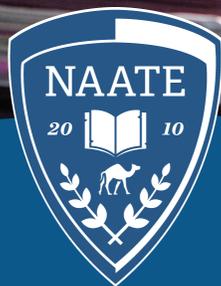


DEVELOPING OUR BEST TEACHERS

Moving Beyond Effectiveness

Written by Tony Klemmer

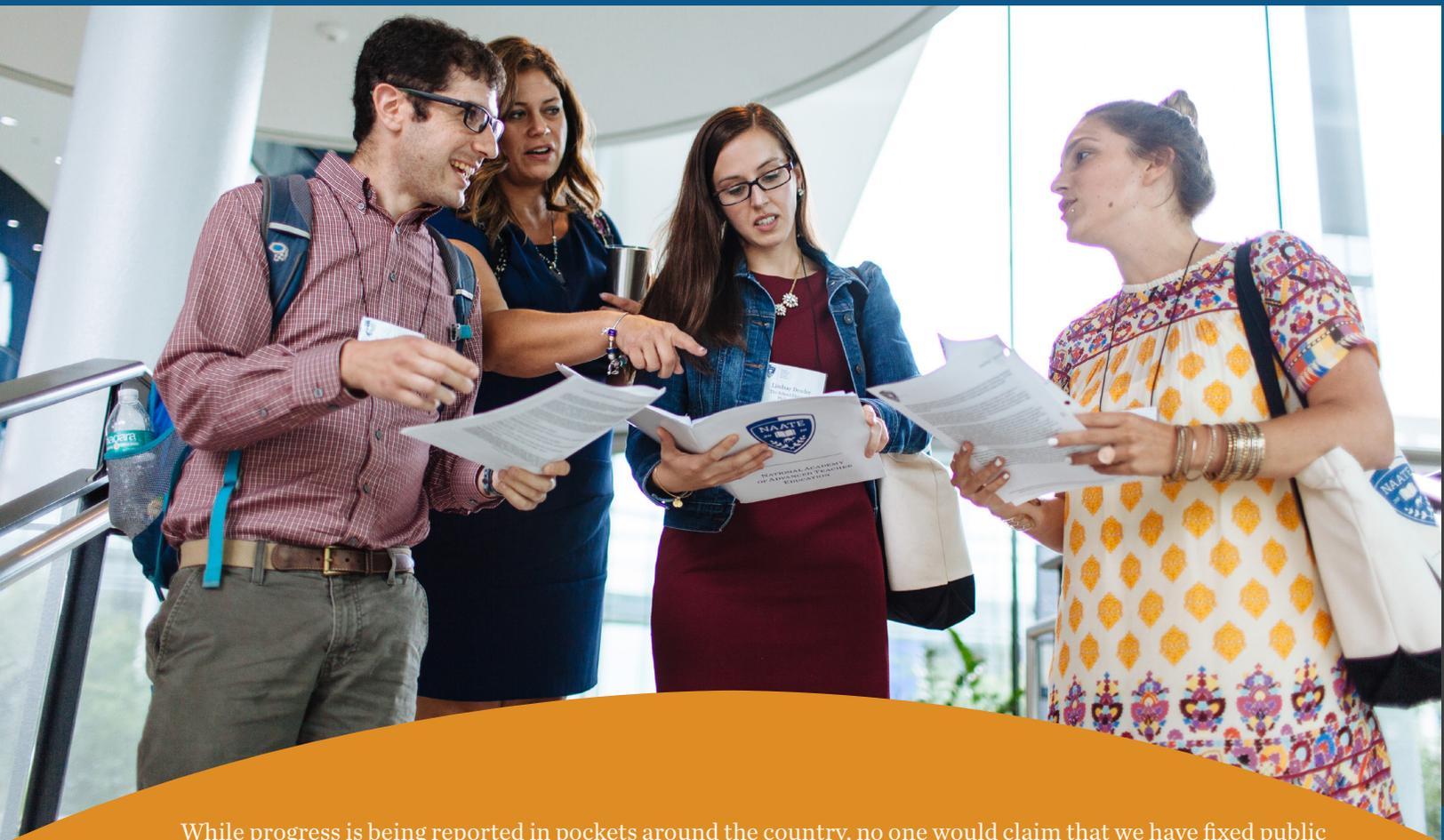


NATIONAL ACADEMY
OF ADVANCED TEACHER
EDUCATION

DEVELOPING OUR BEST TEACHERS,

But How?

