

Preface

If we accept that the industrial model of society is currently shifting to a learning model of society, then the focus of education must also shift. The change will require a movement away from a content-driven curriculum toward a curriculum that provides individuals with the skills necessary to engage in lifelong learning.

Simultaneously, the role of the educator needs to shift from the information provider to that of a catalyst, coach, innovator, researcher, and collaborator with the learner throughout the learning process. The development of the learner's unique abilities becomes the central focus of the learning environment.

—(Costa & Liebmann, 1997a, p. XXI)

WHY THIS BOOK AND WHY NOW?

The shifts in the focus of education and the role of educators that Costa and Liebmann have spent years researching and writing about present an enormous challenge for educators today. They require that teachers, school administrators, professional developers, curriculum directors, and mentors think outside the educational box they have become so comfortable with.

Today's society demands that these shifts in thinking take place so that all students can obtain the skills and attitudes necessary to be productive and contributing citizens. Students must have solid content knowledge. They must acquire essential understanding of fundamental concepts and exhibit their understanding in a variety of circumstances. At the same time, students must know how to begin and what processes to use when they are faced with new situations beyond the context of the classroom. However, to successfully accomplish this, schools must be committed to helping educators shift the focus in all areas of their practices. Educators need to shift from teaching isolated content to teaching content in a way that promotes the development of essential thinking skills and processes. It requires a shift from textbook-driven curriculum to an emphasis on learning through real-life problem solving experiences. These experiences must encourage the students to constantly question and seek answers,

constructing and refining their knowledge base as they proceed. To support this type of process-oriented learning, teachers need to create classrooms in which interaction between students, and between students and teacher, is valued. They must create classrooms in which teachers and students collaborate, and the role of the teacher shifts from that of the leader on stage to that of expert, facilitator, and co-learner working with students to form cooperative problem-solving teams. In these classrooms, the skills of a lifelong learner are being modeled by the teachers and nurtured in every student.

To state that these shifts in education will be an enormous task would be stating it lightly. But they are shifts that are vital to the students of today who will be our leaders of tomorrow. Many teachers have started to make these vital shifts in their practices and are encouraged by the excitement and commitment of their students. Many institutes of higher education, educational service centers, and other educational initiatives are currently taking a closer look at these teachers and their practices.

During the time that I worked on one such project, it was evident that truly committed professionals are starting to make these vital shifts. In addition, the belief that truly committed professionals continually evaluate themselves was validated in discussions with teachers and administrators from seventeen school districts throughout Ohio. Countless discussions with exemplary teachers also confirmed that teachers believe in the power of collaboration so deeply that they will find the time in their busy schedules for these dialogues. Interviews with numerous administrators revealed that they too saw the value in collegial discussions centered on teaching and learning, and they also realized the tremendous impact these discussions have on a teacher's practice. Visits to schools and conversations with students from elementary through high school had the recurring theme that students feel they learn best when their teachers nurture and construct a process-oriented learning environment for them. Working on this project was a powerful experience for me, during which I attended and presented at conferences throughout the United States to gather further insights and to continue the dialogue with educators, administrators, and students outside Ohio. As well, I held workshops with teachers in Ohio to discuss student work and to record the effects these conversations had on the teachers' practices.

As I reentered the teaching profession after a year and a half, I realized how deeply my views on teacher practice had been affected. I found myself looking differently at everything I did in my own classroom, at the work students were doing throughout my elementary building, and at the entire school system. I became increasingly interested in the unit design work of Wiggins and McTighe (1998), the research of Costa and Liebmann (1997a) into indicators of intelligent behavior, and Schlechty's (1997) research on effective Design Qualities of student work. At the same time, I was mentoring teachers who were completing the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification process, having become a National Board Certified Teacher myself several years earlier. As I mentored

these teachers, and discussed with them the work they had created for their students and were putting into their professional teaching portfolios, I came to realize that possibly the most powerful form of professional development occurs when teachers discuss student work and then, through reflection, use what they learned to direct their professional development endeavors and strengthen their practices. Not only did I feel it was extremely important to make vital shifts in education today, I felt it was extremely important to make it clear how these shifts could be accomplished in every classroom headed by a truly devoted teacher. From firsthand experience, I knew how hard it was to incorporate current research and educational initiatives into a teacher's practice. With the increasing demands imposed on every teacher, there is little time to restructure our practices and incorporate even the most powerful research that we read about or experience through workshops and higher education classes. As a result, a comprehensive Collaborative Professional Development Process evolved that combines elements of the research of Costa and Liebmann and Schlechty with firsthand teaching experience.

