California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities Index

A 2009 report—Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad (PDF; Outside Source)—confirms what many already know; providing educators with quality professional development experiences translates into increased student achievement.

The Taking Center Stage—Act II (TCSII) Professional Learning Activities (PLAs) are designed to help educators access professional growth opportunities any time, and any place. Use the TCSII PLAs as a **jumping off point**— a place to begin—while you plan your own powerful staff development with a focus on closing the achievement gap at your school.

We encourage you to use these presentations and frame them around your own local context.

Organized around the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendation's for Middle Grades Success, each of the following professional learning activities is designed to be self-guided and/or used with teams. Many of the professional learning activities include videos featuring presentations by nationally renowned education experts.

Recommendation	*TCSII* Professional Learning Activity Title	Presenter
1 Rigor	Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
1	Reeves 1—Rigor in the Classroom	Part of the Doug Reeves
2 Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention	A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention	Series CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
2	Differentiated Instruction in the Middle Grades	Debbie Silver
2	Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners	Part of the Kate Kinsella Series
2	Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades	Part of the Kate Kinsella Series
2	Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills through Structured Tasks	Part of the Kate Kinsella Series
2	Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills (Parts 1 and 2)	Part of the Kate Kinsella Series
2	Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work in the Real World	Part of the Doug Reeves Series
2	Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment	Part of the Janet Zadina Series
3 Time	Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
4 Relevance	Relevant and Engaging Learning in the Middle Grades	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
		Part of the

4	Zadina 1—Brain Matters: Research on Learning	Janet Zadina Series
4	Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain	Part of the Janet Zadina Series
5 Relationships	Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II): The Social Nature of the Brain and the Role of Emotion	Part of the Janet Zadina Series
5 Relationships	Relationships that Promote Success in the Middle Grades	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
6 Transitions	Transitions that Promote Success in the Middle Grades	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
7 Access	A Visual Tour of Middle Grades Achievement Gap Data	Russlynn Ali
7	Access that Promotes Success in the Middle Grades	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
9 Leadership	Reeves 4—Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference	Part of the Doug Reeves Series
11 Accountability	Reeves 3—Accountability in a Learning Organization	Part of the Doug Reeves Series
All 12 Recommendations	Enhance Your Planning Efforts with the TCSII Initiatives Crosswalk	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office
All 12 Recommendations	Adolescents, You, and TCSII	CDE's K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office

New professional learning activities are added periodically to this section. To receive notification of all TCSII updates, subscribe to the Middle Grades Electronic Mailing List. It is free and you'll be among the first to receive notification when additional professional learning activities (PLAs) are posted to TCSII.

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation 1—Rigor

Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is designed for you and your colleagues to use and adapt so that it fits your unique needs and challenges. It is recommended that you read through the entire PLA prior to beginning the cycle of inquiry.

After completing this PLA, you will have a greater understanding about:

- This recommendation and the connection to your existing work/practice.
- Your areas of strength in relation to the recommendation.
- Gaps you identified in regard to your implementation of components of the recommendation.
- Opportunities for implementing a new practice and/or improving an existing practice.

This PLA contains four phases that make up a continuous cycle of inquiry:

I. Identify: Reflect on current practices and identify areas of strength.
II. Investigate: Research the recommendation content on *TCSII* for successful strategies based on an identified area of improvement.
III. Implement: Create a short-term action plan, take action, and evaluate the results.
IV. Interact: Reflect on lessons learned during implementation, discuss experiences, share knowledge gained, and deepen understanding of concepts in *TCSII* as they relate to Recommendation 1–Rigor.

Professional Learning Activity (PLA) for Recommendation 1	Identify	Investigate	Implement	Interact
Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student	Reflect on Current Practices	Research the Recommendation	Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results	Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 1—Rigor in the Classroom

As part of this professional learning activity, Dr. Doug Reeves explores achievement and student socioeconomic status, power standards, nonfiction writing, feedback and grading, and establishing a culture of achievement. Custom-designed exercises help educators (1) survey their current individual and school practices and (2) investigate ways to enhance practices that lead to rigor in the classroom.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Doug Reeves Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Reeves 1: Rigor in the Classroom	Reeves 1: Take Stock	Reeves 1: Take Time	Reeves 1: Take Action	Reeves 1: Take it Away

Dr. Reeves' Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Dr. Douglas Reeves Index

Join Dr. Douglas Reeves, a national expert on leadership and organizational effectiveness, as he applies his research to middle grades practices in the classroom and at the school and district levels.

Dr. Douglas Reeves' Biography

Access Dr. Reeves' professional learning activities

Dr. Doug Reeves' Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Reeves 1: Rigor in the Classroom	Reeves 1: Take Stock	Reeves 1: Take Time	Reeves 1: Take Action	Reeves 1: Take it Away
Reeves 2: Making Assessment Work in the Real World	Reeves 2: Take Stock	Reeves 2: Take Time	Reeves 2: Take Action	Reeves 2: Take it Away
Reeves 3: Accountability in a Learning Organization	Reeves 3: Take Stock	Reeves 3: Take Time	Reeves 3: Take Action	Reeves 3: Take it Away
Reeves 4: Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference	Reeves 4: Take Stock	Reeves 4: Take Time	Reeves 4: Take Action	Reeves 4: Take it Away

These professional learning activities are among several in the *TCSII* **Get Into the Act!** Professional Learning Series.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Two

A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is designed for you and your colleagues to use and adapt so that it fits your unique needs and challenges. It is recommended that you read through the entire PLA prior to beginning the cycle of inquiry.

After completing this PLA, you will have a greater understanding about:

- Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention and the connection between it and your existing work/practice.
- Your areas of strength in relation to Recommendation 2.
- Any gaps you identified in regard to your implementation of any components of Recommendation 2.
- Opportunities for implementing a new practice and/or improving an existing practice.

This professional learning activity contains four phases that make up a continuous cycle of inquiry:

I. Identify: Reflect on current practices and identify areas of strength.
II. Investigate: Research content on *TCSII* for Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention to discover successful strategies based on an identified area of improvement.
III. Implement: Create a short-term action plan, take action, and evaluate the results.
IV. Interact: Reflect on lessons learned during implementation, discuss experiences, share knowledge gained, and deepen understanding of concepts in *TCSII* as they relate to Recommendation 2.

Professional Learning Activity (PLA) for Recommendation Two	Identify	Investigate	Implement	Interact
A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention	Reflect on Current Practices	Research the Recommendation	Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results	Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Be inspired by Debbie Silver,
an authority on differentiated instruction

Dr. Debbie Silver, award-winning author and veteran educator, speaks with humor and passion on how differentiating instruction can meet the diverse needs of middle grades learners.

Differentiated Instruction in the Middle Grades: Professional Learning Activity

As a schoolwide team:

- View Dr. Debbie Silver's video presentation (WMV; 1:05:20) | MOV.
- After viewing the presentation, explore the *Taking Center Stage—Act II* (*TCSII*) Web portal to find ideas on differentiating instruction :
    - Enter the term "differentiated instruction" in the "Search" box (that appears at the top left corner of the *TCSII* home page).
    - Search for differentiated instruction in the A-Z Hot Links
    - Review each of the items presented in the search results.
- In individual teams of four to six, explore how to implement or improve differentiated instruction at your school.
    - Identify the top three ideas and report back to the larger group.
    Access Dr. Silver's Differentiated Instruction Handout and PowerPoint presentation (Outside Source) designed to accompany her archived presentation. (Login required; Dr. Silver gives the password toward the end of her presentation.) View answers to the questions posed to Dr. Silver during the *TCSII* Webcast regarding her presentation on differentiated instruction.

This presentation was originally delivered as part of a statewide Webcast on April 8, 2008. The entire archived *TCSII* Webcast (WMV; 2:11:50) is available for viewing by individuals or teams.

Text Transcript of *TCSII* Webcast

Dr. Debbie Silver's Biography

Dr. Debbie Silver is an award-winning educator with 30 years experience as a classroom teacher, staff development instructor, and university professor. Her numerous recognitions include being named the *Louisiana State Teacher of the Year*. Along the way she has taught almost every grade level and most every kind of student. Dr. Silver has been an invited author for several educational journals and has given keynotes at state, national, and international conferences. She has been a featured teacher for the *PBS OnLine Teacher Chat* and for KDS Knowledge Delivery Systems. She is the author of Drumming to the Beat of Different Marchers: Finding the Rhythm for Teaching Differentiated Learning (Outside Source).

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners

As part of this professional learning activity, Dr. Kate Kinsella provides practical, research-based strategies and recommendations for promoting student engagement in understanding lesson content. Dr. Kinsella shares exemplary teaching models from California's middle grades classrooms and provides tools and directions that you can download and use to help implement the practices in your own classroom.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Kate Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Kinsella 1–Engaging Middle Grades Learners	Kinsella 1: Take Stock	Kinsella 1: Take Time	Kinsella 1: Take Action	Kinsella 1: Take it Away

This professional learning activity is one of several in the *TCSII* **Get into the Act!** Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

	Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
	A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Dr. Kate Kinsella Index

Dr. Kinsella is a popular lecturer, consultant, and renowned researcher focusing on effective strategies for teaching academic language. She places particular emphasis on practices that are successful in teaching English language learners.

Dr. Kate Kinsella's Biography

Access Dr. Kinsella's professional learning activities

Dr. Kate Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Kinsella 1 – Engaging Middle Grades Learners	Kinsella 1: Take Stock	Kinsella 1: Take Time	Kinsella 1: Take Action	Kinsella 1: Take it Away
Kinsella 2 – Teaching Vocabulary in the MIddle Grades	Kinsella 2: Take Stock	Kinsella 2: Take Time	Kinsella 2: Take Action	Kinsella 2: Take it Away
Kinsella 3 – Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks	Kinsella 3: Take Stock	Kinsella 3: Take Time	Kinsella 3: Take Action	Kinsella 3: Take it Away
Kinsella 4 – Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills (Parts 1 and 2)	Kinsella 4: Take Stock	Kinsella 4: Take Time	Kinsella 4: Take Action	Kinsella 4: Take it Away

Be sure to Subscribe to the Middle Grades Electronic Mailing List. It is **free** and you'll be among the first to receive notification when the other presentations by Dr. Kinsella are posted.

These professional learning activities are among several in the *TCSII* **Get Into the Act!** Professional Learning Series.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

California Department of **EDUCATION** PUBLICATION

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades

In this Professional Learning Activity, Dr. Kinsella presents an instructional approach that bolsters students' expressive vocabulary knowledge, outlines key steps for teaching a word, and explains the pivotal role of vocabulary in literacy and learning.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Kate Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Kinsella 2–Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades	Kinsella 2: Take Stock	Kinsella 2: Take Time	Kinsella 2: Take Action	Kinsella 2: Take it Away

This professional learning activity is one of several in the *TCSII Get into the Act!* Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks

In this Professional Learning Activity, Dr. Kinsella demonstrates strategies that enable students to engage in discussion tasks.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Kate Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Kinsella 3–Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks	Kinsella 3: Take Stock	Kinsella 3: Take Time	Kinsella 3: Take Action	Kinsella 3: Take it Away

This professional learning activity is one of several in the *TCSII Get into the Act!* Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students'
Academic Discussion Skills
(Parts 1 and 2)

In this Professional Learning Activity, Dr. Kinsella explores steps in effectively setting up discussion tasks for students.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Kate Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Kinsella 4–Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills (Parts 1 and 2)	Kinsella 4: Take Stock	Kinsella 4: Take Time	Kinsella 4: Take Action	Kinsella 4: Take it Away

This professional learning activity is one of several in the *TCSII Get into the Act!* Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work
in the Real World

In this professional learning activity, you and your school team members will find ways to make formative assessment more effective. You will learn about the leadership and learning matrix and the power of nonfiction writing. Dr. Reeves shares his suggestions for improving instruction for young adolescents and connects them to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially beginning with:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Doug Reeves' Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work in the Real World	Reeves 2: Take Stock:	Reeves 2: Take Time	Reeves 2: Take Action	Reeves 2: Take it Away

Dr. Reeves' Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 4—Multiple Methods
for Learning and Assessment

Learn how to apply new research on adolescent brain development from Dr. Janet Zadina, an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist now engaged in neuroscience research. In this video and accompanying professional learning activity, you and your school team members will consider how to apply new findings on how the brain functions as young adolescents think and learn. As you discuss Dr. Zadina's suggestions on improving instruction for young adolescents, you will also find connections to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success for helping young adolescents succeed.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Janet Zadina's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment	Zadina 4: Take Stock	Zadina 4: Take Time	Zadina 4: Take Action	Zadina 4: Take it Away

These professional learning activities are among several in the *TCSII Get Into the Act!* Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Zadina's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Dr. Janet Zadina Index

Join Dr. Janet Zadina, an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist now engaged in neuroscience research, as she explores ways to apply new findings on how the brain functions as young adolescents think and learn. Dr. Zadina's suggestions for improving instruction for young adolescents connect to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.

Dr. Zadina is also founder of Brain Research & Instruction (Outside Source) (BR&IN).

Dr. Janet Zadina's Biography

Access Dr. Zadina's professional learning activities

Dr. Janet Zadina's Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Zadina 1 — Brain Matters: Research on Learning	Zadina 1: Take Stock	Zadina 1: Take Time	Zadina 1: Take Action	Zadina 1: Take it Away
Zadina 2 — Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain	Zadina 2: Take Stock	Zadina 2: Take Time	Zadina 2: Take Action	Zadina 2: Take it Away
Zadina 3 — Adolescent Characteristics (Part II): The Social Nature of the Brain and the Role of Emotion	Zadina 3: Take Stock	Zadina 3: Take Time	Zadina 3: Take Action	Zadina 3: Take it Away
Zadina 4 — Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment	Zadina 4: Take Stock	Zadina 4: Take Time	Zadina 4: Take Action	Zadina 4: Take it Away

These professional learning activities are among several in the *TCSII* **Get Into the Act!** Professional Learning Series.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Three

Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is designed for you and your colleagues to use and adapt so that it fits your unique needs and challenges. It is recommended that you read through the entire PLA prior to beginning the cycle of inquiry.

After completing this PLA, you will have a greater understanding about:

- Recommendation 3—Time and how it connects to your existing work/practice.
- Your areas of strength in relation to Recommendation 3.
- Any gaps you identified in regard to your implementation of any components of Recommendation 3.
- Opportunities for implementing a new practice and/or improving an existing practice.

This professional learning activity contains four phases that make up a continuous cycle of inquiry:

I. Identify: Reflect on current practices and identify areas of strength.
II. Investigate: Research content on *TCSII* for Recommendation 3—Time to discover successful strategies based on an identified area of improvement.
III. Implement: Create a short-term action plan, take action, and evaluate the results.
IV. Interact: Reflect on lessons learned during implementation, discuss experiences, share knowledge gained, and deepen understanding of concepts in *TCSII* as they relate to Recommendation 3—Time.

Professional Learning Activity (PLA) for Recommendation Three	Identify	Investigate	Implement	Interact
PLA: Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades	Reflect on Current Practices	Research the Recommendation	Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results	Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Four
Relevant and Engaging Learning
in the Middle Grades

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is designed for you and your colleagues to use and adapt so that it fits your unique needs and challenges. It is recommended that you read through the entire PLA prior to beginning the cycle of inquiry.

After completing this PLA, you will have a greater understanding about:

- Recommendation 4—Relevance and how it connects to your existing work/practice.
- Your areas of strength in relation to Recommendation 4.
- Any gaps you identified in regard to your implementation of any components of Recommendation 4.
- Opportunities for implementing a new practice and/or improving an existing practice.

This professional learning activity contains four phases that make up a continuous cycle of inquiry:

I. Identify: Reflect on current practices and identify areas of strength.
II. Investigate: Research content on *TCSII* for Recommendation 4—Relevance to discover successful strategies based on an identified area of improvement.
III. Implement: Create a short-term action plan, take action, and evaluate the results.
IV. Interact: Reflect on lessons learned during implementation, discuss experiences, share knowledge gained, and deepen understanding of concepts in *TCSII* as they relate to Recommendation 4—Relevance.

Professional Learning Activity (PLA) for Recommendation Four	Identify	Investigate	Implement	Interact
PLA: Relevant and Engaging Learning in the Middle Grades	Reflect on Current Practices	Research the Recommendation	Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results	Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 1—Brain Matters: Research on Learning

Learn how to apply new research on adolescent brain development from Dr. Janet Zadina, an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist now engaged in neuroscience research. In this professional learning presentation, you and your school team members will find ways to apply new findings on how the brain functions as young adolescents think and learn. Dr. Zadina's suggestions for improving instruction for young adolescents connect to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Janet Zadina Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Zadina 1—Brain Matters: Research on Learning	Zadina 1: Take Stock	Zadina 1: Take Time	Zadina 1: Take Action	Zadina 1: Take it Away

Dr. Zadina's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)

A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain

Learn how to apply new research on adolescent brain development from Dr. Janet Zadina, an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist now engaged in neuroscience research. In this professional learning presentation, you and your school team members will find that middle grades is an ideal time to develop critical thinking because of rapid brain growth that is occurring in young adolescents. This assists the development of the frontal lobe which is essential to student success. Dr. Zadina's suggestions for improving instruction for young adolescents connect to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Janet Zadina Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain	Zadina 2: Take Stock	Zadina 2: Take Time	Zadina 2: Take Action	Zadina 2: Take it Away

These professional learning activities are among several in the *TCSII* **Get Into the Act!** Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Zadina's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II):
The Social Nature of the Brain
and the Role of Emotion

Learn how to apply new research on adolescent brain development from Dr. Janet Zadina, an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist now engaged in neuroscience research. In this video and accompanying professional learning activity, you and your school team members will consider how to apply new findings on how the brain functions as young adolescents think and learn. As you discuss Dr. Zadina's suggestions on improving instruction for young adolescents, you will also find connections to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success for helping young adolescents succeed.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially as follows:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Janet Zadina Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II): The Social Nature of the Brain and the Role of Emotion	*Zadina 3: Take Stock*	*Zadina 3: Take Time*	*Zadina 3: Take Action*	*Zadina 3: Take it Away*

 These professional learning activities are among several in the *TCSII **Get Into the Act!*** Professional Learning Series.

Dr. Zadina's Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

| | Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators | |

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Five

Relationships that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

"In school, there is a strong correlation between a student's self-concept and academic achievement, motivation, and teacher and peer relationships; the combination puts them in either an upward spin or downward spiral in school."[1]

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is designed to assist in implementing Recommendation 5—Relationships at your school. We encourage you to use the Self-Assessment Guide, as well as the ideas and examples provided, as catalysts for discussion and to help you customize plans for your unique needs.

Recommendation 5—Relationships is one of twelve integrated recommendations intended to foster middle grades excellence. Recommendation 5 focuses on the critical component of educator-student relationships.

Each PLA consists of four segments:

Acquaint: Familiarize yourself with the Recommendation

- Review the Recommendation and its major components

Assess: Evaluate how your school stacks up in terms of implementing the basic components of the Recommendation

- Use the Self-Assessment Guide to evaluate and recognize areas of strength, identify gaps, and find opportunities for improvement
- Discuss and decide areas to target

Access: See what others have done; review research

- View videos and read featured spotlights for ideas that other schools have used to further their implementation of the Recommendation
- Find out through research why this Recommendation is important

Adapt: Create and implement your own plan; evaluate results

- Incorporate your ideas into a customized action plan to meet your school needs
- Determine how well the plan is working

Proceed to Acquaint

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Footnote

[1]Jeanne Ellis Ormrod in Sheryl Feinstein's *Secrets of the Teenage Brain: Research-Based Strategies for Reaching & Teaching Today's Adolescents*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004.

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Six

Transitions that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

"Students making the transition into middle level schools need to receive assistance
prior to, during, and after the move so that their social, psychological, and
academic well-being is not compromised."[1]

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is provided to assist in implementing Recommendation 6—Transitions at your school. We encourage you to use the Self-Assessment Guide as well as the ideas and examples provided, as catalysts for discussion and to help you customize plans for your unique needs.

Recommendation 6—Transitions is one of 12 integrated recommendations intended to foster middle grades excellence. Recommendation 6 focuses on the critical component of transitions from elementary school to middle grades and from middle grades to high school.

Each PLA consists of four segments:

Acquaint: Familiarize yourself with the Recommendation

- Review the Recommendation and its major components.

Assess: Evaluate how your school stacks up in terms of implementing the basic components of the Recommendation

- Use the Self-Assessment Guide to evaluate and recognize areas of strength, identify gaps, and find opportunities for improvement
- Discuss and decide areas to target

Access: See what others have done; review research

- Review text and read featured spotlights for ideas that other schools have used to further their implementation of the Recommendation
- Find out through research why this Recommendation is important

Adapt: Create and implement your own plan; evaluate results

- Incorporate your ideas into a customized action plan to meet your school needs
-
Determine how well the plan is working

Proceed to Acquaint

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Footnote

[1]Schumacher, Donna, "The Transition to Middle School" (Outside Source). ERIC Digest EDO-PS-98-6 (1998).

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Join Russlynn Ali
on a visual tour of achievement gap data

Russlynn Ali, author and former Executive Director of the non-profit Education Trust-West, leads a visual tour of achievement gap data and provides in-depth analysis on what it means for middle grades students and educators.

Russlynn Ali is currently serving as the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights with the U.S Department of Education.

Achievement Gap Data: Professional Learning Activity

As a schoolwide team:

- View Russlynn Ali's Video Presentation (WMV; 1:07:40) | MOV .
- Use the information in the presentation as a springboard to discuss your school's data and steps you can take toward closing the achievement gap.
- Learn more about the achievement gap from Recommendation 7—Access, and by searching for additional resources on the "achievement gap" in the A-Z Hot Links.

This presentation was originally delivered as part of a statewide Webcast on April 8, 2008. The entire archived *TCSII* Webcast (WMV; 2:11:50) is available for viewing by individuals or teams.

Text transcript of *TCSII* Webcast

Russlynn Ali's Biography

 Russlynn Ali, a former teacher, serves as assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education. Prior to her appointment to that post, she was the director of The Education Trust–West, a nonprofit organization focused on school reform. Ms. Ali has worked for the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) where she served as the President's Liaison for CDF's "Movement to Leave No Child Behind." Prior to joining CDF, she was the assistant director of Policy & Research for the Broad Foundation and also served as chief of staff to the Los Angeles Unified School District's Board of Education president. Ali earned her J.D. at Northwestern University School of Law and has practiced law in several capacities in Los Angeles, California.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Seven

Access that Promotes Success in the Middle Grades

"California must close the academic achievement gap that is threatening the futures
of too many of our students and indeed threatens the social and economic future of our state.
We need to set the same high expectations for all students within our accountability system.
I know when you raise the bar, students and schools reach to meet it."

—Jack O'Connell, Former State Superintendent of Public School Instruction, 2006

This Professional Learning Activity (PLA) is provided to assist in implementing Recommendation 7—Access at your school. We encourage you to use the Self-Assessment Guide as well as the ideas and examples provided as catalysts for discussion and to help you customize plans for your unique needs.

Recommendation 7—Access is one of 12 integrated recommendations intended to foster middle grades excellence. Recommendation 7 focuses on providing **all** middle grades students with equal access to a rich learning environment.

Each PLA consists of four segments:

Acquaint: Familiarize yourself with the Recommendation

- Review the Recommendation and its major components.

Assess: Evaluate how your school stacks up in terms of implementing the basic components of the Recommendation

- Use the Self-Assessment Guide to evaluate and recognize areas of strength, identify gaps, and find opportunities for improvement
- Discuss and decide areas to target

Access: See what others have done; review research

- Review text and read featured spotlights for ideas that other schools have used to further their implementation of the Recommendation
- Find out through research why this Recommendation is important

Adapt: Create and implement your own plan; evaluate results

- Incorporate your ideas into a customized action plan to meet your school needs
- Determine how well the plan is working

Proceed to Acquaint

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 4—Teacher Leadership:
Making a Difference

In this professional learning activity, you and your school team members will explore the teacher leadership imperative, teacher leadership strategies, and what's in it for you. Dr. Reeves will expose errors you're bound to make and he'll conclude with the power of networks.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially beginning with:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Doug Reeves Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Reeves 4: Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference	Reeves 4: Take Stock	Reeves 4: Take Time	Reeves 4: Take Action	Reeves 4: Take it Away

Dr. Reeves' Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 3—Accountability
in a Learning Organization

In this professional learning activity, you and your school team members will learn what's wrong with accountability and what's right with it. Dr. Reeves introduces holistic accountability (an accountability structure) and talks about how you can use accountability in a learning organization. Dr. Reeves shares his suggestions for improving accountability and connects them to the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.

This professional learning activity is made up of four components and is designed to be completed sequentially beginning with:

1. Take Stock: pre-video reflection exercise
2. Take Time: watch the video
3. Take Action: initial activities designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices
4. Take it Away: answer questions designed to help educators identify support and resources needed to implement the suggested practices

Dr. Doug Reeves Professional Learning Activities	Consider Your Practices	View the Video	Apply the Concepts	Make it Happen at Your School
Reeves 3: Accountability in a Learning Organization	Reeves 3: Take Stock	Reeves 3: Take Time	Reeves 3: Take Action	Reeves 3: Take it Away

Dr. Reeves' Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Use the *TCSII* Initiatives Crosswalks to enhance your existing planning efforts

The *TCSII* Initiatives Crosswalks are designed to help school teams better understand how each of the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success connect with and relate to key components of state, federal, and national initiatives that support student achievement.

