

Bev's Findings

Jan 2010

As always I have been reading furiously. As is the case with most Kappans we remain life-long learners. So this issue I have some reading to share. If you have been thinking about inclusion or differentiation or with Haiti what is humanness and humanity then [The Boy in the Moon](#) by Ian Brown is a must read. It would be great for a PLC. Ian Brown's son suffers/endures an obscure but all encompassing syndrome. The book is not depressing, but rather hopeful and it made me think –a lot –about what is ability and disability. The interview with Jean Vanier of L'Arche is brilliant and all by itself, it could be the lever to an in-depth discussion on diversity in today's classrooms K-12.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge: London.

Visible Leadership is another must read. It is a synthesis of 15 years of global research studies on what really impacts achievement. He argues that what we suffer from in education is a plethora of programs. There is fragmentation disconnects and ad hocry in the system and what is needed is intentionality and coherency.

There are several chapters on the effects of teachers and teaching approaches. He recommends: teachers having high expectations and “challenging students to think through and solve problems” (p. 115) and “nurture and challenge intellectual and imaginative capacities ... to care with sensitivity and humanity (p. 2610 These attributes/strategies will assist students to strive for their full potential. He write about the need to teach a love of the subject/discipline to help students contracts meaning and understanding.

Me Read? And How?

Have you seen the Ministry's recently released Me Read? and How? It's the continuum of Me Read, No Way!. The focus on targeted approaches to boys' literacy is timely. This does not, nor has it ever meant we ignore young women. Gendered interventions are different for boys and girls. Each has unique needs and strengths. It behoves us to remember that the differences among girls and among boys is greater than the differences between them. Not all boys are reluctant readers and writers, but many remain disengaged from the curriculum and the selection of fiction texts. “Boys are more literate than their reading and writing results indicate and if we use different strategies to engage them and assess their achievement, the abilities that we were unable to see become apparent.” (p.3) If we are to develop life-long literacy for all students then we need to understand from the research what some additional effective practices may be. Gender is another form of differentiation and the more we understand the individuals in the groups, the better teachers we will all be. This is about refining practice.

Fullan, M. (2010). *Motion leadership: the skinny on becoming change savvy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing. You can also get this through OPC.

The skinny is a distillation on what should matter to change leaders. It's a blueprint of action. Fullan writes that “if a leader notices something that needs improvement, he or she can either act on it or hope it will take care of itself.” (p.45) He reflect that as a leader, you can either build capacity of the

system to understand and act intentionally and effectively [capacity-building] or become critical and judgemental. Argyris argues in Teaching Smart People How to Learn that since most leaders are successful when an initiative fails leaders look to external sources to blame. He refers to that as single loop learning. He has a chapter on defensive reasoning.

Effective leaders learn from their mistakes and learn along with their system. This chapter is entitled “Capacity building trumps judgementalism”. Dr. Avis Glaze used to remind us at LNS that when don’t see something in classrooms or schools, in 90 percent of the cases the answer is capacity building – knowledge, skills, attitudes both individually and collectively. We are social animals and we learn better together.

Note: we could include in the newsletter or post on the website or both

PLC Web Sites and Tools

All Things PLC (<http://www.allthingsplc.com>)

www.centerforcsri.org – Center for Comprehensive School reform and Improvement

Annenberg Institute for School Reform

http://www.annenberginstitute.org/Products/schools_PLC.php

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) at Brown University works with urban school systems that are pursuing system wide efforts to improve educational experiences and opportunities. In the context of a comprehensive reform initiative, AISR promotes the use of PLCs as a central element for effective professional development. The report, *Professional Learning Communities: Professional Development Strategies that Improve Instruction*, describes AISR's current approach to PLCs and is available online. Reports on other related topics also are available.

Effective Professional Learning Communities

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/education/eplc>

The Effective Professional Learning Communities (EPLC) research project is a collaborative of several universities and institutes in England. EPLC's mission is to study effective PLCs to determine how they are created and sustained. The site offers the following resources:

- *Creating and Sustaining Effective Professional Learning Communities* (full report and research brief)
- Surveys used to gather information about PLCs

Learning Policy Center

<http://www.lpc.pitt.edu/index.php/content/view/homepage>

The Learning Policy Center (LPC) at the University of Pittsburgh was established to advance ideas related to policy and learning. LPC offers policy briefs in conjunction with a blog in which participants can share their experiences and perspectives on the topics. One of the briefs is, *Getting the Most out of Professional Learning Communities and Coaching: Promoting Interactions that Support Instructional Improvement*.

National Staff Development Council

<http://www.nsd.org/standards/learningcommunities.cfm>

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) is a nonprofit association focused on improving schools through effective staff development. NSDC has a set of standards for professional development, one of which focuses on PLCs. Descriptions of the standard and resources are provided. Also, NSDC offers an online library of resources on topical areas, including PLCs.

SEDL (formerly the Southwest Educational Development) Laboratory

<http://www.sedl.org>

SEDL is a private, nonprofit education research, development, and dissemination corporation based in Austin, Texas. Improving teaching and learning has been at the heart of SEDL's work for more than 40 years. The SEDL website contains a number of resources on PLCs, including:

- *Leading Professional Learning Communities: Voices from Research and Practice*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/change67.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/change67.html)
- *Professional Learning Communities-Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha34.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha34.html)
- *Professional Learning Communities-An Ongoing Exploration*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha45.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha45.html)
- *Multiple Mirrors: Reflections on the Creation of Professional Learning Communities*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha97.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha97.html)
- *Schools as Learning Communities. Issues About Change, 4(1)*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/sch11.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/sch11.html)
- *Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and Why Are They Important? Issues About Change, 6(1)* [\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha35.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha35.html)
- *Creating a Professional Learning Community: Cottonwood Creek School. Issues About Change, 6(2)* [\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha36.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha36.html)
- *Assessing a School Staff as a Community of Professional Learners. Issues About Change, 7(1)*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha37.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha37.html)
- *Principals and Teachers: Continuous Learners. Issues About Change, 7(2)*
[\[http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha40.html\]](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cha40.html)