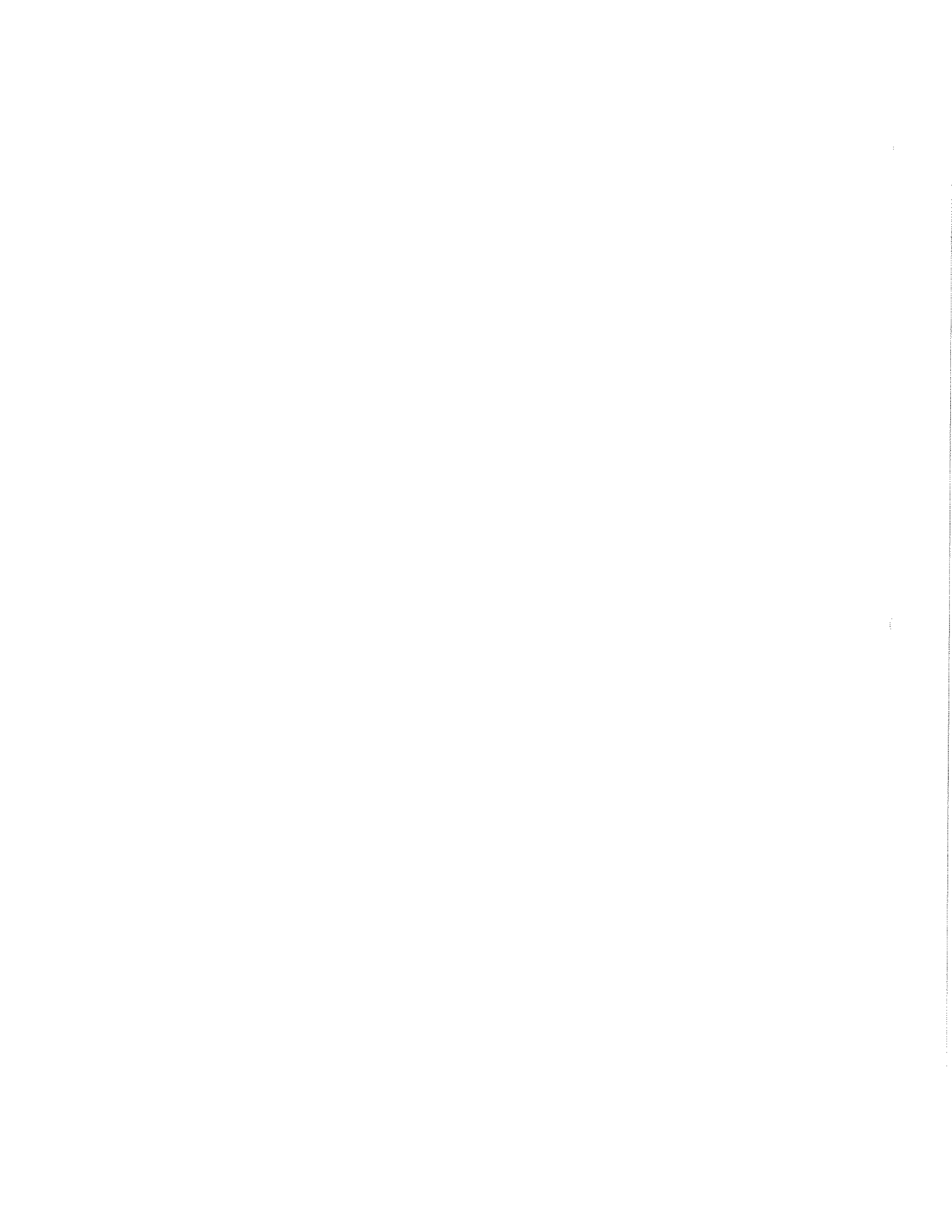
newest video, *The Powers of Professional Learning Communities at Work*, immediately asked that her 20 students be placed in their 4 classrooms for the remainder of the year. They talked about "our" kids instead of "her" kids". They said, our mission statement is, "Excellence for all... Whatever it takes". "Whatever it takes is here", said one. Imagine what the educational community would be like if we took the "Y" off the word "Your" kids and made it into "Our" kids. The United States would no longer have to worry about its standing in the world educational arena. This would never happen in my school before we were a PLC. I have been in this business for more than 35 years. I know that it would not and does not happen in other schools in this nation.

Dr. DuFour deserves not only this award but an award from the President of the United States for what will come as a result of his personal mission and vision for education. If this does occur, hopefully, Brock International will be able to say, "We *also* gave Dr. DuFour an award". Again, I am honored that I was asked. Your consideration of this nominating statement would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lillie G. Jessie".

Lillie G. Jessie, Principal



Jun 26, 2007

Dear Nominating Committee,

The purpose of this letter is to share my experiences with the Professional Learning Community process created by Dr. Rick DuFour and explain how this process helped to change an entire school's beliefs about teaching and learning. In 2004 Boones Mill Elementary School received the prestigious Blue Ribbon Award for excellence in education. I believe much credit must be given to the school's journey through the Professional Learning Community process. In 1998, I began my teaching career at Boones Mill Elementary School, a rural school in Franklin County, Virginia. Based on our state test scores at that time, I would have described Boones Mill as a mediocre school where vision and values sat on a shelf in the Principal's office collecting dust. There was very little interaction among teachers and if a child needed additional time and support, it was pretty much left up to the individual teacher. We played a mean game of monopoly where teaching and learning was by happenstance. Parents knew the game very well and many classroom requests were made for the "best teacher." Data driven instruction was very foreign and basically our purpose for assessing was merely to add grades to the grade book.

Then our school received a new principal named Rebecca Burnette. She met with individual grade levels prior to the new school year. One of her first questions to the team was, "What can we do to make this school better?" Of course we thought we had already arrived and there was nothing we could do to make the school better, we thought. How wrong we were! She set us on a course for change when we as a staff examined our school mission statement and core values. Thereafter, the mission and core values became our road map in building a school culture that nurtured staff collaboration, participated in the decision-making process, and built a system of interventions. Parent request for the "best teacher" decreased because Ms. Burnette went a step further by creating a weekly schedule where each grade level team met to engage in collegial work that focused on increasing student achievement and "teachers as learners". The teams' first order of business was to study the standards so each teacher would have the same interpretation of the standards. After that, she asked each grade level to create common assessments that were 100% aligned with the state standards. These common assessments were used to assess students' understanding and application of the taught concepts and skills. Using the school-wide benchmark of 80% and higher, if a student did not reach the benchmark that student automatically received additional time and support with the concepts and/or skills.

The process was beginning to take shape when student success wasn't up to the individual teacher; student success became the responsibility of the entire school/grade level team. Using common assessments in a timely manner forced the team to focus on learning not teaching. Teachers were analyzing students' work to make good decisions

about teaching and learning. Learning was happening not only for students, but for teachers and parents as well. Teachers were forced to seek, share, and act on their learning. Teachers were heavily involved in the on-going process of monitoring student achievement by asking and answering the four key questions: What does a student need know, how will we know if the student has learned it, what happens if a student doesn't learn the skill; and what happens if a student already knows the skill.

Now, all of a sudden, shared responsibility and accountability had replaced teacher isolation. There was something magical about individuals sitting down together building shared knowledge and finding common grounds to meet the needs of individual students. Within a two year period we saw a mediocre school transform into a "school to watch".

In 2005 I became the principal of a rural Title 1 school that would have been considered, at that time, a low performing school based on it adequate yearly progress. Snow Creek School was facing serious challenges in reading and math. Many students came from homes where reading had not been emphasized as an important activity. I had had experience with the Professional Learning Community process and knew the powerful impact such a process could have on teaching and learning. The school had a vision statement but it was only words in the school's handbook on a shelf in the back of the closet. There was much work to do and it wasn't an easy process for us because it required our school staff to focus on results, to collaborate weekly with the sole purpose of monitoring learning, to setup timely systems of interventions, and to hold ourselves responsible and accountable for every child's success. In 2006 and 2007 this same school was awarded the Distinguished Title 1 School Award given to schools that are fully accredited and exceeds the annual measurable objectives in English and Math. This award was an important award for us because it came with a financial stipend that was used to support our professional development initiatives.

Again much credit must be given to the Professional Learning Community process and to the man who has helped educators translate that process into reality in their schools, Dr Rick DuFour. This process requires hard work and dedication from all key stake holders but it does work. There is no one more deserving of the Brock prize, for no one has given educators in this country a greater gift – the insights and will to make a difference in the lives of students.

Mrs. Bernice Cobbs
Principal
Snow Creek Elementary School

June 26, 2007

Dear Brock International Prize in Education for 2008 Advocate,

During my first six months as a principal in 2002 I was requested to attend a staff development workshop with the rest of the principals in our Cluster in Fairfax County Public Schools. There were over 100 of us and in addition each of us was requested to bring an assistant principal and a couple of our lead teachers. We were also asked to read a book "Getting Started" by Dr. DuFour before the workshop date.

When we arrived at the workshop we had the honor of meeting both Dr. DuFours' "Rick and Becky" and for the next two days we learned many details of developing Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at our schools. A month later we returned to attend another workshop conducted by the Dr. DuFours on PLC. This was to help us gain a more in depth understanding of specific methods and applications to implementing PLC at the school level.

Although I had 20 years of experience in education and felt I was well prepared with the skills necessary to effectively lead and manage a school, I found the philosophy of PLC to be totally captivating. Dr. DuFour's methods of presenting PLC offered an inspirational, educational, and "doable" approach to improved school improvement and leadership. For the first time in my educational career I found a systematic and measurable approach to increase student achievement, organize a school, and develop clear and measurable goals for myself and all of my staff while developing and creating leadership capacity in my building. I think one of the major components that sold me on the concepts of PLC was that I didn't have to buy software, textbooks, workbooks, or anything else. This model helped us identify how to reorganize our priorities and make better use of the resources we already have to dramatically increase our effectiveness as a school.

My staff and I were able to quickly apply the PLC strategies that Dr. DuFour shared. Within our first year of developing our own PLC we saw significant gains in student achievement results based the Virginia high stakes assessments. There were cheers and celebrations throughout our building as we reviewed the state assessment results and measured our gains. As we matured in our professional learning community we continued to improve, by reviewing our successes and renewing our goals.

I was fortunate enough to be part of a PLC principal cohort that included several principals from the same cluster and with some principals from other clusters who wanted to know more about PLC. We dedicated monthly meetings to PLC discussions sharing our successes and strategies then returned to our schools armed with more knowledge and applications of how other PLC's are operating and moving forward.

I could go on for pages upon pages of all the positive attributes of PLC, how PLC helped me become a well recognized principal, how PLC help my staff be more successful as a team of professionals instead of working in isolation and most of all, how implementing the PLC model has helped thousands of my students experience success and develop an increased appetite for learning but instead I will close with the following.

Dr. DuFour shared a proven model of school reform. He is gifted in the art of creating motivation, enthusiasm, interest, and in many cases hope, for those who are close to giving up on hard to reach students, staff, and educational leaders. I can confidently say if I had not had an opportunity to learn about Dr. DuFour's work at Stevenson High School and PLC, I would still be struggling to find the right answers to successful educational leadership. To this day I share PLC concepts and strategies with hundreds of other educators. I know the PLC model that Dr. DuFour has shared has touched the heart, and faith of thousands upon thousands of educators and students. I am "now" in my 25th year of educational practice and I can confidently say that Dr. DuFour's and the PLC model he shares is my number one recommendation for the 2008 Brock International Prize in Education.

Please don't hesitate to contact me for more specifics on how PLC has helped me, my school, our school system, staff and students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Farmer".

Paul Farmer

9232 Chapel Hill Terr.
Fairfax, VA 22031

pcf farmer@learn4schools.com



White River School District #416

Post Office Box 2050 • Buckley, Washington 98321 • Telephone (360) 829-0600
Fax (360) 829-3358 • TDD Relay Service 1-800-833-6388
e-mail jkeating@whiteriver.wednet.edu

Janel Keating, Deputy Superintendent

June 26, 2007

To Whom This May Concern:

It is an honor to write this letter in support of Rick Dufour. Rick's work with professional learning communities served as a roadmap for improving student learning at Mountain Meadow Elementary. The experiences shared reflect my work with the staff at Mountain Meadow Elementary in Buckley, Washington where I was the principal for eight years and currently the deputy superintendent.

The staff at Mountain Meadow began implementing a number of "best practices" under the framework of becoming a professional learning community. It was difficult and at times frustrating work, but it was also encouraging work. The staff began working together in a collaborative culture. Students began to show improvement. Six years later the data showed dramatic improvements with 98 percent meeting state standards in reading and 92 percent meeting the state standards in math. Mountain Meadow achieved:

- 100% AYP in reading 2004 and 2006; 99% AYP in 2005
- Achieved 100% AYP in math in 2004; 94.6% in 2005; 96.6% in 2006

Mountain Meadow Elementary School was recognized as one of the highest academically performing elementary schools in Washington State. It was a showcase school with teachers and administrators. These educators were given the opportunity to observe the work of collaborative teams, successful learning programs, pyramids of intervention and strategies to embed additional time and support for kids.

