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Building Capacity for Sustained Change: Characteristics of Common Core Implementation Models that Actually Work

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The National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE) exists to help schools and districts build the capacity for improved literacy teaching and learning. Over the last several years, as schools work to put new literacy standards in place, we've been providing resources and support to school/district and state leaders on Common Core implementation. Our focus has *not* been on the content of the Common Core – there is a wealth of information available to help educators unpack the standards and build strategies for classroom instruction. Rather, we've been helping leaders think about *models* and *strategies* for supporting reform that build local capacity to sustain change. Building capacity, we suggest to leaders and describe in this article, has to do with intentionally creating conditions and practices that generate the potential for sustained change and thoughtful, continuous improvement. Focusing on capacity means thinking as much, or more, about the *process* put in place to support reform as the *content*. As one state leader commented recently, "it's easy to schedule a meeting, reserve a hotel, send out the announcements, and bring in speakers, but designing strategies that build local capacity for change....we don't really know how to do that."

This article is intended to help educators look beyond the specifics of the instructional changes called for in Common Core to the big picture of how change happens (or doesn't happen) in schools. We want you to think about the way you are experiencing the changes prompted by the Common Core and to develop a framework for examining how to support and enact change in your system in ways that build local capacity for sustained improvements. In other words, we want to help you in whatever role you are in (classroom teacher, department chair, literacy coach, building principal, district leader, ISD consultant) advocate for and design local approaches to Common Core implementation (or any other new standards based reform approach) that are most likely not only to facilitate educational change but also create stronger, more collaborative systems driven by continuous improvement and local ownership. Another state leader we work with explained in an interview that the last time they had a state wide effort at reform, "we ended up de-skilling an entire generation of teachers" because they mandated curriculum without engaging teachers in the process of meaning making or assuming responsibility for what good instruction looks like for each student. She explained that in her state, the goal now with Common Core is to empower teachers to make decisions, have ownership, and develop the expertise needed to engage in high quality teaching and learning in ways that are responsive to the local needs of their students and the curricular resources they bring.

So how does educational change that builds capacity actually happen?

Essentially there are two distinct policy approaches to education change – an incentive-based approach or a capacity-based approach (see

Figure 1). Incentive-based approaches assume that you need carrots and sticks in order to make change happen, or in other words, that people need external motivations to change their behavior. Incentive-based policies assume that schools would get better/different learning outcomes if teachers (or students and parents) only worked harder (i.e. they weren't so lazy or had higher expectations) and that they need to be pushed to do the hard work of improvement. Another important assumption of incentive-based policies is that key actors in the system know what to do; they just need external incentives and pressure to make them do it.

By contrast, capacity-based approaches instead assume that change happens when people work together to define both the problems and the solutions relevant to the systems they work in and then build the skills to put solutions in place collaboratively. External resources, support, and information in a capacity-based approach are provided in ways that make sense to educators and are designed to build their ability and skills to continue to solve new challenges. Building capacity means that a primary goal is to create new strategies and skills locally to better address problems in the future. UNESCO, an organization that works to address really big social and human problems by building (not undermining) the ability of nations, indigenous groups, and local organizations to contribute towards solutions, describes **capacity building** as a "*process* by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies *increase their abilities* to: perform core func-

tions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and understand and deal with their *development needs* in a broad context and in a *sustainable* manner" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 81, emphasis ours). Approaching change with a goal of building capacity requires paying attention to how the activities in support of a specific change increase the ability of local players to solve future problems in ways that are attentive to local conditions and allow for continued learning, growth and development.

In our work with state and district leaders, we find that much of the work on Common Core implementation is not designed with building local capacity in mind. Rather, the default model seems to be the attempt to "install" change by bringing in outside experts and packaged curricula, rather than building change from the ground up. Hiring consultants and purchasing materials may seem like the quickest route to change, but such changes are likely to prove shallow. Unfortunately, most of the Common Core implementation approaches we're seeing do little to help educators understand the teaching and learning shifts called for by the standards and work collaboratively towards instructional approaches that

Figure 1.

