

LDC LETTER

A MONTHLY UPDATE ABOUT ALL THINGS LDC

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GETTING LDC RIGHT FOR STUDENTS

Lee Kappes barely has time to do her laundry and cook a few meals at her home in Ramsey, NJ, before she is out the door again, headed for another LDC work session with teachers or school administrators in far-flung states and districts.

She has been doing this for over two years as an original member of the design team. The experience provides her with a fine-tuned opinion of how LDC plays in the field, and it is good. “Teachers are being blown away by what students are able to do,” she says.

One of several veteran team members working in the field, Kappes has a special perspective on the intersection between policy and practice because of her focus on the “integration” states. In Louisiana, Colorado, and Kentucky several initiatives of the Gates Foundation’s College-Ready Work – math, literacy and teacher effectiveness – are being coordinated. Kappes also is LDC’s primary professional resource for the New York City Department of Education and Hillsborough County (FL).

When the emphasis is on the

classroom and what teachers need, policy changes are inevitable if the implementation is done right, Kappes has observed. For example, teachers using LDC should have commensurate changes in the curriculum and in the use of time, especially for collaboration with each other. “When you lead with practice, like in LDC, you have to pull in policy,” she explains. “When you only lead with policy, you don’t have to pay attention to practice.”

Kappes organized similar training sequences for the three integration states. Three times during the school year she conducted two-day workshops at each school/district site, scaffolding understanding of the LDC strategy for teachers and project leads. These trainings began with a detailed agenda on the background, research base and core components of the LDC framework. Teachers then moved to writing their first module. The next time Kappes met with the teachers, they discussed LDC rubrics for scoring student work, scored papers and considered revisions to their first module. Teachers took what they had learned and worked on a second module. In the third round of



Lee Kappes.

professional development, teachers and project leads met for one or two days to go deeper with scoring student work, revising modules based on student outcomes and the jurying process, and in some instances, writing a third module.

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PARTNER PROFILE:

TEACHER-TO-TEACHER, SREB STYLE

Gene Bottoms knows that “spray on” professional development doesn’t work. Drawing on years of experience with the High Schools That Work (HSTW) project of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), this veteran of “shake-it-up” policy and practice is directing a roll-out strategy for LDC that may become a model for states, districts and especially teacher leaders.

SREB, an LDC partner, selected Arkansas as its pilot site, picking eight high schools last November with different demographics (rural, urban, high achieving, or in take-over status). Bottoms directed the principals to pick four teachers (ELA, social studies, science and career/technical education) with special qualities: open to change, evidence of leadership skills, a passion for teaching extra-needs students, and quick learners. These teachers, joined by their principals, became a specially trained team that worked within their schools and demonstrated LDC module teaching for others. In Bottoms’ opinion, it is better to start with a small team: “If you involve the whole faculty, the attitude becomes that this, too, shall pass.”

The teams underwent intensive and continuing professional development. They met together at a three-day professional development session in Atlanta, bringing with them their textbooks, curriculum guides and assessment data. If a principal complained about losing classroom time, Bottoms promised that the outcome would be higher student learning. “They bought that,” he says, “and also agreed that teachers didn’t need to follow traditional pacing.” The teachers developed modules and improved them with feedback from colleagues at the work session, “but we discovered that you can’t stop with three days of training.”

As a result, the professional development never stops under the SREB strategy. Each school received six visits during the school year from subject-area trainers or others providing technical assistance; teams attended technical assistance seminars, either at Little Rock or Ft. Smith; and SREB organized 4-6 webinars for each school. The principals

provided time for team discussions and prepared specific agendas for visits and feedback from the trainers.

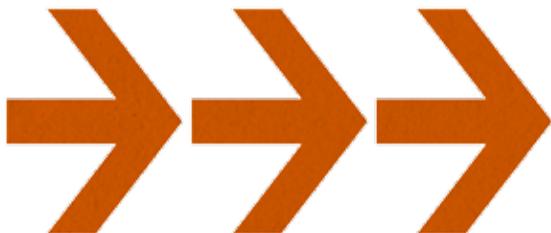
Each teacher on the team guided a “buddy” teacher through the process of developing a module. Outside of the within-school roll-out, the strategy, or “migration” as Bottoms calls the roll-out, has included training a cadre of teacher leaders within the state who have observed the teams and are getting ready to take LDC to up to 50 more schools next year. And the training and migration will continue until teachers in every secondary school in the state know how “to use literacy to make students more independent learners,” Bottoms says.



Gene Bottoms.

The roll-out plan, according to SREB’s technical assistance provider Barbara Smith, “is sophisticated and on the right track because it provides technical assistance at the school site.” A staff development and training specialist with UI13 in Pennsylvania, she and Bottoms shared hands-on help on site visits and work sessions, and, in her opinion, Bottoms’ insistence on accountability from the trainers and the teams is a key to the plan’s success. Working on the policy angle, Bottoms is now aligning the work of the LDC trainers with that of the HSTW improvement coaches. The next target group will be teacher preparation programs at state colleges.

Meanwhile, SREB is piloting a further use of LDC under its HSTW program, embedding literacy modules in the project-based learning being fostered in CTE courses. Schools in Oklahoma and Vermont piloted the idea this past year, and several states want to field test it. In one Oklahoma school, according to Bottoms, a CTE teacher became the literacy coach for the school.



CTE + LDC = EXCITING

“BEST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ... EVER”

In discussions about literacy standards and core subjects, career/technical education (CTE) often is the wallflower at the prom.