It would be easy and acceptable to just focus on the dramatic increases in test scores that resulted from the professional learning communities work, but the test scores only tell a portion of the story. This PLC work changed the culture – a culture that focused on each child and is best illustrated by a story of a Mountain Meadow student who directly benefitted from the work of Rick Dufour.

Meet Lydia-

Although Lydia had been immersed in an early literacy environment, she still entered first grade knowing only eight letters of the alphabet, and not always the same eight. First grade was very hard for Lydia. On the way home during the first three months of the school year, she would frequently state to her mother, "This is the worst day of my life!" and "I hate school!" The intensity of her emotions often peaked to nearly unbearable just before complete silence as she dropped into an exhausted sleep.

Yet Lydia was very fortunate. During the same first grade year, she was graced with a caring, highly effective teacher who could redirect a frustrated Lydia into focus and productivity.

Mountain Meadow had a well developed pyramid of interventions that provided Lydia with explicit reading instruction, tracked Lydia's progress weekly, adjusted her program as needed in an intentional and timely manner and communicated with her parents. Lydia was also immediately identified for the Learning Assistance Program..

Lydia's progress was not an overnight success. It was slow and steady. It mirrored the relentless forward push that was provided to Lydia through her teachers, a team of paraeducators and the entire school. Lydia was not provided an option to fail. She moved into second grade having shown progress, but still needing strong support. Her first grade teacher looped with her and the class to second grade. This was a tremendous boost for Lydia. She didn't have to start over. As she continued through third and fourth grade, each with new teachers who were also highly skilled, Lydia also continued to make steady progress. It was like her teachers were linked together, each doing their part and providing Lydia a solid, forged chain of learning.

As Lydia entered fifth grade, her state assessment scores from spring of fourth grade arrived. This young girl, who very early on could shut down or tantrum with the intensity of students formally identified with a behavior disorder, and who professed to hate school but never gave up because those around her never gave up on her, had met standard in reading and exceeded standard in writing and math.

Like all real stories, the end of Lydia's is yet to be written. In her fifth grade year, Lydia struggled with getting homework in on time. She then ended the year having received several awards for 'improved school work' and being assigned captain of the geography bowl. She wore this last badge proudly and could be found studying of her own accord, even on the last day of school, because her team was counting on her.

And now Lydia enters middle school. She is not even half-way through the linked chain of her schooling. Will her teachers be skillful and effective in their instruction? Will they know how to reach Lydia as she filters information through her own unique lens? Will they each maintain the integrity of their portion of the chain and ensure that Lydia reaches the very same high standards for learning that Lydia holds for herself? The next successfully navigated link in the journey of Lydia's learning is counting on it. Lydia's learning needs at the middle level will

have a greater chance of being supported because Glacier Middle School has embraced the Professional Learning Community concepts.

Lydia is one of many individual success stories at Mountain Meadow. Stories linked to a school that embraced the three big ideas of a professional learning community – the work of Rick Dufour.

Fondly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janel Keating".

Janel Keating



A QUALITY
EDUCATION
FOR
EVERY
CHILD



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

May 18, 2007

Rick DuFour
465 Island Pointe Land
Moneta, VA 24121

Dear Rick:

I welcome the opportunity to write a letter recommending you for the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008, based on your work with Professional Learning Communities.

You and Becky conducted a pre-conference session prior to the New Wisconsin Promise Conference: Closing the Achievement Gap on January 8, 2007 for approximately 230 Wisconsin educators. The pre-conference, entitled "Building the Collaborative Culture of a Professional Learning Community" received an overall rating of 3.91 on a four-point scale. Below are the comments of some of the participants:

I have heard the DuFours four times to date and learn a new idea each time. Their message is essential for all schools.

The most relevant and logically organized workshop I have attended in recent memory.

A great supplement to the DuFour books that I've been reading for years. You two get me excited about education again - thank you!

You've taken all the excuses away!

You provided the keynote address to kick off the main conference for 1500 people, followed by packed sectional presentations. Once again the evaluations were excellent. Educators spoke to me personally to tell me how much the implementation of Professional Learning Communities in their schools and districts had improved teaching and learning.

I strongly support you as a candidate for the Brock International Prize in Education and hope it will enable the Professional Learning Communities process to impact even more schools.

Sincerely,

Elaine Granke
Coordinator, New Wisconsin Promise Conference





A n a m C a r a
Leading and Learning with Soul

June 29, 2007

Dear Brock Prize Committee,

I recommend Dr. Richard DuFour for the Brock International Prize in Education. Given the award's purpose – to honor an individual who has made a specific innovation or contribution to the science and art of education, resulting in a significant impact on the practice or understanding of the field of education – I can think of no other as deserving of this award as Dr. DuFour for his work in developing and implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

I have the privilege of supporting schools across North America in implementing and operating as Professional Learning Communities. In my 20 years as an educator and school improvement facilitator, I have never observed a more powerful school improvement effort than when teachers engage in the work of Professional Learning Communities. The process is empowering and the results are stunning! Classroom by classroom and school by school, teachers are impacting student learning with achievement scores that make significant gains in a single year's time and then continue the upward climb to close achievement gaps. I believe the remarkable and consistent student achievement gains alone should qualify Dr. DuFour as having made a significant impact in the practice *and* understanding of the work of education.

I believe there are two additional qualifiers regarding Dr. DuFour's work that probably don't have much formal documentation or publicity around them quite yet, but that are equally significant to his contribution: collective efficacy and hopefulness.

When I initiate school improvement work with teachers, they often express a sense of being overwhelmed and helpless when it comes to impacting student achievement. Fortunately, the PLC process helps them quickly understand their own powerbase. The first time I observed this, I was working in a high school that nervously agreed to address their reading scores school wide using the PLC process. In one year's time the students in that school moved from performing below the state average to exceeding the state average in reading. Even though the school had additional work to do in addressing their reading achievement gap, staff now understood and valued their ability to make a

difference. Teacher efficacy across the staff seemed to increase as dramatically as their achievement results and this pattern is consistent in all of the PLC schools and districts in which I work. In effective PLC schools, collective efficacy is both evident and irreversible.

It goes without saying that consistent increases in student achievement and dramatic improvements in teacher efficacy create a sense of hope. More than that, however, I am noticing a fundamental shift in the way we now approach our work; across the field, our attitudes and even our language has begun to change from "victim" to "victor." It may be because I have the thrill of working with empowered teachers almost every day, but it seems as if we are now reaching a tipping point where hope is more prevalent than despair because even those who've not yet experienced participation in a Professional Learning Community are beginning to notice and understand that the potential for impacting student achievement exists. Like the staffs with whom I work, I now have hope that we can, in fact, revamp and revitalize education for the benefit of student *and* teacher learning.

Selecting Dr. Richard DuFour for the Brock International Prize in Education would not only be appropriate, it would also be advantageous as it would continue the momentum of hope and spread the word that school improvement really is possible, enabling the Brock International Prize itself to contribute to "a significant impact on the practice or understanding of the field of education."

Sincerely,



Cassandra M. S. Erkens
Anam Cara Consulting, Inc.
23125 Grandview Way
Lakeville, MN 55044-7261
Phone: 952-461-6911
Fax: 952-461-6912
CassErkens@anamcaraconsulting.com

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am writing to substantiate the case for the nomination of Dr. Rick Dufour for the prestigious Brock International Prize in Education for 2008.

I have had the privilege of benefiting from the work of Dr. Dufour and his colleagues as it pertains to concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) over the past several years. I first became a devotee of PLC when I was a high school principal and more recently the Director of Education for the Western Quebec School Board in Gatineau, Quebec where I have encouraged the implementation of PLC's in our schools.

I was instrumental in suggesting the concept of PLC for our annual provincial administrator's conference back in 2000 in Quebec City that involved over six hundred Quebec English administrators. PLC was the theme of the conference and Dr. Dufour was the keynote speaker on this occasion. As a result of this and other opportunities that followed PLC has become a driving force in school and district improvement here in Quebec.

I happen to teach Master's level courses under the auspices of an English University to educators in our school board and have used PLC as the focus if many of my courses. As a result we have several strong and lasting school improvement initiatives using the PLC concepts as the basis of their ever improving student results on provincial exams as borne out in the annual data that is publicly reported. Our school board has achieved modest, but ever increasing results since the emphasis on PLC concepts.

Despite our vast territory (90,000 sq kilometers) we have managed to imbed many of the concepts in our outlying schools. There is now a common language for school improvement and a focus on analyzing data to monitor student achievement and adjust teaching. The application of a Pyramid of Interventions has enhanced a careful and purposeful attention to our special needs population and coupled with the writing of SMART GOALS we have made real progress in meeting the needs of our hardest to teach children with a degree of success not before enjoyed.

Clearly the greatest benefit is that of reducing teacher isolation and making planning around common assessment a reality. The concept of PLC has also spawned several unique attempts to take the concept across schools to engender a real partnership among a group of schools. One such partnership has seen the project called SMURALS which is an acronym for some of our Small Rural Schools. It has created a real PLC culture and has grown in the number of participating schools each year for the past three years all on a voluntary basis and planned and now run by the teachers themselves.

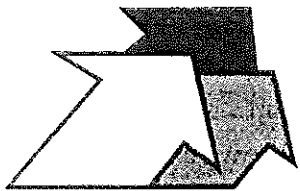
PLC has made a tangible impact in school improvement and increasing student achievement in our small part of the world. So, I can endorse the concept as useful, powerful and relevant in improving teacher engagement, increasing student achievement and providing school administrators with a solid basis for school improvement that aligns

other initiatives to shift the emphasis from teaching to learning one of the foundational aspects of Professional Learning Communities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ainsley B. Rose". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'A'.

Ainsley B. Rose
Director of Education
Western Quebec School Board
170 Rue Principale
Gatineau, Quebec
J9H 6K1



SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP UNIT

Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon SK S7N 0X1 Canada
Tel. (306) 966-7634 Fax (306) 966-7916

Letter of Recommendation For the Brock International Prize in Education

Re: Dr. Richard Dufour

As a starting point for this letter of recommendation for Richard Dufour, I would like to provide the context for my comments regarding his work in our province.

In this regard, I am the Associate Director of the Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit (SELU) in the Department of Educational Administration, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Our role in the province is to provide services to the field in areas such as leadership development and research. Many of our contracts are with Saskatchewan school districts, making it essential that we are well informed of trends and initiatives undertaken by them. Professional Learning Communities is one such area of interest for our organization.

Since 2003, on three occasions our organization has brought Richard and Rebecca Dufour into our province to deliver one or two-day workshops related to the development and implementation of Professional Learning Communities. In each case, the size of the audience grew from 450 to 650 to 1300 participants. Essentially, over this three-year span there have been over 4,000 Saskatchewan teachers and administrators involved in these workshops. This is a testament to the quality of presentations and the delivery of a message that resounded with the participants involved in the workshops. Similar interest has been shown for the PLC movement in Alberta and Manitoba that was generated by the work of Dr. Dufour. Participants typically come away from the workshop with fresh insights and a feeling that changes in the way they work in schools empowers them as professionals and makes a difference in student learning.

From my experience in being an educator in this province for over 35 years, I can't remember any topic that has been as fully embraced by teachers, administrators and school boards than Professional Learning Communities. This is a tremendous tribute to Dr. Dufour and his work in this province. The formalization of teachers working in a

collegial relationship focusing on learning has spurred many of districts to incorporate the principles and practices espoused by Richard Dufour in his presentations, articles and books. The impact of his work in this province has been well documented from our research into school division implementation of PLC's.

In closing, in my opinion and I should say, in the opinion of many of my colleagues in Saskatchewan, Richard Dufour's work in the area of Professional Learning Communities has contributed greatly to education in our province. I would not hesitate to recommend Dr. Dufour to be the recipient of the Brock International Prize in Education for 2008.

Yours truly,



Brian Keegan
Associate Director



ARCHULETA SCHOOL DISTRICT 50 JT.
309 Lewis Street · Pagosa Springs, Colorado 81147 · Phone (970) 264-2228

June 21, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of Dr. Rick DuFour's nomination for the 2008 Brock International Prize in Education for his development sharing of Professional Learning Communities. (PLC). John A. Brock noted "The purpose of the Brock Prize is to identify the best ideas on education in the world and to expose them to our educators, teachers, administrators, and politicians." Dr. DuFour has clearly accomplished this through his development and global sharing of Professional Learning Communities.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) has created a profoundly positive impact on student achievement in our district, region and state through a total re-shaping of how our educators behave professionally. Our embracing of PLC has actually allowed us to move from a culture of teacher isolation to a culture of on-going purposeful collaboration. During the past five years I has gone from seeing PLC implemented in our 5th and 6th grade Intermediate School, to having total district and regional support, with our 5 district BOCES making PLC implementation and training their number one professional development priority. The initiative to develop PLC as the greatest positive support factor to student achievement is also evident at the state level, backed by training opportunities through the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Association of School Boards, and Colorado Association of School Executives, the "Big 3" in Colorado public education.