Two Approaches to Change

	Incentive driven	Capacity Building
Powered by...	Have to	Know how
Teachers need to...	Try harder	Learn more/pool their knowledge
Leaders need to...	Work on teachers to reform them	Work with teachers to reform the system
Level of change	Individual	Collective
Change happens from..	Top down	Bottom up
Curriculum shaped by..	Textbooks	Professional expertise

make sense in their local context. Capacity-building approaches to reform aren't about getting someone to do something you tell them to do because you create an appropriate incentive system (do this and we'll pay you more; don't do it and your evaluation will be impacted), it's about increasing the ability of people close to the problem to address it in ways that make sense and lead to continued adaptation and improvement.

I (KaiLonnie) look back now on my first years of teaching with a far a more experienced and expert view of literacy and find much to critique in my early years as a teacher. An incentive-based approach suggests that if someone had just paid me more (or else threatened me enough), my teaching would have been better able to address the real student needs I encountered. My own experience tells me, however, that lack of motivation was not the problem. We had professional development days when we were talked at by experts and I attended workshops at our local ISD. I learned strategies and tips and I tried very hard. I regularly stayed late into the night and worked weekends. But I didn't really know how to help

students with learning disabilities or how to differentiate instruction. I didn't even know what questions to ask. Even more problematic, I was asking them alone, with little access to the acquired wisdom of more experienced colleagues.

I really started to become a good teacher through ongoing professional learning, conversations with colleagues in graduate school, observations of expert teaching (much of it through video), support and structures to ask inquiry questions and systematically study them, and opportunities to read and examine examples of good teaching.. Unfortunately, most of this learning was through graduate coursework and almost none of it through the regular practice of being a teacher in a school with other colleagues who dealt with the same students and issues. As a researcher, I now know my experience was not unique- most American teachers lack the time and structures that would allow them to systematically learn from their practice.

A capacity-based approach to change isn't rooted in ideological commitments to top-down policy-driven reforms or bottom-up grassroots efforts. Rather it's about building a coherent approach in which policy levers (e.g. a common vision, assessment systems, evaluation tools) are designed to integrate and support bottom-up drivers of change (teacher professionalism, expertise, ownership). Figure 2 represents how and where bottom-up and top-down drivers of change come together in a capacity-based system: the creation of

Figure 2.

Drivers of Educational Change

shared agreements and attention to building organizational conditions.

Capacity-Based Approaches Attend to the Organizational Conditions and Shared Agreements that Exist in the System

According to a 2009 Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, American teachers spend 93% of their day working in isolation from their colleagues. Most approaches to change focus on building expertise in individual teachers (consider reform movements that focus on "highly qualified teachers") and most state and district Common Core implementation efforts place emphasis on sending teachers individually through workshops and training. We have found in our own research (NCTE, 2014) that there are very few cross disciplinary conversations about literacy, even though the new ELA/Literacy Common Core Standards are premised on the notion of shared responsibility for literacy teaching and learning across multiple disciplines and kinds of texts. This isn't to say that content expertise and skill aren't important; however, sustained change for students requires school-wide agreement about what learning goals should guide individual teacher decision-making, as well as what good teaching and learning of literacy look like and how they're assessed.

Stanford researcher Carrie Leana (2011) argues that we focus too much on "human capital", that is individual teachers' cumulative abilities, knowledge, and skills developed through formal education and on-the-job experience. We credential programs, require hours of professional development, and mandate specific certifications (and assessments) in order to teach. Yet Leana's research finds that, "social capital", the quality of the relationships between teachers in a school

and their ability to learn from each other has more impact on student achievement. High quality teachers tend to leave schools with low social capital, frustrated with the isolation and lack of shared responsibility for student learning. In schools with high social capital, teachers who may initially have lower skills are immersed in opportunities to learn and improve, thus raising the total level of human capital. Reform efforts too often focus on what individual teachers are doing without paying attention to the culture, conditions, and practices in the school.