Three professional learning activities are presented in relation to using each of the 12 *TCSII* Initiatives Crosswalks. The following suggested professional learning activities are designed as a guide to assist school teams with:

- Activity A: Reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses associated with current practices in relation to the implementation of the CDE's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success and a variety of initiatives including the Nine Essential Program Components (EPCs).
- Activity B: Using the areas of strength and weakness identified in the first activity to develop effective improvement strategies, revise school goals and monitor implementation of the Single School Plan for Student Achievement.
- Activity C: Completing the Schools to Watch™ –Taking Center Stage (STW™–TCS) School Self-Study and Rating Rubric.

Although the activities described below specifically address Recommendation 1—Rigor, these sample activities can be similarly used to explore each one of CDE's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success and key components of the initiatives identified.

TCSII Initiatives Crosswalk Activity A—Professional Learning Activity

Recommendation 1—Rigor and Essential Program Component 1

- Review the *TCSII* Initiatives Crosswalk for Recommendation 1—Rigor.
- Start with the first initiative — Essential Program Component (EPC) 1: Use of SBE-adopted English/reading/language arts and mathematics instructional and intervention materials.
  - Reflect on how current practices at your school effectively address the use of these instructional materials.
  - Which cornerstone strategies are done well at your school in relation to the recommendation?
- Summarize your findings by highlighting at least four major strengths and four major weaknesses in current practices in relation to Recommendation — Rigor. Report findings to the schoolwide team.
- Next, as a schoolwide team, prioritize the list of weaknesses and establish a timeline with benchmarks for developing and implementing strategies and/or solutions to address each area of weakness.
- Assign teams to focus on the identified weaknesses in relation to subject areas and explore the *TCSII* portal to locate information and resources to address those weaknesses. (On the *TCSII* Home Page, enter key words in the Search Box located at the top left corner.)
- Review each of the items presented in the search results.
- **Next Steps**: Using the steps described above,
  - Continue team analysis of Recommendation —Rigor in relation to the remaining Essential Program Components or select another one of the other 12 Recommendations.
  - Continue team analysis of Recommendation 1—Rigor in relation to other site-specific initiatives and then, following the same steps complete this process for each of the other 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.
  - Select another one of the California Department of Education's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success to analyze the same steps for each of the initiatives in the Crosswalk.

TCSII Initiatives Crosswalk Activity B—Professional Learning Activity

Rigor and the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA)

- Review the Seven Recommended Steps for Developing the Single Plan for Student Achievement
- Use the strengths and weaknesses identified in Activity 1 above based on review of each of the CDE's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success as a springboard for developing or modifying the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) according to the seven steps listed below:

  - Step One: Analyze Student Achievement Data
  - Step Two: Measure Effectiveness of Current Improvement Strategies Using State Tools to Determine Critical Causes of Student Underachievement
  - Step Three: Identify Achievement Goals and Key Program/Improvement Strategies that Align with the District LEA Plan
  - Step Four: Define Timelines, Personnel Responsible, Proposed Expenditures, and Funding Sources to Implement the Plan
  - Step Five: Recommend the SPSA to the Local Governing Board
  - Step Six: Implement the Plan
  - Step Seven: Monitor Implementation

TCSII Initiatives Crosswalk Activity C—Professional Learning Activity

Recommendation 1—Rigor and the California Schools to Watch™-Taking Center Stage (STW™-TCS) program

- Review the California Schools to Watch™–Taking Center Stage (STW™-TCS) program School Self-Study and Rating Rubric (DOC: 574 KB; 9 pp.) (SSRR)
- Use the information–identified strengths and weaknesses based on review of each of the CDE's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success –from Activity A to complete the California Schools to Watch™–Taking Center Stage (STW™-TCS) School Self-Study and Rating Rubric.
- The STW™-TCS initiative appears in the fifth row of the Initiatives Crosswalk chart under the heading, National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform.
  - Complete the (STW™-TCS) School Self-Study and Rating Rubric in preparation for completing the STW™-TCS application.
  - The STW™-TCS School Self-Study and Rating Rubric can also be used as a continuous improvement tool.

Initiatives Crosswalk Index

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Start a conversation about *TCSII* with your school teams, parents, or school board members

"Adolescents, You, and *TCSII*" Video: Professional Learning Activity

Following an overview about the unique characteristics of young adolescents and the talented, caring adults who teach them, the *TCSII* Preview Video presents a short tour of the *TCSII* portal features. Share how *TCSII* is designed to help meet adolescent learning needs by providing a myriad ideas, strategies, and resources.

As a group:

- View the five-minute Adolescents, You, and *TCSII* Video (WMV; 5:09) | MOV | AAV.
- After viewing the video, engage the audience in defining, "What would a developmentally appropriate middle grades school look and feel like to the young adolescent?"
- Chart responses and use them to begin examining and evaluating current practices.
- Review the summary of Adolescent Development as it pertains to each of the California Department of Education's (CDE) 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success.
- Explore the suggestions and determine potential ideas to implement.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation 1—Rigor

Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student

I. Identify: Reflect on Current Practices

The following are designed to help you and your colleagues reflect on current practices in relation to rigor; ask critical questions; and begin the continuous cycle of inquiry.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: As a team, meet to discuss the following to ensure that you and members of your team share a common understanding:
   - How do you define rigor?
   - What strategies do you use to convey high expectations?
   - Are there ways that you (subtly or overtly) convey low expectations?
   - What strategies do you use to develop critical thinking skills in every student?
   - How do you align curriculum with grade-level standards?
     - How do you and your subject-matter team work together to develop coordinated lessons so that all students receive the same challenging content?
   - How do you determine if students are learning the content?
2. **Activity**: On your own or in teams, complete the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist: Recommendation 1 – Rigor—a walk-through checklist provided to help school teams informally gauge their implementation of a particular recommendation.
   - Print out the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist: Recommendation 1–Rigor.
   - Place a check by those practices currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom.
3. **Activity**: Individually or in teams, review the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist for Recommendation 1–Rigor.
   - For those items that you indicated are currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom, identify one or more practice(s) that you or your team believe you are doing well.
   - In a pair-share activity, describe the practice(s) that you identified and respond to the following:
     - Explain why this practice was selected.
     - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom?

Then, proceed to:

- II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation 1—Rigor

Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student

II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Now that you have completed the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist based on your current school practices, use the following activities to continue learning about the strategies and practices related to Recommendation 1 – Rigor.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: Return to the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and look at the items that were not checked.
   - Identify one or more practices that you would like to improve or implement.
   - In a pair-share activity, respond to the following:
     - Why is this practice being selected for improvement or implementation?
       - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
       - Is there consensus on this choice?
         - If there is not consensus, how will you determine on which practice to focus?
     - How will selection be beneficial to you, your students, and others?
     - Does this practice allow you to explore a range of insights and findings?
     - Is this practice something that you can investigate and implement within your daily work schedule and in a manageable timeframe?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom?
2. **Activity**: Each pair will report to the team regarding the practice(s) selected. As an entire staff, discuss the following:
   - Should you focus on improving one existing practice?
   - If so, which one? —OR—
   - Should you implement one new practice to address an identified need or gap?
   - What evidence helped you determine the need for a new or revised practice or approach?
3. **Activity**: As an entire staff and based on the group discussion:
   - Finalize the selection of one practice on which you would like to focus your enhancement or implementation efforts. Consider selecting only one practice to be enhanced or implemented at a time. If more than one change is made, it will be difficult to determine which action is responsible for the outcome.
   - Next, obtain ideas and/or strategies that would assist you in implementing this new practice or enhancing one existing practice.
4. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*–review the content sections of Recommendation 1—Rigor.
   - The following are examples of how to begin your exploration of the content sections in *TCSII* related to Recommendation 1 – Rigor.
   - If, for example, you want to obtain more information about developing all students' critical thinking skills, read the *TCSII* content section on "Critical thinking."
     - Did you discover any additional critical thinking activities that you could incorporate into your own classroom instruction?
   - Keep a list of practices or ideas you found.
   - If, instead, you would like to focus on how effectively your grading system supports a rigorous instructional program, begin with a review of the *TCSII* content section "Grades and effective standards-based reporting."
   - Did you identify any changes that you could make to the grading system or how you use the grading system?

- How might you implement any changes to your grading practices?
5. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following:
    - What did you learn from your research?
    - What patterns, insights, and new understandings emerged?
    - What meaning do these patterns, insights, and new understandings have for your practice?
    - How will these findings impact your students?

Then, proceed to:

- III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation 1—Rigor

Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student

III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Successful implementation of a new practice or enhancing an existing practice requires planning, applying, and evaluating.

To begin:

1. **Activity:** Create an Action Plan
   - Based upon your research, determine which strategies you will use to enhance one existing practice or implement one new practice.
   - Discuss why those strategies were chosen and consider these questions:
     - What steps are needed to improve or implement this practice in your classroom?
     - What existing resources or information do you need to obtain that would:
       - Be useful in helping you implement a new practice or modify an existing one?
       - Help you decide on the type of data/evidence to collect?
     - What did you learn from your exploration on *TCSII* that will assist you?
       - How did you interpret your findings?
     - As part of your action plan, determine:
       - How you will differentiate this practice so that every student learns.
       - Which strategies you will use to ensure that all students are able to demonstrate what they know.
     - As part of your action plan, design a method to evaluate results and a schedule to assess progress.
       - Discuss how you will evaluate the success of the new and/or modified practice.
       - Determine an appropriate timeline for completing what you are trying to accomplish.
       - Create a list of the evidence and/or data you will collect and use to evaluate the successful implementation of the new practice or enhancement of the existing practice.
       - While implementing the new practice or improving on an existing practice, collect evidence/data about performance and document the results.
       - Compare your action plan with the list of content sections contained in Recommendation 1 – Rigor and their related *Education Code* Sections, Frameworks, and State Board of Education Policies.
         - Go to Linking the Recommendation on Rigor with *Education Code*, State Board of Education Policies, and Curricular Frameworks (DOC; 44 KB; 2 pp.).
         - In a pair-share activity, discuss how the strategies selected relate to State Board of Education policies and curricular frameworks.
         - Identify ways that this information will help you implement your action plan.
2. **Activity**: Take Action and Apply the Concepts
   - Implement the action plan.
     - As you apply the strategies identified in your action plan, meet weekly with your colleagues and discuss the following:
       - What additional resources, if any, have you needed to successfully implement the strategies?
       - What is different about your classroom?
       - Are your students more engaged? How do you know?
       - What type of additional administrative support have you needed, if any?
       - How have the new strategies helped to meet the needs of all your students?

- Compare your action plan to the:
  - Revised California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (2009) (PDF; Outside Source) adopted by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and endorsed by the State Board of Education. While comparing your plan to the CSTP, consider the following questions:
    - How do I:
      - Establish a productive, achievement-oriented climate in my classroom?
      - Set high expectations for all of my students?
      - Motivate all students to initiate their own learning and strive for challenging learning goals?
      - Provide all students opportunities to examine and evaluate their own work and to learn from the work of their peers?
      - Ensure access to challenging and diverse academic content for all students?
3. **Activity:** Evaluate the Results
   - Review the list of evidence collected (as identified during the planning phase) and as a team complete the following:
     - Bring samples of student work and discuss how the samples exemplify the measure of success of the practice.
     - Discuss the ways in which your students have demonstrated their learning.
     - Discuss how your instruction has changed based on the measures of success.
     - Based upon your evaluation, what further changes will you make in your practice and how will you evaluate those changes?

Then, proceed to:

- IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation 1—Rigor

Implementing High Expectations for the Success of Every Student

IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Learn more about key concepts of Recommendation 1 – Rigor by completing the following activities. Discuss experiences and share knowledge as you deepen your understanding.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following questions:
   - As you implemented the new practice, what challenges and opportunities did you discover?
   - What else do you need to learn now that you have completed research, created a plan, implemented a new practice, and evaluated the results?
   - How can you and your colleagues broaden your understanding about improving your professional practice?
   - What did you learn from the data you collected while implementing the new practice?
   - How did the new practice affect rigor at your site?
   - What new questions emerged from the changes made?
   - Was the new or improved practice effective?
   - Did the strategies work? If so, what evidence can you provide of its effectiveness?
   - What were the shortcomings? If so, what evidence can you provide of its lack of effectiveness?
   - What new or additional issues did your team uncover?
   - Which new questions or issues will the team address next using this process?
   - If you identified any low expectation messages, brainstorm ways to change the messages or behaviors into high expectations.
   - If you do not work together with your subject-matter team to develop coordinated lessons so that all students receive the same challenging content, discuss ways you might begin doing this.
   - Once you discover that students are not learning the content, how do you currently adjust instruction?
2. **Activity**: Watch the *TCSII* video *Leading the Way to Academic Excellence (WMV; 6:50) | MOV*
   1. Consider the best practices described by the principal of Toby Johnson Middle School (consistent syllabi for the same course offered in the same grade and taught by different teachers) and described by a teacher at Rio Norte Junior High School (backwards mapping).
   2. Discuss which of these best practices would translate well to your school.
3. **Activity**: Go into more depth regarding Recommendation 1 – Rigor by scheduling a series of staff meetings to complete the following *TCSII* Professional Learning Activity.
   - Professional Learning Activity with Dr. Douglas Reeves: Reeves 1: Rigor in the Classroom.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Biography

Dr. Douglas Reeves

Dr. Douglas Reeves is the founder of the Leadership and Learning Center. He has worked with education, business, nonprofit and government organizations throughout the world. The author of more than 20 books and many articles on leadership and organizational effectiveness, he has twice been named to the Harvard University Distinguished Authors Series. Dr. Reeves was named Brock International Laureate for his contributions to education, received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and was awarded the Parent's Choice Award for his writing for children and parents.

To learn more about Dr. Reeves and his work, visit the Leadership and Learning Center (Outside Source).

Dr. Reeves' Professional Learning Activities Index

Professional Learning Activities Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 1—Rigor in the Classroom

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. What are your (or your staff's) perceptions or expectations of the academic achievement of your students who receive free and reduced lunch?

2. What characteristics describe an "A" student? What characteristics describe an "F" student?

3. What does your school community value? How do you know?

4. What or who determines which content standards are taught at each grade level?

5. What are the most important standards for students to learn this year so they can be successful next year?

Then, proceed to:

- Take Time: View the video presentation

Reeves 1 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 1—Rigor in the Classroom

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin: Watch the video

- Rigor in the Classroom Video Presentation (WMV; 22:59) | Flash
    - ◈ **Coming Soon!** A handout of Dr. Reeves' PowerPoint Presentation for Reeves 1 — Rigor in the Classroom.

Then, proceed to:

- ◈ Take Action: Apply the concepts — initial activities to help educators incorporate brain-compatible practices.

Reeves 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 1—Rigor in the Classroom

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

Achievement and Student Socioeconomic Status

1. **Activity:** Using Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data, ascertain what percentage of your student socioeconomic status (SES) subgroup scored at proficient or above in English language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics.
   - Ascertain what percentage of other subgroups scored at proficient or above in ELA and/or mathematics.
   - Compare the results.
   - Does an achievement gap exist within your school's subgroups?
   - Based on Dr. Reeves' presentation, what strategies and/or practices can be put in place to close the achievement gap?

2. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Socioeconomic status

Power Standards

1. **Activity:** Organize a staff rotation so that each teacher meets with at least one colleague who teaches the next level to discuss:
   - What is most important for incoming students to have mastered by the time they reach your classroom?

2. **Activity:** Watch the *TCSII* video Leading the Way to Academic Excellence (WMV; 6:50) | MOV.
   - Consider the best practices described by the principal of Toby Johnson Middle School (consistent syllabi for the same course offered in the same grade and taught by different teachers) and described by a teacher at Rio Norte Junior High School (backwards mapping).
   - Discuss which of these best practices would translate well to your school.

3. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - State policy on standards

Nonfiction Writing

1. **Activity:** Meet with a teacher or teachers from other departments to plan strategies to increase and support nonfiction writing across the curricula at your school.
   - How could your program be adjusted to increase the amount of time all students spend on nonfiction writing at your school?

2. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII:*
   - Writing across the curriculum

- Teaching writing
- Writing Assessment
- Cross-curricular connections; writing across the curriculum
- Writing Prompt Guidelines for Teacher Teams
- Summary Writing Task—Grade Seven
- Summative Essay Recipe
- Professional Considerations: English Learners and Academic Success

Feedback and Grading

1. **Activity:** Review your personal and your school's grading policies and practices.
    - Is there room for improvement?
    - How could you change your grading policies?
    - How can you encourage students to **DO** their work?
    - What are appropriate consequences for students who do not do their work?
    - How could you change your grading policies so that early and appropriately completed work is rewarded rather than punishing students for submitting late or incomplete work?
    - How could you provide immediate and specific feedback to your students on a regular basis?
    - How can grades be used to coach students rather than punish them?

2. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII:*
    - Rubrics

Culture of Achievement

1. **Activity:** Visit your school's trophy case and/or public bulletin boards and record the items on display.
    - In the event the display changes throughout the year, list other items that are typically displayed during the school year.
    - How do the school displays indicate what your school community values?

2. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII:*
    - Resilience—Strengthening Protective Factors and Developmental Assets
    - Create a climate for learning
    - Professional Considerations: Creating a School Culture
    - Nurturing Motivation, Effort, and Investment in School Work
    - A Middle School Culture Supporting Standards-Based Education

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school — identify support and resources needed for implementation

Reeves 1 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 1—Rigor in the Classroom

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

1. What resources would you need to implement these practices in your classroom or at your school site?

2. What administrative support would you need?

3. What personal changes would you have to make?

4. How would you evaluate success?

Reeves 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work
in the Real World

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practice as you answer the questions that follow:

1. How do you define formative and summative assessments? When and how are they used?

2. What types of feedback are your students given related to their learning?

3. On your campus, how is nonfiction writing currently practiced in classes other than English language arts classes?

Then, proceed to:

- Reeves 2—Take Time: View the video presentation

Reeves 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work in the Real World

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin: Watch the Video

- Making Assessment Work in the Real World (WMV; 18:35) | Flash
  - *Coming Soon!* A handout of Dr. Reeves' PowerPoint Presentation for Reeves 2 — Making Assessment Work in the Real World

Then, proceed to:

- Reeves 2—Take Action: Apply the

concepts Reeves 2 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work
in the Real World

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

Assessment

The term "formative assessment" refers to assessments that provide information (feedback) to guide instruction and improve student performance. In the California curriculum frameworks, "formative" assessments are called progress-monitoring assessments. (*TCSII* Glossary)

1. **Activity:** Applying Dr. Reeves' definition, describe how teachers at your school are using formative assessment
   - Is formative assessment used to improve teaching and learning?
   - If not, what administrative/classroom/personal changes are needed to effectively use formative assessment to help guide teaching and learning?
   - Would Dr. Reeves consider your assessments fair? Why? Why not?
   - Is nonfiction writing being used in all of the classrooms in your school? If not, why not?
2. **Activity**: Discuss the following:
   - According to Dr. Reeves, is the feedback that you provide to your students effective in improving their learning? How does it differ from the feedback Doug Reeves says coaches and music teachers provide their students?
   - What does Dr. Reeves mean when he says the key to assessment is consistency, not format?
3. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Assessments
   - Assessment
   - Assessment purposes
   - Assessment for continual progress monitoring
   - Targeted Resources Related to Assessment

Nonfiction Writing

Nonfiction writing includes writing that persuades, describes, compares, contrasts, and explains.

1. **Activity:** Ask your non-English language arts teachers if they are using nonfiction writing in their classes? Include art, music, and physical education teachers in your survey.

   - What changes will be needed to support the use of nonfiction writing in non-English language arts classes?
   - What kinds of support can English language arts teachers provide?
   - If implementation is low, brainstorm ways to infuse nonfiction writing across the curriculum.

The Leadership and Learning Matrix

1. **Activity:** According to the Leadership and Learning Matrix, which quadrant best describes your school?
   - What evidence supports your view?
   - What improvements would be needed to insure success?
   - How could formative assessments be used to ensure success?
2. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   Targeted Resources Related to Assessment

Then, proceed to:

- Reeves 2—Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Reeves 2 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 2—Making Assessment Work
in the Real World

Take It Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

1. What additional support would help teachers use formative assessment to guide teaching and learning?
2. What administrative supports will be needed to implement nonfiction writing across all subject areas in your school?
3. What support could you provide to other teachers to help them use nonfiction writing in their classrooms?
4. How would you evaluate the success of your changes?
5. How can you provide opportunities for students to utilize nonfiction writing?

Reeves 2 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 3—Accountability
in a Learning Organization

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. Describe your school's accountability system?
2. What is the general perception of your school's accountability system?
3. How would you improve your school's accountability system to improve teaching and student performance?
4. What does accountability mean to your community?
5. What are the pros and cons of your school's accountability system?

Then, proceed to:

■ Take Time: View the

presentation Reeves 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 3—Accountability in a Learning Organization

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin, watch the video:

- Accountability in a Learning Organization (WMV; 15:49) | Flash
  - ◈ **Coming Soon!** A handout of Dr. Reeves' PowerPoint Presentation for Reeves 3 — Accountability in a Learning Organization

Then, proceed to:

- <u>Take Action: Apply the concepts</u>—initial activities to help educators incorporate effective accountability practices and strategies at both the school and district levels

Reeves 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 3—Accountability
in a Learning Organization

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

Science Fair for Adults

1. **Activity:** Create a display for a schoolwide science fair for adults

   - What data would you put on the left panel?
   - What adult actions would you display on the middle panel that resulted in the scores displayed on the left panel?
   - What inference or conclusions would you draw from the information you included on the other two panels?
2. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Accountability
   - Keep a focus on accountability
   - Hold teachers accountable

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Reeves 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 3—Accountability
in a Learning Organization

Take It Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

1. Identify an idea or practice that Dr. Reeves shares in his video that would help your school improve its accountability system.
2. Map the steps you would follow to implement (or integrate) your idea or practice into your school accountability process.
3. Identify the supports you would need to implement a holistic accountability system in your classroom or at your school site?
4. How would you evaluate the success of your changes?

Reeves 3 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 4—Teacher Leadership:
Making a Difference

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:.

- What are the main influences on your professional practices as a teacher? College courses? Reading? Team meetings? District in-service? Informal sharing with colleagues?
- How and why do you network with other teachers at your school?
- How long does it take you to successfully implement a teaching strategy that you learned in a professional development session? How do you evaluate success?

Then, proceed to:

- Take Time: View the presentation

Reeves 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 4—Teacher Leadership:
Making a Difference

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin:

- Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference (WMV; 25:41) | Flash
  - ***Coming soon!*** A handout of Dr. Reeves' PowerPoint Presentation for Reeves 4 — Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference

Then, proceed to:

Take Action: Apply the concepts—initial activities to help educators incorporate effective accountability practices and strategies at both the school and district levels

Reeves 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 4—Teacher Leadership:
Making a Difference

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

1. **Activity**: Evaluate Your School's Networks
   - Based on the five levels of networks described by Dr. Reeves, which levels are most evident at your school?
   - Describe the most effective network in which you participate:

     - Who are the members?
     - What is its purpose?
     - How is it sustained?
     - Would this network survive without funding or mandates

2. **Activity**: Ask Compelling Questions
   - Review the sample compelling questions shared by Dr. Reeves.
   - What compelling questions need to be asked at your school?
   - What steps need to be taken to address those questions?

3. **Activity:** Create a Display for a Schoolwide Science Fair for Adults

   - What data would you put on the left panel?
   - What adult actions would you display on the middle panel that resulted in the scores displayed on the left panel?
   - What inference or conclusions would you draw from the information you included on the other two panels?
4. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Leadership: The Organizational Structures That Support Rigor
   - Teacher leadership
   - Professional Learning

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Reeves 4 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Reeves 4—Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference

Take It Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Reeves.

1. What steps would you take to implement the four teacher leadership strategies described by Dr. Reeves?

   - ◈ Ask compelling questions
   - ◈ Conduct action research
   - ◈ Publicly display research data and results
   - ◈ Make evidence-based decisions

2. What administrative support is needed to implement these strategies?

3. How is the success of the implementation of these strategies and associated changes evaluated?

4. How can you transform your school networks into value-driven networks?

Reeves 4 Index

Back to Top

TCSII *Get Into the Act!*
Professional Learning Series
Showcases Renowned Education Experts

The *TCSII* **Get into the Act!** Professional Learning Series is a collection of high quality professional learning activities designed for curious educators, school teams, and district leaders.

Built around engaging video presentations of prominent education experts, **Get Into the Act! (GITA!)** will elevate your professional learning efforts to a new level. Each **GITA!** professional learning activity features four components:

- Thought-provoking questions to consider as you delve into a particular issue
- A video presentation by an expert in a specific field relevant to middle grades education
- Guidance on using concepts learned and applying them to your unique school environment
- An exploration of ways to make changes at your school that lead to improved student achievement

In 2009, the following three presenters take center stage to deliver conference-quality professional learning through the *TCSII* **Get into the Act!** Professional Learning Series:

Dr. Kate Kinsella, a university professor who specializes in language and literacy development in diverse classrooms, discusses how to promote engaged and accountable learning in the classroom, teach explicit vocabulary, develop academic language across the curriculum, and increase reading engagement for middle grades students.