During my 20 years as a public school educator I have never seen programs or reform movements achieve lasting, sustainable impact until PLC. Professional Learning Communities has grown through local, regional and global utilization of the greatest resource education has to offer: educators. This lasting impact has been achieved through the belief and collaboration of educators at the classroom, administrative, and legislative levels. For these reasons, Dr. Rick DuFour deserves outstanding recognition. I hope John A. Brock would agree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark DeVoti".

Mark DeVoti
Superintendent



FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Cluster VII
8115 Gatehouse Road
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

June 27, 2007

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Dr. Richard DuFour for national recognition for his work developing and promoting the ideas, language, research, and philosophy associated with Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Over the course of the past five years I've had an opportunity as both a principal and assistant superintendent to engage schools, and subsequently change school cultures, in an effort to establish and promote PLCs resulting in increased student achievement.

Through the extraordinary work of Dr. DuFour, Fairfax County Public Schools, to a great degree, have been transformed to become great schools. This, in part, is due to our organizational and collaborative philosophy outlined by Dr. DuFour in his research based books. As principal at both a middle and high school I have used the tenets outlined by Dr. DuFour to substantively change the way a faculty thinks and acts in reference to supporting all students in their quest to learn. This shift in culture has resulted in the new establishment of patterns for work with teachers as well as administrators. Our schools have become collaborative and now focus on providing intervention for students who are struggling based on collaborative approaches by teachers. This C-change is a direct consequence of the three correlate questions associated with becoming a high functioning PLC:

- What is it that we want students to know?
- How will we know if students have learned it?
- How will we respond if students have not learned?

While these questions may seem simple, it is the third posed by Dr. DuFour that has required us, as a school and system, to reflect deeply about current practice and further investigate how we need to operate to ensure that *all* students are successful. Without the quality review of literature, personal stories, and work that Dr. DuFour has done to establishing a PLC in his own building while principal at Adlai Stevenson High School, we would not have a foundation and model from which to work.

When I arrived at Centreville High School in 2004 I was faced with a student population that had pockets of students that historically failed. Additionally, there was a grounded faculty reluctant to change. Through the course of the next 12 months, with book talks about Professional Learning Communities At Work and Whatever it Takes, the teaching staff began to move their thinking in a fundamental way from: "we are all about teaching" to "we are all about learning." This is a direct result of the power and influence of Dr. DuFour's work. As time has progressed it is evident that this seemingly simple shift in thinking is truly the method by which we have, and will into the future, substantively change public education as it currently stands. Because

Dr. DuFour has forced us to take an inward look at the job we do, not only did Centerville High School and Lanier Middle School improve, but the moral imperative of taking care of *every student* we work with has been fulfilled.

Therefore, it is without hesitation that I suggest that Dr. DuFour and his work regarding school reform and reorganization has the greatest impact on my life as a professional educator and on the life of the thousands of students. It is my hope that Dr. DuFour will be recognized for his extraordinary contribution to the field of education.

Sincerely,

Peter Noonan
Assistant Superintendent
Cluster VII
Fairfax County Public Schools

What Is a “Professional Learning Community”?

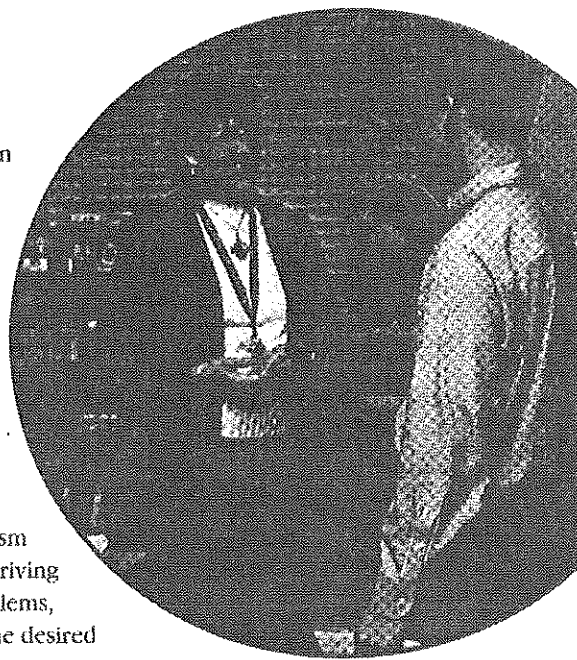
To create a professional learning community, focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively, and hold yourself accountable for results.

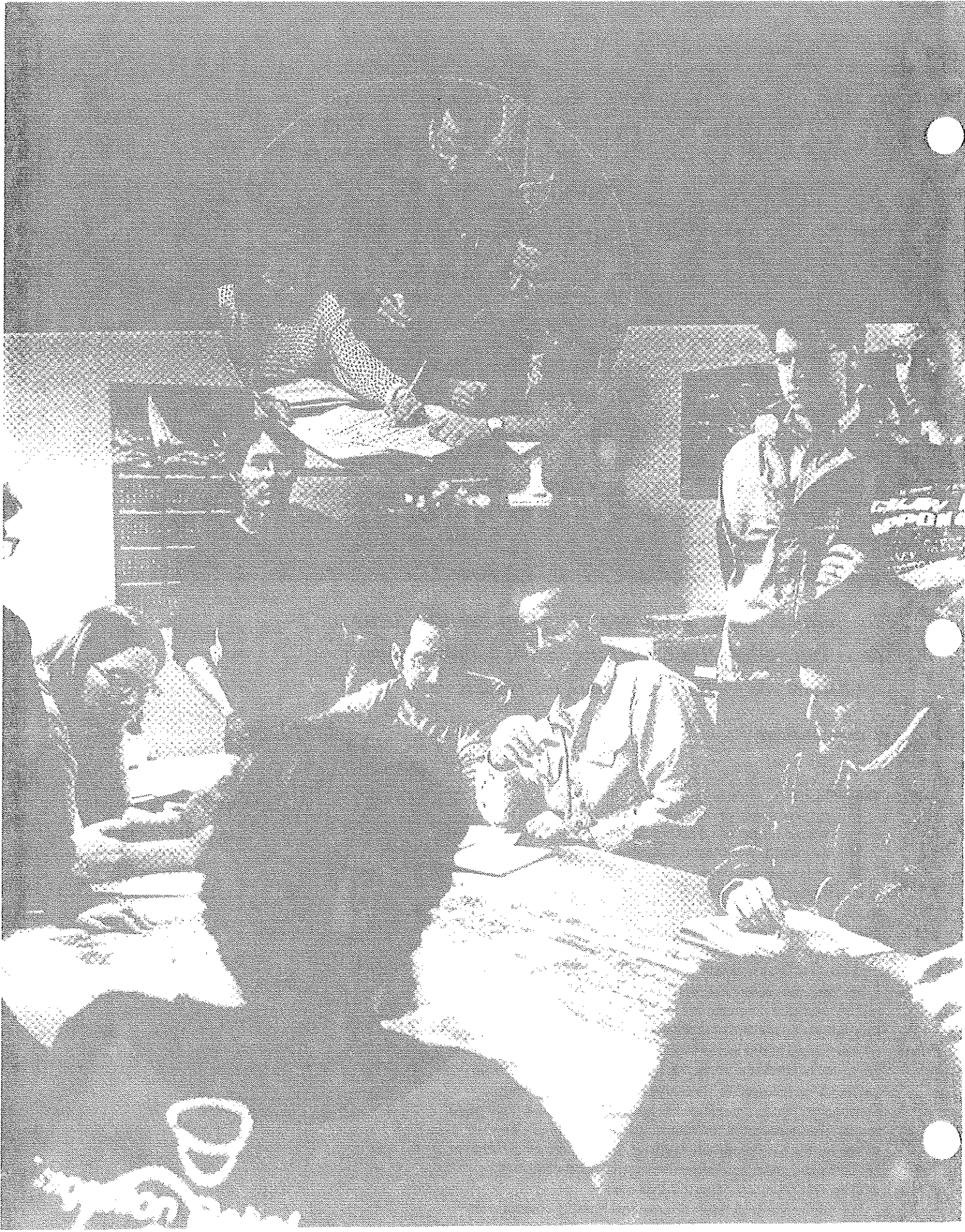
Richard DuFour

The idea of improving schools by developing *professional learning communities* is currently in vogue. People use this term to describe every imaginable combination of individuals with an interest in education—a grade-level teaching team, a school committee, a high school department, an entire school district, a state department of education, a national professional organization, and so on. In fact, the term has been used so ubiquitously that it is in danger of losing all meaning.

The professional learning community model has now reached a critical juncture, one well known to those who have witnessed the fate of other well-intentioned school reform efforts. In this all-too-familiar cycle, initial enthusiasm gives way to confusion about the fundamental concepts driving the initiative, followed by inevitable implementation problems, the conclusion that the reform has failed to bring about the desired results, abandonment of the reform, and the launch of a new search for the next promising initiative. Another reform movement has come and gone, reinforcing the conventional education wisdom that promises, “This too shall pass.”

The movement to develop professional learning communities





can avoid this cycle, but only if educators reflect critically on the concept's merits. What are the "big ideas" that represent the core principles of professional learning communities? How do these principles guide schools' efforts to sustain the professional learning community model until it becomes deeply embedded in the culture of the school?

Big Idea #1: Ensuring That Students Learn

The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools.

School mission statements that promise "learning for all" have become a cliché. But when a school staff takes that statement literally—when teachers view it as a pledge to ensure the success of each student rather than as politically correct hyperbole—profound changes begin to take place. The school staff finds itself asking, What school characteristics and practices have been most successful in helping all students achieve at high levels? How could we adopt those characteristics and practices in our own school? What commitments would we have to make to one another to create such a school? What indicators could we monitor to assess our progress? When the staff has built shared knowledge and found common ground on these questions, the school has a solid foundation for moving forward with its improvement initiative.

As the school moves forward, every professional in the building must engage with colleagues in the ongoing exploration of three crucial questions that drive the work of those within a professional learning community:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

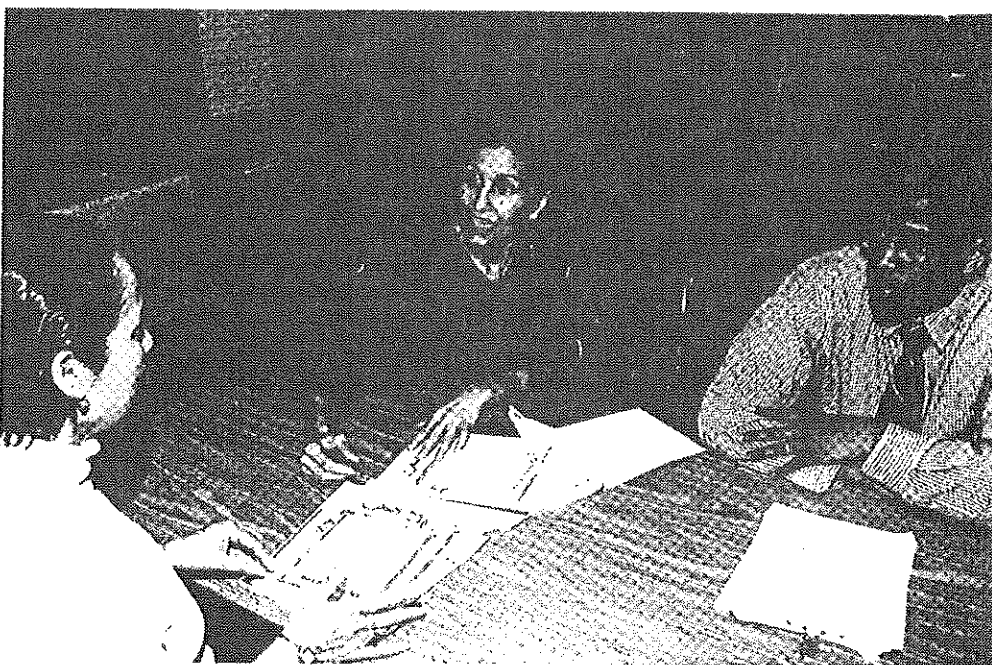


Photo by Kevin Quinones

The answer to the third question separates learning communities from traditional schools.

