

Teachers with DRIVE

One way to motivate teachers to stay in the classroom is to offer them opportunities for leadership.

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and PK Diffenbaugh**

For students in U.S. classrooms today, the odds of being assigned to an inexperienced teacher are higher than they have ever been. In fact, right now there are more first-year teachers in U.S. classrooms than teachers at any other experience level (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). This is a dramatic change from a generation ago: In 1987, a U.S. student was most likely to be assigned to a 15-year veteran (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). But many of today's new teachers don't stay in the profession long enough to become veterans.

The education sector has spent precious **little time thinking** about what motivates teachers.

Studies have found that half of all urban teachers in the United States leave the profession within their first three to five years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Even more startling, a recent study from the New Teacher Project (TNTP) indicates that half of all teachers in the top 20 percent of effectiveness leave within five years (TNTP, 2012). Failure to retain effective teachers not only is costing our school systems billions of dollars, but also is negatively affecting student achievement (Teoh & Coggins, 2013).

The troubling reality is that although we expect

educators to be experts in motivating students, the education sector has spent precious little time thinking about what motivates teachers. The results show for themselves.

Daniel Pink's book *Drive* (2009) articulates how modern research is redefining what motivates us and how companies and managers are altering their practices to increase employee satisfaction and performance. Pink argues that previous conceptions of motivation (what he calls Motivation 2.0) relied largely on carrots and sticks and has "become far less compatible with, and at times downright antagonistic to: how we *organize* what we do; how we *think about* what we do; and how we *do* what we do" (p. 18).

He suggests that there is a need for a new conception of motivation (what he calls Motivation 3.0) that relies on the theory that "human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another" (p. 71). Citing numerous experiments, research, and examples, Pink builds a new theory of motivation around the themes of *mastery*, *purpose*, and *autonomy*. These themes provide a useful framework for motivating teachers to maintain their sense of drive for the long term.

Mastery

Establishing a profession focused on mastery means more thoughtfully matching the skills of teachers with the responsibilities of the job. Most teachers who have spent considerable time in the classroom will likely agree with Malcolm Gladwell's (2008) notion that it takes 10,000 hours of practice (almost 7 school years) to achieve mastery. Yet, despite research that confirms the notion that experience matters,



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systems, the quality and immediacy of feedback most teachers receive is woefully inadequate. Teachers usually receive around one to two formal visits per year, and the feedback they receive often says little more than “good job—keep it up!” How can a practitioner hope to strive for greater mastery with such poor feedback? Improving the feedback teachers receive requires better data systems, improved teacher assessments, and more frequent and higher-quality classroom observations.

Purpose

Research has long documented that teachers pursue a career in education largely to influence the lives of students (Johnson, 2004; Lortie, 1975). Pursuing teaching as a way to have a positive effect on individuals and society is especially apparent in the new generation of teachers (those with fewer than 10 years of experience) who now make up the majority of U.S. teachers (Coggins & Peske, 2011). Second-stage teachers, those with 3–10 years of experience, chose teaching not only for their love of working with students, but also because of their commitment to social justice and their belief that teaching can improve society on a broader scale (Coggins, 2010). Acknowledging that second-stage teachers wish to have a voice in education policy and practice has implications for the teaching profession.

First, the profession must offer career ladders that provide teachers the opportunity to stay in the classroom as they exert their leadership to improve the system. At Teach Plus, for example, we provide effective urban teachers in the second stage of their careers with opportunities to learn and grow in the profession in ways that will improve student outcomes. We’ve heard again

the responsibilities of a teacher on his or her first day are likely to be similar to those on his or her last day (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). This has a doubly negative effect: (1) Inexperienced teachers, who are often placed in the most difficult schools, face a task that exceeds their current capabilities; and (2) teachers who have honed their craft are not asked to take on increasingly difficult roles and, lacking a sense of challenge, may begin to search for other opportunities to grow professionally.

Like other professionals, teachers are passionate about their craft and wish to improve their practice as they progress in the profession. Yet, unlike many other professions, teaching does not have a universally accepted standard of effective practice. Despite

an increasing body of reliable evidence that articulates effective teaching practice, the expectations for professional growth and excellence will vary depending on each individual teacher’s state, district, school site, or supervising school leader. If the definition of mastery continues to be somewhat arbitrary, it will be difficult to build a profession in which teachers are working toward developing a common skill set. Certainly, the most important starting point for mastery is success producing student learning gains, yet even how to define this remains controversial.

A mastery-focused profession must provide frequent quality feedback to the practitioner. Although there has been recent movement toward developing stronger teacher evaluation

and again from our teacher cohorts that they did not want to leave the classroom but felt that they were faced with an unwanted choice: Either continue to use their experience and expertise to touch the lives of the students in their classrooms, or leave the classroom to pursue other positions in which they believed they could have a broader influence. If the teaching profession does not enable teachers to fulfill their commitment to social justice while staying in the classroom, teachers like these will continue to leave the profession.