Dr. Douglas Reeves, an expert on leadership and organizational effectiveness, examines ways to establish rigor in the classroom, focuses on making assessment work, discusses effective accountability, and shares his thoughts on the importance of teacher leadership.

Dr. Janet Zadina, a cognitive neuroscientist and award-winning researcher, discusses adolescent brain development, the physical nature of thinking and learning based on brain research, the social nature of the brain, and classroom strategies that work.

 We encourage you to use these presentations and frame them around your own local context. Before planning your staff development, please read the latest findings included in the report titled Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad (PDF; Outside Source), released in February 2009. Written by Linda Darling-Hammond and a team of researchers from the Stanford University School Redesign Network, the report reveals the professional learning that best improves teachers' practice and student learning and the crucial steps necessary to transforming schools and improving academic achievement. Major findings of the report reveal that the most effective staff development is intensive, ongoing, connected to practice, and includes teaching teams who focus on analyzing student data to plan powerful lessons. One of the least effective methods of staff development is the short term "workshop" style learning. Please note, the Series should be used as a "jumping off point" – a place to begin - while you plan your own powerful staff development to close the achievement gap at your school.

The entire series is summarized in a downloadable brochure (PDF; 1.5MB; 2pp.).

As always, *TCSII's* rich repository of strategies, best practices, and professional learning tools—including the *TCSII* **Get into the Act!** Professional Learning Series—is delivered direct to your desktop for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Recommendations in Action Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Two

A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

I. Identify: Reflect on Current Practices

The following activities are designed to help you and your colleagues reflect on your current practices related to Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention, ask critical questions, and begin the continuous cycle of inquiry.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: As a team, meet to discuss the following to ensure that you and members of your team share a common understanding:
   - How do we define assessment?
   - What common assessments are used by everyone on our team?
     - Discuss the purpose and effectiveness of each.
     - Is everyone on the team using all of the same common assessments? If not, why not?
   - How do we analyze our assessments to best inform our instruction?
   - What is an instructional strategy?
   - How do we currently select our instructional strategies?
   - What instructional support(s) are we providing?
   - How do we know when our students have mastered grade-level academic content standards?
   - How do we define intervention?
   - How do we determine intervention strategies for our students?
   - What is our shared understanding of the interrelationship among assessment, instruction, and intervention?
   - How are assessment and intervention components of instruction?

2. **Activity**: On your own or in teams, complete the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist:
   Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention—a walk-through checklist provided to help school teams informally gauge their implementation of a particular recommendation.
   - Print out the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist: Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention.
   - Place a check by those practices currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom.

3. **Activity**: Individually or in teams, review the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist:
   Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention.
   - For those items that you indicated are currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom, identify one or more practice(s) that you or your team believe you are doing well.
   - In a pair-share activity, describe the practice(s) that you identified and respond to the following:
     - Explain why this practice was selected.
     - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom?

Then, proceed to:

- II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Two

A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Now that you have reviewed the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and completed it based on your current school practices, use the following activities to continue learning about the strategies and practices related to Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: Return to the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and look at the items that were not checked.
    - Identify one or more practices that you would like to improve or implement.
    - In a pair-share activity, respond to the following:
        - Why is this practice being selected for improvement or implementation?
            - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
            - Is there consensus on this choice?
            - If there is not consensus, how will you determine on which practice to focus?
        - How will implementation or improvement of this practice be beneficial to you, your students, and others?
        - Will work on this practice allow you to explore a range of insights and findings?
        - Is this practice something that you can investigate and implement within your daily work schedule and in a manageable timeframe?
        - How does this practice currently look in your classroom?

2. **Activity**: Each pair will report to the team regarding the practice(s) selected.
    - As an entire staff, discuss the following:
        - Should you focus on improving one *existing* practice?
        - If so, which one? —OR—
        - Should you implement one *new* practice to address an identified need or gap?
        - What evidence helped you determine the need for a new or revised practice or approach?

3. **Activity**: As an entire staff and based on the group discussion:
    - Finalize the selection of one practice on which you would like to focus your enhancement or implementation efforts.
        - Consider selecting only one practice to be enhanced or implemented at a time. If more than one change is made, it will be difficult to determine which action is responsible for the outcome.
    - Next, obtain ideas and/or strategies that would assist you in implementing this new practice or enhancing one existing practice.

4. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*: Review the content sections of Recommendation 2 —Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention.
    - The following are examples of how to begin your exploration of the content sections in *TCSII* related to Recommendation 2 — Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention.
        - If, for example, your identified practice is teaching students how to be effective learners, explore more on *TCSII* in the following content section: Study skills—Teaching students how to learn.
        - If, instead, you would like to focus on knowing when each student has acquired the intended knowledge and skills, begin with a review of the TCSII content section: How to Know When Each Student Has Acquired the Knowledge and

Skills.
- ◈ To gain additional information regarding common benchmark assessments, review the "In the Spotlight" article in TCSII that focuses on teachers at Rio Norte Junior High School scoring benchmark assessments and working with others in the district to ensure that assessments also help to guide articulation.
- ◈ To obtain more information about differentiated Instruction:
  - ▶ Review the following content section on TCSII:
    - ▶ Differentiated instruction
  - ▶ Watch the following videos on TCSII:
    - ▶ Kinesthetic Learning, Part I (WMV; 5:36) | MOV
    - ▶ Kinesthetic Learning, Part II (WMV; 5:04) | MOV

5. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following:
   - ▪ What did you learn from your research?
   - ▪ What patterns, insights, and new understandings emerged?
   - ▪ What meaning do these patterns, insights, and new understandings have for your practice?
   - ▪ How will these findings impact your professional practice?
   - ▪ How will these findings impact your students?

Then, proceed to:

- ▪ III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Two

A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Successful implementation of a new practice or enhancing an existing practice requires planning, applying, and evaluating the results.

To begin:

1. **Activity:** Create an Action Plan
   - Based upon your research, determine which strategies you will use to enhance one existing practice or implement one new practice.
   - Discuss why you chose these strategies and consider these questions:
     - What steps are needed to improve or implement this practice in your classroom?
     - What existing resources or information do you need to obtain that would:
       - Be useful in helping you implement a new practice or modify an existing one?
       - Help you decide on the type of data/evidence to collect?
       - Help you interpret your findings?
     - As part of your action plan, determine:
       - How you will differentiate this practice so that every student learns.
       - Which strategies you will use to ensure that all teachers integrate the concepts described in Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention to effectively address student needs.
     - As part of your action plan, design a method to evaluate results and create a schedule to assess progress.
       - Discuss how you will evaluate the success of the new and/or modified practice.
       - Determine an appropriate timeline for completing what you are trying to accomplish.
       - Determine what evidence you will collect to evaluate the implementation of the new practice or enhancement of the existing practice.
       - Document your findings throughout the implementation process..
       - Summarize your findings. Be sure to highlight the successes and make note of things that didn't work (if any).

2. **Activity**: Take Action and Apply the Concepts
   - As you apply the strategies identified in your action plan, meet weekly with your colleagues and discuss the following:
     - What additional resources, if any, have you needed to successfully implement the strategies?
     - What is different about your classroom?
     - How do you know if your students are more engaged as learners?
     - What type of additional administrative support have you needed, if any?
     - How have you differentiated the strategies to meet the needs of all your students?
     - How have you deepened your content knowledge?
   - Compare your action plan to the revised California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (2009) (PDF; Outside Source). While comparing your plan to the 2009 CSTP, consider which of the following standards emphasize strategies that are impacted by improved instruction, assessment, and intervention practices:
     - Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
     - Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
     - Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning

✦ Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students
✦ Standard 5: Assessing Students for Learning
✦ Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator.

3. **Activity:** Evaluate the Results
   - Review the list of evidence collected (as identified during the planning phase) and as a team complete the following:
     - ✦ Bring samples of student work and discuss how the samples illustrate the success of the practice.
     - ✦ Discuss the ways in which your students have demonstrated their learning.
     - ✦ Discuss how your instruction has changed based on the measures of success.
     - ✦ Based upon your evaluation, what further changes will you make in your practice and how will you evaluate those changes?

Then, proceed to:

- IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

	Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)	
	A Portal for Middle Grades Educators	

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Two

A Continuous Cycle of Teaching and Learning: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Learn more about key concepts of Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention by completing the following activities. Discuss experiences and share knowledge as you deepen your understanding.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following questions:
   - Did the strategy work? If so, what evidence can you provide of its effectiveness?
   - Were there shortcomings? If so, what evidence can you provide about the lack of effectiveness of the chosen strategy?
   - What else do you need to learn now that you have completed research, created a plan, implemented a new practice, and evaluated the results?
   - How can you and your colleagues broaden your understanding about improving your professional practice?
   - What did you learn from the data you collected while implementing the new practice?
   - How did the new practice affect instruction, assessment, and/or intervention at your site?
   - How did the new practice impact students at your site? How do you know?
   - As you implemented the new practice, what challenges and opportunities did you discover?
   - Was the cycle of inquiry useful? If yes, what will the team address next using this process?

2. **Activity**: Conduct a Science Fair for Adults.
   - Dr. Douglas Reeves discusses the "Science Fair for Adults" in two of his videos posted on TCSII. Please watch:
     - Accountability in a Learning Organization (WMV; 15:49) | Flash and
     Teacher Leadership: Making a Difference (WMV; 25:41) | Flash
   - Individually or in teams, create a three-paneled display to describe your research findings as follows:
     - Left panel: Evidence of an effective practice
       - Test scores
       - Local data
       - Data on parental involvement
       - Engagement
     - Middle Panel: Adult Actions
       - What did the adults do that caused the results found in the data?
       - Describe the teaching and leadership strategies related to the data.
     - Right Panel: Inferences and Conclusions
       - Include samples of student work and share how the samples exemplify the measure of success of the practice.
       - Describe how your instruction has changed based on the measures of success.
       - Based upon your own evaluation, explain what further changes you will make in your practice and how you will evaluate those changes?
       - Reflect on what you, as an individual, learned from the process of the research and summarize your thoughts.
     - Convene the entire school staff where everyone can review the three-paneled displays describing:
       - Research findings,
       - Action(s) taken,

- Results, and
- Next steps.

3. **Activity**: Go into more depth regarding Recommendation 2–Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention by scheduling a series of staff meetings to complete the following Professional Learning Activities on *TCSII*:
  - Professional Learning Activity with Dr. Kate Kinsella:
    - Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners
    - Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades
    - Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills through Structured Tasks
    - Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills (Parts 1 and 2)
  - Professional Learning Activity with Dr. Debbie Silver:
    - Differentiated Instruction in the Middle Grades
  - Professional Learning Activity with Dr. Janet Zadina:
    - Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Dr. Debbie Silver — Questions and Answers

April 8, 2008 *Taking Center Stage—Act II* Statewide Webcast

These are the questions posed by viewers during the TCSII Webcast. Dr. Debbie Silver submitted her responses after the Webcast, which can be viewed from the Professional Learning Toolkit.

1. Should (& do) teachers receive appropriate cultural competence training in order to know the cultures, languages, and experiences of students in order to effectively differentiate instruction?

> It is almost impossible to give undergraduate education majors all they need in order to be competent in the various cultures, languages, and experiences of students before they begin teaching. It would be helpful if we in the United States did what some of the Canadian Provinces do; they pay beginning teachers to be interns with master teachers for at least a year before they get their own classrooms. What a wonderful opportunity that would be for neophytes to learn more about the culture(s) of the communities in which they teach. I think school districts need to become more responsible for giving new teachers (as well as veteran teachers) ongoing professional development along these lines. Probably students would be best served by educators forming localized professional learning communities that meet on a regular basis to discuss and plan how best to address student diversities.

2. Considering the current demand for higher California Standard Test (CST) scores, do you have any ideas that teachers can implement to prepare students to take the CST?

> I have always believed that if we incorporate effective teaching strategies, the test scores will take care of themselves in the long run. Unfortunately, most districts are looking for immediate improvement, and statistically that is usually impossible because it disregards the normal "implementation dip" of any newly activated program. I believe that D.I. can positively affect test scores in several ways. First, students who have a heightened sense of "self-efficacy" will not be paralyzed by test fears. If they believe they have a reasonable chance to do well on the assessments, they are more likely to commit to doing their best.

> Second, D.I. helps students make greater gains in all academic areas by helping them understand what they already know and making connections among the disciplines. And, finally, effective D.I. requires teachers to vigilantly revisit essential ideas. If essential ideas are linked to the CST, students will have a greater familiarity with and mastery of those particular standards.

3. Wonderful presentation! It is clear that teachers need the time to know their students and differentiate instruction. How can teachers find the time?

> Thank you for your positive comments. You have hit on a major "challenge" for effectively implementing D.I. How do teachers find the time? Unfortunately, much of what we need to do with D.I. requires a lot of thought, planning, and execution *before* we meet with students. As we begin to compact, tier assignments, use alternative assessments, and modify our levels of support even more time is required. My advice is for teachers to work in groups to help distribute the load. I advise teachers to duplicate their creations and share them with other teachers (who will likewise share their own work). If a teacher develops a D.I. unit on a particular concept and trades it with another teacher, they both have two more units next year than they did this year. As teachers continue to create, share, and accumulate D.I. materials, their reserve of ideas and materials will grow exponentially. I would love to see teachers given more planning time and less classroom responsibility (as is done in several other countries) so that the balance of time intensive implementation required for D.I. would be far more equitable.

4. How can technology as a tool be utilized to help differentiate teaching & learning?

> Technology is essential for effective implementation of Differentiated Instruction. Part of the issue about time requirements can be at least partially solved with the use of technology innovations. It would be impossible to list in this small space the many tools, devices, and programs now available for teachers to help with diverse levels of support and challenging activities. For a phenomenal compilation or resources, visit Brenda Dycks's Website: http://www.nmsa.org/services/online/rebooting.html (Outside Source)

5. With more schools emphasizing on English Language Arts (ELA) and Math time, what impact do you believe less science instruction will have on the overall achievement of the student?

It disturbs me that the emphasis on ELA and Math testing has led to an emphasis on skill sets rather than on the importance of helping students learn to use their knowledge in new and novel ways. I much prefer the model of an integrated approach to education that balances all of the core subject areas -- language arts, science, social studies, and math with the "encore" subject areas such as music, art, humanities, drama, physical education, and electives. It has always been my belief that by using science as an entry point teachers can effectively incorporate language arts and mathematics as tools to deepen understanding of basic scientific principles. The same can be said for social studies and other disciplines. I hope that the positive gains in education that have come about because of curriculum mapping, thematic instruction, and the cohesive curriculum will not be abandoned with the emphasis on D.I. Both concepts are important for student understanding and motivation.

6. How do you/we reconcile the benefits and need for differentiation with our accountability system which relies solely on multiple choice exams?

We can't. If we truly want to represent D.I. across the educational spectrum, we are going to have to come up with multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding. I have no problem with an objective multiple choice exam being one indicator of achievement, but it should by no means be the only acceptable evidence of learning. Presently we attempt to measure that which is easily measured despite its limits and lack of equity. Objective multiple choice tests are expedient, but they are often heavily weighted in favor of students who are verbal-linguistic learners.

7. What is the Website for applied assessment strategies?

I am not sure what you mean by the term "applied" assessment strategies. Generally we think of assessment as being diagnostic, formative, or summative. Formative assessment is probably the most important because it lets us know where our students are as we move along and informs us about how to adjust our instructional strategies to better help with student understanding. A comprehensive list can be found at: http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=Assessment+Strategies&btnG=Search (Outside Source)

8. Great examples using science content; could you provide a few differentiated instruction examples for English Learners?

Unfortunately in our limited time I was able to offer only a few instructional examples. My background is in science, so "in a pinch" I usually fall back on examples I used with my own students. I encourage you to use Google for Educators (Outside Source) to locate instructional examples for your particular field.

| California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION | Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII) A Portal for Middle Grades Educators | |

Transcript: Taking Center Stage—Act II Webcast (April 8, 2008)

This is the transcript of the TCSII Webcast which can be viewed from http://pubs.cde.ca.gov/tcsii/prolearningtoolkit.aspx.

Introduction

Rozlynn: Hello and welcome to the kick-off of the *Taking Center Stage—Act II Road Show Webcast. Fifty-six county offices of education from around the state are participating in today's Webcast which is being transmitted from the Sacramento County Office of Education.*

My name is Rozlynn Worrall, and I am the administrator for the Middle and High School Improvement Office of the California Department of Education. It is my pleasure to be here today to facilitate this Webcast.

Our State Superintendent of Instruction, Jack O'Connell, would also like to welcome you and to say a little bit about *Taking Center Stage—Act II* Web portal and today's professional learning experience.

Jack O'Connell Welcome Video

Jack O'Connell: Greetings! It's really my great pleasure to welcome you to today's *Taking Center Stage—Act II* professional learning experience.

This is the first in a series of professional learning opportunities that's really designed by the Middle and High School Improvement Office of the California Department of Education to help us close the achievement gap in California's middle grades.

Now, as most of you may know, the California Department of Education recently launched our new and highly innovative Web-based resource for California's middle grades educators and partners. Taking *Center Stage—Act II,* which will be known as *TCSII,* is subtitled *Ensuring Success and Closing the Achievement Gap for All of California's Middle Grades Students.*

Now, *TCSII* is based on 12 interrelated recommendations for middle grades improvement. We've developed these foundational recommendations with the help of our California Middle Grades Alliance partners. Today, you'll explore even more about these recommendations and how they address the connections between academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and the organizational structures and processes needed to support effective middle grades practices.

Today's event includes both presentations and small group experiences. Now, first, you will hear from two renowned experts. My friend, Russlynn Ali, who is the executive director of the nonprofit organization Education Trust-West. And she is going to talk about achievement gap data and how it really pertains to students in our middle grades. Next, you will hear about differentiated instruction from Dr. Debbie Silver, who really is a great award-winning educator with 30 years experience as a classroom teacher and author.

Now, following these presentations, you will be able to participate in the *Taking Center Stage—Act II Road* Show that's designed for teams and professional learning communities. As district and site leadership teams, you will be taking the strategies you learn today back to your school communities to help your colleagues understand and fully implement the 12 *TCSII* recommendations through guided school-site professional learning. Now, your participation in this professional learning event signals your commitment to success for all middle grades students. And, I really want to commend you as change agents for continuous improvement.

We are looking at a tough budget year. But we must invest in our impressionable middle grades students or we will be shortchanging the future of our great state. Whether we have an abundant or lean budget, the *TCSII* Web portal is free. You can access it 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Now, *TCSII*, along with the Road Show CD that each trained team will receive, will have everything that you need for on-site professional learning experiences that will move your school from fair to good and from good to great. This is a renewable, dynamic Web resource that can be used with beginning teachers and administrators and with veteran teachers and administrators as you continuously improve your

practices and continue to meet the needs of your young adolescents.

I would like to sincerely express my appreciation to the county offices of education and the Curriculum and Instruction Steering Secondary Subcommittee of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, for working with the California Department of Education to host and facilitate today's event. Again, thank you for taking your time today to truly help our schools prepare our young adolescents to be productive citizens and leaders for tomorrow.

Rozlynn: Thank you, Superintendent. Before I introduce our first speaker today, I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you about the format of today's Webcast. Each of our presenters will have approximately 45 minutes for their presentation. During that time, you are welcome to send in questions via the chat function of the Webcast. And directly after their 45-minute presentation, there will be a five-minute break where you can get up and stretch and relax a little bit; and we will compile those questions. And then, we will come back to you promptly after five minutes and our speakers will answer as many of those questions as best they can within the ten minutes that they have after that. Any questions left unanswered will be answered and posted on the Web site soon after the Webcast, maybe a couple of days afterwards. So we are looking forward to today's Webcast which will also be archived and on the *TCSII* Web portal very shortly after the Webcast.

We are pleased today to have two nationally renowned speakers with us today. Russlynn Ali will take you through a visual tour of achievement gap data and impress upon you the need for a high impact middle grades education for all of our students. Debbie Silver, author and veteran educator, will focus on the effect of differentiating classroom instruction for all of our students and to meet the diverse needs of our learners.

Russlynn Ali Presentation

Our first presenter is Russlynn Ali. She is the executive director of the nonprofit organization Education Trust-West. Russlynn's presentation today is "Our Mission is Possible; and The Time is Now." This will be posted on the Education West Trust [sic] Web site for you to view after today's presentation. Welcome, Russlynn.

Russlynn: Good morning. Thank you so much.

Rozlynn: It's very nice to have you here. And we need a little bit of help here because we have a different presentation up. How do we get Russlynn's presentation up here?

Russlynn: It is amazing that we're here today to really focus on middle schools. Middle schools are taking center stage in our reform and school transformation efforts and what an important task . . . as we'll talk about as soon as we resolve some of these technical difficulties.

And, as you know all too well, we are making great gains in our middle and elementary schools statewide. Achievement is up for all groups of kids. In fact, at the elementary grades, we are doing much better than in our secondary years. And by the time—as we'll now see—students get to high school, early gains often get lost.

So what I'd like to do for you today is paint a portrait of what's happening to students as they journey throughout our middle grades and, most importantly, what we know about what it takes to ensure that all young students from the sixth through the eighth grades can achieve at the highest levels and be ready for the new demands and new rigor of our nation and our state's high schools.

So let's take a look at really where we are now. As Superintendent O'Connell said, our biggest challenge—our biggest challenge—is closing the achievement gap. It is the most important crisis facing our public schools. We have to make headway on this challenge for moral reasons, for demographic reasons, and, certainly, for economic reasons.

But, when we talk about the achievement gap, we really are talking about twin gaps in California—both the gap separating our state's young people from their peers in almost every state in the nation **and** the gap within our own borders separating our students of color and their low-income peers from more advantaged groups of students. Now, the truth is, we will never get to that first gap between California and all our other states without attending to the second.

So let's take a look at that first gap—California versus every other state. As we see overall in mathematics, we are very near the bottom doing better only than eighth graders in West Virginia, Hawaii, New Mexico, Alabama, and Mississippi. Now many . . . when we see these NAEP data (the National Assessment of Educational Progress) . . . as you know, it's the only assessment we can use to compare California's young people to their peers elsewhere.

Many people . . . when they see these average numbers, they say, "Well, of course, Russlynn, well of course. . . because, you see, we have so many more Latinos, so many more low-income students." Let me say at the outset, if I share nothing with you today, I hope that it is this take away: that it is not the color of students, it is not how much money their parents make that guides student achievement. It's what schools do—what schools do matter very, very much. And what we as educators do can make all of the difference.

Now, so these eighth grade numbers, well, that's all our kids. What about certain groups of kids? Well, let's compare our Latino eighth

graders to their Latino peers everywhere else and there you'll see Latino eighth graders in California are doing better only than Utah, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Alabama again.

Well, what about our black young people? Doing a little bit better than a few other states—doing better than blacks and African American young people in Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Alabama, Michigan, Nebraska.

But, if it was just our demographics, then our white students, we would expect—one of our top performing subgroups—to be doing much better than their white peers nationwide. We see, though, a very different picture where our white students, while they have a higher average scale score on the National Assessment of Education Progress, they are still performing well below their peers elsewhere. All of those states that are Latino and African American peers are doing a little bit better than our white students are too; and add to that white students in Idaho, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky only—that's where our white students are outperforming their peers. So the achievement gap facing California as a whole, relative to almost every other state in the nation, is huge.

Now, let's go deeper and take a look at our young people in California. Now, Jack O'Connell and the staff of the state chief revealed some incredibly powerful data just a few months ago. It really puts to notion that myth that achievement gaps are about socioeconomic status only —that race, if you will, is almost just a correlating factor, right? If you're low achieving, then you're most likely to be poor. And, far too often, we conflate race and poverty in public education and when we talk about, for example, finance reform. But the truth is non-poor African American, non-poor middle-class Latino students are still in California performing below the level and right at the level of white students in California who are poor. This is true in grades two through eleven.

Here we're looking at English language arts. And here we're looking at mathematics where middle-class African American and Latino young people are performing worse than white students that are poor. And this is true in grades two through eleven. So it's about race and poverty. Very tough questions especially for educators often to contend with . . . especially in the middle grades when young people are dealing with so many of life's challenges.

Now, we've seen some improvement over time in California but not enough.

And achievement gaps are not narrowing. That's English . . . . Here's math . . . . where we're seeing, again, steady improvement for all groups of kids, but achievement gaps are not closing. When we talk about closing the achievement gap, we are talking about improving every group of students. But we've got to accelerate those kids furthest behind.

Now, let's go deep into middle schools. Red is where we do not want to be—that's below and far below basic on our California Standards Test. Yellow is basic. Green, our goal for all students—that's proficient.

Here you're looking at sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Now, long before No Child Left Behind, back in the days of the Public School Accountability Act, we were waxing eloquent about how our goal for all students was indeed proficiency. You see we have a long way to go as of the most recent data sets.

Now, underneath those averages that I just showed you, we see very big achievement gaps. Let's look for a moment at reading. Again, we're doing better in the sixth grade and almost any place else but here you see very wide achievement gaps separating our African American and Latino students from their white and Asian counterparts.

The same is true when we cut those data by socioeconomic status. As we matriculate into seventh grade, we see similar patterns but here, too—wide achievement gaps especially between Asian and white students that are performing at grade level and their Latino and African American counterparts? Same patterns when we cut that data by socioeconomic status.