During six plus years of work with experienced, high performing classroom teachers from across the nation and every conceivable school type, the sector has shifted in numerous ways. Teacher leadership moved from a fledgling concept to a call to arms. Teacher effectiveness, while still a work in progress definitionally and in terms of measurement, has taken hold along with an almost universal belief, supported by research, that having high quality teachers in student facing roles is the sine qua non of improved educational outcomes for children.



While progress is being reported in pockets around the country, no one would claim that we have fixed public schools, nor have we stemmed the wave of departures of teachers from the profession of classroom teaching. Enormous effort continues to focus on recruiting new entrants to the profession, while an arguably more cost effective and complementary solution might focus on retaining the already good teachers in our schools. What more is needed to retain our best teachers and accelerate improvement, particularly as we have elevated the goal to include deeper learning and thinking standards?

The answer may lie in rethinking the ways we serve teachers, particularly already high performing teachers as they work to deepen their practice and support their peers. Moving high performing teachers beyond “effective” accomplishes not only the goal of deepening their impact on their students and peers, but also directly serves the objective of retaining them.

Effectiveness is measured against frameworks, observations and student achievement. It focuses on the things that can be seen and quantified, that some might describe as the “science” of teaching; the critical procedural and factual knowledge best learned through the deliberate practice methods researched and popularized by K. Anders Ericsson and applied extensively in classroom teaching by Doug Lemov and his taxonomy of teaching.

Henry Mintzberg of McGill University argues that beyond the science of a practice lie the craft and art. Beyond the procedural techniques and tactics gained through deliberate practice lie the more nuanced abilities to improvise, conceptualize, reflect and re-imagine. We should not expect that the same learning methods that yield procedural expertise and effectiveness also yield conceptual and metacognitive knowledge, deep self-reflectiveness, intuition, sense making and tacit knowledge. Different methods are needed.

An approach to developing already “effective” teachers that focuses on conceptual understandings of the work – not just the “how” but the “why” – serves the top tier of the profession more appropriately, and leads to the virtuous cascade of retention, improved classroom practice and improved support and influence among their peers.

Holes and Hope in the Professional Development Research

What does the research literature on professional development (PD) in classroom teaching tell us about such matters? A review of several dozen of the most widely cited articles about how best to conduct effective professional development for classroom teachers reveals insights.

While funders and school network leaders have an understandable desire to directly link professional development interventions to specific student outcomes in classrooms, Yoon and colleagues report that only nine studies of the 1,340 examined pass the What Works Clearinghouse standards for quality research, and narrow curricular interventions are the norm. Not one of these most cited studies focuses on the partic-

ular segment of teachers deemed effective or highly effective. All of the research, particularly the research on job-embedded professional learning by Coggeshall and by Croft describe numerous examples of brand new teachers and struggling teachers as the beneficiaries of well-designed job-embedded professional development (JEPD), but effective teachers are not referenced. Those same studies also describe the considerable number of qualified facilitators, coaches, mentors, team leaders, teacher leaders and aligned school principals required for effective JEPD, all of whom need tailored professional learning to enter those roles.

Not one study analyzes high quality, differentiated professional learning programs for their potential value as recognition and reward in the service of teacher retention. Most current PD is instrumental in its objectives and tactical in its measurement. Borko’s and Putnam’s research suggests that “breaking set” – getting out of the normal routines of schools and school buildings to create the time and space for learning – is a critical advantage for high quality professional learning. Kennedy’s meta-analysis of effective PD studies also concludes that less proscriptive approaches to adult learning lead to the best long term results. By allowing teachers discretion in their application, their results improved.

It should come as no surprise that we need to differentiate our approach to developing already effective educators, that’s what we do with K-12 students. With more focus on our best teachers, all teachers win. Such differentiation can yield multiple rewards from retention to improved classroom practices to better peer leadership to attainment of the goal of getting all students ready for post secondary success.