In very practical terms, if you take a not-very-good teacher and put him or her in a school with a high degree of collaboration, coaching, co-planning and development, and use of common assessments, the quality of his or her teaching generally increases. If you take a teacher with strong classroom practices and put him or her in a school that is dysfunctional – where teachers are isolated, fear taking risks, and do their own practices—the quality of his or her teaching generally decreases. Understanding the relationship between human capital and social capital helps us understand that sustained educational improvement requires attention not only to the pedagogical practices and skills of individual teachers, but also the organizational conditions in place and the ways in which teachers interact together around a collective definition of good teaching.

When there are shared agreements in a school about what good teaching looks like and what the goals for student learning are, and these are coherent across grade levels, this often results in teachers taking ownership and responsibility for the learning not only of their own students, but that of others. You move from a compliance-based system ("I have to") to a commitment-based system ("We believe this is best") in which teachers hold one another accountable for good instruction. Such a system relies on local conditions and practices that involve teachers in regularly looking at student learning data and evaluating it against a concrete set of outcome

goals that are aligned across the grades (See Au, K. and Rapahel, T., 2011).

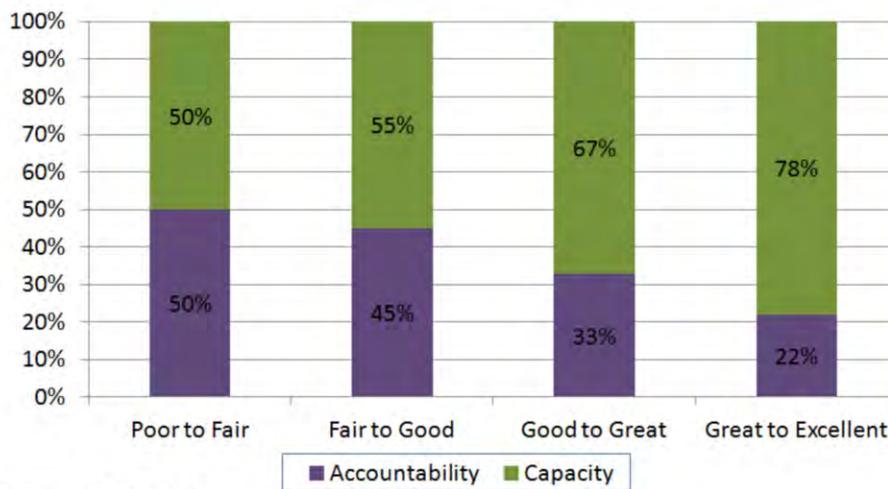# Capacity-Based Drivers of School Reform are more effective

A 2010 international study of improving school systems by McKinsey and Company (Figure 3), demonstrates that systems at the highest end (moving from Great to Excellent) place far more reliance on capacity-based approaches to change than systems which only moved from Poor to Fair. Specifically, the systems at the high end of the improvement continuum invested in peer-led learning, collaboration, and structured experimentation—all strategies powered by professional expertise—while the systems at the lower end focused on establishing minimum levels of quality through accountability and incentives.

Michael Fullan (2011) draws from extensive research on school reform examining where and how school reform has failed and where and how it has been effective. He suggests that