Now, as you have a chance after this Webcast to begin to study these numbers and look a little deeper, contact our offices. Let's talk about why these patterns persist.

What we're going to spend most of our time talking about today is what we can do to ameliorate these achievement gaps. I'm going to go fast as we take a look at these patterns because what you've seen at sixth grade and what you've seen at seventh grade, unfortunately, gets worse at eighth grade and ninth grade. And, by high school, again, early gains get lost quickly.

Now, by seventh grade, what do these numbers mean when it comes to grade level—a year's worth of learning? We can use the norm-referenced but standards-aligned CAT6 to tell us a very disturbing story in California. And, that is, that African American and Latino seventh graders are reading at about the level of their white third grade peers. That means, by the time students get to your doors at middle school, they are already four years—four years, if not more, years—worth of learning behind their peers.

The same is true for low-income seventh graders. They are performing at about the level of non-poor third graders—four years worth of learning. And later this morning, you are going to hear from Debbie, who's going to talk to you about differentiated instruction. Because you know and I know and we know that that is key—capacity building so that educators know what to do when students are coming to you at the secondary level so far behind.

We're going to talk about some places that are doing that very well and see their achievement gaps begin to close as a result. Eighth grade

—you see those patterns getting a little bit bigger on the red (the below basic) especially for Latino and African American students where just over a quarter—just over a fourth—of Latino and African American eighth graders are performing at grade level statewide. Same is true for low-income young people—well less than one in five, if they are poor—are performing at grade level in reading. And, you see by ninth grade, that red begins to even get bigger.

Now, ninth grade is showing you here because we've got to get students. That's the new charge for middle schools, right?—making sure that they are high school ready with a new definition of high schools. California has finally marched with 30 other states. We are now the thirty-first in the American Diploma Project Network. That means we are going to align our high school exit requirements to match the new demands of college, career, and civic participation.

Your job at middle schools is key—is key—to make sure that students are ready to embark on a very new high school journey. You see from data like this that, at the ninth grade especially, we have a long way to go for our African American and Latino young people. Same is true for our low-income young people.

Now, let's look deeply at math, too. You see there's—more red, especially at the sixth grade. We were doing better in English than we are in mathematics . . . equally wide achievement gaps where a full 72 percent of our state's Asian students at the sixth grade in mathematics are performing proficient.

Now, bear in mind, you'll see through these patterns a new kind of achievement gap growing—one between white and Asian students, with Asian students, especially in mathematics on top. But we've got to be very careful when we make assumptions behind those patterns. Because when we unpack Asian data and look behind those averages, we see very wide achievement gaps within the Asian community depending on when students came to this country and depending on region—Hmong, Cambodia, Laos—usually at the bottom of the achievement gap between their Korean, Chinese, and Japanese counterparts. And those gaps are wide. So let's not clump all Asians together when we say they are fast becoming our highest performing subgroup.

Looking at the data by socioeconomic status—similar patterns. By seventh grade, you see similar patterns. Only about a quarter of our state's (a little more than one in four of our state's) Latino young people are proficient in seventh grade mathematics. A little over one in five of our African American young people at the seventh grade performing at grade level in mathematics.

Why is the seventh grade important, so important, in mathematics? You know this better than I do. If we're serious about algebra in the eighth grade, they have to have much more fundamental understanding of the deeper level mathematics concepts for them to be ready.

Socioeconomic status—cutting that data by . . . you see very similar patterns where over half of our state's non-poor students are proficient compared to only about one in four of our students that are poor.

Now, eighth grade general math—there ought to be a big asterisk here under general math, right? Because our goal for all students is algebra in the eighth grade . . . has been—has been—since about 1996, 1997. Recently, it just became a real high school graduation requirement in the last three years. The state board is always contending with waivers for students that still haven't been able to master algebra; but, yet, it's a middle school charge. We see far too many students still, especially if they are African American or Latino, enrolled in general mathematics at the eighth grade. And look at these data patterns where over half of them in general math are really not where we want them to be—if they are African American, are below or far below where they ought to be, to be ready for the demands of high school. And just under half of all Latinos students are below and far below basic.

Cutting that data by socioeconomic status, you see very similar patterns in the gap. Now, Algebra I for our students that are getting algebra in the eighth grade that are . . . . Now we can't tell statewide patterns to a really accurate extent about who's getting algebra in the eighth grade and who's getting general math and what classes those students took before and what classes they'll take when they get through high school. You know why?

That's because we haven't made the kind of investment at the state level on a comprehensive data system that is both student-level and teacher-level so that we can study classroom performance, so that we can study programs that work. So folks like me can get up on Webcasts like this and tell you for sure what we know that's working in California classrooms.

This year, in this dire fiscal times, we have a new kind of opportunity to make sure that we actually make good on policymaker promise—that is now turning into rhetoric because we've heard the promises year after year after year after year—that, finally, we are going to invest in a data system worthy of the sixth largest economy in the world so it just doesn't become the eighth, and the tenth, and the twelfth and continue to lose its economic standing. Let's push at both the local and state levels to make sure we get much better data.

What we know for sure, though—because we have some good data . . . more than we've ever had before . . . we got a long way to go—what we know for sure is that the expectations of high school are much more rigorous than they were before. I'm going to say that, always, college and work readiness is the goal of K-12 now as it should be.

So we've got to get much deeper into what works at the middle school level—what works to get students truly mastering algebra in the eighth grade. Because patterns like what these data show, the kids that are getting it are failing it. And patterns . . . as our team at the Education Trust-West spends over half of our time in schools and districts every day that are working to transform themselves into those that are truly

college and work ready. What we see in every district that we are in—and these are forward-thinking districts—the common intervention of choice, especially in algebra, is what?—to repeat the course over and over and over again. We're seeing high school transcripts that date back from middle school where students are taking six courses of algebra. Sometimes they're called different names; but they're, sort of, kind of, algebra and still not mastering it.

Debbie will come to talk to us about differentiated instruction—how we're going to cure that. Because interventions of doing the same thing over and over again—taking the same course over and over again—aren't what's in the best interest of our students.

In a few moments, we'll talk about what we're learning from some of the high performing middle schools (especially in algebra)—of what they're doing that's working so well to change these patterns. But I'm going to try to get through the sobering data because the truth . . . where these data are likely breaking your heart as much as they break ours at the Education Trust-West everyday . . . the inspiration—the hope—is what high performing, high minority, high poverty schools are doing up and down the state to figure out how to change these patterns.

Now, the trends are persisting over time. At the eighth grade, we're seeing some improvement, though, especially since 2003. That is the very good news for all groups of kids. We want to see more for our Latino and African American students if we are serious about closing the achievement gap. But we are seeing a steady improvement over time. In math, that improvement doesn't appear to be as consistent longitudinally as we're seeing in English; but still some progress in the eighth grade.

Now, of course, you know as well as I do, these gaps begin before students ever get to kindergarten. There is much new research about school readiness—that children need to know their alphabet; they need to know some basic elements of reading and, yes, mathematics before they get to kindergarten; and that there are wide achievement gaps separating low-income three-year-olds and low-income five-year-olds—big huge vocabulary gaps, big gaps on knowing their colors, big gaps on knowing their alphabet.

The problem, though, is rather than taking these kids that already come to our doors with less to begin with and giving them more of what research tells us makes a difference, we do the opposite at every level, K-12. We take the kids who need the most and we turn around and give them less of everything that we know makes a difference. We organize our systems—whether that system is a classroom, a school, a district, or even our state. We organize them in a way that actually don't ameliorate the achievement gap. They exacerbate the achievement gap. Gaps don't leave once students enter our doors—leave our schools either.

Now, just for a real moment, let me show you some national adult literacy survey. Go with me. Just—at what we were asking—what this study asked, for folks over 16, over 18 to do. If they were proficient, they could compute and compare the cost per ounce of food items. If they were below basic, they could just barely add the amounts on a bank deposit slip. What we're talking about is quantitative literacy. Look what we saw. Where . . . if you were African American or Latino as an adult, nearly . . . and just about half of you—half of you—were below basic in quantitative literacy.

What made the biggest difference?—Advanced degree, college education. Now, I know my "higher ed" friends that might be watching will look at these numbers and go "eh." But we still only have about a third—less than a third—of adults proficient with a college degree, right? We've got a long way to go.

And what do we know is the gatekeeper? Algebra. Bob Moses' stuff from back in the day, right? . . . not too long ago . . . . Algebra is a civil right. I say "back in the day" because, as we're learning from the new economic research, it's actually geometry that's the gatekeeper course —because, in order to earn a job sufficient to support a family in the blue-collar workforce, adults are going to need to know geometry. It doesn't have to be this way. These patterns—the achievement gap—is not inevitable. It is not. What schools do, matter.

Let's just take a look at some of those high poverty middle schools that are scoring in the top third of our state . . . that have the highest populations of Latino and African American young people; of ELL (English language learners); of low- income students; and that are performing in the top third of all schools statewide—not just schools that look like them—all schools statewide. Hill Middle in Long Beach, Thompson Middle in Murietta Valley, Oakland Charter in Oakland Unified with an API of 896.

What about those middle schools that have the smallest gaps between Latino and white young people? Pioneer that has a six-point gap. Not the norm that we see. The hundreds of API points separate groups of students from one another within schools.

So what are they doing? Let me show you just a little bit at Hill Middle (just a snapshot of their data) where they are outperforming for every group of kids—not just their district, but the state as a whole . . . where you see consistent growth over time, where kids are moving from the sixth to the eighth grade and in droves, that paces much higher than the state as a whole.

Take a look just at Kipp, now the highest performing middle school in San Francisco Unified. Look what they're doing at every grade level—outpacing San Francisco Unified, outpacing San Francisco County, outpacing California as a whole for every group of kids.

Now, what Kipp is also showing us . . . because, you know, this focus on accountability I'm hearing so much in the field that says it's only about reading and math. And I understand that oftentimes the focus on reading and math—given how little time (instructional time) we have during the course of the school day, and school year, and school week , , , oftentimes, a focus on, for example, science gets lost (not to mention arts and PE).

But Kipp is showing us that it doesn't have to be that way. That high performing can mean high performing across all disciplines. In science, Kipp students are outpacing all groups of kids in their district, in their county, in their state.

What are they doing that's working so well? What's Hill doing? We're talking traditional public schools . . . we're talking some charter schools. Our chore is to get into those high performing classrooms and schools, find out what they are doing, and see what lessons can be learned.

Now, we know from whole districts that there are very big differences in the performance of the same groups of kids. Take a look at some district comparisons nationally using the NAEP (the National Assessment of Education Progress) and a study called the Trial Urban District Assessment. Look at Los Angeles. This is ranked in terms of performance across these other urban districts. My friends in L.A. . . . we'll be there in a few weeks. Let's talk about these numbers: LAUSD versus New York City for low-income black kids—low-income African American young people. They're not different in New York than they are in Los Angeles.

The bottom line is at every level of education. What we do matters a lot at middle schools—that crucial juncture, that crucial transition. Finally, there's acknowledgment from state leaders that you've known all along; and that is, what you do matters almost most of all.

So, what do we know about these gap-closing schools? There are six powerful lessons, six powerful takeaways. Now, before we get into them . . . some real context. What you have chosen to do as educators has the power to transform—more than almost any other field—the lives of children. In this era of economic . . . increasing economic despair, we're finding a new kind of focus on public education.

Why? Because, as we look at America's standing relative to almost every other country developed and developing that participates in these international studies, we're realizing that America is losing its ground in the middle grades. Our fifteen-year-olds—looking at that piece of study—have a problem-solving capacity compared to their peers in Latvia—that in most other nations, both in problem solving and mathematics, they are far outpacing America's kids.

We talked about the achievement gap especially at the eighth grade between California and every other state. But—as we're wrestling in our global economy to regain our standing—to focus on what we as educators do has the power—holds the key—to transforming whole communities, to transforming neighborhoods, to transforming families. It matters most of all.

And what teachers know in these high poverty, high minority, high poverty environments that we are studying, is that they hold the key—that they're doing it everyday. They're doing it many times despite the system, not because of the system. What do they do most of all? They focus on what they can do. They focus on what they can change rather than on what they can't.

Now, some schools and districts—those that aren't so high performing and high improving—oftentimes, they focus . . . they're caught up in correlations:

- The percentage of babies born at low birth weight;
- The percentage of children born to single moms;
- The percentage of their kids and families receiving government assistance;
- Education levels of the mothers.

You know, it goes and on and on and on and on. That's not to say that each of these correlations doesn't make your work more challenging. But they don't focus endlessly on those correlations. They don't focus on what they can't do. They focus on what they can.

We hear things like this from those high performing, high poverty principals. They say, "Yeah, we get it. Our kids live in dire circumstances. No student in America should face what so many of ours do everyday. They are poor. They are hungry. There aren't books in their homes. They live in crime-ridden neighborhoods. They have severe health challenges and issues that impact their lives when they come into our classrooms. But we can't dwell on that," high performing educators say, "because we can't change it." So, when they come into our doors, we dwell on that which is going to move our students in terms of their academic achievement. They don't leave anything about teaching and learning to chance.

Now, an awful lot of our teachers—even brand new ones (those just coming out of our schools of ed)—are often left to figure out on their own what to teach and what constitutes "good enough" student work. The result of that system is one that doesn't expect very much from most students; and expects much less from some such types of students than others.

Now, my colleague says that this is where the achievement gap lives—in the quality of the expectations of our assignments that we ask students to do. We are going to go through these quickly because there's not enough time to really dig deep into what constitutes a good assignment. Fortunately, our leaders at the state level are working on overcoming this obstacle.

On these Web portals, you're going to be able to see good assignments—anchor assignments—at every grade level in the core subjects especially. Oftentimes, we'll see high quality assignments like the one that I'm showing you now: a seventh grade writing assignment that asks students to read an important essay and critically analyze the impact on society today, for example.

On the other hand, we see assignments like this that I am showing you now—where both of these assignments, believe it or not, were regular education kids. This wasn't special ed; this wasn't ELL kids. We're asking kids in preparation for the CST in writing to do things like

fill in blanks about what a neat expression is or what their best friend's name is. Who's going to do better on the assessment in writing?—likely, the kids that have been asked to write. Standards alone can't get us there.

Couple of other assignments . . . sixth grade—you know, we like to call this science meets multiple intelligences. It's as if Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences have run amuck. It's as if visual learners by definition are black and brown in some schools. And, in some communities, we're creating a 3-D creature in a shoebox. The assignment might look like this—with very little explanation as how—or an assignment . . . that I should read Shakespeare because that's what our standards tell us, that's what our frameworks tell us, that's what our blueprints tell us, that's what our rubrics tell us.

What are we asking kids to do with the Shakespeare assignment?—to do a visual. What do we get?—things like this. If you can't see it, it's a heart with an "x" through it that talks about Montague and says "no family love."

Compared to an assignment like this—where students are reading the Odyssey and asked to do deep thought. Some assignments that ask students to read the Odyssey . . . because in this era of standards, everybody's reading the Odyssey . . . we'll ask students to draw pictures of each adventure. We can put them at the high school level and schools call classes college prep. But you know and I know a label is just a label.

So what do high performing schools and districts do? They have very clear goals for what students should learn at their grade levels—not just taking what the state has done. Using the state as a guide, they provide teachers with a common curriculum and assignments. They have a regular vehicle to assure common marking of those standards—discussion about them. Some people call them power standards. Some people call them very important standards. You know—most educators have known this for a long time. Our state leaders need to develop the acumen, too. And, you hear the rhetoric. Perhaps we have too many standards. Perhaps we have to go deeper and richer, clearer, more specific, deeper, fewer.

We know that educators across the state are already doing that. And, they are taking somewhat of a risk that they're guessing right based on what those assessments do tell us, right? But we know that they're also developing formative assessments. They're not waiting for what so many educators call those "autopsy tests" at the end of the year—course assessments from the state. They're developing formative assessments based on what they know matters and they're judging student learning over time. They're acting immediately on those results. They're getting those results of these formative assessments into the hands of educators, supplemental instruction providers, and, yes, parents. They set their goals high.

Now, I'm going to race through this part. But let's be clear—college and work readiness is the goal of our high schools, is the goal of our K-12 system. Parents are clear. They want to go to college. They want their kids to go to college. Kids are clear. They want to go to college. Now, parents in California—minority parents—expect their kids to at least go to a four-year college . . . every group. And that's good because only with the credential does the wage gap finally close. Some college, in other words, is not enough.

Even in jobs that we don't expect . . . automotive apprenticeship programs are requiring students to know physics—to get force hydraulics and friction—because cars are made differently today than they used to be. What is a construction academy if it's not based on plane geometry? And, in almost every apprenticeship program that . . . we've learned . . . that we've studied . . . . that actually get young people on a meaningful career track that will actually offer them benefits, they have to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the English language.

Culinary arts is the new big thing in California—Proposition 1-D. That's where our new money is coming from. I've talked to a number of central district office folks almost everywhere in the state where they say that SB 70 money is going to culinary arts . . . not a bad thing if we are using it as a pathway to rigor. Because, if we are using it as an occupational sort of destination, we might not be doing it right. The culinary arts academies are actually requiring ACTs, SATs. They are giving credit if you scored above a three plus on an AP assessment and they're requiring remediation if kids don't know basic skills. The culinary arts Web site—it's not folks in a kitchen . . . the picture we see . . . . It's young people using a calculator and doing computations in mathematics.

Ready for work means ready for college. Yet, by the end, only about 14 percent of our state's Latino ninth graders and only about 15 percent of our state's African Americans ninth graders are going to graduate with the courses that our four-year universities and colleges require for admission. And we know ready for work is ready for college. We are talking about a new basic here.

Now, at the ninth grade, most kids (or an increasing percentage of them) are on track. But—as new research from the U.C. is showing us—by the time they get to the twelfth grade, very few are on track. So, how does it happen? In part, it's the decisions adults make.

Let me show you, real quickly, two counselors, same school. How are counselors divided at this high school?—based on alphabet so they were distributed equitably. But look how many kids in counselor B were actually college ready and got access to the courses versus counselor A. Was it equitable?

And, as we talk to counselors up and down high schools in California, what do they tell us? A lot of their determinations are based on middle school recommendations—middle school recommendations. What you do has an enormous consequence for what happens to students after they leave our middle schools. Bottom line—our choices affect their chances.

Now, in order to be on track, it's no surprise anymore—Algebra I, Algebra I, Algebra I. At the middle school level, to really be on track, we can look at the high school exit exam and realize the sooner students took algebra, the more likely they were to pass the high school exit exam. That's no surprise to you middle school educators. Why? This is no surprise either. If they take middle school [sic] early, they go on to higher ed at higher rates. They get big gains even for low-achieving students. And all signs—all signs—according to national research, point to the benefit of algebra in the middle grades. Now, it's not just about the course, though. It's about that rich curriculum throughout. And it's a rich curriculum not just in algebra, but in all types of classes.

Now, we don't have time to go deep into what we mean by rich curriculum; but you know. And, as we're looking at the international studies—back to those—what we're seeing is that in those countries that are higher performing than ours, all of the system from grade one to what we could call grade eight—they are going deeper into the mathematical concepts at an earlier age and building on those concepts over time. They don't do what we so often do in America and right here in California—that spiraling, where we touch on a few standards every year, every year, every year—without ensuring a deeper understanding of them along the way.

Now, one of our favorite courses . . . as we dig deep into these transcripts

. . . will shock your conscience of what we are actually offering students, especially at the high school level—things like "algebra art" that are truly being counted as algebra; courses like "newcomer math" at the high school level that kids are staying in, not just for a transition period, but for two and three years; "home rest" at the high school level.

Take a look at your high school. As we know, right? . . . . We've got to talk articulation amongst the grade levels. Middle schools and high schools gotta know—align their expectations to one another. Take a look at what we're offering at some of these high schools in California and ask yourself, "Could we justify this to parents?" Or, "If the press motivates us, could we justify them to an editorial board?"

Setting goals is important. We have to make it a piece of accountability. I'm not going to go deep here. Let's be clear that, even with the changes to our API system, it will take an enormously long time for students in California to be proficient. Taking a look at one school and its achievement gaps . . . . Even with the new changes to API, gaps are growing at every grade level and schools are still getting rewarded and kids won't be proficient at this particular middle school if they're Latino until 2038. Okay? Got to make it the centerpiece of accountability or else it's rhetoric.

So, we've heard a lot about a growth model. A growth model is terribly important to control for the challenges that the students bring into your classroom. How much learning ought to be done over a year's work so that you can get credit for improving student scores over time? But those gross targets have to be rigorous and ambitious.

Now, high performing schools (you know this) are obsessive about time, especially instructional time. First, they know how much time they have left. They look at their master schedule. They dig deep in them.

Let me show you very quickly what we're learning from some when we take away all of those things that take out of instructional learning for kids. Schools are left with not nearly enough time—18 eight-hour days per subject per year, right? Now, the state ed code requires over 64,000 minutes at the high school level. When we dig deep into master schedules, we're finding about 51,000 minutes that students are getting. Students that are coming in to you—especially those that are coming in to you far below—need more time in order to catch up and you need more time with them.

Now, that's not all. They don't make big guesses. They go deep with their study of how much time they have. There's a drive towards block scheduling. Do the math. Sometimes—not always, not always, but sometimes—even with a block schedule you actually get less time per course than you might with a six-period day. You got to do the math.

Now, principals are important . . . ever present . . . . we know—the focus of research is clear—instructional leadership matters hugely. But principals are not the only leaders in the school. High performing schools . . . those . . . teachers regularly observe other teachers. They have time to plan and work collaboratively. New teachers get generous and careful support. Teachers take on many other leadership tasks at the school. Teachers in high performing, high poverty, high minority schools are leaders, too. Now, good schools know how much teachers matter; and they act on that knowledge. They build the will to monitor teacher talent in new ways.

Value-added—you've heard a lot about this. Controlling for prior student performance, what teachers make the biggest gains with what groups of kids? Because, as value-added research is showing us across the board, the power of the teacher matters most. It's the difference—as this study showed us—between remedial placement and talented and gifted placement.

Now, we can't be serious about closing the achievement gap while we let the teacher-quality gap continue to persist and grow. Nationally, about 30 percent of seventh and eighth grade teachers assigned to teach math or science don't have the subject matter knowledge to do so. In California, most intern teachers work in our lowest performing schools. Today, sixth graders who attended a low-achieving school have had a 41 percent chance of being taught by an under-qualified teacher according to the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. They have about a quarter chance—one in four—of having more than one. Their peers, though, in the highest achieving schools have had only about one in five chance of having an under-prepared teacher and only a two percent chance of having more than one.

And, the teacher quality gap is about money. It's not just about those proxies or credentials—those years of experience and higher education

degrees. Those proxies translate into how much we're spending on what we know matters most—our teachers. In our lowest performing, highest minority schools versus our . . . I'm sorry . . . I mean our lowest minority and highest performing schools. . . .

Let's take a look at two in Los Angeles Unified. I'm picking on my friends in L.A. here again. Palms Middle, Daniel Middle—they have very different API

Scores. Go with me to the bottom of this graph. And most would say, well . . . Daniel Webster's API is about 600, which is a high performing relative to middle schools across the state. So I'm giving my L.A. friends some credit there, too. But they would say this 100-point gap is based on those kids. Look at the kids. They're poor. They're black. They're brown. What that assumption does is ignore an incredibly important underlying factor—and that's that the average teacher at Webster Middle gets paid about $8,800 less every year than his counterpart or her counterpart at Palms Middle. If Webster spent as much as Palms did on its teachers, Webster's school budget—school budget—would increase by over $450,000 every year—over $460,000 every year. Unrealized funds spent on what we know matters most—the teacher.

Now, if we had the creativity to change these patterns, the achievement gap could close. Five years running on having an effective teacher using a value-added model of what's effective and the achievement gap can wipe out.

To go to the remaining distance, though, requires strong leadership. School leadership will help, so could improving working conditions and extra pay and reducing student load. But we've also got to address the hierarchy in our profession that says . . . that judges the eliteness of a teacher not by how well she improves student achievement, but rather on how elite the kids are that she is teaching. We have to flip that paradigm and restore honor to those doing our most important work with our most challenging kids.

Now, lastly, in this era of tough budget times, we've got to make sense of the "adequacy versus the efficiency" debate, right? Those folks that say, "Oh, spend what you have more wisely. Spend it more efficiently." And they say sometimes, "Spend it more efficiently before you get more money." And those folks that say, "Oh, we can't do anything until we get more money." It is both, ladies and gentlemen. We have to spend what we have more wisely; and we need more to get the job before us—the new challenge of educating all students to extraordinarily high levels—done.

Now, of course, more money will help. But just like the "get down to the facts" research showed us not too long ago (remember that $1.7 trillion figure that was all over the newspaper). Underneath that study said $1.7 trillion spent in the exact same way we are spending it is likely not to lead to the kind of results we want to see. When we look deeply at that urban district comparison over time, we realize that districts that are performing better than L.A. are spending actually less money than L.A., even when we do cost adjustments like this graph does. And districts performing worse than L.A. are actually spending more than L.A. More money spent more wisely is key.