We offer two leadership tracks that enable teachers to expand their influence on closing the achievement gap: Our Teaching Policy Fellows program offers experienced teachers opportunities to learn about and advocate policy change at the district, state, and even federal level. Our Turnaround Teacher Teams program offers teachers the opportunity to lead a grade-level team in instructional change, spreading the influence of their expertise from a class of 30 students to a grade level of, perhaps, 150 students.

Second, the teaching profession must bridge policy and practice by designing mechanisms through which teachers can influence education policy. Currently, teachers are largely excluded from policy decisions that directly influence their daily work. This leads to a sense of frustration and disillusionment; it is difficult for teachers to derive meaning and purpose from their work when they are thought to be implementers of others' ideas rather than owners of the policies that directly affect their practice. The Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellows program fulfills this need by connecting teachers with policymakers and training them to speak on behalf of the teaching profession.

Teachers are passionate about their craft and wish to improve their practice.

Third, teachers want to know their efforts are having an effect, want to be recognized for that, and want to help colleagues reach more students. When teachers Alex Seeskin and Laura Meili in Chicago saw a need for teachers to take a role in implementing the Common Core State Standards, they secured funding and the support of the district CEO and the union president to organize a professional development event on a Saturday during the summer. They initially hoped to attract 300 teachers, but 2,500 signed up. Several dozen teachers led sessions on how they had taught a certain English language arts or math topic in the past and how they had adjusted instruction and developed new resources to meet the Common Core standards.

Alex and Laura's sense of purpose and leadership brought people together on behalf of students and accomplished two important ends: First, it demonstrated that teachers could lead their peers in facing this major instructional change. Second, it demonstrated that teachers could be effective leaders during a politically sensitive process. The processes of implementing the Common Core standards and collaborating with the Chicago schools CEO and the president of the teachers union were rife with political conflict. Having current teachers act as brokers between

the district and its teaching force, and between the district and union leadership, proved instrumental to implementation.

Autonomy

Some have argued that the profession offers teachers too much autonomy by allowing them to close the door and practice as they please. Seeking to increase accountability, these reformers seek to decrease teacher autonomy. But autonomy does not necessarily mean independence; rather, it "means acting with choice—which means we can be both autonomous and happily interdependent with others" (Pink, 2009, p. 88).

A teaching profession that incorporates this vision of autonomy can insist on high standards of student achievement and teacher practice but remain flexible about how teachers achieve these results. We have walked into schools where superintendents proudly boast that we will see the same lesson in every class that day, we have seen schools resort to hours of test prep to boost student achievement, and we have heard from teachers who made the difficult decision to leave the profession because they grew tired of the mandated scripted curriculum. A teaching profession that values autonomy rejects *both* the notion that teachers should be left alone to do as they please *and* the belief that teachers are pawns who must be controlled.

Autonomy also means creating the conditions for teachers to lead their peers in meaningful ways. One example of this is the Teach Plus Turnaround Teacher Teams (T3) program. T3 recruits highly effective teachers, trains them to be turnaround leaders, places them together for at least three years in a district's most chronically low-performing schools, and provides ongoing leadership development with a school-based

coach. These teachers teach full time while leading content and grade-level teams. T3 is now in nine schools in three (soon to be four) districts, and initial results are impressive.

Equally important, however, is that T3 schools are redefining teacher roles in the difficult work of school turnaround. In T3 schools, teachers share leadership and ownership of the turnaround effort instead of having new policies and approaches imposed on them from above. T3 schools have created structures, cultures, and relationships that allow for autonomy. These are built into the T3 process before it ever begins. Principals need to complete a written application and be interviewed before their school can be selected. It is crucial that they not only talk the talk of distributed leadership, but also walk the walk.

A New Way to Motivate

As the major challenge for education reformers moves from ensuring high standards for all students to transforming the teaching profession so that practitioners are able to meet those standards, it is important not to get stuck in the old paradigm of command and control that dominated the 20th century—and is still strong today. We need a new framework that is backed by emerging evidence on the factors that increase motivation and performance. Pink's themes of mastery, purpose, and autonomy provide a good place to begin. **EL**

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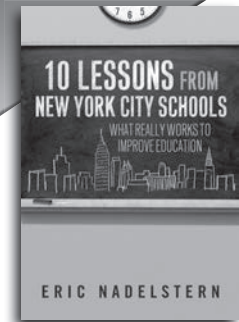
For more on the T3 program, read the online-only article "Leading in Schools on the Edge" by Elisa B. MacDonald, Katie Hickey, Stephanie Kennedy, and Marisa Suescun at www.ascd.org/el1013macdonald.

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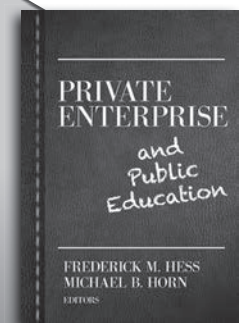
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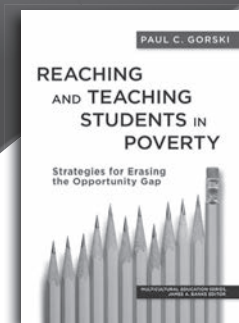
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