there are *right drivers* of school reform and *wrong drivers.* (See Figure 4.) Right Drivers build <u>capacity</u> by heavily investing in professional learning and in supporting educators in local decision making so that teachers not only *do/use* effective strategies but they *understand* them. They agree at a deep level on the goals of instruction. Right Drivers also create *teamwork*, or collaborative approaches to decision-making and reform. This way of thinking about improvement shows up in the new draft Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), which emphasize the ability of school administrators to have skills and display values that build *shared* ownership and *collaborative* leadership. The concept of *shared leadership* figures prominently in these new standards, as in other research on school reform, as the core of an effective educational system in which administrators and teachers work together to make decisions, share power, and ensure that collaboration and collective commitments and agreements drive teaching and learning.
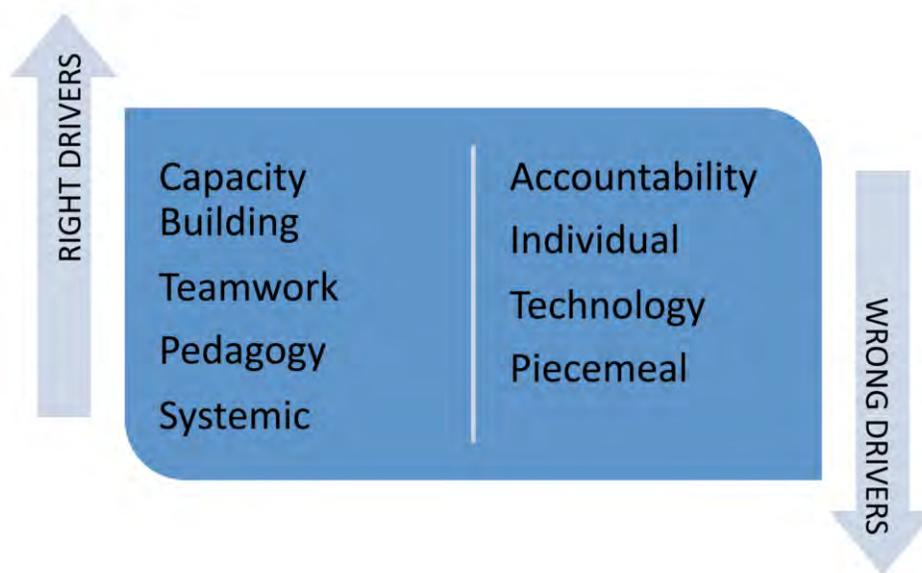
In systems that are using a capacity-based or *right drivers* approach to Common Core implementation, the focus is on *pedagogy* (Latin for the science of teaching) rather than fidelity to purchased programs or curriculum. Shared learning about good teaching practices and a vision of what those look like drive change, and not just following the next lesson in a purchased program. The goal of standards implementa-

Figure 3.

Where do Rapidly Improving Systems Focus?

McKinsey & Co, 2010.

tion, and more generally of school improvement, should be to get all educators to talk about good teaching, to observe teaching and refine it, and to agree on how to assess student learning.

Finally, Fullan emphasizes that effective drivers of reform are s*ystemic*. This means they aren't piecemeal (a new assessment here, new curriculum there, this work shop here, new technology there) but rather co-

Figure 4.

Drivers of Change

herently address the conditions and goals. An effective driver of school reform involves an effort to have a single model for reform and a few key outcomes with which all goals (finance, professional development, engagement of parents, assessments) are aligned.

According to Fullan, *wrong drivers* lead to inconsistent results and fragmented culture, and often result in tension, conflict, and apathy. Rather than viewing reform efforts that don't lead to improvements in teaching and learning as the fault of individual educators, Fullan suggests that we need to attend to the culture and pattern of behaviors and expectations in a school, and the "drivers" that organize and fuel reform efforts. *Wrong drivers*, Fullan argues, are not necessarily unimportant—accountability measures, for example, play an extremely important role in education—however, they aren't effective drivers or *leaders* in a change process. A reform strategy driven by *accountability* often focuses on getting teachers to comply with directives, being a "good" employee, or following rules or curriculum mandates. It assumes that teachers know

what good instruction is, but just aren't putting it into place because they lack motivation. They need incentives (carrots or sticks) to teach well. Fullan's analysis suggests that accountability isn't an effective *driver* of reform. It has its place in ensuring coherent implementation *once an effective curricular model is designed collaboratively with teachers.* If teachers understand and own the school learning goals and identify (and have support in implementing) effective pedagogical strategies, then accountability is based upon shared "commitments". As an illustration, you don't want doctors prescribing medicine or a test solely because someone with authority in a hospital told them to and your doctor is just mindlessly following directives. You want the doctors to understand bodily systems and medicine, and choose approaches based upon the most recent science and research. Accountability for outcomes has an appropriate role in evaluation of teaching and learning, but it is *not* the place to start.