And, while we're waiting for new money to come down the pipe for newer resources to get targeted, we've got to work on closing the funding gaps between what we spend—whether it be on teachers or schools or interventions in our lowest performing, highest minority, and high poverty schools compared to our highest performing, lowest minority and lowest poverty schools. Of course, more money will help. But how much, again, depends entirely on how it is spent.

Thank you for your time this morning. I look forward to answering your questions.

Rozlynn: Thank you, Russlynn. As always, your graphic data is so compelling; and you're so passionate about closing the achievement gap. It's been wonderful having you here and I know that our educators have some questions for you. So we're going to take a five-minute break now. If you haven't already sent in your questions, please do so now, and we will be back in five minutes.

Five-Minute Break

Rozlynn: Welcome back, everybody. We have had our five-minute little stretch break here. And as we were waiting, we had lots and lots of questions come in from you. Russlynn is going to take about 10 minutes now to go through some of these questions. And, again, I'll just let you know that, if she is unable to answer some of these questions because of time, the answers will be posted on the *TCSII* Web portal. So I'm going to turn it over to Russlynn and thank you again.

Russlynn: Thank you, Roz. Let me say this—we won't be able to answer all these questions. I am presently surprised at the kind of feedback that you're getting in real time. This is quite phenomenal and your interest and your willingness to go deep and probe deep and ask more is always so inspiring. It's the lifelong learner in all of us. So I thank you for this.

What we don't have time to do, we will (as Roz indicated) . . . we'll get the answers on the Web site. You can always call our office and any of our staff would be delighted to help you at 510-465-6444. You can also access . . . I understand, at least some of the questions have been, "Where can I find this data show?" You'll be able to access it on our Web site at www.edtrustwest.org.

So, let's try to tackle some of these. Let's do in order of the data show. A lot of questions on NAEP . . . on are the NAEP standards . . . essentially these questions seem to fall into two big buckets. One is, "Are the NAEP standards aligned to which state standards?" And the

other is, "Since our standards are so rigorous, should we take NAEP very seriously? How does our performance on the CST's map with that on NAEP?"

So, in answer to the first question, NAEP is not aligned to . . . specifically to any one state's standard. That's why it's the assessment we can use to measure student performance across states. It does, though, answer the question based on a long time research . . . and experts from across the country . . . what students—no matter where your Zip Code is, no matter in which state you reside—what ought they know and be able to do at minimum in reading and mathematics.

Now, I think most experts would say that California standards are actually quite a bit more rigorous. You would expect, then, to see California's performance on our CST and NAEP not to look so identical. But the truth is, when we unpack California performance on NAEP at the fourth and eighth grade level, (we can't dig deep at the state level NAEP at the twelfth grade level), we see very similar patterns, both in terms of overall achievement compared to our California standards tests as well as on the achievement gaps that separate groups of students from their peers.

So, NAEP is an important assessment. But it's also important to remember that no one assessment is a panacea. No one assessment is going to tell us everything that we need to know about student performance. What we use these assessments for is for a snapshot—whether it be the California Standards Test or the National Assessment on Educational Progress or the CAT-6 or the CELDT test or the RICA. It is really trying to extrapolate patterns about what's happening to whole groups of students. And these . . . each assessment, in and of itself, becomes a thermometer for us to understand where the problems are and to then do something about what the data say.

We also had many questions particularly about KIPP. But the questions about the KIPP example that we gave seemed to focus almost exclusively on time. What they say is, "Well, KIPP schools—as we understand it—those kids are in school from 7:30 to 5:30. And certainly, I think, by and large, it's safe to say across those KIPP schools that we've studied they do have a longer school day. And, as we talk and dig deep with the principal—especially at KIPP S.F. Bay—she will often point to the fact that she has much more time to both highlight the courses that often get lost in this era of accountability—arts, music, gym—but also to make sure that interventions are consistent throughout the school day and targeted.

Now, you don't have to be a KIPP, though, to add more time to your school day or your school week or your school year. Now, I have talked to superintendents up and down the state that say, "I know that, Russlynn, but my hands are cuffed at the bargaining table," they'll say. They'll say that, "I can't just unilaterally decide to extend the school day or the school year or the school week." And perhaps the key is unilaterally, right?

There are two signatories to that bargaining agreement. We all can point to what is perceived somehow as the pillars of collective bargaining and use that to prevent what we know is right for our kids. Students that are coming in behind need more time, and you need more time with them.

There are also, though, those leaders up and down the state that—notwithstanding what the collective bargaining agreements say—they are figuring out ways that don't violate any of the bargaining agreements but that still get kids in the school day for longer. For lower performing kids, they might, for example, stagger teacher workday. And, you can do that. Some schools require a waiver, some just a consensus—to say that, "We're going to be in school longer." Some teachers might come in at 7:00 and leave at 1:00. Some teachers might come in at 10:00 and stay until 4:00. Point is—their workload, their course load, the time they spend is still the same. But the day for the students could be longer.

Districts are doing this with interventions. That zero period, shadow classes—districts are doing this, especially unified districts at the middle school to high school transition where mandatory summer school for students that are far behind or even just a focus on algebra readiness.

We've got to, though, ladies and gentlemen, build the kind of civic and political will that will both ensure that teachers are paid more for working more but will also ensure that students get what they mostly need—which is more time in front of and with our most effective educators.

There are other questions about algebra and tracking. There are many questions that will ask about algebra programs and say something like "A large percentage of students are not developmentally ready for such abstract thinking." Okay, I want to unpack that . . . probably more than we have time to do here.

But, what we know . . . Bill Schmidt, for example, has done some amazing research and . . . really looking at the countries and the curriculum in the countries that are performing better than America [six] kids are. He's finding what those educators high performing, high poverty schools know now—and that is, that access and who gets what course of study when, matters terribly. And the truth is, when it comes to both getting the access to the rigor of a course called algebra and getting the access to the best instructors to teach algebra—if you are poor, if you are low- income, your parents are low-income, if your parents don't have a college education, if you are black, if you are brown, if you are Hmong, if you are from Cambodia—chances are you're not going to get access to that course in the first place.

Now, we've talked all morning about the notion that course alone is not enough. We've got to go much deeper and make sure we're driving the instruction. But access is huge, And what we see in eighth grade (though the CSTs are starting to matter) what really is still bearing the

biggest difference in terms of who gets access to algebra is teacher and guidance counselor recommendation—teacher recommendation at the middle school and guidance counselor recommendation at the high school. So access is terribly important.

It's also, as we touched on briefly, about how you deliver that instruction. And our standards have some algebraic function dating all the way back to the early, early elementary grades. It's how deep we go in them—whether students understand the building blocks of numeracy and quantitative literacy. So, that by the time they get into algebra, they are academically ready.

And to . . . specifically to the questioner's question about developmentally ready (and how the belief that so many students are not developmentally ready for algebra) . . . . Oftentimes, when we talk to those leaders, teacher-leaders, and administrative-leaders that bear ultimate authority over who gets algebra when they have confused developmentally ready with academically ready. They say, "If you are not academically ready (quote, unquote) by middle school, then you're not going to get it." Well, the truth is—we are realizing the low performance persists throughout high school. And you are never going to get it.

There are other questions, many of them about this notion of intervening in algebra. And why is it that the common intervention of choice is taking those courses over and over and over again. It's because it's what we've always done, right?

But we have to do more. We have to dig deep, figure out what our students are struggling with almost before they get into the algebra class. That's why that mandatory middle school transition is terribly important for students that aren't on track (but that ought to be) to take algebra in the ninth grade and to truly understand what works best. This brings me back to our lack of data.

Unfortunately, we had many questions . . . "Well, what is the intervention program that works?" We know a little bit more in reading with Read 180 and the like. But we don't know very much about exactly what intervention program works—exactly with what group of kids—because we don't have the data system on the state level to tell us. You have them at the local level. You could do these kinds of analysis with your programs, with your teachers, with your students to figure out which programs work best.

And our next speaker, Debbie Silver, will dig deep into differentiated instruction because what we are hearing (from especially beginning teachers up and down the state) is, "Help me with the kids that I have in front of me." Debbie will show us how to do that.

I think we are running out of time. I'm sorry we didn't get to more questions. We will answer them and, as we always say, we want to be your partners in this work. Call our office. Call me. We can struggle through finding many of the answers to that we don't know together. Thank you.

Rozlynn: Thank you so much, Russlynn. You did a wonderful job with our kick-off today for *Taking Center Stage—Act II*. And, you really helped us to set the stage for closing the achievement gap. We know in the state (after your talk) and we know in our hearts that we really do need to make some significant changes on the culture and the infrastructure of our schools if we are going to make a difference for our students. So thank you again very much.

Dr. Debbie Silver Presentation

Okay, our next speaker is Debbie Silver. She is well known to many middle grades educators across the nation. She's an expert in differentiating instruction and has written a book called *Drumming to the Beat of a Different Marcher: Finding the Rhythm for Teaching a Differentiated Classroom.*

The title of her presentation today is *Going Outside the Lines to Differentiate Instruction for Middle Level Learners.* Welcome, Debbie. We are so pleased to have you with us today.

Debbie: It's great to be here and you might be picking up a little bit of an accent. I'm from Boston. Okay, that's a lie. I'm from Texas. I've taught 30 years in the state of Louisiana and I know what you're thinking, "God she looks so young." Okay, you weren't thinking that. But I am a teacher and mainly I've taught middle school and this is my passion. I appreciate what Russlynn had to tell us and the statistics are absolutely overwhelming. And what I want to do is talk about some ways—some more anecdotal ways—to go in and bridge that achievement gap.

And I've always considered myself kind of the poster child for differentiated instruction because I was that kid who didn't respond well to traditional education. I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas. And, when I started school, I had every intention of being a wonderful student. And I walked into my first grade (because I'm old and we didn't have kindergarten) and there she was—my first grade teacher, Mrs. Castleberry.

Now, I don't know if you all know Mrs. Castleberry but let me just describe her. She was Nazi teacher. She had the helmet hair. She had the little boots. She was ready for bear and we walked into the first grade classroom. And, guys, I may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I am intuitive. And I figured there was going to be a problem because this woman . . . . We were six years old. It's our first day of school.

She has our desks lined up so linear, so pristine, so sequential that she had the desk legs so that they met the linoleum lines going both ways. So, if you got your desk out of line then you can somehow make sure that you got it . . . she had tape marks so you could get it back where it needed to be. And, I know my math teachers are out there thinking, "And her point would be . . . . "

And, actually, I will defend to the death a teacher's right to teach in their own style. Because, you know, I think it's important that we figure out who we are before we can figure out who we are with kids. So, that is a legitimate learning style. And you guys that are familiar with Anthony Gregory know that's its called concrete sequential. Actually, I just thought of it as anal retentive. But that's me. But I knew there was going to be a problem.

But it was not just the configuring of the room. What I saw was (when I watched Mrs. Castleberry watch us walk in the room) was a differentiation that started in my first experience. Because what I saw her do was look at us, evaluate us, and you could tell by looking at her face who she liked, who was going to be successful in that room.

And I will tell you it was the perfect kids. And I want to be very clear when I describe perfect kids what I'm talking about here. I'm not talking about smart because . . . you mentioned how Howard Gardner, Russ . . . has popularized the notion, "It's not about how smart are you, it's how are you smart?" I've always believed that. I think all kids have gifts. I think they open them at different times. But I think they all have gifts. Like most of you as teachers, I know that all kids can do something and that we all have strengths. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about who we have traditionally valued. And Russ alluded to this some in her presentation. Those are the perfect kids that look like we want them to look. They're bright. They're shiny. They're clean. They're compliant. And teachers used to love them.

I mean, what's not to love? They show on the first day, "Oh Mrs. Castleberry, fill us with knowledge!" And Mrs, Castleberry . . . , "Please, come, sit at my feet, and learn, my children." I'm not that way. And here I was. I was trying to impress her. So I had skills. I had brothers. And I said, "Mrs. Castleberry, listen to this." And I felt this disconnect. But the thing is, when I walked in her room, I realized that, you know, I could tell you who was going to be prom queen and who was going to be prom king the day we graduated. And I knew it wasn't Deb. And I was relegated to the back row.

And those kids that sit in the front row . . . . And you teachers have different words for them. Some of you call them the "teacher-pleasers." I used to call them the "suck-ups." As a teacher, sometimes I called them the "Stepford-kids." But, as a child . . . . and, not to genderize, but they were mainly girls. And as girls in this period of time, they wore these big bows in their hair which matched their little bows on their little skirts and their little bows on their little shoes. And I called them the "bow heads." So, when I discuss a bow head today, you know who I'm talking about.

And, guys, let's be honest. Those kids still come to us. They come to me on the first day of middle school and say, "Oh, Mrs. Silver, can we have a syllabus of what we'll be doing the rest of the year?" I'm like, "You guys are lucky that I got here with my underwear on, okay?" All right, like you all haven't had that dream.

The thing is, guys, they're all important. They all have needs. They all have styles. And, what I want to talk about is the going outside the line. So that's the presentation of this. And, I want to discuss today . . . hang on one second. I'm trying to figure out which button to push. That's not it. Hang on one second. I'm not hitting the right button . . . somebody. Thanks, Russlynn. She's my little helper here. I'm way outside the lines. Ah, there we go.

And let me explain a little bit about what this means. Alright, this little girl is

. . . is supposed to be, sort of, like me. I remember our first assignment and Mrs. Castleberry said, "Boys and girls, I want you to color a picture of an apple." And she passed out this ditto—oh, now I may have some young ones in the audience that probably have no recollection of what a ditto master is. So, if you veteran teachers in the audience would just kind of explain that to them . . . . But, do you all remember dittos? Do you guys remember dittos? Do you remember the teacher passed them out, and the first thing you did was . . . . You know, we all smelled it. Then for the rest of the day, whoa! . . . I think it was why we were so well behaved. We were stoned.

But, anyway, the thing is . . . she passed us out this outline master and she said . . . . I think she said, "Boys and girls, color your apple." But, guys, all my life I've been told that I marched to the beat of a different drummer. And I used to think, "You say that like it's a bad thing." That's why my first book is called *Marching to the Beat of Different a Drummer*. Because, as Russlynn said, we've got to do a better job figuring out who our cliental is, who our audience is.

But the point is maybe I don't want to hear what other people hear. But all I heard was, "Mrs. Castleberry has teacher business to do. Color your apples. Do not bother me." So I laid out my array of my jumbo crayons and I picked my favorite two colors—which are blue and green. And I began trying to get some wax to stay on this outline.

Now, when we do talk about different string theories, we know that all of us talking about modalities we know about kinesthetic-tactile learners. I'm not one. Howard Gardner described that as a bodily kinesthetic learner. I don't have large motor control. I don't have fine motor control. But I was doing my best. And I took my crayons and I start putting some color—some wax—on this picture.

And, all of a sudden, one of the bow heads did what bow heads always do. She has her little apple done complete with highlights and she begins to look around and monitor everyone else in the room. And she looks back at me trying to get all this wax to stay on my apple—or on the page—and she said, "Hey, you're not doing that right."

Well, now I was brought up with three brothers. So I gave what I thought was a socially appropriate response. And I said, "Shut up." Well, that

got Mrs. Castleberry's attention. So here she came. And she is klek-klek-klek coming over there. She heard noise. "What is going on?" And this bow head (who shall remain nameless) said, "Go look at her paper."

And she clomps-clomps over there in her little boots. And she looks down at me. And I'm just coloring the best I can. And, y'all, this is a very tall woman and very mean look on her face. And she's glaring at me. So I'm coloring and I'm looking at her. And I'm coloring and I'm looking at her. And then I noticed everybody's looking at me and looking at her.

And, you know, when I tell that story, people usually go, "Deb, you must have felt so intimidated. You must have felt so embarrassed." I said, "Not at all. In fact I was excited." And all you classroom teachers out there know exactly what was going on in my mind. I was the only teacher . . . I was the only student in that room that had captured Mrs. Castleburry's attention. She was focused on me. And I loved that.

And, you know, to back up . . . what Russlynn was telling us earlier, I think what we have to do is talk to bureaucrats, to talk to policymakers, and say what we need is more time in the classroom. And I'm talking about teacher-directed instruction with kids. I am talking about taking away some of the periphery that we're doing—some of the red tape, the bureaucratic kinds of things.

Let us be attentive to our students. I think it is one of the single greatest gifts we can give them is our undivided, focused attention. In fact, when I rule the world, teachers are going to teach an hour; then they're going to plan an hour. Then they're going to teach an hour; then they're going to plan an hour. And I know that you don't have that right now. And sometimes people say, "But, Deb, you know, how do I do all that you're asking us to do? And all that we're being asked to do in my limited time? Maybe you forgot what it's like to be in the classroom."

Guys, I haven't forgotten. At one time, as a middle school teacher, I taught over 200 kids a day. I'm a science teacher. I do hands-on, performance-based science. And, you know, it never failed that sometimes I would have that little kid . . . . And I know you guys get stretched. Do you ever get stretched so thin you think about mid-day, "You know, I'm not going to stretch-any thinner"? And here comes that little student. "Miss Pace?" And my name used to be Miss Pace. So I had a starter marriage. "Miss Pace, I really need to talk to you. I've got a problem." I'm like, "Honey, I just need a moment of adult time, okay? That's why I'm in this bathroom stall. Now, shut the door and let me finish my sandwich."

I understand, guys. I understand about the demands. But what I'm telling you is this—when we give kids our undivided attention and when we focus and we constantly raise the bar, I think it's the greatest gift that we can give kids. And some people are amazed sometimes when the example I use for this is a high school coach. Now, I now live back in Texas. I grew up in Texas. I taught 30 years in Louisiana and I'm now back in Texas. And, for those of you who are not familiar with our state, football is a religion. So I'm going to use football as an example.

You want talk about differentiated instruction. You know, a lot of our high school coaches have always gotten this right because they walk in and they're talking with their high school boys and ready to go onto the practice field. They put a play on the board. And they say, "You know, I want you all to check out the X's and O's. Write this in your playbook." And after they introduce the lesson, did they stop and say, "Memorize that and if I call for this play on Friday night, I'd you to run it"? No, not in any way. That wouldn't work at all.

So what do they do? They break it down. And, guys, they don't break it down into these pre-tracked groups. They know their kids and the kids know they know them. So, when they start doing their flexible grouping, it goes something like this—"I need you guys over here pitching the ball. I want you guys over here with the coach. And I want you guys over here running tires."

And the kids don't come up and say, "Coach, I'd really rather be in that group." Because coach says, "Well, people in hell want ice water but they don't get it, now, do they?" They go and they do what coach asks them to do and why?—because coach pays attention to them, because he's walking by and he's giving them some feedback. And he's watching. Have you ever known a coach that use stars or stickers or blows smoke up their dress?

No, it is that rigor that Russlynn was talking about. It is that expectation. And let me tell you what that gives kids. That gives them a feeling of power. And out of all the things I'm going to talk about today, this is, I think, the most imperative.

We all have talked about Bandura. And we all know that Albert Bandura gave us the concept of self-efficacy. And guys, that's what I see failing. And Russlynn alluded to a lot of it. We have kids now that have been targeted. We have kids that come to us with a belief of learned helplessness. And I call it the cycle of failure—I can't so I won't, so I quit, so I fails, so I can't, so I won't.

And I think of this as a self-fulfilling, self-perpetuating prophecy. It is our obligation—our moral duty as teachers—to go in and help undo that. And the only way that's going to happen is for kids to believe that their effort, that their direction, their focus will make a difference in their lives.

Now, I'm not talking about this cheaply held self-esteem stuff that we were doing in the seventies because, as a teacher, I would get these ridiculous exercises for eighth graders. They'd hand me an ink pad and have all the eighth graders put their thumb prints on ink pads. And then we'd put them on white paper and we would hold up the paper and we would chant, "I am thumb-body." Okay, guys, that's lame. That is so lame.

What is it that works is when students are able to achieve that to which they could previously not achieve. You change their belief system

about themselves. And Bandura . . . .I've got more on my Web site and more in your handout . . . but what he has proven is it is the single greatest key to give kids. It's a belief system.

Now, the way that we do that is not dumbing down the curriculum in any way, shape, or form. It's like the accessibility that Russlynn talked about. It's about saying, "Yes, this is difficult, but I'm going to bridge for you." Remember scaffolding? "I'm going to scaffold this, and I'm going to make you see that there is something you can do that you previously could not do."

I kind of likened it to this. As audience members, I want you guys to think of something that you wanted to do in the last couple of years— something you really wanted to do, something you wanted to strive for. And maybe some of your friends said, "Oh yeah, you can do that." Or maybe some said, "No, no way." But, whatever, you went for it. And you had to work, you had to stretch, you had to push. But, when you got it, how did you feel? Did you feel like this—dut-duta-dah, dut-duta-duta-dah!? That's what I want for all kids.

My anecdotal research (which is my classroom experience) and as a college professor has taught me is that that is the greatest gift we can give kids because there is a carry-over effect. There is a carry-over effect from stretching kids and showing them what they can do through their own effort.

And I'm going now to Lev Vygotsky who gave us this idea of "zone of proximal development. And the reason I am so in favor of differentiated instruction (which by the way, guys, you know, boiled down we're talking about variety) . . . . we're talking about those purposeful practices— those successful things that teachers have always done. But, according to Carolyn Tomlinson, no we're are using it in a little more intentional —a little more purposeful—way. But what it means is that we've got to pay attention.

Where are those kids when they come to us?—not where they ought to be, where we wish they were. Where are they? And look at those essential ideas from the state and say, "This is what is absolutely imperative that they know and be able to do. Here is where they are. I'm going to start scaffolding so that they can make steps towards that." The zone of proximal development says it cannot be too easy; it cannot be too hard. Both of those are chiefly held.

And, you know, one of the things that bothers me . . . I think we've gone off and left a lot of kids at the higher end of the spectrum. Because, basically, what No Child Left Behind has said is we devalue those kids because their scores, their gains, aren't going to make that much difference in your, in your AYP. So we've kind of left those kids on their own. And that scares me. You see, I think those kids need to also be challenged and raise the bar.

I was working with a group of teachers and we were particularly trying to target disenfranchised learners (and, guys, that can be your high level and your low level). You know, they come from all areas. But we talked about going in and doing some reform-based kinds of teaching —going outside the lines. Mrs. Castleberry was not interested in any of that. I'm sure she didn't know about Vygotsky and I'm sure she didn't care about Bandura.

What she wanted was what everybody knows that I'm talking about. What we used to expect in our schools. That big "C" word that I hate. It's called "compliance." And she picked up my paper and she said, "Boys and girls, look at this. Look at Deborah's paper." She said, "First of all, has anyone ever seen an apple that is blue and green? I don't think so. But, more importantly, Mrs. Castleberry said to color **in** the apple. And look what Deborah did. She went what? That's exactly right—outside the lines." She crumpled up my paper and she tossed it in the trash.

Now, you know, I was a very assertive little girl. And, watched way too many cartoons. Daffy Duck is my hero. But she threw my paper in the trash. I got up out of my seat. I couldn't believe she did that. And I looked in the trash can. And I looked up at her. And I said, "Of course, you know this means war." Yeah, she didn't think that was too funny either.

But here is the thing, guys—what a prophetic statement that was. Because . . . even coming from parents who valued school, having the older brother (y'all may know my older brother; his name is Mr. Perfect) . . . all that ahead of me, I wasn't prepared. Because what we learned was the only thing Mrs. Castleberry valued (and indeed a lot of our modern western cultural is kind of a phenomenon) . . . .

We tell kids for years, "Unless you are a good reader, you're not very smart." And I have a reading disability. I didn't know that until I got to school. But Mrs. Castleberry put us into three reading groups. And those of you that remember these three reading groups, this was your group for life. There was no mobility. There was no transition. That was your group. And we all knew who you were. You know, I knew I wanted to be in that top group because my brother had been a red bird. And the red birds got the bright shiny books. And they got all the cool stuff to do. So I wanted to be a red bird. But, when she read out the list of red birds, I wasn't in the red bird group. So I thought I'll be a blue bird 'cause blue birds were told, "If you study really hard, some day you might be a red bird." But I didn't make blue bird either. I was in the other group—the buzzards. A lot of you know who the buzzards are (and I'm being facetious). That wasn't the real name.

But I'm talking about the same group that Russlynn spent a lot of time talking about—the kids that are told, "You're not very smart so you do drill and kill." And I remember sitting there doing worksheet after worksheet after worksheet. And I'd look over and I'd say, "Hey, why can't we do cool stuff like the red birds?" And you know what I was told? "Because you didn't earn it; because you don't deserve it. Until you learn to do this mind numbing drill and kill, I will not reward you with that kind of education, with that kind of instructional strategy." Guys, that's the opposite. The kids who most need that are the kids who need us to go outside the lines and reach them to figure a way to connect with

their worlds.

At Louisiana Tech, when I taught, we brought in 30 science teachers. We're talking about disenfranchised kids now. And we said, "Let's do things that will actually go in and engage the learners. That's a good starting point. Let's make sure we engage everybody." And I was talking about, "Let's use cooperative-learning . . . " and a lot of things that you found on the Web site for *Taking Center Stage*. I was talking about some of the different strategies that we'll use. And I kept hearing this voice, "That won't work. I tried that in 1952. It didn't work then. It's not going to work now." And I thought, "Who is talking?" Well, guys, we all know who that teacher is.