Not so under the roll-out strategy for LDC by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), which placed a CTE teacher on each four-teacher team at its eight high school pilot sites in Arkansas. In fact, they are having as much success with LDC as core subject teachers, according to Carol Ann Duke, SREB coordinator in Arkansas. One reason is that CTE fosters project-based, analytical learning; once CTE teachers realize that this is what is expected in LDC modules, they reach a comfort level with LDC, she says.

An exemplary convert is Danielle Stevens, business teacher at Heritage High School in the northwest Arkansas city of Rogers. In her sixth year of teaching (including coaching volleyball and chairing her department), Stevens accepted the request to be part of the LDC team but felt “overwhelmed” after an orientation meeting with other teams in Atlanta. She worked through chunks of tasks and skills, with actual use of modules beginning last January. Over the next several months, her business law students tackled three modules, starting rather shakily at first with the new expectations for learning. “I watched their work grow from the first time to the third module,” she says. “They began to push themselves, and while I guided them at first, they were leading the process on their own by the third module.” Stevens also says that she found it possible to go into greater depth on topics and “grow” her



Danielle Stevens.

SAMPLE: ANALYSIS OF DEATH PENALTY

In cases of heinous crimes, is capital punishment a fair sentence for those convicted of these crimes? After reading Chapter 4 of the Business Law text, various articles on capital punishment and correlating case studies, and watching video clips, write an essay that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text(s). Be sure to acknowledge competing views. Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

teaching. For example, her mini-task on analysis of the death penalty (see box) used to be a minor unit out of the textbook, but using it with the reading and writing demands in LDC, the subject became a way for Stevens and her students to be much more engaged in analysis.

Stevens highly praises the support she has received from SREB and her own school and district. LDC team facilitators made several classroom visits, giving her feedback each time. She “bounced ideas around” with other LDC teams at a regional meeting in Ft. Smith, received guidance and resource help from her school’s literacy instructor, and took a leadership role within her department. At a year-end professional development session with colleagues, she shared her experience with the modules and helped them see where they could use modules. “In CTE,” she points out, “the initiative has to be custom designed because CTE covers so many areas.”

Heritage High’s Principal Karen Steen believes LDC (and its math counterpart) have brought her teachers “the best professional development we have ever had. The state and SREB have been with us all the way.” She received a conference call immediately after each site visit, followed soon by a webinar addressing any problems. Teachers could contact LDC trainers directly. She is working, teacher by teacher, to “tease” her faculty into using LDC. In the meantime, next year’s school calendar will list when teachers are using module instruction and be placed on the web so that not only her teachers but also teachers from other schools in the area can visit LDC classrooms in action.

LDC KEEPS ROLLING

T2X: NEXT STEP TO TEACHERS HONING EXPERTISE

The LDC success so far is because of teacher success. From the beginning, LDC has depended on the expertise, enthusiasm and willingness of teachers to learn how to share responsibility for teaching literacy. They also grasp the vision for literacy in the Common Core State Standards.

How can all this terrific experience be used to keep the LDC momentum going? By organizing it. In the next school year, about 100 teachers who have worked their way through several successful modules will become part of a new teacher-to-teacher initiative to guide colleagues to their own expertise. This will be known as T2X (teacher-to-teacher experts), which will be launched at an LDC convening in Atlanta in June.

The T2X teachers will keep on doing what they already do for LDC, only spread their expertise, both online and personally. They will each post two modules they developed from two of the three categories (argumentation, informational/explanatory or narrative), including scored, annotated student work. They will host online discussions about their modules, helping colleagues understand how to design their tasks, mini-tasks and instruction.

The “personal” part of the T2X strategy will center on direct mentoring. The T2X teachers will work with five colleagues new to LDC, helping them to develop two “good-to-go” modules and then to share their work online and host discussions about them. With the help of the T2X teachers, they will revise their modules and possibly move them to the top rating, or “exemplar” status. T2X teachers also will coach their groups on using such tools as the Module Creator and showcase what their mentoring and coaching have accomplished at a convening in 2013.

Feedback from the T2X teachers will be important to the future of this roll-out strategy. Equally important, however, is the role these experts can play in their



PERSONAL AND POWERFUL

The exceptional impact of LDC on teaching and learning comes alive in Kathy Thiebes’ account of her experience with creating modules. A social studies teacher at Centennial High School outside of Portland, OR, Thiebes (pictured above) is an LDC “pioneer.” She has written a candid and personal story of how she developed modules and changed her teaching. Most of all, she records the strong progress and engagement of her students – from those with disabilities to Advanced Placement classes. Her story, *What I Have Learned About How to Build a Module*, will be available for download in mid-June.

districts/states, even nationally. Their leadership could be felt in many ways, such as producing videos of mini-tasks for use by all teachers online, taking a prominent role in scoring student work based on LDC throughout a state, or leading online discussions related to the literacy standards for teachers anywhere. They will become, in effect, a tremendous LDC professional corps!

STUDENTS continues >>

What are the major lessons from the field so far? Kappes believes the whole system, including state policy, needs to find time for teacher collaboration: “The critical shifts we are asking teachers to do require the

ability to work together. You cannot learn this in isolation.” Moreover, systems must capitalize on how the LDC process can encourage teachers “to put a greater emphasis on inquiry in their own learning.” On the positive side, Kappes has seen “real energy around getting this right for students”

and eye-opening conversations when teachers share the outcomes from their students. For the future, she envisions a gradual release of responsibility so that the early implementers can assume the preparation of a new cadre of LDC teachers.