Similarly, ineffective reform drivers focus on Individual teachers –investing in the skills and knowledge of individual teachers and rating and

comparing their performance. Highly effective systems are collaborative, organize resources around a core set of pedagogical practices which all teachers are expected to implement (and are supported in becoming expert in), and reflect agreements in K-12 about what good instruction looks like and how to best assess it.

Technology is one of the most ineffective, but also among the most common, drivers of reform in American schools. It's become de rigor to purchase computers, iPads, software and e-books and say that 21st century learning happens. This again reflects the tendency to default to quick, purchased solutions rather than the slow work of investing in professional skills. A small school in which one of the authors worked recently allocated $4000/year for professional learning while spending $70,000 on "technology support systems". The emphasis on 1-1 iPad ratios and the technology support needed to keep them all up and running reflect school leaders' beliefs that the technology alone would lead to transformation in teaching and learning. However, *absent is any real investment in support for teacher learning or even built-in time for teachers to share and work together.* Ineffective teaching, done with an iPad, is still ineffective teaching. Efforts in local schools to use technology tied to the Common Core to drive instruction can make the "tool" become the "content" of teaching and learning.

Finally, *piecemeal* approaches—new books, new programs, new initiatives—will only lead to teachers feeling overwhelmed, to fragmented and incomplete implementation efforts, and to internal conflict and tension. Fullan notes that you can evaluate if your school is using "Right Drivers" by examining the culture of the school. See Figure 5.

To what extent is Common Core State Standards Implementation Supporting Local Teacher Capacity?

We have been involved in two national studies this past year on Common Core implementation. One study is a large-scale national survey of teachers in all states in which the Common Core standards were adopted. This survey asked teachers in all subjects, in all grades, and in every state that had adopted the ELA/Literacy Common Core about their experiences with implementation. A report of high-level findings can be found here http://www.literacyinlearningexchange.org/remodeling-together. In a parallel study, we conducted 101 in-depth interviews (45-60 minutes each) to understand the nuances and specifics of teachers' experiences with Common Core implementation. Below we draw on

Figure 5.

Do we have "Right" Drivers in place to lead reform in our school?

- Taps intrinsic motivation
- Engages students and teachers in continuous improvement
- Inspires teamwork
- Affects 100% of students and teachers
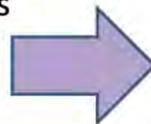
Works directly on **changing the culture** of school systems
  – Values
  – Norms
  – Skills
  – Practices
  – Relationships

findings from these two studies to examine the extent to which Common Core implementation is building local capacity. We then provide a framework, which emerged from the data, that local educators can use to examine their own district's Common Core implementation approach.

Survey Findings: Collaboration is key predictor of successful implementation

Overall findings in our national survey indicate that:

- Most teachers are optimistic about the potential of the standards to elevate student learning, but do not yet feel well prepared to teach the standards, especially with their most challenged students.
- Purposeful professional collaboration is the most powerful form of preparation. Teachers across all categories rated the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues as the most powerful and effective form of professional learning related to Common Core implementation. It far surpassed workshops, coaching, online training, independent research, and every other form of professional support provided.
- Time for educator collaboration remains very limited.
- Implementation is better where teachers are more engaged in the process.

This last finding is particularly significant. We found that some teachers had an opportunity to engage in what we call "purposeful collaboration" - that is, their meeting time and work together was grounded in evidence of student learning and involved educators across all disciplines and roles. These teachers had three significant and important outcomes that were not evident among teachers who lacked purposeful collaboration and who merely attended meetings, workshops, and trainings, or even worked alone.