Here is a scenario that plays out daily in traditional schools. A teacher teaches a unit to the best of his or her ability, but at the conclusion of the unit some students have not mastered the essential outcomes. On the one hand, the teacher would like to take the time to help those students. On the other hand, the teacher feels compelled to move forward to "cover" the course content. If the teacher uses instructional time to assist students who have not learned, the progress of students who have mastered the content will suffer; if the teacher pushes on with new concepts, the struggling students will fall farther behind.

What typically happens in this situation? Almost invariably, the school leaves the solution to the discretion of individual teachers, who vary widely in the ways they respond. Some teachers conclude that the struggling students should transfer to a less rigorous course or should be considered for special education. Some lower their expectations by adopting less challenging standards for subgroups of students within their classrooms. Some look for ways to assist the students before and after

school. Some allow struggling students to fail.

When a school begins to function as a professional learning community, however, teachers become aware of the incongruity between their commitment to ensure learning for all students and their lack of a coordinated strategy to respond when some students do not learn. The staff addresses this discrepancy by designing strategies to ensure that struggling students receive additional time and support, no matter who their teacher is. In addition to being systematic and schoolwide, the professional learning community's response to students who experience difficulty is

■ *Timely*: The school quickly identifies students who need additional time and support.

■ *Based on intervention rather than remediation*: The plan provides students with help as soon as they experience difficulty rather than relying on summer school, retention, and remedial courses.

■ *Directive*: Instead of *inviting* students to seek additional help, the systematic plan *requires* students to devote extra time and receive additional assistance until they have mastered the necessary concepts.

The systematic, timely, and directive

intervention program operating at Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, provides an excellent example. Every three weeks, every student receives a progress report. Within the first month of school, new students discover that if they are not doing well in a class, they will receive a wide array of immediate interventions. First, the teacher, counselor, and faculty advisor each talk with the student individually to help resolve the problem. The school also notifies the student's parents about the concern. In addition, the school offers the struggling student a pass from study hall to a school tutoring center to get additional help in the course. An older student mentor, in conjunction with the struggling student's advisor, helps the student with homework during the student's daily advisory period.

than 4,000 students. Yet this school has found a way to monitor each student's learning on a timely basis and to ensure that every student who experiences academic difficulty will receive extra time and support for learning.

Like Stevenson, schools that are truly committed to the concept of learning for each student will stop subjecting struggling students to a haphazard education lottery. These schools will guarantee that each student receives whatever additional support he or she needs.

Big Idea #2: A Culture of Collaboration

Educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to

The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement.

Collaborating for School Improvement

At Boones Mill Elementary School, a K-5 school serving 400 students in rural Franklin County, Virginia, the powerful collaboration of grade-level teams drives the school improvement process. The following scenario describes what Boones Mill staff members refer to as their *teaching-learning process*.

The school's five 3rd grade teachers study state and national standards, the district curriculum guide, and student achievement data to identify the essential knowledge and skills that all students should learn in an upcoming language arts unit. They also ask the 4th grade teachers what they hope students will have mastered by the time they leave 3rd grade. On the basis of the shared knowledge generated by this joint study, the 3rd grade team agrees on the critical outcomes that they will make sure each student achieves during the unit.

Next, the team turns its attention to developing common formative assessments to monitor each student's mastery of the essential outcomes. Team members discuss the most authentic and valid ways to assess student mastery. They set the standard for each skill or concept that each student must achieve to be deemed proficient. They agree on the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work, and they practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently. Finally, they decide when they will administer the assessments.

After each teacher has examined the results of the common formative assessment for his or her students, the team analyzes how all 3rd graders performed. Team members identify strengths and

Collaborative teacher conversations must quickly move beyond "What are we expected to teach?" to "How will we know when each student has learned?"

Any student who continues to fall short of expectations at the end of six weeks despite these interventions is required, rather than invited, to attend tutoring sessions during the study hall period. Counselors begin to make weekly checks on the struggling student's progress. If tutoring fails to bring about improvement within the next six weeks, the student is assigned to a daily guided study hall with 10 or fewer students. The guided study hall supervisor communicates with classroom teachers to learn exactly what homework each student needs to complete and monitors the completion of that homework. Parents attend a meeting at the school at which the student, parents, counselor, and classroom teacher must sign a contract clarifying what each party will do to help the student meet the standards for the course.

Stevenson High School serves more

promote a collaborative culture.

Despite compelling evidence indicating that working collaboratively represents best practice, teachers in many schools continue to work in isolation. Even in schools that endorse the idea of collaboration, the staff's willingness to collaborate often stops at the classroom door. Some school staffs equate the term "collaboration" with congeniality and focus on building group camaraderie. Other staffs join forces to develop consensus on operational procedures, such as how they will respond to tardiness or supervise recess. Still others organize themselves into committees to oversee different facets of the school's operation, such as discipline, technology, and social climate. Although each of these activities can serve a useful purpose, none represents the kind of professional dialogue that can transform a school into a professional learning community.

weaknesses in student learning and begin to discuss how they can build on the strengths and address the weaknesses. The entire team gains new insights into what is working and what is not, and members discuss new strategies that they can implement in their classrooms to raise student achievement.

At Boones Mill, collaborative conversations happen routinely throughout the year. Teachers use frequent formative assessments to investigate the questions "Are students learning what they need to learn?" and "Who needs additional time and support to learn?" rather than relying solely on summative assessments that ask "Which students learned what was intended and which students did not?"

Collaborative conversations call on team members to make public what has traditionally been private—goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results. These discussions give every teacher someone to turn to and talk to, and they are explicitly structured to improve the classroom practice of teachers—individually and collectively.

For teachers to participate in such a powerful process, the school must ensure that everyone belongs to a team that focuses on student learning. Each team must have time to meet during the workday and throughout the school year. Teams must focus their efforts on crucial questions related to learning and generate products that reflect that focus, such as lists of essential outcomes, different kinds of assessment, analyses of student achievement, and strategies for improving results. Teams must develop norms or protocols to clarify expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and relationships among team members. Teams must adopt student achievement goals linked with school and district goals.

Removing Barriers to Success

For meaningful collaboration to occur, a number of things must also *stop* happening. Schools must stop pretending that merely presenting teachers with state standards or district

curriculum guides will guarantee that all students have access to a common curriculum. Even school districts that devote tremendous time and energy to designing the *intended* curriculum often pay little attention to the *implemented* curriculum (what teachers actually teach) and even less to the *attained* curriculum (what students learn) (Marzano, 2003). Schools must also give teachers time to analyze and discuss state and district curriculum documents. More important, teacher conversations must quickly move beyond "What are we expected to teach?" to "How will we know when each student has learned?"

In addition, faculties must stop making excuses for failing to collabo-

**A group of staff members
who are determined
to work together
will find a way.**

rate. Few educators publicly assert that working in isolation is the best strategy for improving schools. Instead, they give reasons why it is impossible for them to work together: "We just can't find the time." "Not everyone on the staff has endorsed the idea." "We need more training in collaboration." But the number of schools that have created truly collaborative cultures proves that such barriers are not insurmountable. As Roland Barth (1991) wrote,

Are teachers and administrators willing to accept the fact that they are part of the problem? . . . God didn't create self-contained classrooms, 50-minute periods, and subjects taught in isolation. We did—because we find working alone safer than and preferable to working together. (pp. 126-127)

In the final analysis, building the collaborative culture of a professional learning community is a question of will.

A group of staff members who are determined to work together will find a way.

Big Idea #3: A Focus on Results

Professional learning communities judge their effectiveness on the basis of results. Working together to improve student achievement becomes the routine work of everyone in the school. Every teacher team participates in an ongoing process of identifying the current level of student achievement, establishing a goal to improve the current level, working together to achieve that goal, and providing periodic evidence of progress. The focus of team goals shifts. Such goals as "We will adopt the Junior Great Books program" or "We will create three new labs for our science course" give way to "We will increase the percentage of students who meet the state standard in language arts from 83 percent to 90 percent" or "We will reduce the failure rate in our course by 50 percent."

Schools and teachers typically suffer from the DRIP syndrome—Data Rich/Information Poor. The results-oriented professional learning community not only welcomes data but also turns data into useful and relevant information for staff. Teachers have never suffered from a lack of data. Even a teacher who works in isolation can easily establish the mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and percentage of students who demonstrated proficiency every time he or she administers a test. However, data will become a catalyst for improved teacher practice only if the teacher has a basis of comparison.

When teacher teams develop common formative assessments throughout the school year, each teacher can identify how his or her students performed on each skill compared with other students. Individual teachers can call on their team colleagues to help them reflect on areas of concern. Each teacher has access to the ideas, materials, strategies, and talents of the entire team.

Freeport Intermediate School, located 50 miles south of Houston, Texas, attributes its success to an unrelenting

focus on results. Teachers work in collaborative teams for 90 minutes daily to clarify the essential outcomes of their grade levels and courses and to align those outcomes with state standards. They develop consistent instructional calendars and administer the same brief assessment to all students at the same grade level at the conclusion of each instructional unit, roughly once a week.

Each quarter, the teams administer a common cumulative exam. Each spring, the teams develop and administer practice tests for the state exam. Each year, the teams pore over the results of the state test, which are broken down to show every teacher how his or her students performed on every skill and on every test item. The teachers share their results from all of these assessments with their colleagues, and they quickly learn when a teammate has been particularly effective in teaching a certain skill. Team members consciously look for successful practice and attempt to replicate it in their own practice; they also identify areas of the curriculum that need more attention.

Freeport Intermediate has been transformed from one of the lowest-performing schools in the state to a national model for academic achievement. Principal Clara Sale-Davis believes that the crucial first step in that transformation came when the staff began to honestly confront data on student achievement and to work together to improve results rather than make excuses for them.

Of course, this focus on continual improvement and results requires educators to change traditional practices and revise prevalent assumptions. Educators must begin to embrace data as a useful indicator of progress. They must stop disregarding or excusing unfavorable data and honestly confront the sometimes-brutal facts. They must stop using averages to analyze student performance and begin to focus on the success of each student.

Educators who focus on results must also stop limiting improvement goals to factors outside the classroom, such as

student discipline and staff morale, and shift their attention to goals that focus on student learning. They must stop assessing their own effectiveness on the basis of how busy they are or how many new initiatives they have launched and begin instead to ask, "Have we made progress on the goals that are most important to us?" Educators must stop working in isolation and hoarding their ideas, materials, and strategies and begin to work together to meet the needs of all students.

students learn will rise. If they fail to demonstrate the discipline to initiate and sustain this work, then their school is unlikely to become more effective, even if those within it claim to be a professional learning community. The rise or fall of the professional learning community concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school—the commitment and persistence of the educators within it. ■



Photo by Kevin Davis

Hard Work and Commitment

Even the grandest design eventually translates into hard work. The professional learning community model is a grand design—a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. But initiating and sustaining the concept requires hard work. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement.

When educators do the hard work necessary to implement these principles, their collective ability to help all

References

- Barth, R. (1991). Restructuring schools: Some questions for teachers and principals. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(2), 123-128.
- Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Copyright © 2004 Richard DuFour.

Richard DuFour recently retired as Superintendent of Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois. He currently resides in Moneta, Virginia, and may be reached at (540) 721-4662; rdufour@district125.k12.il.us. His forthcoming book is *Whatever It Takes: How a Professional Learning Community Responds When Kids Don't Learn* (National Educational Service, in press).

Building a Professional Learning Community

To be a school superintendent in the United States today is to feel the pull of conflicting demands and competing ideologies. The demands of different interest groups are often readily apparent—for example, parents who want smaller class sizes versus taxpayers who want cuts in the budget.

Perhaps less obvious to those who never have served as a superintendent are the conflicting images of the very nature of the position. Should the superintendent be the forceful leader who implements his or her personal vision of how a school district and its individual schools should operate, or should the contemporary superintendent embrace site-based management and encourage the staff of each school to identify and pursue the issues most relevant to them? Should the desire for equity and equal opportunity lead superintendents to champion uniformity and consistency throughout the district, or should the realization that change occurs one school at a time lead superintendents to support the freedom and autonomy at each school that inevitably lead to differences between sites?

Superintendents err when they resolve this apparent dichotomy by choosing one approach or the other. In their

For system leaders, it means allowing autonomy within defined parameters

landmark study of organizations that sustained excellence over an extended period of time, James Collins and Jerry Porras, co-authors of *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, found those organizations embraced the paradox of living with two seemingly contradictory ideas or forces at the same time. They rejected the “Tyranny of the Or” and embraced the “Genius of the And.” Instead of choosing between A or B, these companies figured out a way to have both A and B. For example, they developed powerful philosophical and conceptual images that drove the entire organization and that encouraged the individuals within the organization to seek and develop innovative strategies for achieving the core purpose of the organization.