I'm going to give her a name now. This is the antithesis to everybody sitting here today, but this is Mrs. Rodenna Cullsmucker. Well, she was a Gunch before she married. And she's an egalitarian. She hates everybody. But there is always that negative naysayer out there that says, "It's all about the kids. The kids aren't motivated. The kids won't do anything. I shouldn't even try. I'm going to look at Russlynn's statistics, but you know what? There's nothing I can do."

I beg you. I implore you. Russlynn was talking about teachers going and observing other teachers. I implore you to go look at your colleagues. And, guys, those teachers that are in the lounge making all those negative comments and always bringing everyone down—go to their classrooms. And those people who want to tell you, "Kids aren't motivated. They can't learn." Go sit and tell me how well you'd be motivated in there.

Let me be Mrs. Cullsmucker now introducing an eighth grade science lesson and let's see how motivated you would be, alright?

"Goods morning, students. Today we're going to start a new unit on the compressibility of molecules. This one's just going to snap your drawers. No talking! Now, in order to get you motivated and excited, I'd like you to take out your science books. Look up here at the board where I've written 40 words. Today in class, you will copy each word. You'll write the re-spelling and the complete definition; skip lines; leave margins. Do not bother me. I'll be doing teacher-business."

Now, how many of you are motivated? That would be no one. So we are talking to teachers and we are saying, "You know, let's get out there. Let's find some things because a lot of those kids—who are disenfranchised, who are outside the lines—are bodily kinesthetic. They are not good readers. We are going to have to bring them through another door while maintaining rigor, but at least it's a start."

So I said, "So why don't you start by bringing something like a Cartesian diver?" Most of you guys have seen this before. It's just water and an eye dropper and you give it to kids. And you say, "Can you make the dropper go to the bottom?" And after experimentation, a lot of them will learn that if they squeeze it, it sinks; and if they release it, it floats.

Now, I know a lot of you teachers in California are under a lot of stress right now with all the standards and stuff; so you might want to make one of these just for yourself. So when you're having a bad day—"Am I a good teacher? Oh thank you! Do I look like I'm losing weight? Oh, you're so sweet. You're my best friend. The other teachers don't understand me." I'm kidding.

But here's the thing, guys—don't you think all of your learners would be more likely to be engaged in the lesson if you started out with something that they can hold, touch, see, feel? Put them in groups rather than starting with the vocabulary. You see, I'm not saying that you don't use vocabulary, you don't use direct instruction. Of course, you do.

But a lot of times, guys, what we have to change is just the order in which we do it. You know, elementary teachers call it the ABC method—activity before content. And what I'm saying is . . . in learning cycle . . . and I talk some about that

. . . and you'll have in your handout. But let's get their attention first.

When you talk about constructivism in college (and scaffolding)—that's what that was all about. Students need something known to which to attach new learning. Otherwise, it's superfluous. It's an exercise in futility. So let's start with something they can do.

Well, here's the good news. Three weeks into this course . . . and one of the things we did was . . . this is a very special program. We provided them with materials, time . . . and then I was the resource. And teachers were to go back and try these things then and we had to document, collect data. Is it working?

Mrs. Cullsmucker never bothered to ask me to come in for a visit. So I said, "Mrs. Cullsmucker, you are required to have me come in as a visitor because you went through the training. So I need to know when you want me to come."

She said, "I don't want you to come. I don't want you in my room."

And I said, "Why?"

And most of you know it was because she didn't want to try anything new. She didn't want to be challenged. She didn't want anybody to just go in there and ask her to do something different.

I said, "Well, you know, I'm being paid. You're being paid. I have to come to your room."

She said, "Why don't you come Friday and I'll use a toy." I'll use a toy. I have no idea what this woman is talking about. We had three weeks of intensive kinds of the hands-on stuff that we did, and I don't know what she's talking about. But I thought, "You know what, I'll try. You know, maybe I've made a little bit of a headway in here." So I walk in the room, and she's got this up on her desk. And I thought, "Oh, praise be! We are learning." But, guys, some teachers really don't get it; and Mrs. Cullsmucker is one of them.

She said, "Students today in class we have a special guest, Dr. Deborah Silver here from Louisiana Tech. Woo! Wooptie Doo! Now, I was going to give you 40 words in class today; but Dr. Silver says I can't do that. You'll have those for homework. Thank her. However, she wanted me to show you this. This is the Car-tes-ian diver—Car-tes-ian diver—named after Rene Descartes. I'd like a half-page summery of his life in your notebook for tomorrow—'A' if you do it; 'F' if you don't. Eyes this way—I'll do this one time. I'm going to squeeze it and down– eyes this way, this way—I'm going to squeeze it and down it goes. I release it and up it goes. Do not touch this. This is teacher-business. But I've got worksheets for the rest of the period.

I'm like, "No!"

And she said, "What do you mean, 'no'? I used the toy." Grrrrrr.

It's not about the toy. And you guys, that's my point here. With differentiated instruction, we have all kinds of components. We don't have time to go into those today. But you know what they are—flexible grouping . . . you know, all different kinds of anchor activities, contract learning. All of those components are there. But those are not what we're looking for.

I'm going to tell you what differentiated instruction is—it's a mind set and it's a lot what Russlynn talked about. It is the belief system among teachers that we know our subject matter inside and out and we are compelled to do that—that we know our subject matter so well we can come at it in a myriad of ways and that we get to know who our kids are as individuals.

And we do everything we can to match those essential ideas with their experiential and their background academic knowledge and developmental levels. And we're in there giving it every opportunity. It's about teachers who know when kids know even if it's outside the lines. It's like Russlynn said about the developmental ability to do algebra. It may not show up on a test. It may be some observations that we've watched some interactions that those kids have. It may be extending that Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. You know, I would love to have a day when middle school teachers no longer went into panic when the teacher key said, "Answers may vary."

She said, "Well you just think you're so smart" Guys, I don't think I'm so smart. As a matter of fact, if we had videos of my first few years of teaching, I wouldn't be here. I'd be in jail. But the thing is, I am what I ask every teacher to be. I am a reflective practitioner. I think about what I'm doing. And, you know—with all the mandates and everything that comes down from Sacramento, Washington D.C., I don't care, Mount Sinai—you as teachers know your kids better than anybody else. And you know what they need to know. And that's what it is. You get in there and make that difference. I hear teachers say, "Well, I've been doing this for four years. It doesn't work." I'm thinking, "Are you stupid?" You know, we have a saying in Texas—"If the horse is dead, dismount." Make it happen.

She said, "Well, you just think you're so smart. Why don't you come teach my class?" I said, "I'd love to teach your class. When shall I come?" She said, "Why don't you come seventh period?" Class from hell! Now we've all had that class. Every child hand-picked from Lucifer himself.

But here's the thing, guys. It doesn't matter. It's like Russlynn said, "You've got who you've got." It's not like the parents are keeping all the good ones home. You get who you have. And what I know because I'm a veteran teacher and I know about this last hour. And, people are telling me, "Oh, these kids are old. You know, they've got moustache and beards. And the boys are old, too."

The thing is, I know this is my disfranchised and my hardest group. And I also know about eighth graders and, guys, this is . . . what really bothers me is a lot of people are out there teaching in middle school that don't understand the developmental needs of eighth grade kids or seventh or sixth or whatever your configuration is. I tell people all the time. If kids running into walls, forgetting their pencils, looking up halfway through your class saying, "Why are they all writing?"—if that bothers you—you don't need to teach in the middle school. But I know these kids. And I know when I walk in I'm going to be getting the traditional eighth grade slump. We're all familiar with it. It's in their contract. They must do this.

But, you know, I also believe that a lot of us micromanage a little bit too much. I tell . . . when I train new teachers, you need to develop selective hearing and selective vision. Fight the battles carefully. I know if I walk into a group of eighth grade kids with something kinda interesting looking, most of the time I am going to engage their attention.

And I say, "Good afternoon, eighth graders. My name is Dr. Debbie Silver. I am here today from Louisiana Tech University." And from the back row—all of you all who teach eighth grade know what happens—there is a little kid back there going, "Good afternoon, eighth graders. My name is Dr. Debbie Silver. I am here today from Louisiana Tech University." Now, I can get all caught up in that little kid that's mocking me; or I can do what I do pretty well and that's engage my learners. "Students I'd like you to meet Bubba. Bubba is my trained diver. He'll do anything I tell him to on command. If I say sink, he'll sink. If I say float, he'll float. He'll pretty much do whatever I tell him to do."

Now let me tell you what I know about eighth graders. Even those little guys sitting on the back row making fart noises under their arms are going to engage because one of two things is about to happen. Either, I'm going to show them something way cool or I'm going to make a

total fool of myself. And both of those are worthy of an eighth grader's attention.

"Hey, tech lady, you can make him sink?"

"Yes, I can."

"Alright, do it!"

"So you really, really want to see this?" Now eighth graders' "whatever"—which to me says, "Please, share with us. We want to learn. Well, it's really how you look at it. But the thing is, guys, I got them where I want them.

Now, Russlynn talked a lot about rigor and about raising the bar. She's absolutely right. You know, this "read the chapter and fill in the study guide" is not making it. We go back to Piaget who talked not only about developmental, operational, concrete—those kinds of stages. He also said we need to use discrepant events. We need to shake up cognitive dissonance so that kids have a reason to learn something new. So I do that.

"Students, this is my magic wand. If I tell Bubba to sink, he'll sink. If I tell him to float, he'll float. Bubba, sink. Bubba, float." And they're like "Whoa!" Then I hand everybody—every group—one of these. And let me tell you who usually gets it a lot of the times. It is my ELL, my disenfranchised, my "outside-the-lines" thinker. They grab a hold of this and they go absolutely crazy. It is that higher order thinking. "Look, she's compressing the air bubble, look. There goes the liquid up there. Blah, blah, blah." But they're off and they're running. I'm like, "Yes!" and then, this is where I get a little poetic revenge on the bow heads.

"Dr. Silver, you forgot something."

"Well, I'm sorry, Tiffany Rene. What did I forget?"

"You were supposed to give us a wand."

"Oh, the wand! Here ya go! Knock yourself out."

And I've got . . . now, I'm talking about the straight A student, guys . . . going to college . . . sitting there going, "Bubba sink. Bubba sink. Ours is broken." I literally had a guy that had given me nothing. He's watching this little ordeal and he came storming up there.

"Tiffany Rene! She is jerking you around. It's not the wand. Squeeze it! That's all she's doing! SQUEEEEEZE it!" It's not about how smart are you. It's how are you smart.

Okay, real quickly—one of the ways that we can figure that out, ya'll . . . . There are so many ways to come in to differentiated instruction with entry points. But, one of them that I like (and this is one I developed and you all are welcome to use it), it's called Essential Eight. And, on Essential Eight, you kind of get an idea of where the kids' strengths are—what they're able to do and do well.

And, as we go through this, I'm going to show you just . . . . this is a real good. It's a step off point for me . . . to show you how some of these things can be brought in to capture those kids who maybe don't read quite so well, who maybe don't read the chapter, answer the questions, read the chapter, answer the questions. . . . because that's kind of what they used to sound like to me. So, get your kids to fill this out, and then let's look at how this works.

Some of these . . . the first one says, "How many of you could recite a poem from memory?" Now, when I ask teachers, you know, what intelligence is that, a lot of times they're a little bit confused because I didn't say, "You are a voracious reader, that you are above the grade level, and that you have good decoding skills," . . . because, guys, I think we've missed the point here.

There are some kids out there who are not good readers; but they are, indeed, verbally and linguistically gifted. I'm talking about your class clowns. A lot of you all have kids that really, you know, take your words and use them against you. Well, they may be a lot of things. They may be annoying. They may be disruptive. But let me tell you what they're not. They're not dumb. And we need to know . . . one of the things that I ask teachers to do when you're getting ready to differentiate instruction is take a five-by-eight note card and write about every child things that you have to know. One of those essentials is their language [sic] of English proficiency. The other is what's their reading level—not what you heard it was; not what you wish it was; what is it?

And, when you are making your lesson plans, guys, you don't make it for the class. You're looking at cards. These are kids. These represent people in your room. And, when you're looking at a kid that reads at the second grade level, you're going to realize you cannot make the same assignment to that kid that you're asking for the kid who's college bound and reading at another level. We have got to go in and offer some support—still raising the bar, still challenging.

There are some indicators of verbal linguistic (and you'll have these in your handout). And also you'll have access to this. But I want to show you this. The verbal linguistic is one that we that need to pay attention to because, when we talk about differentiating content, one third of differentiation (if you will look at these components listed by Carolyn Tomlinson). . . . All of these have to do with language acquisition. All of these have to do with reading.

So, if you really want to start using DI and you want to make a difference for kids, then we're going to have to get more creative about narrative. We're going to have to find other ways. And, you know, with all of the technology we have now, you can have your stronger readers make little iPodcasts so that the child that is not that articulate . . . not reading that well . . . not is only seeing the words when you assign a chapter or a passage of narrative. . . . they're hearing it. There, reading buddies is another one . . . . myriad of ways that effective teachers now are bridging that gap.

You see, here's the dichotomy that I see—who are the only kinds of readers who like to read?—Right, good readers. Now, what is the only way to become a better reader?—To read. You see how the chasm grows because kids who do not believe they are good readers—who do not have that confidence—are getting further and further behind. My belief is that when kids have a reason to read they will. They will figure it out. And then we start raising the bar for them as we move along.

The second one . . . I don't know if any of y'all had time to do this. But this is kind of interesting. Figure out this number sequence and tell the logic behind it—64, 1, 49, 4, 36, 9, 25. I'll bet somebody in your group just said it. It's 16 and some of y'all are going, "Now what?"

But, guys, here is the thing about that . . . that isn't as much about numbers (it is a little bit) as it is about pattern recognition. And, as we're talking about math (and Russlynn mentioned this a lot), what scares me is . . . and just let me explain for those of you who didn't figure it out yet . . . that is a pattern of 8 times 8, 1 times 1, 7 times 7, 2 times 2, 6 times 6, 5 times 5, and the only one left is 4 times 4.

But it's pattern recognition and this is where I beg to differ with Howard Gardner because he talks about this as being number smart. But when you look at these indicators, you will notice that about half of those have nothing to do with numbers.

t has to do . . . and this is getting into algebra, y'all—this is theoretical, analytical, logical thinking. These are kids that can solve puzzles. These are kids that can read a mystery novel and know what the end of it is before it is written out for them. These are kids who can do a myriad of tasks, but a lot of times—computationally—they're not that strong. So what do we do? We say, "Sit in the low group and write these facts. Sit in the low group and do this mind numbing drill-and-kill." And we teach them to absolutely hate math.

Now, let me show you how to use math to help you. Let's say you're going for low-level knowledge—Bloom's Taxonomy. And you want a different tool for that kid that is very logical-analytical. And I actually got this off the Web. I've made this up but how about making an equation. On this we'll do science words. So what I did was—I made a little clue: 93 equals number of M M from the E to the S. and hint is: NO always stands for "number of." So I want you to think of a science fact that you learned—fifth grade or below—just like the show. And it will fit this pattern. So you're going through your mind, and some of you already have it. Some of you all yelled it out right away. But I bet somebody in your group said, "Oh, I know! It's 93 equals number of million miles from the Earth to the sun." Okay, that is a very strong recall of basic knowledge.

But let me show you another way that you can do this. And what I'm going to do now is . . . I'm going to give all of the audience, "the test." You will have 30 seconds to do "the test." Every decision about the rest of your life will be based on how well you do on "the test." I want you to relax. I want you to enjoy the process. And here we go—"the test."

Alright, I'm going to stop. I know I'm making you crazy. Some of you are saying, "Debbie, be quiet. I can't think!" Well, of course, you can't. But, guys—and some of y'all love this kind of stuff. Some of y'all hate this kind of stuff. Well, don't you think we have kids that do the same thing? Just for purposes of time . . . I want to show you . . . these are some of the answers, alright? The answers to some that I've done . . . . All of those would be a review of some basic concepts. Guys, you can use this in any subject—anything that has both numerals and words. You can use this as a review. But what is more powerful than you doing these? How about letting your kids do it?

How about that kid that says, "Been there, done that? Got the t-shirt. I'm already done."? Instead of saying, "Sit quietly," say, "Go make some of those facts-sense so we can review other people. See if you can challenge me. See if you can stump me."

But one of the reasons I wanted to do that . . . . And you saw how I was doing it with the pressure on the test. And, guys, I don't know how we're going to get away from this with our standardized test. But let me say that when you look at differentiated content . . . . Oh, I'm sorry. Let me give you a really good Web site—very quick. This is . . . this will link kids to why they need to study math and science. These are vignettes. It's called "The Future's Channel." And it's on that Web site. And you can send kids to the computer and they can say, "Well, I don't need to learn math. I'm going to be a musician." And they'll see a vignette from a very famous drummer who talks about the importance of math with music . . . and all kinds of ways to relate culinary arts and others. But "The Future's Channel" is very helpful.

But, when you're differentiating process . . . I just have time to talk about the last one. But this is something you can do with no additional funding—with no additional resources. And I think it's one of the most important things—vary the time that you give students for their knowledge acquisition and mastery.

And I'm just going to say this—I think it is criminal to time any child who is a non-mastery learner. With what we know about brain development, about the MRI scans, about kids whose amygdala actually shuts off connections between cognitive transfer and emotions—it is silly to put this kind of pressure on them. One of the things we have got to do is make better use of our time. And for those kids who are non-mastery learners, we've got to say, "Come see me later. Bring that back to me later. Meet me at lunch," or give them less. But we have got to take that time element off of those kids.

Conversely, for the higher-order learners, time is your friend. They've mastered it. They don't see a challenge. Then, you start to challenge them to go against time. That builds those facts into automaticity so that it just comes without them having to think about it.

Okay, very quickly . . . one more—on your sheet—within 20 seconds, name six traits. This has to do with the science. But, guys, we have research out there now. Some of y'all have read the book *Last Child in the Woods* . . . getting a lot of press . . . now about kids who no longer relate to nature. We have research that says a lot of middle school boys, in particular, do better when they have a teacher that relates their subject matter to the outdoors—or bring those kinds of examples in. Just wanted to point out these are some of your indicators. And, you guys may know who I'm talking about those kids that just turn off when they walk into the classroom. But you take them outside . . . they come alive. And they have a lot of knowledge.

These are four awesome programs that are out there and available to you. They're linked to my Web site. They have their own Web sites. But they're Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, Project Wild Aquatic, Project Wet. And I know California has some that you've developed just for your indigenous area and that's good, too.

But what it does—and y'all I'm not just talking about science teachers here—I'm talking about all of us. Math, social studies, music, fine arts—those all can be related to outdoor activities or at least examples of nature in the classroom. It is one way to add variety to your class without doing anything else—go to one of these trainings. But, for those of you that say, "Well, I don't have time to go to a training right now."

Let me give you . . . one of . . . I think the most flexible tool that I can give you. It's called "BARFs and NOT BARFs." And this . . . (in case you are wondering) BARF doesn't mean anything. It's just a word I use when I want sixth graders to pay attention. But it goes back to Marzano's belief that we need to teach by example and non-example. And a naturalist that has that intelligence, y'all . . . that is how they learn. These are what it is. These are what it isn't. And in our zest to cover the curriculum, sometimes we're not spending enough time on what it isn't.

So here's a quick example. The teacher is getting ready to assess. Let's say I want to use flexible grouping and I need to know where the kids are. Now, guys, watch me. This is not a good assessment. "Did everybody learn last year about the parts of speech?" Okay, that's not good assessment. But, if I give something like this little BARF activity . . . and I know a lot of you are going, "Oh I know what it is." You know . . . . "speedily," "gracefully," "twice," and "finally"—those are all what? Yes, they are. They're adverbs.

Okay, now, you also had to go to the bottom now and see if you can apply that. So which of these are BARFs? And I would have you and your group just yell those out. And I bet somebody said "scholarly." And I think you'll find that you will find it impossible to use "scholarly" in a correct English sentence as an adverb. It is an adjective. But most people go, "Oh, whoa, that's one of those discrepant events because you learned about the "l-y." That is not an adverb. But these are. Okay, I've got my BARFs up here and I'm trying to separate—to differentiate—what kids need in align with adverbs. Very quickly—I can say these kids look like they pretty much got it. These kids have no clue. Start over . . . same thing . . . .

Here's the social studies teacher. Instead of saying, "Last year, did you study about . . . ?" Just give them a BARF. Rhode Island, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York are BARFs. Texas, Maine, California, Nebraska are not BARFs. Now, we are not talking about New England coastal states because Maine is a New England coastal state. And I know some of you really got this very quickly but those BARFs are the 13 original colonies. Then I'd ask the kids, "Pick at the bottom which of these would be BARFS?" And they would tell me this.

One more very quickly . . . this summer, I was working in Alaska with a group of teachers and this was actually a three-day differentiated instruction. So we actually did a lot of the activities. And one of the groups of presenters got up and put this on the board. They were all trying to stump each other. And we were all like, "Whoa! That . . . whoa, how did you all do that?" And they were giggling and laughing. They were so proud of themselves. And finally they told us, "Well, a BARF is land-locked, okay. It has no coast."

And then they went on and gave other examples . . . these. And we were all going, "Well, how did y'all know that? How were you able to come up with that in your group?" And one of the teachers said, "There's an Internet connect—a high speed Internet connection—in here and I had a computer." Well, immediately all the other teachers—now y'all, these are teachers—said, "That's not . . . fair." And I said, "What's not fair about it? That they used the resources at their fingertips? That they were able to go outside the lines?" And, y'all, I'm telling you when you do these with kids and let the kids make up the BARFs for you, they'll be asking, "Can I use the next level book. Can I use the Internet? Can I use resources?"—absolutely phenomenal.

Bodily kinesthetic is, of course, what we talked about. And I'm a big believer in teaching and learning being two sides of the same coin. Very quickly—just wanted to show you an "outside the line" assessment called "differentiated assessment." And, by the way guys, if you're familiar with alternative assessment, you already know one-third of differentiated instruction because all that is is alternative assessment.

Teacher in Rustin (Louisiana) High School came in and said, "These are assessment goals for cell division." Where did she get them? She got them from the state standards from the state of Louisiana. Now, guys, I taught in Louisiana, and I taught science. And, personally, I think you can have a quality life without knowing all those things about cell division. But, that's the state. So, taking those standards, she went in and she gave the kids an opportunity to do what we call "flexible grouping." She said, "You guys can self select into groups and you have a choice about how you're going to demonstrate your knowledge."

Russlynn said it has to have rigor. So it can't just be, "Do a play. Sing a song." Her rigor said, "Look at my model." And the rubric that she presented, if you'll notice, follows the goals exactly. So, they can't say, "Well, we didn't know we had to know about all the organelles. We didn't know we had to talk about interface." "Yes, you did." And for y'all that don't teach cell division, you might want to use her second page —well, I skipped, sorry—might want to use her second page, which actually can be used for any of these.

And the oral presentation . . . part two . . . the Teaching Method . . . and then part three . . . the Oral Presentation. And let me just share that some kids came in . . . . These are the leftover kids. I was actually in the room for this. These are the kids that nobody picked to be in their group. They came up with their own plan. And they walked in wearing cowboy hats and kerchiefs. And I know you guys think we all dress like that, but we don't. And African American kids in Texas never dress like that. But they had their little stuff on and . . . . other kids were kinda just rolling their eyes and being really rude. And I thought, "Oh, please, please, let them do a good job."

They had their jam box and I thought, "Well, it'll be a rap." And, guys, I didn't know how they knew to do this. I don't know who taught them. I didn't even know kids knew about this. But I saw one of the most incredible things I've ever seen. The lowest of the low-level learners in that room—they stood up and performed Square Dance Mitosis. I don't know how they even knew it. But they wrote a complete square dance with the callers, "Swing those chromosomes around. Mitochondria coming down. Ya, ya!" It was the funniest thing I've ever seen in my life. I was crying, I was laughing so hard.

Their teacher was sitting there checking off the rubric. And when they finished, they got a spontaneous standing ovation from their class. They walked out and said, "Yeah, we know that. We know that cell division. We know mitosis." And Miss Lee, their teacher, said, "Deb, what do you think the chances are that for the rest of their lives they will remember the steps of cell division?" I said, "Hmmmm, pretty good." But, more importantly, guys—for one brief shining moment—those kids were stars. They did it. I think there is a carry-over effect with that.

Here's just a list of different ways that students can demonstrate their understanding. Again, it's alternative assessment. And I want to give you this Web site. This is something I found recently on the Web—*Applying Assessment Strategies in Psychology.* And, guys—for those of us who want rigor, who want to use the eye in Bloom's Taxonomy—this is one of the best things I have seen. These folks actually took it and went to the next level beyond evaluation to create and produce. So you might want to look that one up. It really gives you the words to strategies. It's absolutely amazing.

Books that I've authored and co-authored—*Drumming to a Beat*, *Because You Teach* (which is staff development), and *Middle School Matters*. But, if I were to recommend one book for you guys on differentiated instruction, this would be it—written by my very close friend, Rick Wormeli, called, *Differentiating: From Planning to Practicing Grades Six to Twelve.* Just released, absolutely phenomenal—takes you from conception all the way to assessment. Rick is an amazing talent.

On your Web site for *Taking Center Stage*, this book was mentioned. Another one of my favorites—*Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design*. So you've got the backwards design (which is looking for the rigor), your outcomes, your essential ideas— combined with the DI of Tomlinson. And it is absolutely fantastic. And I have been to your Web site. There are examples. There are ideas. There are vignettes, videos. Guys, if you haven't yet explored *Taking Center Stage—Act II*, please do that. Your state is giving you incredible resources.