First, teachers who engaged in *purposeful collaboration* on Common Core implementation were more positive about the impact of the standards on student learning and achievement. Second, teachers who had engaged in collaboration with other teachers on the Common Core had made more standards-aligned changes in their actual instructional practice than teachers who hadn't engaged in collaboration. Third, teachers who engaged in collaboration had higher self-efficacy. In other words, they believed that they had the skills and strategies to implement the Common Core in ways that would support their students' learning.

Interview Findings: In interviews we were able to pursue in greater depth teachers' experience with the Common Core. We talked about what collaborative professional learning actually looked like or, in other cases, what teachers were doing instead of collaborating to learn about the standards. We also asked about the supports and infrastructure within which collaboration occurred. We learned that much of the collaboration is occurring either through networks existing outside of individual schools and districts, or is supported primarily by the individual efforts and expertise of dynamic local teacher leaders with little active support or guidance by the district or administration. We also learned that much of the work at the secondary level is happening in disciplinary silos.

Disciplinary silos: Of significant concern is that teachers reported little, if any, cross- disciplinary conversation about student literacy goals or about the most effective instructional strategies for attaining these objectives. Where collaboration is occurring, it is happening in disciplinary and department silos. Teachers themselves indicate that this is a problem, but they explain that professional learning and collaboration time has been designed to provide support for discipline-based planning and work. There has been little recognition by school and district leadership of the need to ensure coherence in how literacy con-

cepts are being addressed across disciplines. Where cross-disciplinary conversation about effective literacy instruction does occur, it is ad-hoc and generally based upon personal relationships rather than formally designed systemic efforts to ensure coherence and collaboration in supporting student literacy development.

In addition, teachers across all subjects indicated that responsibility for student learning is falling more heavily at the secondary level on English teachers. Two years ago when we conducted a survey of teachers on collaboration and literacy (NCLE, 2013), we were both surprised and pleased to learn that the vast majority of teachers in all subject areas (77%) agreed with the view that helping students with literacy learning and development was one of their core instructional responsibilities. It seemed that the 20 years of research and rhetoric on literacy across the curriculum had paid off, and teachers across the disciplines understood literacy as a core responsibility. In addition, in our 2014 data set, we found that teachers in all disciplines (including mathematics) viewed the ELA/Literacy Common Core as a set of standards which they, in their subject area, had responsibility for implementing. Yet, in interviews, secondary teachers in the content areas reported their perception that new assessments were only assessing literacy as taught and supported in the English department, and they suggested that their efforts to support literacy were primarily in assistance to the core and primary work of the English department. As one teacher explained, "since my subject (social studies) isn't assessed, I try to figure out what I can do to *help out* the English teacher." This comment reflected the sentiments expressed by many teachers of social studies and science who felt that since assessments in their discipline were not part of Common Core tests adopted by their states, their role in literacy was limited to "helping out" the English teachers, who held primary responsibility for literacy learning and accountability in their school/district. In other words, they expressed the perception that any student's

literacy needs would be held as the weaknesses/strengths of the English department and not collectively of all teachers in the secondary level. This conclusion, although understandable given the structure of assessment and accountability systems, is contrary to the stated intention of the standards to emphasize literacy throughout the curriculum.

Need for strategic local leadership on implementation: Teachers overwhelmingly felt their school/district leaders lacked models and strategies to build local capacity for implementation. Forty-one of the 101 teachers mentioned the need for clearer leadership of the change process. Although teachers want to be treated as the professionals they are, and to have their expertise engaged through a collaborative change process, they also want a plan. Many teachers felt their school or district leaders were being surprisingly passive about the change. Many of the teachers we spoke to were working on their own, or with a few trusted colleagues, to put the standards in place in ways they knew lacked the coherence and power of a more coordinated, better resourced effort. As one teacher said plaintively, what was needed from leaders was "clearer guidance, not, 'Here are the standards, go implement them' ". Another teacher suggested the need for "my district to stop pulling whatever they find from the internet and saying this is what we are supposed to do." And one respondent noted, "The one change I would like to see would be that the local school administration would get more involved, be more proactive, and include everyone in this change so that it can be positive. Then we can move forward, collectively and cooperatively."