Collins and Porras wrote: “We are not talking about balance here. Balance

implies going to the midpoint, 50-50, half and half. ... [A] highly visionary company doesn't want to blend ying and yang into a gray, indistinguishable circle that is neither highly ying nor highly yang; it aims to be distinctly ying and distinctly yang, both at the same time, all the time.”

Superintendents who reject the “Tyranny of the Or” and embrace the “Genius of the And” are skillful in demonstrating “loose-tight leadership” or “directed autonomy.” They focus on identifying and articulating both the fundamental purpose of the organization and a few “big ideas” that will help the district improve in its capacity to achieve that purpose. They are tight on purpose and big ideas—insisting that those within the organization act in ways consistent with those concepts and demanding that the district align all of its practices and programs with them.

At the same time, however, they encourage individual and organizational autonomy in the day-to-day operations of the various schools and departments. This autonomy is not characterized by random acts of innovation, but rather is guided by carefully defined parameters that give focus and direction to schools and those within them.

I am convinced that the parame-



ters—the focused purpose and big ideas—that should drive school districts today are found in the concept of the professional learning community.

I have worked with school districts throughout North America and witnessed the different approaches superintendents have taken to implement the concepts of the learning community model in their districts. Some have invited schools to consider the learning community model as a strategy for stimulating improvement. Others have proclaimed that all schools must become learning communities, then left the de-

velop as a learning organization.

The strategy proven most effective, however, is one that is loose and tight, a strategy that establishes a clear priority and discernible parameters and then provides each school and department with the autonomy to chart its own course for achieving the objectives.

Shared Knowledge

The efforts of a superintendent of a suburban school district offer an excellent example of leading the professional learning community initiative on a districtwide basis. She began by building

content of those articles the focus of monthly team meetings.

In addition, she presented a book on learning communities to every member of the team, raised questions based on the book and solicited reactions to the concepts it presented. She required all members of the leadership team to attend a two-day workshop on professional learning communities to ensure her entire team heard a consistent message and developed a common vocabulary. She demonstrated the importance she placed on the workshop by attending every minute of it herself. Soon thereafter she held a follow-up meeting of the team where she asked if the professional learning community model offered a preferred alternative to the current reality of the district's operations.

Although this superintendent was a proponent of collaborative decision making, she recognized the importance of building shared knowledge as a prerequisite for the decision-making process. She understood that as a leader she was called on not merely to pool opinions, but rather to ensure that each member of the group had sufficient knowledge to make good decisions.

“Perhaps less obvious to those who never have served as a superintendent are the conflicting images of the very nature of the position.”

trails as to how to bring about this transformation to each school to resolve. Still others have been more prescriptive about the precise policies, programs and procedures each school must adopt to

shared knowledge about professional learning communities with her leadership team—central-office staff, principals and leaders of the teachers' union. She distributed articles and made the

Thus she ensured that members of her team were able to draw upon consistent information, operate from the same conceptual framework and use a common vocabulary when called upon to assess the potential of the professional learning community model. She attended to a critical component of the process—building shared knowledge.

Constructing Consensus

While most superintendents acknowledge the benefits of building consensus, they often operate under the assumption that the group does not achieve consensus until each member has endorsed the proposal under consideration.

This superintendent understood the difference between "consensus" and "unanimity." If everyone must agree before the group can take action, it is unlikely that action will ever occur. Therefore, she had established an operational definition for consensus that was understood by every member of the team.

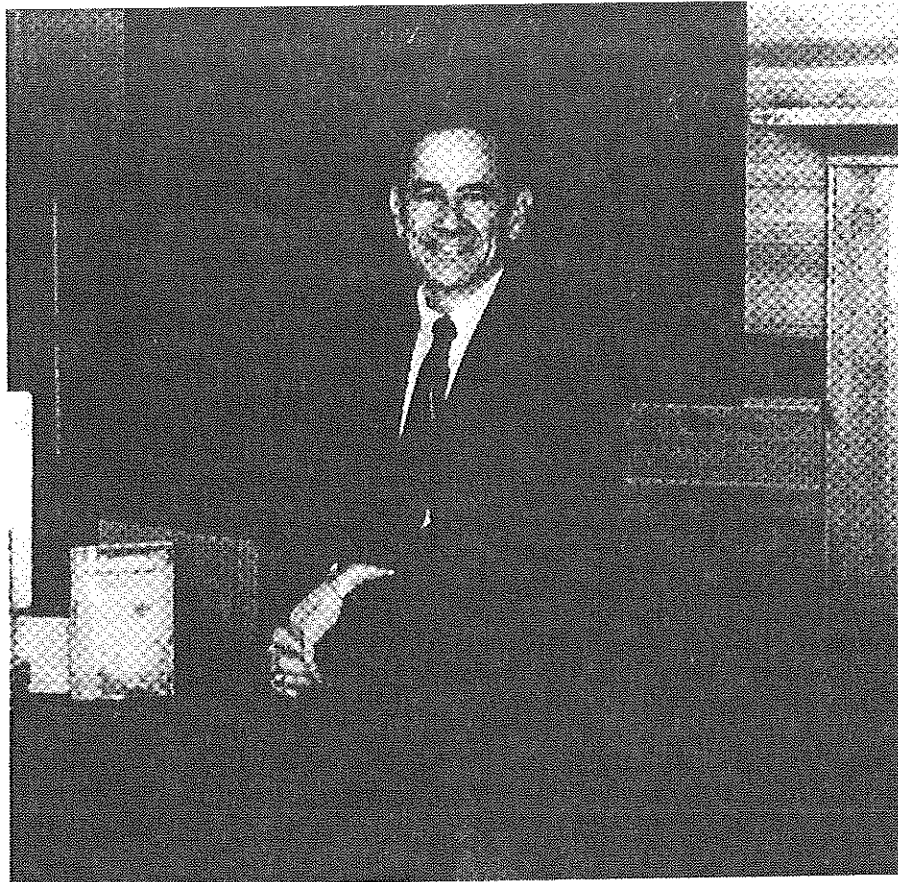
This definition included two important criteria: 1) all points of view have been heard and 2) the will of the group is evident, even to those who most oppose it. Once those criteria were met, the superintendent declared the team had arrived at consensus and made it clear she expected the full cooperation of each member of the team in implementing the professional learning community model throughout the district.

She then arranged for a series of meetings with members of the team to articulate her expectations and to clarify priorities. She used a small-group format for these meetings to encourage dialogue and questions. At each meeting she explained that she intended to be tight on the following concepts.

- *A focus on learning.*

The superintendent reviewed the district mission statement and its pledge to ensure high levels of learning for all students. She contended that if the school district was to fulfill that pledge, administrators and teachers at all levels had to focus their energies on three critical questions: what is it we want all students to learn, how will we know when they have learned it, and how will we respond when a student is not learning?

She called on every school to monitor the learning of each student on a timely basis and to develop systematic procedures to give additional time and support—during the school day—to any



Consultant Richard DuFour is a former superintendent.

student who was experiencing difficulty. The particulars of each school's plan could vary, but every school was called on to create a system of interventions that ensured students received additional time and support.

- *Collaborative teams.*

The superintendent called upon each school to organize the professional staff into collaborative teams. The structure of the teams was left to each school's discretion—course specific, grade level, interdisciplinary, vertical or departmental.

continued on page 17

Defining a Learning Community

The term "professional learning community" is in vogue these days, but what is a professional learning community? What could we expect to see in an organization that is functioning as one?

First, the people in the organization have a clear sense of the mission they are to accomplish and a shared vision of the conditions they must create to achieve their mission. They work together in collaborative teams that engage in collective inquiry into both best practices for accomplishing their aims and the current reality of the conditions in their organization. Any discrepancy between best practice and the reality of their school spurs them to take action to reduce the discrepancy.

The entire organization is designed to engage teams in a cycle of continuous improvement—gathering and an-

alyzing data and information, identifying weaknesses and areas of concern, working together to develop strategies to address specific weaknesses and concerns, supporting each other as they implement those strategies, gathering new data and information to assess the impact of the strategies and then starting the process all over again.

This cycle is not an annual event, but is rather the ongoing process that drives the daily work of people throughout the organization. Finally, the effectiveness of the organization is assessed on the basis of results, rather than intentions or activities.

To create these conditions in her district, the superintendent in the accompanying article delineated both discretionary and non-discretionary aspects of the district's initiative.

— Richard DuFour

Central-Office Support for Learning Communities

BY REBECCA BURNETTE DuFOUR

It's 7:30 on Monday morning. As the principal of This-Too-Shall-Pass Elementary School reviews the pages of his daily planner, he is struck by the limited amount of time he will actually be in school this week because of scheduled meetings at the district office.

As the sole building administrator, he is expected to attend a testing coordinators' meeting to receive information about the state assessment program; a special education eligibility meeting; technology training for administrators; the monthly districtwide administrative meeting; the elementary principals meeting; an afterschool training session on sexual harassment in the workplace; and a meeting with the transportation director and two other principals to discuss bus routes.

Maybe next week he'll have time to focus on improving student learning in his school.

Resolving Tension

Although principals may start each day hoping to focus on student learning, the nature of the job inevitably diverts their attention and energy to other aspects of schooling—student discipline, parent conferences, personnel matters, building maintenance and so forth.

As a former principal and central-office coordinator who works with educators on implementing the professional learning community model in their schools, I understand the constant tension between the learning-centered principal's desire to concentrate on school improvement and the urgent demands that are a natural part of any principal's daily to-do list.

However, I have seen principals resolve that tension in ways that improve student achievement. As a result, I have come to a deeper understanding about what works and what does not work regarding continuous school improvement. I am convinced the practices of the central office play a major role in the eventual success or failure of the improvement efforts of individual schools.

Two recommendations (or more accurately, pleas) to central-office ad-



Rebecca Burnette DuFour

ministrators can facilitate continuous improvement throughout their districts: limit the number of new initiatives and coordinate the array of central-office services.

Limit Initiatives

Nothing is more discouraging to the learning-centered principal than being deluged by disconnected, fragmented, competing initiatives generated from numerous central-office departments. Allowing each department the autonomy to launch separate initiatives that simultaneously descend upon schools is a recipe for disaster. Consider the following scenario.

The director of staff development has mandated that all professional development days will be devoted to training teachers in differentiated instruction, problem-based learning and multiple intelligences. The technology department has developed a new checklist requiring classroom teachers to assess each child's proficiency on numerous computer skills. The math coordinator has insisted that all K-12 teachers fully use the newly adopted project-based math curriculum—even though most are unfamiliar with the concept. The assessment director has required that all K-8 teachers conduct time-intensive independent reading inventories on every student three times each year although schools are not clear on how the results will be used. The director of elementary edu-

cation has decreed all schools must implement cognitive coaching by the end of the school year.

When principals and teachers confront these all-too-common scenarios, their emphasis shifts from results to activity. It is impossible to focus on the learning needs of each student when a district presents so many competing demands. Central-office administrators who support continuous school improvement heed the adage to have more than one goal is to have no goals at all. They recognize that in the arena of school improvement, less is more. They limit district initiatives and demand the coordination of all central-office services to support those limited initiatives.

Poway Unified School District in suburban San Diego serves as an example of a district that has discovered the benefits of limiting initiatives. Poway has reduced the number of district goals from more than 60 per year to just two. Every central-office staff member is called on to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Janet Malone, Poway's director of staff development, reports the effort to limit initiatives has been extremely beneficial because there is no confusion about district priorities.

Coordinated Services

While an effective central office will speak with one voice when communicating priorities, the central office in many districts is viewed as a cacophony of competing interests. When all central-office administrators are separately chanting, "Pay attention to my directives! My initiatives are the priority!" they sow seeds of confusion, frustration and cynicism in schools.

Districts increase the likelihood of sending a consistent message throughout the district when they insist all central-office administrators function as a learning community, working interdependently as a unified team to achieve a focused, districtwide achievement goal.

Imagine a district in which the superintendent leads the administrative team through a process that establishes improved student achievement in

reading as the district's priority for all elementary schools. The superintendent then calls on each member of the team to develop a plan to contribute to that effort.

The directors of staff development, language arts, special education and Title I create ongoing training programs to provide principals and teachers with best practices for the teaching of reading. They also develop a more intensive training-of-trainers program for representative teachers from each school who have volunteered to serve as peer coaches as their colleagues implement the new strategies.

The technology director presents a variety of software programs that serve as reading tutorials for students and user-friendly programs that track each student's mastery of essential skills. The director of assessment develops strategies to provide each school with specific, easily understandable data from the state and national assessments that will identify strengths and weaknesses in reading for students collectively and individually. He also creates a database of released test items

inghouse of best practices and as a resource center that provides the knowledge, training, programs and support to address the unique needs of each school.

Fairfax County, Va., divides its large school district into clusters. The central-office leadership team of Cluster II has made developing professional learning communities a priority for its schools.