There are other intelligences—visual-spatial, people smart, self smart. We don't have time for those today . . . music smart. And, guys, in middle school, a lot of our kids learn a lot better with the music on than with the music off.

But I'm going to wrap this up and tell you that . . . actually, that's something else . . . that I am going to invite you to my Web site. It is Debbiesilver.com. And, if you know my secret password, you can actually login and download any of about 30 handouts I have on various subjects for teachers. The secret password is "iamateacher." And there are no caps; there are no spaces.

I also have a place for you to e-mail me. And I'll be glad to answer your e-mail. I answer everything. Just don't start your e-mail with this sentence: "Deb, I'm sorry to bother you, but . . . ." You are not bothering me, guys. This is my passion. This is my joy. And, if I can share with you, I will be happy to do that. So follow that and if you forget—excuse me—if you forget the login password, just e-mail me and I'll send it to you.

But I'm going to close with what I think is the perfect metaphor for what we've talked about today. Some of you all may or may not recognize this. This is the tissue that used to come inside the old ditto master. And I made me a rocket out of it, because I'm a science teacher. And, guys, what I understand is—we got an air current in here. I wonder if we could cut that off real quick. What I understand is that in rocket science for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Okay, I'm not sure if this is going to work with air blowing, but we'll try. There we go. Okay—and I know—like you know—if you want a rocket to go up, where do you light it? You light it at the bottom. Well, guys, here's the thing—I'm really a little bit tired of everybody out in the world thinking that they're an expert on education because they went to school. The thing is—the people most qualified to make decisions about what's going on at the middle level in California—you're sitting here. Take your power back.

People say, "Well, it's not rocket science." Oh no, it's not rocket science. It's a lot harder than rocket science. See, I can predict what a rocket will do. But I don't know about kids, y'all, because it's two things—it's heart and art. And, what I'm encouraging you today . . . it's like what

Russlynn said, "Go inside yourself." Be willing to go outside the lines. And maybe light your rocket in a way that here to for it has not been lit.

Now, you're going to have a lot of people complaining, "Oh, that's not going to work. Hey wait—the whole system is going to crash and burn. You can't do it that way. In my day, we did it this way. We like compliant kids." I'm telling you that there's nothing more powerful than a human soul on fire. Go in after those kids with all the power you have and you won't crash and burn. You'll go straight—oh, god—up! We had an air current.

Sorry about that. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Rozlynn: Thank you, Debbie.

Debbie: Tell them it worked in rehearsal.

Rozlynn: That was wonderful. It really worked in rehearsal. It went straight up but there was an air current here today. We appreciate you coming and sharing your humor with us. I don't think there was anyone out there who didn't crack a smile at least once. And they certainly knew you were a middle school teacher.

And I think that you've demonstrated today that, really, we can't have one size fits all and that we really need to differentiate our instruction—not so much the curriculum, the instruction. We keep the curriculum rigorous and we differentiate the instruction. So, thank you so much.

I know that our audience has some questions for you. So what we're going to do right now is we're going to take a five-minute break. And we'll be back in five minutes.

Five-Minute Break

Debbie: Wow, thank you for your questions, guys. We did have . . . from Sonoma County . . . and asked for the demonstration of the rocket with it working. So, we're going to go with this one more time. Alright, I'm lighting my rocket at the wrong end. I'm going outside the lines, believing that there's nothing more powerful than a human soul on fire.

When people say, "You've got to do 80 hours on professional development on the textbook. We have to follow the standards." I'm saying that I think, if we teach outside the lines and going after kids, we won't crash and burn. We'll have no place to go but straight . . . yay! I love it when a plan comes together.

Alright, a couple of just clarifications here—my presentation, my PowerPoint—will be on the portal site as will . . . here comes our ash again. . . as will . . . . I understand that some of you all could not read the site that had the psychology and the new Bloom's Taxonomy. So that will also be on the portal site. I want you to have access to that. Russlynn's and my presentations will be available to you. The PowerPoint . . . . Also, I think we've made available a handout for those of you who want it that is a little more detailed. Some of the little things that I did up here will also be available. So, that is there. Also, you can e-mail me. But, however you want to do that, we want you to have the information that you want.

So, a lot of you are saying, "You know, she's using science, but I'd like for ELL. I'd like for math." And I do have a lot of those kinds of examples. If you will e-mail me, I'll be glad to get those to you. Because of our limited time, I always lapse back into science because that's my background, of course.

But, let me just say that the book that I recommended by Rick Wormeli has a myriad of examples in every subject area. That's why I'm so fond of his book because he will walk you through it. And, somebody said, "Well, Deb, we'd like to look at like a differentiated lesson." And, I'm thinking maybe you were talking about a tiered assignment. And, again, you know . . . minimal time here. I would love to go through . . . walk you through that. But any specific questions that you have, you can address to me. You can look at the two books that I recommended, Rick Wormeli's and *Integrating Backwards Design with Differentiated Instruction* for some of those answers.

But, guys, one of the best places to do this is go on the Web and Google it because what I'm finding on the Web are teachers who are as the most resourceful people in the world (as we all know), are willing to share. So, if you will go in and Google whatever concept you're trying to teach to whomever you're trying to teach it and put in some parameter words like "differentiated instruction" or "tiered assignment" or "flexible grouping." What you're going to find is so many things that your problem is not going to be is not figuring out what to do—it's going to be what to leave out. But it's all there. It's just a matter of, you know, focusing—getting the time.

Another thing somebody said, "But, Deb, we are required to have 80 professional development hours on the book itself." Guys, the book can be a resource. You know, when they say "the book," I don't think they meant word by word, verbatim narrative. I think they're saying probably . . . you know . . . correct me if I'm wrong . . . but I'm thinking what they're saying the essential ideas as presented—maybe the scope and sequence as presented in the book.

Creative teachers, you have always been able to find a way to do whatever it is you need to do with whomever your kids are. And, I know

that you can do this. Give yourself permission to go outside the lines. Let me say this—I think that anybody who can demonstrate to our administrators that "Yes, I am approaching essential ideas. Yes, I am moving kids from point here to point here, and this is how I do it," I really think you're going to find little argument in the way that you choose to do that.

I know that of you all as middle school teachers are a little bit crazy 'cause we are. You jump off your table. You wear costumes. You roller skate in your room. That's terrific. If that works for you, you do that. And, if you're meeting those essential ideas . . . . But let's remember, too y'all—all kids aren't turned on by that. And, some of you who are quiet and passionate, linear and sequential—you also are fulfilling that need. You've got to figure out who you are and make that work within your talents, your strengths, your comfort zone. So, you know, I'm just giving you permission to do that.

People are asking me for good entry points for a lot of different subject areas. And, again, you know, use the Web, write to me personally, read Rick's book, go to your conferences, go to the California state conferences in whatever your subject area is. I've worked with your science people. I've worked with your middle level and I'm telling you they are some of the finest in the country available to you. So get there.

Somebody says, "Deb, with us doing more emphasis on ELA and math, what do you believe will happen with less instruction to the . . . in the science thing?" Of course, as a middle school person, you know I'm really big on the teaming. And what I believe is every one of us represents our own discipline when we come in as a team. And that is our job is to sell it to the rest of the team. You know, we have to make sure we in covering my essential ideas in science and your essential ideas in language arts and the core and encore subjects.

But, my belief is this (and you know probably I didn't say it well enough) but my passion about science is because what I see is . . . and it can be language arts, math, whatever, art, music. When a child becomes passionate about their learning and their belief system starts changing, I think there's a carryover effect. And, if we as teachers are meeting together and affirming that and stretching ourselves with the kids (and that means sometime play in a team), then I think it works for the benefit of the kids.

One more—"How do you feel about technology as a tool to help differentiate teaching and learning?" I think it's absolutely the most incredible thing that has happened to teaching in the last 50 years. Those of you who don't go to the CUE conferences here in California, you need to plan to do that. I've worked with CUE. I'm a huge fan. They really will work with you—from being a novice to being an expert—on how you can improve this.

I've talked a little bit about iPodcasts which can help. We have things at our fingertips now that will free you—the teacher—from so much direct instruction and allow you to have the kids to do a little more independent, small group. And, yes, I think technology is really going to be the key for doing this if we want it to happen.

I think that's all we have time for. So thank you for letting me come to your wonderful state again. And we're going to turn it back to Rozlynn.

Rozlynn: Okay, well, thank you very much. I'd like to have you here while I just read this one comment that came in from Riverside County. It says, "Thank you for an inspiring presentation. Our participants really enjoyed it. And, we'll take your inspirational message back." So thank you so much. It was wonderful.

Debbie: Thanks, guys! Appreciate it.

Rozlynn: Thank you very much and I appreciate Debbie's reference to *Taking Center Stage—Act II.* Many of the resources that Debbie talked about—the research study—you will find in the *Taking Center Stage—Act II* Web portal. The *TCSII* recommendations—there are 12 of them—each one of them focuses on a different area of middle grades education.

Time seemed to be a recurring theme through both of Debbie and Ruslynn's talks today. There is a recommendation in *Taking Center Stage* and a whole chapter dedicated to time and how people are using time.

I would like this opportunity to thank both Debbie and Russlynn again. And, I know that Debbie provided you with a wealth of ideas and strategies to take back to your school sites. And, I know that many of you are going to want to do that tomorrow. But, more importantly, it is that you go back to your school site with a passion to mobilize your entire professional learning community to make the kinds of changes that you need to make to close the achievement gap and ensure success for all of our middle grades students.

This afternoon, you are going to have an opportunity to be working with your county office of education facilitators. And, they are going to be sharing with you what is called The Road Show CD. It has four professional learning modules on there that will take you deep inside the *TCSII* Web portal and will show you how to use it within your professional learning communities.

I want to thank Russlynn and Debbie again and thank the Secondary Subcommittee of the CISC—superintendents association. And I would like to take a minute here and also thank the Sacramento County Office of Education for producing this Webcast today and all of our county facilitators . . . and thank all of you for being with us today. And, please, if you haven't done so already, get into the act!

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Biography

Dr. Kate Kinsella

Kate Kinsella, Ed.D., is currently an adjunct faculty member in Secondary Education at San Francisco State University and provides consultancy nationally to school districts regarding instruction of adolescent English learners. Her career has been devoted to English Language Development (ELD) scholarship and classroom practice, including extensive experience teaching high school English learners and first generation bilingual college students. As a teacher-educator, she has maintained active involvement in 4-12 classrooms by regularly coaching and co-teaching while also teaching academic literacy skills to high school English learners in San Francisco State University's Step to College Program.

Dr. Kinsella is co-author of Scholastic's (2006) *Read 180* Literacy Intervention Program and is the (2008) author of the companion 4-12 ELD curricula to the *Read 180 LBook*. She was co-editor of the *CATESOL Journal* from 2000-2005 and served on the editorial board of the *TESOL Journal* from *1999-2003.* Dr. Kinsella recently joined the National Advisory Board for the Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE). She led the development of the *Longman Study Dictionary* (2007) for secondary English learners and is the author of Pearson's *Reading in the Content Areas: Strategies for Reading Success.* A former Fulbright lecturer in teaching English as a Second Language, Dr. Kinsella has received numerous awards including the Marcus Foster Memorial Reading Award, offered by the California Reading Association in 2002 to one California educator who has made a statewide impact on policy and pedagogy in the area of literacy. In 2005 she received the California Department of Education's Award for Excellence for her contributions to improving the education of immigrant youth.

Dr. Kinsella's Professional Learning Activities Index

Professional Learning Activities Index

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners

Take Stock: Consider your own practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. How do you know when a student is an engaged learner?

2. What evidence does the administrator or classroom guest look for when assessing whether engaged learning is taking place?

3. How can the classroom environment be used to promote engaged learning?

4. What are some teaching practices you use to engage learners in the classroom?

5. What engaging practices are used schoolwide?

6. When partnering adolescents for learning, what are your considerations?

7. How are passive learners encouraged to participate:
   - in the classroom?
   - in the school?

Then, proceed to:

- Take Time: View the video presentation

Kinsella 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin: Watch the Video

- Engaging Middle Grades Learners (WMV: 33:36) | MOV
    - Coming Soon! A handout of Dr. Kinsella 's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

Take Action: Apply the concepts — initial activities to help educators incorporate Dr. Kinsella's practices in their own lessons

Kinsella 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

Structured Learner Engagement

1. **Activity**: Arrange with a colleague or group of colleagues to visit each others' classrooms to look at the ways students are actively engaged in the learning process during a lesson. Use the handout Lesson Observation and Reflection Tool–Structured Learner Engagement (DOC; 77KB; 1p.) to record your observations and then share the results.
2. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Connections to prior knowledge
   - Questioning strategies

Pragmatics of Structured Partnering

1. **Activity**: Read the handout Pragmatics of Structured Partnering (DOC; 84KB; 1p.). Using the information from the handout, brainstorm with colleagues to develop some possible seating arrangements that would support structured partnering in your classrooms.
2. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Student grouping (flexible)

Implications for Instruction

1. **Activity**: Reflect on your own or with a group about a successful lesson in which your students were especially engaged and on task. What teaching strategies did you use during this lesson? How did these strategies compare to what you saw in Dr. Kinsella's presentation?
2. Which strategies were most effective in encouraging English learners to participate? Which strategies were most effective in encouraging passive learners to participate?
3. **Activity**: Discuss. how what you learned in the video fit   with what you are currently doing in Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2)?
4. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Instructional Strategies
   - Differentiated Instruction

Critical Lesson Planning Questions

1. **Activity**: Working with colleagues from your grade or subject area, review favorite lesson plans and note student interaction components within the plans. Re-design one or more lesson plans to incorporate some of the strategies shared by Dr. Kinsella

(structured sentence completion, partner dialogue, and journal writing).

2. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Adolescent Development: Recommendation 2—Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention
   - Adolescent Development: Recommendation 4—Relevance

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school — identify support and resources needed for implementation

Kinsella 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 1—Engaging Middle Grades Learners

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

1. What kinds of support and resources would you need to implement strategies that engage learners at your school site?

2. What changes would you have to make to your instructional practices to ensure that all students are exhibiting content understanding?

3. How would you evaluate whether the instructional practice changes you identified in question number two above result in engaged learners?

4. What resources and support would you need to implement these strategies into Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2)?

Kinsella 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

- Is vocabulary instruction at your site a planned part of each lesson?

- How do teachers check for understanding when assessing vocabulary knowledge?

- How frequently are students assessed on their vocabulary mastery?

- Are students routinely given opportunities during class time to practice using new vocabulary through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities across the curriculum?

- Do students have access to dictionaries that are appropriate for their age and proficiency levels?

- Do teachers collaborate to determine a consistent and familiar way to teach vocabulary across academic disciplines?

Then, proceed to:

- Take Time: View the video presentation

Kinsella 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin: watch the video

- Teaching Vocabulary in the Middle Grades (WMV: 36:59) | MOV
  - ◈ **Coming Soon!** A handout of Dr. Kinsella's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

- Take Action: Apply the concepts — initial activities to help educators incorporate Dr. Kinsella's practices into their own lessons

Kinsella 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary
in the Middle Grades

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

1. **Activity:** Agree that vocabulary development will be a planned part of every lesson. Collaborate with colleagues to establish a consistent, schoolwide format for teaching vocabulary to students. Choose and use one or more of the following handouts as references during this process:

   - A Rationale for Steps in the Process of Explicitly Teaching a Critical Word With a Goal of Developing Expressive Vocabulary Knowledge (DOC; 84 KB; 2pp.)
   - Explicit Vocabulary Instructional Strategy (to Develop Expressive Word Knowledge) (DOC; 30 KB; 1p.)
   - Guidelines for Prioritizing Words to Address from a Text (to Support Reading Comprehension and Academic Vocabulary Acquisition) (DOC; 32 KB; 1p.)
   - Characteristics of Effective Explicit Vocabulary Instruction in Mixed-Ability 6-12 Classrooms (DOC; 32 KB; 1p.)

2. **Activity:** Review a previously taught lesson that included vocabulary instruction. Specifically look to see if activities such as word sorts, crossword puzzles, and matching exercises were part of the lesson. If the lesson is taught again, what would you do differently to ensure students receive vocabulary instruction that is both explicit and scaffolded?

3. **Activity:** Using the Vocabulary Notetaking Guide (DOC; 105 KB; 1p.) as a reference; customize the form with the vocabulary you will teach in a particular lesson.

4. **Activity:** Review the Affix and Root Word Charts (DOC; 298 KB; 6p.) and select the appropriate affixes that you will include in your next lesson. Provide students with the definition and have them determine how the definition fits with the context of the lesson.

5. **Activity:** Explore more on *TCSII*:

   - Vocabulary Development
   - English language development
   - Recommendation One: Rigor
   - Recommendation Two: Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention
   - Recommendation Four: Relevance

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Kinsella 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 2—Teaching Vocabulary
in the Middle Grades

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

1. What kinds of support and resources would you need to implement strategies that promote vocabulary development at your school site?

2. What changes would you have to make to your instructional practices to ensure that all students are actively engaged in learning vocabulary across all disciplines?

3. How would you evaluate whether the changes to instructional practice you identified in Question 2 above result in engaged learners?

4. What collaboration must take place among teachers to ensure that vocabulary development is incorporated into all content areas?

5. How can the school or district librarian be involved to assist with vocabulary instruction support?

Kinsella 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks

Take Stock: Consider your own practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. What strategies do teachers use to ensure that all students feel confident enough to participate in class discussions?

2. Which strategies have been most successful in encouraging reluctant participants, including those students who have a primary language other than English?

3. Is there a similar format from classroom to classroom for providing structured task set up for students? What steps are included?

4. What types of questions or prompts are the most successful at encouraging student participation?

5. What evaluation is done in the classroom to determine if task directions provided by the teacher are clearly understood by the students?

Then, proceed to:

- Take Time: View the video presentation

Kinsella 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin: Watch the Video

- Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks (WMV: 20:23) | MOV
    - ❖ ***Coming Soon!*** A handout of Dr. Kinsella 's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

Take Action: Apply the concepts — initial activities to help educators incorporate Dr. Kinsella's practices in their own lessons

Kinsella 3 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

1. **Activity**: Arrange with a colleague or group of colleagues to visit each others' classrooms. During the visit, observe what language and literacy support is provided to students to promote learner engagement. Share the results with colleagues.

2. **Activity**: With the same or a different colleague as you met with previously, create a structured lesson that promotes student interaction for a concept you will soon be teaching.

3. **Activity**: Select and review several favorite lesson plans with a colleague or colleagues. Re-design one or more lesson plans to incorporate strategies observed in the video Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks.

4. **Activity**: Individually or with a colleague, reflect on a recently taught lesson. What different ways of evaluation could be used to make sure that the lesson content was clearly understood by students? List some ideas that can be incorporated into future lessons.

5. **Activity**: Explore more on TCSII:
   - Academic Literacy
   - English Language Development
   - Adolescent Development: Recommendation 4—Relevance

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school — identify support and resources needed for implementation

Kinsella 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 3—Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Structured Tasks

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

1. What additional language and literacy support or other resources would you need to promote learner engagement at your school site?

2. How can lessons be structured across disciplines to promote student participation at all grade levels?

3. What changes would need to be made as part of instructional evaluation to ensure that all students clearly understand lesson concepts?

4. How can support personnel be incorporated to promote student participation and academic excellence?

Kinsella 3 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills (Parts 1 and 2)

Take Stock: Consider your own practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. How do you currently get your students to participate in class discussions?

2. How do you ensure that your students are both competent and confident when engaging in a class discussion?

3. How is your students' ability to talk about a topic related to their ability to read and/or write?

4. What is academic talk? How is it used in your classroom?

5. How do you currently utilize the Think-Write-Pair-Share strategy in your lessons?

Then, proceed to:

- Take Time: View the video presentation

Kinsella 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students'
Academic Discussion Skills
(Parts 1 and 2)

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin: Watch the Video

- Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills, Part 1 (WMV; 27:14) | MOV
- Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills, Part 2 (WMV; 24:25) | MOV
    - ◈ **Coming Soon!** A handout of Dr. Kinsella 's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

Take Action: Apply the concepts — initial activities to help educators incorporate Dr. Kinsella's practices in their own

lessons Kinsella 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students'
Academic Discussion Skills
(Parts 1 and 2)

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Complete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

Academic Response Frame

1. **Activity**: Arrange with a colleague or group of colleagues to meet to discuss how to structure lesson plans to include Dr. Kinsella's strategies. Consider these questions as you plan:
   - What language and literacy support must I integrate during my lesson?
   - When and how should I interrupt my instruction to elicit a student response?
   - What will be my "evidence checks" that students are indeed responding to my instruction?

   Use the documents listed below to help you develop and evaluate your plans for using the strategies.

   - Ground Rules for Class Discussion
   - Language Strategies for Active Classroom Participation
   - Guidelines for Writing Effective Response Starters
   - Think-Write-Pair-Share (Template)
   - Think-Write-Pair-Share: Characteristics of Effective Partners
   - Think-Write-Pair-Share: Reasons for U.S. Immigration
   - Lesson Observation and Reflection Tool – Structured Academic Discussion
   - Structured Academic Discussion Strategy: Instructional Steps
   - Structured Academic Discussion Task: Preparation and Implementation

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Kinsella 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Kinsella 4—Enhancing Students' Academic Discussion Skills (Part 1 and 2)

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Kinsella.

1. What resources would you need to implement Dr. Kinsella's strategies to support structured academic discussion in mixed ability classes?

2. What administrative support (i.e. time, training, funding) would you need to implement these practices?

3. What changes would you have to make schoolwide to align your instructional practices to improve engagement of all learners, including less proficient readers and English learners, in effective classroom discussions?

4. How would you evaluate the success of your strategy changes?

5. Create a list of the multiple methods (e.g., lesson plans, homework, project-based learning) you use in your classroom. Next to each, note how you implement or might implement structured discussion strategies. Have a discussion with colleagues and share the results.

Kinsella 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Biography

Dr. Janet Zadina

Janet N. Zadina, Ph.D. is an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist now engaged in neuroscience research. She received her doctorate in the College of Education at the University of New Orleans, conducting her award-winning dissertation research on the neuroanatomy of dyslexia through collaboration with Tulane University School of Medicine.

She continued her postdoctoral education with a Fellowship in Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Tulane University School of Medicine where she researched neuroanatomical risk factors for developmental language disorders through Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) brain scans.

She is currently an Assistant Professor in Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Tulane and in Psychology at the University of South Florida engaged in neuroscience research. Dr. Zadina is author of Six Weeks to a Brain-Compatible Classroom, co-author of Writing Now, (2003 Boston: Houghton Mifflin), a college developmental composition textbook, and founder of Brain Research & Instruction (Outside Source) (BR&IN). She has presented keynotes and workshops on brain research and instruction internationally.

Dr. Zadina's Professional Learning Activities Index

Professional Learning Activities Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. How do you adapt lessons to offer a variety of strategies for students to work with information and demonstrate their knowledge?
2. What opportunities do students have to discover and demonstrate their academic and personal *strengths* in the classroom?
3. What opportunities do students have to discover their academic and personal *interests* in the classroom?

Then, proceed to:

◈ Take Time: View the presentation

Zadina 4 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment

Take Time: View the video presentation

First, watch the video:

- Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment (WMV; 20:36) | MOV
    - *Coming Soon!* A handout of Dr. Zadina's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

- Take Action: Apply the concepts—initial activities to help educators incorporate brain-compatible practices in their own lessons

Zadina 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Compete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the brain-compatible practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

Multiple Methods for Learning

1. Activity: List ways that you can help students to discover and demonstrate their gifts and skills in the classroom.

2. Activity: List ways that you can help students develop compensating skills to overcome learning challenges.

3. Activity: Choose a student who is struggling in your class. Think of the student's strengths and then list ways you could build on these to inspire his or her academic confidence.

4. Activity: Choose an upcoming unit in your class. Think of several options for a "homework menu" that will give students a variety of ways to demonstrate their understanding.

5. Activity: Explore more on *TCSII*:

- Adolescent Characteristics
- Adolescent needs
- Adolescent Development and Rigor
- Adolescent Development and Instruction, Assessment and Intervention
- Adolescent Development and Time
- Adolescent Development and Relevance
- Adolescent Development and Relationships
- Adolescent Development and Transitions
- Adolescent Development and Access
- Adolescent Development and Safety, Resilience, and Health
- Adolescent Development and Leadership
- Adolescent Development and Professional Learning
- Adolescent Development and Accountability
- Adolescent Development and Partnership
- Electives and exploratory courses (interest-based)
- Gaining relevance through visual and performing arts
- Making the Middle Grades Relevant and Engaging
- Personalized environment and opportunities for student voice Student
- perceptions about their competence
- Real-world connections
- Career technical education
- Project-based learning
- Service-learning
- Multicultural experiences
- Meaningful participation

- Leadership opportunities
- Field trips

Then, proceed to:

- Take it Away: Make it happen at your school—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Zadina 4 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 4—Multiple Methods for Learning and Assessment

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

1. What equipment, labs, or other resources would you need to implement Dr. Zadina's suggestions about helping students find their interests and strengths in your classroom or at your school site?
2. What administrative support (i.e., time, training, funding) would you need to implement these practices?
3. What changes would you have to make to align your instructional practices to address adolescent brain development?
4. How would you evaluate the success of your changes?
5. Keep a list of multiple methods (such as homework menu or project-based learning) you use. At the end of a unit, review test scores to assess whether new methods improved student learning. Share your most effective methods with team members.