In our work with district/school instructional leaders, we have heard repeatedly that they are finding it challenging to get support in developing implementation models and guidance in how to design a reform effort. They noted that there are many workshops put on by their state, regional agencies, and non-profit and for profit companies to help

educators understand the *content* of the Common Core. There is very little support or information, however, to help them design a plan for implementation—especially one that builds on the ownership, capacity, and expertise of local teachers. Our research indicated that teachers were very concerned that their leaders didn't understand how to design a plan for change. Our conversations with instructional leaders at both state and district levels support this.

Figure 6.

TASKS AND QUESTIONS OF POWERFUL TEAMS

CO-CREATING LESSONS — What learning experiences do our students need to reach this standard?

CO-CREATING ASSESSMENTS — How will we know if they have reached it?

LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK — What does their work suggest about what they do and don't understand and what we as teachers need to do next?

Time and Structure for Collaboration Needed: Repeatedly, teachers indicated that they needed time for collaboration and guidance about the most effective collaborative strategies to use when they were meeting together. Giving teachers time to meet is the first step but ensuring that the work that happens involves "powerful collaboration" is critical to any expectations for subsequent changes in teacher practice or improvements in student learning. In our research, we've identified three core practices that reflect the work of collaborative teams that are linked to actual changes in teaching and learning (Figure 6). Teachers who collaborate in ways that build both individual teacher capacity as well as local school conditions for continuous improvement do the following work in their collaborative time: (a) co-create lessons; (b) co-create assessments; (c) look at student work together. Creating and designing lessons and assessments together requires teachers to come to shared agreements about what good instruction looks like, what the appropriate learning outcomes are for students, and how to best assess them. They create local meanings and shared
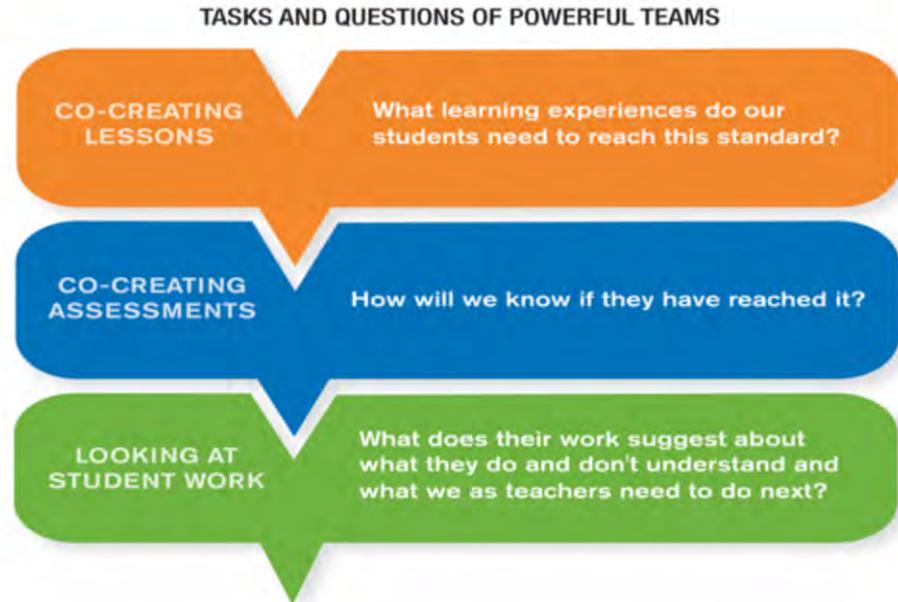
commitments about effective teaching and learning, and must have a set of learning goals that are clearly articulated, measurable, and tied to evaluations of student learning in a way that is uniform and collectively owned. When teachers look at student work together they are putting in place conditions for continuous assessment of teaching and learning. They are constructing a professional culture that balances safety and risk-taking (safety in sharing student learning and work, and risk taking in terms of asking questions of one another about how individual instructional practice supports or fails to support targeted outcomes). Capacity-building at both individual and school level occur when these three practices serve as the core work of collaborative educator teams.