In Chapter 1, Figure 1.1 illustrates how research and everyday teaching experience can blend together into a powerful collaborative professional development initiative—an initiative that begins with teachers self-evaluating, and then in collaboration with trusted colleagues evaluating their practices through structured analysis of the work they design for their students. The Collaborative Professional Development Process relies heavily on the reflective skills of every educator to take what they learn about their practices in the collaborative discussion sessions and use it to design their personal Professional Development Plans.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This book is different because it not only puts teachers in charge of their own professional development, it does so through a highly reflective framework that uses the everyday work their students produce. It is through student work, and in collaboration with their colleagues, that teachers analyze their practices and determine the areas that need improvement to make their teaching and their students' learning as meaningful as possible. Many initiatives are being developed today that look at student work. Standards in Practice developed by The Education Trust, the Collaborative Assessment Conference developed by Harvard's Project Zero, and the Tuning Protocol developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools are only a few of these initiatives. This collaborative professional development initiative is unique in that there is no head facilitator or leader for the collaborative discussions of student work. Instead, every educator who is part of a collaborative team is equal to all the other members. The carefully designed guide for the collaborative discussions of student work is structured in such a way that every member of the team

X REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK

contributes and facilitates, but no one rules. This eliminates the fear of judgment by one's peers and puts all the participants on the same level, making the process truly collaborative in nature. The incorporation of Schlechty's (1997) Design Qualities and Costa and Liebmann's (1997a) Intellectual Engagement Indicators into the discussions of student work also makes this particular approach unique. The Collaborative Professional Development Process not only focuses the discussions of student work on sound research, it gives the presenting teachers this same research base as a framework on which to build their Professional Development Plans.

ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

This book is organized around two central themes. It is conceptual, in that it brings together the research of Costa, Liebmann, and Schlechty, and blends it with the research conducted in schools throughout Ohio. It outlines a collaborative professional development framework that puts educators in charge of their own professional development through reflective and collaborative practices. It ensures that these professional development endeavors are aimed at making the vital shifts in education that are needed to prepare every student to become a productive, contributing member of society and a lifelong learner. This book is also developmental, in that it provides educators with the professional learning activities that are needed to guide their professional development and teaching practices.

Chapter 1 is an overview of the Collaborative Professional Development Process. The process begins with the formation of collaborative learning teams. Educators work with trusted colleagues to examine student work. Through reflection, teachers determine whether their professional development goals have been met and define new professional development goals to pursue.

Chapter 2 describes the professional standards that form the foundation of the Collaborative Professional Development Process. It also introduces the Intellectual Engagement Indicators developed by Costa and Liebmann and the Design Qualities developed by Schlechty.

Chapter 3 addresses the need for reflection in every teacher's practice and provides suggestions for becoming more reflective in all aspects of one's practice. The role that reflective practices play in the Collaborative Professional Development Process is addressed throughout this chapter.

Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to an in-depth explanation of Guided Collaborative Discussion of Student Work. Included in the chapters are worksheets to help educators complete the process.

Chapter 6 addresses the development of the highly personal Professional Development Plan, based on the teacher's reflections during the first four steps of the process. It goes on to explain how subsequent collaborative discussions of student work are used to gather evidence of teachers' growth in their professional development focus areas.

Chapter 7 explains how to design quality lessons and includes sample plans and blank unit design worksheets.

Chapter 8 explores instructional strategies, with a focus on the changing role of the teacher.

Chapter 9 explains the importance of analyzing lessons during implementation and includes worksheets to use while carrying out the recommended strategies.

Finally, Resource A is a sample school calendar that incorporates all the key elements into a schedule that begins the first month of the school year. Educators will find that it will help them to begin thinking about using the Collaborative Professional Development Process to guide their professional lives and help their students to become lifelong learners ready to function in the “real world.”