Ellen Schoetzau, director of Cluster II schools, built shared knowledge of the learning community concept among key staff by providing training for all central-office administrators, principals and lead teachers of every school in the cluster. She devotes the bulk of her monthly meetings with all principals to discussion of learning community concepts. Principals share and celebrate successes and support each other in overcoming obstacles.

Schoetzau also has visited each of the 29 school sites to engage in dialogue with the staff on their progress and to identify what the central office can do to assist them in their effort.

"Poway has reduced the number of district goals from more than 60 per year to just two."

for specific reading skills that teams of teachers can access as they develop local common assessments. He offers to train grade-level team leaders in the construction of various assessments.

The director of curriculum examines the scope and sequence of the district reading curriculum and aligns it with the state standards. She identifies several gaps, works with teachers to develop supplementary curriculum materials and makes the analysis and materials available to each school.

Role Model

In this scenario, the team rallies around a specific priority and each member is called upon to define how his or her department can customize services to support schools in their efforts to address that priority. As individual schools analyze their student achievement data and identify the training and resources necessary to move forward with the initiative, the central-office team serves as a clear-

She and the central-office staff then use the information garnered from these monthly meetings and school-site visits to design the appropriate support and services for each school.

When the central-office team models the clear purpose, collaborative effort and focus on results that characterize a professional learning community, it increases the likelihood that those conditions will flourish in the schools it serves. Help your principals become learning-centered leaders by giving them the gifts of limited initiatives and coordinated services from a unified central-office team.

Rebecca Burnette DuFour, a former central-office coordinator and elementary school principal in Virginia, is an educational consultant. She can be reached at 465 Island Pointe Lane, Moneta, VA 24121. E-mail: mzprinci@cablenet-va.com. She is co-author of *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Learning Communities*.

continued from page 15

Although the superintendent insisted that teams be provided time to meet during the school day, each school was free to create its own strategy for providing this time.

The superintendent, however, was adamant about two points: every professional staff member would be a member of a team, and the focus of the team would be student learning. To ensure this focus on learning, she insisted that every team identify and pursue a specific, measurable goal that, if achieved, would result in demonstrably higher levels of student learning.

● *Teacher teams focused on results.*

The superintendent recognized most districts address the three critical questions at the central-office level. Directors of curriculum develop district curriculum guides. Directors of assessment monitor results on district and state assessments. The central office directs school improvement committees that must develop strategies for raising student performance.

However, she also recognized that all this activity at the central-office level often had little impact on the day-to-day workings of classroom teachers. She made it clear she wanted to engage, not just central-office staff, but each teacher team in every school in the investigation of the critical questions. She proposed a four-part process to promote that team engagement. (See related story, page 18.)

Periodic Reviews

The superintendent then explained she would meet individually with every member of the leadership team over the next several months to review the following areas:

● **Planning:** What is your plan for implementing the professional learning community process in your school or department? What specific steps do you plan to take and when will you take them? What are you doing to align the practices and processes of your school with these concepts?

● **Monitoring:** What are your strategies for monitoring each student's mastery of essential learning? How are you monitoring the productivity of your teams? How will you assess the results of this initiative in your school or department?

● **Modeling:** How are you modeling a focus on student learning and your commitment to collaboration? What have you done to create a guiding coalition to assist you in this important endeavor in

your school or department?

- Driving questions: What questions have you posed to guide the work of the teams and the progress of the initiative?

- Allocating time: How have you ensured that every student who experiences initial difficulty is provided additional time and support for learning during the school day? What steps have you taken to give every collaborative team time to work together during the school day?

- Celebrating: What are you doing

to celebrate the work of teams and the progress of your school in order to sustain this initiative?

- Confronting: What resistance and obstacles have you encountered and

"Obstacles and problems are an inevitable byproduct ..."

how have you responded?

The superintendent concluded by

sharing the assumptions that she hoped would drive the work of the leadership team:

1. The fundamental purpose of the district was to ensure high levels of

learning for every student.

2. This important purpose could not be achieved if people throughout the organization worked in isolation. Coordination and collaboration were essential.

3. By working together to build the capacity of the district to function as a professional learning community, all staff would experience both greater job satisfaction and the sense of accomplishment that comes with making a positive difference in the lives of the students.

4. The advancement of the professional learning community concept would be the top priority of the district, and each member of the leadership team would be called upon to present tangible evidence of his or her contribution to the effort.

A Collective Effort

The leadership of this superintendent has not eliminated obstacles and problems as the district moves forward with the professional learning community initiative. Obstacles and problems are an inevitable byproduct of the change process. But her efforts to build shared knowledge and to arrive at consensus have created a guiding coalition for the initiative.

In addition, she has delineated both the broad parameters to guide the work of schools and the specific areas in which the staff in those schools have the freedom to find the best strategies for achieving the district's goals. She has embraced the "Genius of the And" and given the people in her district rare gifts—a clear sense of organizational direction and a better understanding of how each person can contribute to the collective effort to make a difference in the lives of students. ■

Richard DuFour, a former superintendent, is an educational consultant. He can be reached at 465 Island Pointe Lane, Moneta, VA 24121. E-mail: rdufour@district125.k12.il.us. He is the co-author of *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*.

Four Steps Toward Team Engagement

Simply providing teachers with time to collaborate on a regular basis will not lead to improvements in student achievement. Collaborative teams are most effective when members have a clear sense of purpose, specific goals and structured activities that give direction to their work.

These conditions do not emerge by accident. They are the direct result of effective leadership. Leaders can build the collective capacity of a staff to get better results if they make certain that teams use collaborative time to engage in dialogue and processes that have a positive impact on student learning.

The steps listed below serve as an example.

- Clarify essential outcomes.

All teams would be asked to specify the essential outcomes each student was to achieve as a result of their course, grade level or program. The district would provide each team with relevant national, state and district learning standards and evidence of traditional levels of student performance from a variety of assessments.

After studying the various documents and information, each team would be asked to identify eight to 10 critical outcomes per semester that were aligned with state and district standards. The outcomes could vary from school to school, provided the designated outcomes were aligned with state and district standards. Once a team identified the essential outcomes, the members of the team would be expected to focus their daily work on helping all students acquire the intended knowledge and skills.

- Develop common assessments.

Each team would be asked to develop at least four assessments per year that would be given to all of the students they were teaching. The district would provide released sets of items from national, state and district assessments to assist teams who were free to use those items or create their own. Teams would also be free to determine the type and nature of the assessments—multiple-choice tests, essays, performance, projects, etc.

- Define proficiency.

Each team would be called upon to identify the standard a student must meet on each assessment to be deemed proficient. They also would be required to define the criteria by which they would judge the quality of student work in more subjective assessments.

- Analyze results and develop improvement strategies.

Each team would be required to review student performance on the common assessments to identify the strengths and weaknesses of all students tested. The team then would be asked to develop and implement strategies to improve upon that level of achievement. Each member of the team also would be called upon to assess the performance of his or her students in comparison to the group, to seek help from teammates in areas of concern and to offer teammates suggestions and ideas in areas in which his or her students excelled.

The district would provide each building with the technical capabilities to generate this information for each team and each teacher. It also would provide support and training for each step in this process for teams that required assistance.

Building a Professional Learning Community

To be a school superintendent in the United States today is to feel the pull of conflicting demands and competing ideologies. The demands of different interest groups are often readily apparent—for example, parents who want smaller class sizes versus taxpayers who want cuts in the budget.

Perhaps less obvious to those who never have served as a superintendent are the conflicting images of the very nature of the position. Should the superintendent be the forceful leader who implements his or her personal vision of how a school district and its individual schools should operate, or should the contemporary superintendent embrace site-based management and encourage the staff of each school to identify and pursue the issues most relevant to them? Should the desire for equity and equal opportunity lead superintendents to champion uniformity and consistency throughout the district, or should the realization that change occurs one school at a time lead superintendents to support the freedom and autonomy at each school that inevitably lead to differences between sites?

Superintendents err when they resolve this apparent dichotomy by choosing one approach or the other. In their

For system leaders, it means allowing autonomy within defined parameters

landmark study of organizations that sustained excellence over an extended period of time, James Collins and Jerry Porras, co-authors of *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, found those organizations embraced the paradox of living with two seemingly contradictory ideas or forces at the same time. They rejected the “Tyranny of the Or” and embraced the “Genius of the And.” Instead of choosing between A or B, these companies figured out a way to have both A and B. For example, they developed powerful philosophical and conceptual images that drove the entire organization and that encouraged the individuals within the organization to seek and develop innovative strategies for achieving the core purpose of the organization.

Collins and Porras wrote: “We are not talking about balance here. Balance

implies going to the midpoint, 50-50, half and half. ... [A] highly visionary company doesn't want to blend ying and yang into a gray, indistinguishable circle that is neither highly ying nor highly yang; it aims to be distinctly ying and distinctly yang, both at the same time, all the time.”

Superintendents who reject the “Tyranny of the Or” and embrace the “Genius of the And” are skillful in demonstrating “loose-tight leadership” or “directed autonomy.” They focus on identifying and articulating both the fundamental purpose of the organization and a few “big ideas” that will help the district improve in its capacity to achieve that purpose. They are tight on purpose and big ideas—insisting that those within the organization act in ways consistent with those concepts and demanding that the district align all of its practices and programs with them.

At the same time, however, they encourage individual and organizational autonomy in the day-to-day operations of the various schools and departments. This autonomy is not characterized by random acts of innovation, but rather is guided by carefully defined parameters that give focus and direction to schools and those within them.

I am convinced that the parame-



ters—the focused purpose and big ideas—that should drive school districts today are found in the concept of the professional learning community.

I have worked with school districts throughout North America and witnessed the different approaches superintendents have taken to implement the concepts of the learning community model in their districts. Some have invited schools to consider the learning community model as a strategy for stimulating improvement. Others have proclaimed that all schools must become learning communities, then left the de-

velop as a learning organization.

The strategy proven most effective, however, is one that is loose and tight, a strategy that establishes a clear priority and discernible parameters and then provides each school and department with the autonomy to chart its own course for achieving the objectives.

Shared Knowledge

The efforts of a superintendent of a suburban school district offer an excellent example of leading the professional learning community initiative on a districtwide basis. She began by building

content of those articles the focus of monthly team meetings.

In addition, she presented a book on learning communities to every member of the team, raised questions based on the book and solicited reactions to the concepts it presented. She required all members of the leadership team to attend a two-day workshop on professional learning communities to ensure her entire team heard a consistent message and developed a common vocabulary. She demonstrated the importance she placed on the workshop by attending every minute of it herself. Soon thereafter she held a follow-up meeting of the team where she asked if the professional learning community model offered a preferred alternative to the current reality of the district's operations.

Although this superintendent was a proponent of collaborative decision making, she recognized the importance of building shared knowledge as a prerequisite for the decision-making process. She understood that as a leader she was called on not merely to pool opinions, but rather to ensure that each member of the group had sufficient knowledge to make good decisions.

“Perhaps less obvious to those who never have served as a superintendent are the conflicting images of the very nature of the position.”

tails as to how to bring about this transformation to each school to resolve. Still others have been more prescriptive about the precise policies, programs and procedures each school must adopt to

shared knowledge about professional learning communities with her leadership team—central-office staff, principals and leaders of the teachers' union. She distributed articles and made the

Thus she ensured that members of her team were able to draw upon consistent information, operate from the same conceptual framework and use a common vocabulary when called upon to assess the potential of the professional learning community model. She attended to a critical component of the process—building shared knowledge.

Constructing Consensus

While most superintendents acknowledge the benefits of building consensus, they often operate under the assumption that the group does not achieve consensus until each member has endorsed the proposal under consideration.

This superintendent understood the difference between “consensus” and “unanimity.” If everyone must agree before the group can take action, it is unlikely that action will ever occur. Therefore, she had established an operational definition for consensus that was understood by every member of the team.

This definition included two important criteria: 1) all points of view have been heard and 2) the will of the group is evident, even to those who most oppose it. Once those criteria were met, the superintendent declared the team had arrived at consensus and made it clear she expected the full cooperation of each member of the team in implementing the professional learning community model throughout the district.

She then arranged for a series of meetings with members of the team to articulate her expectations and to clarify priorities. She used a small-group format for these meetings to encourage dialogue and questions. At each meeting she explained that she intended to be tight on the following concepts.

- *A focus on learning.*

The superintendent reviewed the district mission statement and its pledge to ensure high levels of learning for all students. She contended that if the school district was to fulfill that pledge, administrators and teachers at all levels had to focus their energies on three critical questions: what is it we want all students to learn, how will we know when they have learned it, and how will we respond when a student is not learning?