Beyond Effective: The Road to Mastery

If many of the conventional approaches to professional development do not yield the desired results or address the unique needs of high performing classroom teachers as the TNTP Mirage Report suggested, what can be done? In other fields such as business and law, journalism and medicine, experienced professionals are further developed through more inquiry-based teach-

ing methods. Many adult learning experts like Malcolm Knowles and Stephen Brookfield support differentiating approaches to adult learning based on objectives and the target audience. These approaches are less about repetitive practice and more about reflective inquiry. To address the conceptual and metacognitive knowledge required of professionals and to try to move them beyond effectiveness toward mastery, a shift in methods and design is appropriate.

Lee Shulman and his mentor Joseph Schwab, Mortimer Adler who designed the original Aspen (Pahara) Leadership Seminars, Roland Christensen and David Garvin of the Harvard Business School, and Peter Senge and William Issacs of MIT have all written extensively about the transformative power of discussion-based learning for professionals with the lived experience of practice. Donald Schön, who wrote *The Reflective Practitioner*, describes the “indeterminate zones of practice, the situations of complexity and uncertainty, the unique cases that require artistry, the elusive task of problem setting...”

These thinkers suggest the case method of instruction, dialogic learning and Socratic exchanges as the core of this kind of learning for effective, experienced professionals. It is a shift from the behaviorist view that a technical, rational, instrumental approach is comprehensive, to a more constructivist view of professional knowledge that moves beyond the science to the art, craft and the metacognitive dimensions that ultimately lead to mastery. These are not mutually exclusive domains, rather additive in nature. Through the first years within the profession of teaching, the tools and techniques learned through deliberate practice and taxonomies are vital, but ultimately not enough to retain highly effective professionals nor extend their competency to meet the increased objectives of 21st century learning and post-secondary success.

Along with these ways of learning are the ways of knowing that Karl Weick describes as sense making, Gary Klein as intuition, Michael Polanyi as tacit knowledge, Robert Sternberg as wisdom and Benjamin Bloom as conceptual and metacognitive. The objectives move from training to formation, from effectiveness to mastery.

Personalizing The Road To Mastery

As the sector has begun to successfully identify effective teachers, the next stage of development to retain them and to address the ambitious academic, civic and social-emotional goals of a pre-K-12 education is to serve them in a differentiated fashion akin to their peers in other professions.

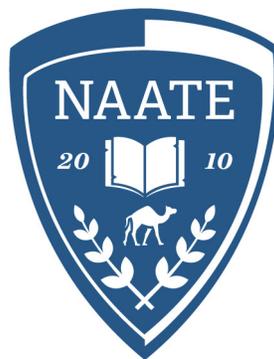
Intense, residential programs of peer-to-peer, discussion based learning with top tier participants selected from charter, district and faith-based schools from across the country are validating this new way of thinking about leveraging and retaining top talent in the classroom teaching profession. With content focused on their student facing roles as well as their responsibilities in supporting and leading their peers and a strong combination of the case method of instruction and experiential learning modes, ten cohorts of NAATE Teacher Fellows are demonstrating the promise of this new approach. The added advantage of serving this top tier of teachers through these new methods is that the very nature of discourse-based, inductive, peer-to-peer learning is that it is intensely personalized, as each participant draws his or her own meaning from each conceptual idea leading to very high transfer learning, just like the Harvard Business School on which it was modeled.

Implications for the K-12 Education Sector

Moving thousands of top level classroom teachers from effective to masterful could elevate the profession and form the basis of a resurgence of interest in classroom teaching. It would do so at a fraction of the cost of induction alone, by concentrating on the needs of the top 10 – 20% of the profession and letting them then work with their peers. Such teachers are capable of leading job embedded professional learning and tackling the coaching and mentoring duties from within the unique context of their own school buildings, but only if they first are properly formed. They also will set a higher bar for the performance of and acculturation into the profession by all new entrants and represent the bench from which future formal leaders can be selected. There are implications for changing evaluation systems

alongside these new approaches to development and shifting how funds get deployed for talent development and retention to better focus on the unique needs and potential when the sector appropriately addresses this vital core: its best and most experienced classroom teachers.

Moving teachers from effectiveness toward mastery through appropriately designed programs of deep learning may be the next frontier in our efforts to reform K-12 schooling in our country.



naate.org

401.371.0001

166 VALLEY STREET, 6M-104

PROVIDENCE, RI 02909

INFO@NAATE.ORG