Recommendations: What is needed to make Common Core implementation "Capacity-Building"?

Below we summarize the main recommendations from our data and then describe a framework that we're using with instructional leaders and

teachers to assist them in their own self-assessment.

1. Instructional leaders need models and support for designing effective implementation efforts and developing overall reform strategies that are grounded in professional ownership and capacity.
2. Professional development and implementation should take place collaboratively, across disciplinary areas and grade levels, thereby increasing coherence for teachers and students in the curriculum change process.
3. Policies and resources designed to support professional development and curriculum design at the state level should translate into opportunities and experiences that support local administrators and teachers. Teachers must be given significant time and support for collaboration in order to effectively engage in the distinct processes of curriculum design and implementation, including developing local learning standards and assessments, selecting curricular and instructional materials, and implementing the standards.

We have used data from this research to develop a tool to help schools/districts to benchmark their progress with implementing the Common Core literacy standards. As described above, our research has identified characteristics of systems making the most progress in standards implementation. This tool allows districts to benchmark the levels of those characteristics in their own systems, and thus align their implementation strategies and investments to increase capacity (Figure 7). The protocol we've developed allows for all the teachers in a given system (school, district, cross site department) to anonymously provide feedback on the indicators identified as predictive of successful implementation (time, right tasks, right people, ownership). Results are then benchmarked to our national sam-

Figure 7.

Framework for "Benchmarking" Common Core Implementation Effectiveness

TIME	- How much time do teachers have for collaboration around instructional improvement? - How do administrators support collaboration? - How effectively is the time used?
OWNERSHIP	- How involved are teachers in planning standards implementation? - What role do teachers play in the selection and development of curriculum? - Does the school have a collaborative culture?
RIGHT PEOPLE	- Who participates in the work of literacy improvement? ○ Content area teachers ○ Administrators ○ Librarians ○ Coaches
RIGHT TASKS	- When teachers work together, what do they actually do? ○ Co-designing lessons ○ Co-designing assessments ○ Analyzing student work ○ Peer Observation

ple of systems where implementation is most successful.

Conclusion

Considering the results of our research, we are particularly concerned with the finding that only 17% of teachers have been significantly involved with leadership in building a strategy for supporting Common Core implementation (NCLE, 2014). By and large, teacher voices and expertise have been absent from the conversation about how to design an implementation process that really builds capacity by using both top-down and bottom-up change levers. Effectively integrating those levers creates organizational conditions that support continuous improvement, collaboration, and inquiry. It also builds shared agreement for what good instruction looks like. Certainly instructional leadership has been lacking in designing models to support Common Core implementation in ways that build not only individual, but also collective, capacity for change. We encourage teacher leaders to adapt or use our framework to ask these kinds of questions locally in order to clarify the model in place and support implementation of the Common Core. We believe that not enough attention has been paid to *how* teachers engage in conversations about the Common Core, and that greater investments must be made in building local capacity for change. Money shifted from buying packaged solutions to finding time for teachers to build their own solutions will be money well-spent. We encourage instructional leaders and teacher leaders to spend as much time on identifying effective change strategies – with a goal to building local capacity – as on the content and goals of the standards themselves. We believe that real change, meaningful learning, and lasting improvements in classroom instruction for all students will occur when we harness the possibilities of capacity-building approaches.

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