She called on every school to monitor the learning of each student on a timely basis and to develop systematic procedures to give additional time and support—during the school day—to any



Consultant Richard DuFour is a former superintendent.

student who was experiencing difficulty. The particulars of each school’s plan could vary, but every school was called on to create a system of interventions that ensured students received additional time and support.

- *Collaborative teams.*

The superintendent called upon each school to organize the professional staff into collaborative teams. The structure of the teams was left to each school’s discretion—course specific, grade level, interdisciplinary, vertical or departmental.

continued on page 17

Defining a Learning Community

The term “professional learning community” is in vogue these days, but what is a professional learning community? What could we expect to see in an organization that is functioning as one?

First, the people in the organization have a clear sense of the mission they are to accomplish and a shared vision of the conditions they must create to achieve their mission. They work together in collaborative teams that engage in collective inquiry into both best practices for accomplishing their aims and the current reality of the conditions in their organization. Any discrepancy between best practice and the reality of their school spurs them to take action to reduce the discrepancy.

The entire organization is designed to engage teams in a cycle of continuous improvement—gathering and an-

alyzing data and information, identifying weaknesses and areas of concern, working together to develop strategies to address specific weaknesses and concerns, supporting each other as they implement those strategies, gathering new data and information to assess the impact of the strategies and then starting the process all over again.

This cycle is not an annual event, but is rather the ongoing process that drives the daily work of people throughout the organization. Finally, the effectiveness of the organization is assessed on the basis of results, rather than intentions or activities.

To create these conditions in her district, the superintendent in the accompanying article delineated both discretionary and non-discretionary aspects of the district’s initiative.

— Richard DuFour

Central-Office Support for Learning Communities

BY REBECCA BURNETTE DUFOUR

It's 7:30 on Monday morning. As the principal of This-Too-Shell-Pass Elementary School reviews the pages of his daily planner, he is struck by the limited amount of time he will actually be in school this week because of scheduled meetings at the district office.

As the sole building administrator, he is expected to attend a testing coordinators' meeting to receive information about the state assessment program; a special education eligibility meeting; technology training for administrators; the monthly districtwide administrative meeting; the elementary principals meeting; an afterschool training session on sexual harassment in the workplace; and a meeting with the transportation director and two other principals to discuss bus routes.

Maybe next week he'll have time to focus on improving student learning in his school.

Resolving Tension

Although principals may start each day hoping to focus on student learning, the nature of the job inevitably diverts their attention and energy to other aspects of schooling—student discipline, parent conferences, personnel matters, building maintenance and so forth.

As a former principal and central-office coordinator who works with educators on implementing the professional learning community model in their schools, I understand the constant tension between the learning-centered principal's desire to concentrate on school improvement and the urgent demands that are a natural part of any principal's daily to-do list.

However, I have seen principals resolve that tension in ways that improve student achievement. As a result, I have come to a deeper understanding about what works and what does not work regarding continuous school improvement. I am convinced the practices of the central office play a major role in the eventual success or failure of the improvement efforts of individual schools.

Two recommendations (or more accurately, pleas) to central-office ad-



Rebecca Burnette DuFour

ministrators can facilitate continuous improvement throughout their districts: limit the number of new initiatives and coordinate the array of central-office services.

Limit Initiatives

Nothing is more discouraging to the learning-centered principal than being deluged by disconnected, fragmented, competing initiatives generated from numerous central-office departments. Allowing each department the autonomy to launch separate initiatives that simultaneously descend upon schools is a recipe for disaster. Consider the following scenario.

The director of staff development has mandated that all professional development days will be devoted to training teachers in differentiated instruction, problem-based learning and multiple intelligences. The technology department has developed a new checklist requiring classroom teachers to assess each child's proficiency on numerous computer skills. The math coordinator has insisted that all K-12 teachers fully use the newly adopted project-based math curriculum—even though most are unfamiliar with the concept. The assessment director has required that all K-8 teachers conduct time-intensive independent reading inventories on every student three times each year although schools are not clear on how the results will be used. The director of elementary edu-

cation has decreed all schools must implement cognitive coaching by the end of the school year.

When principals and teachers confront these all-too-common scenarios, their emphasis shifts from results to activity. It is impossible to focus on the learning needs of each student when a district presents so many competing demands. Central-office administrators who support continuous school improvement heed the adage to have more than one goal is to have no goals at all. They recognize that in the arena of school improvement, less is more. They limit district initiatives and demand the coordination of all central-office services to support those limited initiatives.

Poway Unified School District in suburban San Diego serves as an example of a district that has discovered the benefits of limiting initiatives. Poway has reduced the number of district goals from more than 60 per year to just two. Every central-office staff member is called on to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Janet Malone, Poway's director of staff development, reports the effort to limit initiatives has been extremely beneficial because there is no confusion about district priorities.

Coordinated Services

While an effective central office will speak with one voice when communicating priorities, the central office in many districts is viewed as a cacophony of competing interests. When all central-office administrators are separately chanting, "Pay attention to my directives! My initiatives are the priority!" they sow seeds of confusion, frustration and cynicism in schools.

Districts increase the likelihood of sending a consistent message throughout the district when they insist all central-office administrators function as a learning community, working interdependently as a unified team to achieve a focused, districtwide achievement goal.

Imagine a district in which the superintendent leads the administrative team through a process that establishes improved student achievement in

reading as the district's priority for all elementary schools. The superintendent then calls on each member of the team to develop a plan to contribute to that effort.

The directors of staff development, language arts, special education and Title I create ongoing training programs to provide principals and teachers with best practices for the teaching of reading. They also develop a more intensive training-of-trainers program for representative teachers from each school who have volunteered to serve as peer coaches as their colleagues implement the new strategies.

The technology director presents a variety of software programs that serve as reading tutorials for students and user-friendly programs that track each student's mastery of essential skills. The director of assessment develops strategies to provide each school with specific, easily understandable data from the state and national assessments that will identify strengths and weaknesses in reading for students collectively and individually. He also creates a database of released test items

"Poway has reduced the number of district goals from more than 60 per year to just two."

for specific reading skills that teams of teachers can access as they develop local common assessments. He offers to train grade-level team leaders in the construction of various assessments.

The director of curriculum examines the scope and sequence of the district reading curriculum and aligns it with the state standards. She identifies several gaps, works with teachers to develop supplementary curriculum materials and makes the analysis and materials available to each school.

Role Model

In this scenario, the team rallies around a specific priority and each member is called upon to define how his or her department can customize services to support schools in their efforts to address that priority. As individual schools analyze their student achievement data and identify the training and resources necessary to move forward with the initiative, the central-office team serves as a clear-

inghouse of best practices and as a resource center that provides the knowledge, training, programs and support to address the unique needs of each school.

Fairfax County, Va., divides its large school district into clusters. The central-office leadership team of Cluster II has made developing professional learning communities a priority for its schools.

Ellen Schoetzau, director of Cluster II schools, built shared knowledge of the learning community concept among key staff by providing training for all central-office administrators, principals and lead teachers of every school in the cluster. She devotes the bulk of her monthly meetings with all principals to discussion of learning community concepts. Principals share and celebrate successes and support each other in overcoming obstacles.

Schoetzau also has visited each of the 29 school sites to engage in dialogue with the staff on their progress and to identify what the central office can do to assist them in their effort.

She and the central-office staff then use the information garnered from these monthly meetings and school-site visits to design the appropriate support and services for each school.

When the central-office team models the clear purpose, collaborative effort and focus on results that characterize a professional learning community, it increases the likelihood that those conditions will flourish in the schools it serves. Help your principals become learning-centered leaders by giving them the gifts of limited initiatives and coordinated services from a unified central-office team.

Rebecca Burnette DuFour, a former central-office coordinator and elementary school principal in Virginia, is an educational consultant. She can be reached at 465 Island Pointe Lane, Moneta, VA 24121. E-mail: mzprinci@cblenet-va.com. She is co-author of *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Learning Communities*.

continued from page 15

Although the superintendent insisted that teams be provided time to meet during the school day, each school was free to create its own strategy for providing this time.

The superintendent, however, was adamant about two points: every professional staff member would be a member of a team, and the focus of the team would be student learning. To ensure this focus on learning, she insisted that every team identify and pursue a specific, measurable goal that, if achieved, would result in demonstrably higher levels of student learning.

● *Teacher teams focused on results.*

The superintendent recognized most districts address the three critical questions at the central-office level. Directors of curriculum develop district curriculum guides. Directors of assessment monitor results on district and state assessments. The central office directs school improvement committees that must develop strategies for raising student performance.

However, she also recognized that all this activity at the central-office level often had little impact on the day-to-day workings of classroom teachers. She made it clear she wanted to engage, not just central-office staff, but each teacher team in every school in the investigation of the critical questions. She proposed a four-part process to promote that team engagement. (See related story, page 18.)

Periodic Reviews

The superintendent then explained she would meet individually with every member of the leadership team over the next several months to review the following areas:

● **Planning:** What is your plan for implementing the professional learning community process in your school or department? What specific steps do you plan to take and when will you take them? What are you doing to align the practices and processes of your school with these concepts?

● **Monitoring:** What are your strategies for monitoring each student's mastery of essential learning? How are you monitoring the productivity of your teams? How will you assess the results of this initiative in your school or department?

● **Modeling:** How are you modeling a focus on student learning and your commitment to collaboration? What have you done to create a guiding coalition to assist you in this important endeavor in

your school or department?

- **Driving questions:** What questions have you posed to guide the work of the teams and the progress of the initiative?

- **Allocating time:** How have you ensured that every student who experiences initial difficulty is provided additional time and support for learning during the school day? What steps have you taken to give every collaborative team time to work together during the school day?

- **Celebrating:** What are you doing

to celebrate the work of teams and the progress of your school in order to sustain this initiative?

- **Confronting:** What resistance and obstacles have you encountered and

how have you responded?

The superintendent concluded by

sharing the assumptions that she hoped would drive the work of the leadership team:

1. The fundamental purpose of the district was to ensure high levels of

"Obstacles and problems are an inevitable byproduct ..."

learning for every student.

2. This important purpose could not be achieved if people throughout the organization worked in isolation. Coordination and collaboration were essential.

3. By working together to build the capacity of the district to function as a professional learning community, all staff would experience both greater job satisfaction and the sense of accomplishment that comes with making a positive difference in the lives of the students.

4. The advancement of the professional learning community concept would be the top priority of the district, and each member of the leadership team would be called upon to present tangible evidence of his or her contribution to the effort.

Four Steps Toward Team Engagement

Simply providing teachers with time to collaborate on a regular basis will not lead to improvements in student achievement. Collaborative teams are most effective when members have a clear sense of purpose, specific goals and structured activities that give direction to their work.

These conditions do not emerge by accident. They are the direct result of effective leadership. Leaders can build the collective capacity of a staff to get better results if they make certain that teams use collaborative time to engage in dialogue and processes that have a positive impact on student learning.

The steps listed below serve as an example.

- **Clarify essential outcomes.**

All teams would be asked to specify the essential outcomes each student was to achieve as a result of their course, grade level or program. The district would provide each team with relevant national, state and district learning standards and evidence of traditional levels of student performance from a variety of assessments.

After studying the various documents and information, each team would be asked to identify eight to 10 critical outcomes per semester that were aligned with state and district standards. The outcomes could vary from school to school, provided the designated outcomes were aligned with state and district standards. Once a team identified the essential outcomes, the members of the team would be expected to focus their daily work on helping all students acquire the intended knowledge and skills.

- **Develop common assessments.**

Each team would be asked to develop at least four assessments per year that would be given to all of the students they were teaching. The district would provide released sets of items from national, state and district assessments to assist teams who were free to use those items or create their own. Teams would also be free to determine the type and nature of the assessments—multiple-choice tests, essays, performance, projects, etc.

- **Define proficiency.**

Each team would be called upon to identify the standard a student must meet on each assessment to be deemed proficient. They also would be required to define the criteria by which they would judge the quality of student work in more subjective assessments.

- **Analyze results and develop improvement strategies.**

Each team would be required to review student performance on the common assessments to identify the strengths and weaknesses of all students tested. The team then would be asked to develop and implement strategies to improve upon that level of achievement. Each member of the team also would be called upon to assess the performance of his or her students in comparison to the group, to seek help from teammates in areas of concern and to offer teammates suggestions and ideas in areas in which his or her students excelled.

The district would provide each building with the technical capabilities to generate this information for each team and each teacher. It also would provide support and training for each step in this process for teams that required assistance.

A Collective Effort

The leadership of this superintendent has not eliminated obstacles and problems as the district moves forward with the professional learning community initiative. Obstacles and problems are an inevitable byproduct of the change process. But her efforts to build shared knowledge and to arrive at consensus have created a guiding coalition for the initiative.

In addition, she has delineated both the broad parameters to guide the work of schools and the specific areas in which the staff in those schools have the freedom to find the best strategies for achieving the district's goals. She has embraced the "Genius of the And" and given the people in her district rare gifts—a clear sense of organizational direction and a better understanding of how each person can contribute to the collective effort to make a difference in the lives of students. ■

Richard DuFour, a former superintendent, is an educational consultant. He can be reached at 465 Island Pointe Lane, Moneta, VA 24121. E-mail: rdufour@district125.k12.il.us. He is the co-author of *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*.

The Learning-Centered Principal

Schools need leadership from principals who focus on advancing student and staff learning.

I can summarize the most universally accepted conventional wisdom regarding the fundamental role of the contemporary principal in a single phrase: The principal must serve as the *instructional leader* of the school. For more than 30 years, research has described the principal in this way. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2001) defines its mission, in part, as “strengthening the role of the principal as instructional leader.” State legislatures have mandated that principals serve as instructional leaders, and school districts have written their job descriptions for principals to include a reference to instructional leadership. But allow me to offer a radical proposal: The focus on the principal as instructional leader is flawed.

Confessions of an Instructional Leader

When I entered the principalship a quarter century ago, the research on effective schools warned that without strong administrative leadership, the disparate elements of good schooling could be neither brought together nor kept together (Lezotte, 1997). I heeded the message and embraced my role as a strong leader with gusto. I was determined to rise above the mundane managerial tasks of the job and focus instead on instruction—I hoped to be an *instructional leader*. I asked teachers to submit their course syllabi and curriculum guides so that I could monitor what they were teaching. I collected weekly lesson plans to ensure that teachers were teaching the prescribed curriculum. I read voraciously about instructional strategies in different content areas and shared pertinent articles with staff members.

But my devotion to the clinical supervision process at the school was the single greatest illustration of my commitment to function as an instructional leader. I developed a three-part process that required me to be a student of good teaching and to help teachers become more reflective and insightful about their instruction.

During the pre-observation conference, I met with teachers individually and asked them to talk me through the lesson I would be observing in their classroom. I asked a series of questions, including What will you teach? How will you teach it? What instructional strategies will you use? What instructional materials will you use? During the classroom observation, I worked furiously to script as accurately as possible what the teacher said and did.

During the postobservation conference, the teacher and I reconstructed the lesson from my notes and his or her recollections. We looked for patterns or trends in what the teacher had said and done, and we discussed the relationship between those patterns and the lesson’s objectives. Finally, I asked the teacher what he or she might change in the lesson before teaching it again. I then wrote a summary of the classroom observation and our postobservation discussion, offered recommendations for effective teaching strategies, and suggested ways in which the teacher might become more effective.

The observation process was time-consuming, but I was convinced that my focus on individual teachers and their instructional strategies was an effective use of my time. And the process was not without benefits. As a new pair of eyes in the classroom, I was able to help teachers become aware of unintended instructional or classroom management patterns. I could express my appreciation for the wonderful work that teachers were doing because I had witnessed it firsthand. I observed powerful instructional strategies and was able to share those strategies with other teachers. I learned a lot about what effective teaching looks like.

In Hot Pursuit of the Wrong Questions

Eventually, after years as a principal, I realized that even though my efforts had been well intentioned—and even though I had devoted countless hours each school year to those efforts—I had been focusing on the wrong questions. I had focused on the questions, What are the teachers teaching? and How can I help them to teach it more effectively? Instead, my efforts should have been driven by the questions, To what extent are the students learning the intended outcomes of each course? and

What steps can I take to give both students and teachers the additional time and support they need to improve learning?

This shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning is more than semantics. When learning becomes the preoccupation of the school, when all the school's educators examine the efforts and initiatives of the school through the lens of their impact on learning, the structure and culture of the school begin to change in substantive ways. Principals foster this

the essential outcomes of their courses. Teams limited themselves to 8-10 such outcomes per semester. In effect, teams narrowed their focus and reduced their curriculum by eliminating nonessential content.

■ Develop two common assessments per semester and specify the standard of mastery for the assessment as well as for each subtest within the assessment. Once a team had agreed on what students should learn, its members turned their attention to the question, How will we know whether students

concern, and developed and implemented action plans to improve the performance of all students.

As principal, I played an important role in initiating, facilitating, and sustaining the process of shifting our collective focus from teaching to learning. To make collaborative teams the primary engine of our school improvement efforts, teachers needed time to collaborate. Teachers, accustomed to working in isolation, needed focus and parameters as they transitioned to working in teams. They needed a process to follow and guiding questions to pursue. They needed training, resources, and support to overcome difficulties they encountered while developing common outcomes, writing common assessments, and analyzing student achievement data. They needed access to relevant, timely information on their students' performance. They needed help writing specific and measurable team improvement goals that focused on student learning rather than on their team activities. They needed encouragement, recognition, and celebration as they progressed. They needed someone to confront those individuals or teams of teachers who failed to fulfill their

Teachers and students benefit when principals function as *learning leaders* rather than *instructional leaders*.

structural and cultural transformation when they shift their emphasis from helping individual teachers improve instruction to helping teams of teachers ensure that students achieve the intended outcomes of their schooling. More succinctly, teachers and students benefit when principals function as *learning leaders* rather than *instructional leaders*.

From Teaching to Learning: One School's Story

I became principal of Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, in 1983. One of the first steps we took in our transition from teaching to learning was to organize all staff members who taught the same course into teams. For two years, each team worked together to

■ Clarify the essential outcomes of the course and the outcomes of each unit of instruction within the course. A school's teachers cannot make student learning their focus until they know what each student needs to learn. The Stevenson teacher teams examined state curriculum guidelines, the recommendations of professional organizations, and competencies assessed by such tests as the ACT and SAT to clarify

have learned the essential outcomes? Teams developed at least two common assessments each semester to give to all students enrolled in the course. Typically, teachers teach, test, and hope for the best. Stevenson teachers established standards of mastery for these common assessments and for each subtest within a common assessment. They set a bar for student performance and then worked to ensure that each student could make it over that bar.

■ Analyze results and develop strategies for improvement on the basis of the analysis. The common assessments provided the teachers with valuable information. They saw how successful their students were in meeting an agreed-on standard compared with all the other students in the school who were attempting to meet the same standard on the same test. A teacher whose students struggled on a particular subtest could turn to the team for ideas, strategies, and materials to improve student learning. A teacher with expertise in helping students master a particular concept could share that expertise with colleagues. Finally, the team assessed the performance of the entire group of students, celebrated areas of high performance, identified areas of



THOSE CALLED upon to forecast future trends in professional development are well-advised to remember the biblical observation, "There is nothing new under the sun." In fact, a case could be made that the greatest advances in professional development will come not from identifying new strategies or processes, but rather from applying what we already know to be best practice. The most pressing issue confronting educators is not a lack of knowledge but a lack of implementation, and a key to improving schools is taking purposeful steps to close this knowing-doing gap.

It has also been argued, however, that a group must be able to envision a better future before it can take steps to create that future. The following observations are presented to help others imagine a better future — what might be in the domain of professional development for educators.

We will know a new era has dawned when educators engaged in the deepest and most meaningful learning won't even recognize they are participating in professional development. Purposeful collaboration, collective inquiry, action research, and seeking evidence of results to inform individual, team, and school practices will be so deeply embedded in educators' routine work that they will consider these powerful learning experiences as simply "the way we do things around here." The artificial distinc-

tion that has so long existed between teacher "work time" (that is, time spent in the classroom) and teacher "learning time" (that is, the days set aside annually for "institutes") will be replaced by a culture in which working and learning are so interwoven, it will be impossible to identify where one begins and the other ends.

The collaborative team will become the primary engine for this professional learning, and time for collaboration will be embedded in teachers' daily and weekly schedule. Teams will be expected to develop and pursue results-oriented goals that are specifically linked to school and district goals. Teachers working in teams will be required to analyze data, identify concerns regarding the learning of their students, build shared knowledge regarding how to best address those concerns, develop and implement short-term action plans to improve upon the current reality, analyze data to see what worked and what did not, assist each other as they work interdependently to achieve the goals for which they are mutually accountable, and continue to repeat

RICK DuFOUR is the former superintendent of Adlai Stevenson High School District 125 in Lincolnshire, Ill., a nationally known author, and consultant in discussions about learning communities. BECKY DuFOUR, a former principal, now consults nationally on professional learning to create learning communities. You can contact them at 465 Island Pointe Lane, Moneta, VA 24121, 540-721-4662, e-mail: rdufour@district125.k12.il.us and beck.dufour@suddenlinkmail.com.

THOUGHT LEADERS

Rick and Becky DuFour



**What might be
Open the door
to a better future**

© Rick and Becky DuFour, 2007.

this process in a perpetual cycle of improvement. Within this tight process, however, teams will enjoy tremendous autonomy in the problems they choose to address, their selection of improvement strategies, and, very importantly, in seeking the kind of professional learning they deem essential to their success.

The ongoing learning essential to this process has profound implications for schools and districts. Professional development as an event or workshop will give way to a process of continuous learning. The generic professional development presented to an entire faculty on a few designated days each year will give way to just-in-time learning specific to the issues confronting a team. Professional learning will become more timely in delivery and more precise in identifying the specific knowledge and skills educators need to address issues and achieve their goals.

And if adult learning in schools is truly to become professional development, educators must commit to the collective pursuit of best practice and

extend that pursuit beyond their classroom, their team, their school, or even their district. In too many schools and districts, decisions are based upon preferences and perceptions rather than evidence of effectiveness. The question that has driven initiatives has been "Do we like it?" rather than "Does it help more students learn at higher levels?" Discussion of complex problems devolves into a pooling of opinions, and the contrived congeniality of many faculties makes it difficult to critique diverse opinions in a culture that seems to suggest all perceptions are of equal value. A professional, however, is someone with expertise in a specialized field, who not only has pursued advanced training to enter the field, but who also is expected to remain current in its evolving knowledge base. Professional development, then, must be specifically linked to compelling evidence of best practice.

Imagine a group of 2nd-grade teachers who have worked together as a collaborative team to clarify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions their students are to acquire as a result of the upcoming unit they are about to teach. One of those skills is regrouping numbers in two-digit addition and subtraction. Members have discussed different instructional strategies, have agreed on common pacing, and have developed a common formative assessment that they administer to all students. They share the results of the assessment, seek ideas from a colleague who is achieving outstanding results, and offer support and specific strategies for a team member whose students are experiencing difficulty in learning the skill.

But perhaps no one on the team has successfully helped students become proficient with regrouping. So, that district identifies teachers and principals who represent what Jerry Sternin has described as "positive deviants" — individuals who consis-

FROM THE FIELD

Lauren Childs

Teachers with differentiated careers



"MY HOPE is that over the next 10 years, we'll begin to see teachers entering the profession with the expectation of building highly differentiated careers, a process that will put a high premium on their own learning. Someone who aspires to be a 3rd-grade teacher, for instance, may envision a career that includes work not only in the classroom, but also as an instruction/assessment leader, a school-based coach, a

teacher researcher, and a professional learning facilitator. Such opportunities will push us as a profession to commit to alternative structures, practices, and resources for learning."

Lauren Childs is a teacher leadership and school improvement consultant with Oakland Schools, a service agency supporting 28 school districts in Oakland County, Mich. She is also a designer and facilitator for the Galileo Leadership Consortium, a teacher leadership program based in southeast Michigan. You can contact her at Lauren.Childs@oakland.k12.mi.us.

tently achieve results that are dramatically superior to the norm. The district has studied those positive deviants, has asked them to reflect on and articulate their practices, has created training programs based on some of their specific skills, and makes them available as a resource to other educators in the district. The team can access the ideas, insights, and information from the district's most successful teacher in teaching 2nd-grade math skills and solicit his or her assistance as team members implement new strategies in their classrooms.

Or imagine a national network of best practices in education for every course, every discipline, and every grade level. Now, the 2nd-grade team accesses a national web site that provides the lesson plans, handouts, worksheets, teaching tips, and sample assessments for that specific skill from some of the most effective teachers in the nation. They watch a video of some of those teachers working on that skill with students similar to their own. They discuss the best way to

implement ideas they have learned, and they develop strategies for gathering evidence on their effectiveness.

This proposed openness and accessibility may seem foreign to educators who have been reluctant to open their file cabinets to or share "their stuff" with a colleague. But the Massachusetts Institute of Technology recently announced that it is making the content of all its courses available online to anyone in the world at no charge. MIT described this initiative as an act of "intellectual philanthropy." Perhaps others will follow suit. Perhaps the next "education governor" or "education president" will conclude that helping all students learn will require more than assessments and sanctions, and he or she will champion the creation of systematic intellectual philanthropy that provides educators with free and open access to the knowledge base that can serve as a vital catalyst to their ongoing professional development.

To quote John Lennon, "Imagine."