Zadina 4 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 1—Brain Matters:
Research on Learning

Take Stock: Consider your own practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. How do you know when your students have learned a concept?

2. What assumptions do you make about students' prior knowledge as you begin a new lesson?
3. How do you communicate to your students that lessons you teach are important and meaningful?
4. How much repetition and reviewing do you do daily with your students to help them maintain what they have learned?

Then, proceed to:

◈   Take Time: View the video presentation

Zadina 1 Index

Back to Top

	Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)	
California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION	A Portal for Middle Grades Educators	

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 1—Brain Matters:
Research on Learning

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin, watch the video

- Brain Matters: Research on Learning (WMV: 18:48) | MOV
    - ◈ ***Coming Soon!*** A handout of Dr. Zadina's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

◈ Take Action: Apply the concepts—initial activities to help educators incorporate brain-compatible practices in their own lessons.

Zadina 1 Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 1—Brain Matters: Research on Learning

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Compete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the brain-compatible practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

How the Brain Learns: Three Principles

Principle 1: Learning involves making connections

1. **Activity**: Knowing that learning is built upon prior knowledge, think about a lesson you recently taught.
   - What steps did you take to help students make connections to prior knowledge?
   - If you didn't reach all students, what other examples or activities could you have used?
2. **Activity**: Choose a lesson that you normally teach in which students may not have any prior knowledge on that subject (i.e., a lesson about the Ice Age with students who have never touched snow). Brainstorm ways that you could build connections to concepts students do understand as a way of introducing the idea of the lesson.
3. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - Adolescent characteristics (Recommendation 4)
   - Questioning strategies (Recommendation 2)
   - Connections to prior knowledge (Recommendation 2)
   - Scaffolding (Recommendation 2)
   - "People Search," page 3 of Content area reading graphic organizers (DOC; 241 KB; 44pp.)

Principle 2: Use it or lose it!

1. **Activity**: How can you incorporate topics that students perceive as important into your lessons?
   - Write down student comments that you have heard both in the classroom and during passing periods.
   - Based on those comments, list the themes that are important to your students.
   - Identify ways to incorporate those themes in your lesson planning.
2. **Activity**: Think about a challenging lesson that you will be teaching in the near future. Explore different ways to present a lesson that will:
   - Connect with prior knowledge
   - Engage students
   - Encourage critical thinking
   - Allow for physical activities (such as representing an idea with their bodies or building a model).
3. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
   - View the *TCSII* videos on Kinesthetic Learning to see how a science teacher demonstrates the three states of matter by directing student movement.
     - Kinesthetic Learning, Part I (WMV; 5:36) | MOV

- ◈ Kinesthetic Learning, Part II (WMV; 5:04) | MOV
    - Meaningful participation (Recommendation 4) Academic
    - literacy (Recommendation 1)
    - Vocabulary development (Recommendation 1) Critical
    - thinking (Recommendation 1)
    - Reading across the curriculum (Recommendation 1)
    - Writing across the curriculum (Recommendation 1)

Principle 3: It's not enough to fire it; you have to wire it!

1. **Activity**: Choose one of the California Standards that will be taught to your students. Brainstorm different ways to repeat information so that the knowledge or skill (connections in the brain) will be strengthened.

2. **Activity**: List types of authentic assessments that would tell you when a student has built fluency (gained mastery).
3. **Activity**: Reflect on a lesson you recently taught. If you could reteach it based on what you learned from Dr. Zadina, how would you make it more rigorous (effortful)?
4. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*:
    - Rigor in the Classroom with Dr. Douglas Reeves (video and professional learning activity)
    - Questioning strategies (Recommendation 2)
    - Paying Attention (Adolescent Development, Recommendation 2)
    - Real-world connections (Recommendation 4)
    - Memory Retention (Adolescent Development, Recommendation 3)
    - Service-learning and Project-based learning, (Recommendation 4)

Then, proceed to:

- ◈ Take it Away: Make it happen at your school—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Zadina 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 1—Brain Matters: Research on Learning

Take It Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

1. What would you need to implement brain-compatible practices in your classroom or at your school site?

2. What administrative support would you need to implement these practices?

3. What changes would you have to make to your instructional practices to align with adolescent brain research?

4. How would you evaluate the success of your changes?

5. How can you provide opportunities for students to make connections from what they already know, to the new material, using a variety of methods?

Zadina 1 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. What signals do you give to let students know that the information in the lesson is important for them to learn?

2. How do you know when your students are engaged in what you are teaching?

3. How do you ensure that your students are using critical thinking in your lesson?

4. What activities make learning pleasurable for your students?

Then, proceed to:

◈ Take Time: View the presentation

Zadina 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin, watch the video:

- Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and Development of the Brain (WMV; 23:26) | MOV
    - *Coming Soon!* A handout of Dr. Zadina's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

- Take Action: Apply the concepts—initial activities to help educators incorporate brain-compatible practices in their own lessons

Zadina 2 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Compete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the brain-compatible practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

The Survival Instinct

1. Activity: Brainstorm ways to reduce distractions (e.g., classroom bully) that put students in the survival mode.
2. Activity: Learning can be rewarding to the brain. How do you make your lessons activate the brain's reward pathway?
3. Activity: How can you consistently build real-life experiences into your classroom lessons?
4. Activity: What strategies do you use in the classroom to make student learning "all about them"?
5. **Activity: Explore more on *TCSII:***
   - Socioeconomic status (Recommendation 7)
   - Adolescent Characteristics (Recommendation 1)
   - Adolescent Needs (Recommendation 4)

Brain-Compatible Classroom Strategies

1. **Activity:** Discuss classroom strategies that recognize the role of survival and arousal.
2. How do you use the power of storytelling and narrative to facilitate learning?
3. What can you do to increase the attention span of middle grades students?
4. In introducing a lesson, how can you breakdown an abstract concept and rebuild it using concrete examples?
5. List metacognitive activities that you could build into an upcoming lesson to help students think about their thinking.
6. **Activity: Explore more on TCSII:**
   - Critical thinking (Recommendation 1)
   - Meaningful participation (Recommendation 4)
   - Opportunities to cooperate (Recommendation 5)
   - Rigor in the Classroom with Dr. Douglas Reeves (Professional Learning Activity and Video)
   - Reading across the curriculum (Recommendation 1)
   - Writing across the curriculum (Recommendation 1)
   - Multicultural experiences (Recommendation 4)
   - Academic enrichment centers (Recommendation 4)
   - Real-world connections (Recommendation 4)
     - Career technical education
     - Project-based learning
     - Service-learning

Then, proceed to:

- ◈ <u>Take it Away: Make it happen at your school</u>—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Zadina 2 Index

Back to Top

Then, proceed to:

- ◈ <u>Take it Away: Make it happen at your school</u>—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 2—Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the
Development of the Brain

Take It Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

1. What kind of tasks can you give students that naturally engage the frontal lobes?

2. How can you help students develop critical thinking in a context that will engage them?

3. What would you need to implement brain-compatible practices in your classroom or at your school site?
   - What administrative support would you need?
   - What personal changes would you have to make?
   - How would you evaluate success?

Zadina 2 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II)
The Social Nature of the Brain
and the Role of Emotion

Take Stock: Consider your practices

To begin:

Reflect on your own, your team's, or your school's practices as you answer the questions that follow:

1. What diverse teaching methods and strategies have you used to create social interaction in the classroom?
   - Collaborative group work
   - Project-based learning
   - Service-learning
   - Other
2. In thinking over your classroom lessons, how much of what you teach has elements of emotion?
3. What kinds of things do you model (consciously or subconsciously) through your behaviors, attitudes, and facial or body expressions?

4. How do you assess your students' emotional state?
5. How do you establish the tone or the classroom climate for maximum learning?
6. In what ways do you instill a sense of control or empower your students?

Then, proceed to:

❖ Take Time: View the presentation

Zadina 3 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II)
The Social Nature of the Brain
and the Role of Emotion

Take Time: View the video presentation

To begin, watch the video:

- Adolescent Characteristics (Part II): The Social Nature of the Brain and the Role of Emotion (WMV; 24:19) | MOV
  - *Coming Soon!* A handout of Dr. Zadina's PowerPoint Presentation

Then, proceed to:

- Take Action: Apply the concepts—initial activities to help educators incorporate brain-compatible practices in their own lessons

Zadina 3 Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II)
The Social Nature of the Brain and the Role of Emotion
with Dr. Janet Zadina

Take Action: Apply the concepts

To begin:

Compete the following initial activities designed to help educators implement the brain-compatible practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

Social Relationships as a Way of Learning

1. **Activity:** Thinking of young adolescents' intense need for social interaction, list one additional schoolwide and one additional classroom accommodation you could make to fulfill this need.

2. **Activity:** Choose one strategy mentioned by Dr. Zadina to use in your classroom as a way to build social interaction.

3. **Activity:** Building on Dr. Zadina's discussion on the power of modeling desired behaviors for students, ask a colleague to observe you teaching in your classroom. Have him/her list behaviors, facial expressions, or words that you display that might positively or negatively influence student behaviors. Change one behavior based on his/her observation.

4. **Action Research:** Choose one of the activities listed above. After a reasonable period of time, conduct a follow-up analysis to determine its impact on your teaching and on student learning.

5. **Activity:** List students who are doing well in spite of challenges and plan how to use their strengths to inspire peers.

6. **Activity: Explore more on** *TCSII:*

   ▶ Caring for Young Adolescents
   ▶ Quality Middle Grades Foster Relationships
   ▶ Opportunities to cooperate
   ▶ Service-based learning
   ▶ Project-based learning
   ▶ Scaffolding

Emotion as an Essential Component of Learning

1. **Activity:** How do you make opportunities for meaningful participation and social bonding? Next to each activity, brainstorm ways that you could build specific tasks using emotion and emotionally engaging materials.

2. **Activity**: Reflect on your own teaching experience and success stories. Recall a time when you encouraged a student and impacted that student's course of action.

3. **Activity**: Examine your classroom or school "rules." Are there any that could be changed into "positive procedures?" In what ways could you model the behaviors you want students to imitate?

4. **Activity**: Brainstorm ways to incorporate choices into your assignments or tests so that students feel they have a better chance of doing well.

5. **Explore more on *TCSII:***

> ▶ Paying Attention
> ▶ Teacher Tips
> ▶ Meaningful participation
> ▶ Examples of Caring Behavior
> ▶ Discipline: a fair, consistent and positive approach

Then, proceed to:

> ◈ <u>Take it Away: Make it happen at your school</u>—identify support and resources needed for implementation

Zadina 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Zadina 3—Adolescent Characteristics (Part II)
The Social Nature of the Brain
and the Role of Emotion
with Dr. Janet Zadina

Take it Away: Make it happen at your school

Answer the following questions designed to help educators identify the support and resources needed to implement the practices suggested by Dr. Zadina.

1. Reflecting on your current practices and Dr. Zadina's presentation, what changes would you make in order to ensure that your students are socially and emotionally engaged in learning?

2. What resources or support would you need to implement these changes?

3. How can you meaningfully convey to every student that he or she is an important part of the class?

Zadina 3 Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Three

Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades

I. Identify: Reflect on Current Practices

The following activities are designed to help you and your colleagues reflect on your current practices related to Recommendation 3—Time, ask critical questions, and begin the continuous cycle of inquiry.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: As a team, meet to discuss the following to ensure that you and members of your team share a common understanding:
   - How do we view time as a factor that drives academic excellence?
   - How do we use time to meet student needs?
   - How do we make time to create and participate in professional learning communities?
   - How does our contract support the use of time to support academic excellence?

2. **Activity**: On your own or in teams, complete the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist:
   Recommendation 3—Time: a walk-through checklist provided to help school teams informally gauge their implementation of a particular recommendation.
   - Print out the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist: Recommendation 3—Time.
   - Place a check by those practices currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom.

3. **Activity**: Individually or in teams, review the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist:
   Recommendation 3—Time.
   - For those items that you indicated are currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom, identify one or more practice(s) that you or your team believe you are doing well.
   - In a pair-share activity, describe the practice(s) that you identified and respond to the following:
     - Explain why this practice was selected.
     - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom?

Then, proceed to:

- II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Three

Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades

II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Now that you have reviewed the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and completed it based on your current school practices, use the following activities to continue learning about strategies and practices related to Recommendation 3—Time.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: Return to the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and look at the items that were not checked.
   - Identify one or more practices that you would like to improve or implement.
   - In a pair-share activity, respond to the following:
     - Why is this practice being selected for improvement or implementation?
     - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
     - How will implementation or improvement of this practice be beneficial to you, your students, and others?
     - Will work on this practice allow you to explore a range of insights and findings?
     - Is this practice something that you can investigate and implement within your daily work schedule and in a manageable timeframe?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom/school?

2. **Activity**: Each pair will report to the team regarding the practice(s) selected. As an entire staff, discuss the following:
   - Should you focus on improving one *existing* practice?
   - If so, which one? —OR—
   - Should you implement one *new* practice to address an identified need or gap?
   - What evidence helped you determine the need for a new or revised practice or approach?

3. **Activity**: As an entire staff and based on the group discussion:
   - Finalize the selection of one practice on which you would like to focus your enhancement or implementation efforts.
     - Consider selecting only one practice to be enhanced or implemented at a time. If more than one change is made, it will be difficult to determine which action is responsible for the outcome.
   - Next, obtain ideas and/or strategies that would assist you in implementing this new practice or enhancing one existing practice.

4. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*: Review the content sections of Recommendation 3—Time.
   - The following are examples of how to begin your exploration of the content sections in *TCSII* related to Recommendation 3—Time.
     - If, for example, your identified practice is flexible scheduling that allows all students sufficient time during class for extended inquiry-based projects and hands-on experiences, explore more on *TCSII* in the following content section for Recommendation 3—Time: Time for Multiple Opportunities to Succeed.
     - If, instead, you would like to focus on regularly scheduled late start/early release days that allow for department and grade-level meetings, begin with a review of the content section headings outlined in the "Time for Professional Learning Community Activities" section of Recommendation 3—Time.
     - To gain ideas about time for tutoring and mentoring and after-school supports, review the following:
       - John Glenn Middle School's "ASAP" program provides time daily for guided study and mentoring.

Philip Magruder Middle School's "Seize the Day" program extends the learning environment beyond the traditional school day.

5. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following:
   - What did you learn from your research?
   - What patterns, insights, and new understandings emerged?
   - What meaning do these patterns, insights, and new understandings have for your practice?
   - How will these findings impact your professional practice?
   - How will these findings impact your students?

Then, proceed to:

- III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Three

Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades

III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Successful implementation of a new practice or enhancing an existing practice requires planning, applying, and evaluating the results.

To begin:

1. **Activity:** Create an Action Plan
   - Based upon your research, determine which strategies you will use to enhance one **existing** practice or implement one **new** practice.
   - Discuss why you chose these strategies and consider these questions:
     - What steps are needed to improve or implement this practice in your classroom?
     - What existing resources or information do you need to obtain that would:
       - Be useful in helping you implement a new practice or modify an existing one?
       - Help you decide on the type of data/evidence to collect?
       - Help you interpret your findings?
   - As part of your action plan, determine:
     - Which strategies you will use to ensure that there is adequate time to effectively address student needs.
   - As part of your action plan, design a method to evaluate results and create a schedule to assess progress.
     - Discuss how you will evaluate the success of the new and/or modified practice.
     - Determine an appropriate timeline for completing what you are trying to accomplish.
     - Create a list of evidence and/or data you will collect and use to evaluate the successful implementation of the new practice or enhancement of the existing practice.
     - While implementing the new practice or improving on an existing practice, collect evidence/data about performance and document the results.

2. **Activity**: Take Action and Apply the Concepts
   - As you apply the strategies identified in your action plan, meet weekly with your colleagues and discuss the following:
     - What additional resources, if any, you have needed to successfully implement the strategies.
     - What is different about your classroom?
     - How do you know if your students are more engaged as learners?
     - What type of contractual support have you needed, if any?
     - How have you differentiated the strategies to meet the needs of all your students?
     - How have you deepened your content knowledge?
   - Compare your action plan to the revised California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (2009) (PDF; Outside Source). While comparing your plan to the 2009 CSTP, consider which of the following standards emphasize strategies that are impacted by improved practices in relation to Time:
     - Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
     - Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
     - Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning
     - Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students
     - Standard 5: Assessing Students for Learning
     - Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator.

3. **Activity:** Evaluate the Results
   - Review the list of evidence collected (as identified during the planning phase) and as a team complete the following:
     - Bring samples of student work and discuss how the samples exemplify the measure of success of the practice.
     - Discuss the ways in which your students have demonstrated their learning.
     - Discuss how your instruction has changed based on the measures of success.
     - Based upon your evaluation, what further changes will you make in your practice and how will you evaluate those changes?

Then, proceed to:

- IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Three

Strategic Use of Time in the Middle Grades

IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Learn more about key concepts of Recommendation 3—Time by completing the following activities. Discuss experiences and share knowledge as you deepen your understanding.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following questions:
   - Did the strategy work? If so, what evidence can you provide of its effectiveness?
   - Were there shortcomings? If so, what evidence can you provide about the lack of effectiveness of the chosen strategy?
   - As you implemented the new practice, what challenges and opportunities did you discover?
   - What else do you need to learn now that you have completed research, created a plan, implemented a new practice, and evaluated the results?
   - How can you and your colleagues broaden your understanding about improving your professional practice?
   - What did you learn from the data you collected while implementing the new practice?
   - How did the new practice affect the optimization of learning time for students at your site? For staff at your site?
   - What new questions emerged from the changes made?
   - What new or additional issues did your team uncover?
   - Which new questions or issues will the team address next using this process?

2. **Activity**: Using the findings from Activity 1 (above), contact another middle grades school and either visit it or begin a dialogue with the school staff. Be sure to consider the following as topics:
   - In scheduling time to meet student needs, what factors are integral for successful schedules?
   - How do we use time for Professional Learning Communities strategically?
   - As we weigh the benefits of various types of master schedules (flexible block, rotating block, block), how do we determine what is most appropriate for our school site given our student demographics and district constraints (e.g., bus schedules)?

3. **Activity**: Go into more depth regarding Recommendation 3—Time by scheduling time to view the "Scheduling for Success" (WMV; 6:05) video on *TCSII.*
   - Learn how Toby Johnson Middle School used block scheduling to give students extra time for reading and math and nearly two dozen elective choices while affording teachers time to collaborate, plan, and meet the daily needs of students.

4. **Activity**: Review the study: Tracking An Emerging Movement: A Report on Expanded Time Schools in America (Outside Source).

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Four
Relevant and Engaging Learning
in the Middle Grades

I. Identify: Reflect on Current Practices

The following activities are designed to help you and your colleagues reflect on your current practices related to Recommendation 4—Relevance, ask critical questions, and begin the continuous cycle of inquiry.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: As a team, meet to discuss the following to ensure that you and members of your team share a common understanding:
   - How do we prepare our students to be successful in middle school?
   - How welcoming is our learning environment?
   - How meaningful and engaging is the work we give to our students? How do we know?
   - How do we ensure that all students have opportunities for meaningful participating and hands-on learning?

2. **Activity**: On your own or in teams, complete the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist:
   Recommendation 4—Relevance, a walk-through checklist provided to help school teams informally gauge their implementation of a particular recommendation.
   - Print out the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist: Recommendation 4—Relevance.
   - Place a check by those practices currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom.

3. **Activity**: Individually or in teams, review the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist:
   Recommendation 4—Relevance.
   - For those items that you indicated are currently in place at your school and/or in your classroom, identify one or more practice(s) that you or your team believe you are doing well.
   - In a pair-share activity, describe the practice(s) that you identified and respond to the following:
     - Explain why this practice was selected.
     - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom/school?

Then, proceed to:

- II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Four
Relevant and Engaging Learning
in the Middle Grades

II. Investigate: Research the Recommendation

Now that you have reviewed the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and completed it based on your current school practices, use the following activities to continue learning about strategies and practices related to Recommendation 4—Relevance.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: Return to the *TCSII* Evidence Checklist and look at the items that were not checked.
   - Identify one or more practices that you would like to improve or implement.
   - In a pair-share activity, respond to the following:
     - Why is this practice being selected for improvement or implementation?
     - What evidence/data can you provide that supports your selection?
     - How will implementation or improvement of this practice be beneficial to you, your students, and others?
     - Will work on this practice allow you to explore a range of insights and findings?
     - Is this practice something that you can investigate and implement within your daily work schedule and in a manageable timeframe?
     - How does this practice currently look in your classroom/school?

2. **Activity**: Each pair will report to the team regarding the practice(s) selected. As an entire staff, discuss the following:
   - Should you focus on improving one **existing** practice?
   - If so, which one? **—OR—**
   - Should you implement one **new** practice to address an identified need or gap?
   - What evidence helped you determine the need for a new or revised practice or approach?

3. **Activity**: As an entire staff and based on the group discussion:
   - Finalize the selection of one practice on which you would like to focus your enhancement or implementation efforts.
     - Consider selecting only one practice to be enhanced or implemented at a time. If more than one change is made, it will be difficult to determine which action is responsible for the outcome.
   - Next, obtain ideas and/or strategies that would assist you in implementing this new practice or enhancing one existing practice.

4. **Activity**: Explore more on *TCSII*: Review the content sections of Recommendation 4— Relevance.
   - The following are examples of how to begin your exploration of the content sections in *TCSII* related to Recommendation 4—Relevance.
   - If, for example, your identified practice is multiple opportunities to succeed, explore more *TCSII's* content section"Real-world connections. "
   - If, instead, you would like to focus on giving students a voice at school and personalizing their environment, begin with a review of *TCSII* content section "Personalized environment and opportunities for student voice."

5. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following:
   - What did you learn from your research?
   - What patterns, insights, and new understandings emerged?

- What meaning do these patterns, insights, and new understandings have for your practice?
- How will these findings impact your professional practice?
- How will these findings impact your students?

Then, proceed to:

- III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Four
Relevant and Engaging Learning
in the Middle Grades

III. Implement: Plan, Apply, and Evaluate the Results

Successful implementation of a new practice or enhancing an existing practice requires planning, applying, and evaluating the results.

To begin:

1. **Activity:** Create an Action Plan
   - Based upon your research, determine which strategies you will use to enhance one **existing** practice or implement one **new** practice.
   - Discuss why you chose these strategies and consider these questions:
     - What steps are needed to improve or implement this practice in your classroom/school?
     - What existing resources or information do you need to obtain that would:
       - Be useful in helping you implement a new practice or modify an existing one?
       - Help you decide on the type of data/evidence to collect?
       - Help you interpret your findings?
   - As part of your action plan, determine:
     - How you will differentiate this practice so that every student learns.
     - Which strategies you will use to ensure that teachers integrate the concepts described in Recommendation 4—Relevance to effectively address student needs.
   - As part of your action plan, design a method to evaluate results and create a schedule to assess progress.
     - Discuss how you will evaluate the success of the new and/or modified practice.
     - Determine an appropriate timeline for completing what you are trying to accomplish.
     - Create a list of evidence and/or data you will collect and use to evaluate the successful implementation of the new practice or enhancement of the existing practice.
     - While implementing the new practice or improving on an existing practice, collect evidence/data about performance and document the results.

2. **Activity**: Take Action and Apply the Concepts
   - As you apply the strategies identified in your action plan, meet weekly with your colleagues and discuss the following:
     - What additional resources, if any, you have needed to successfully implement the strategies.
     - What is different about your classroom?
     - How do you know if your students are more engaged as learners?
     - What type of contractual support have you needed, if any?
     - How have you differentiated the strategies to meet the needs of all your students?
     - How have you deepened your content knowledge?
   - Compare your action plan to the revised *California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (2009)* (PDF; Outside Source). While comparing your plan to the 2009 CSTP, consider which of the following standards emphasize strategies that are impacted by improved practices in relation to relevance:
     - Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
     - Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
     - Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning
     - Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students
     -

           Standard 5: Assessing Students for Learning
◈ Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator

3. **Activity:** Evaluate the Results
   - Review the list of evidence collected (as identified during the planning phase) and as a team complete the following:
     - ◈ Bring samples of student work and discuss how the samples exemplify the measure of success of the practice.
     - ◈ Discuss the ways in which your students have demonstrated their learning.
     - ◈ Discuss how your instruction has changed based on the measures of success.
     - ◈ Based upon your evaluation, what further changes will you make in your practice and how will you evaluate those changes?

Then, proceed to:

- IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

	Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
California Department of EDUCATION PUBLICATION	A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Four
Relevant and Engaging Learning
in the Middle Grades

IV. Interact: Deepen Understanding

Learn more about key concepts of Recommendation 4—Relevance by completing the following activities. Discuss experiences and share knowledge as you deepen your understanding.

To begin:

1. **Activity**: In teams, discuss the following questions:
   - Did the strategy work? If so, what evidence can you provide of its effectiveness?
   - Were there shortcomings? If so, what evidence can you provide about the lack of effectiveness of the chosen strategy?
   - As you implemented the new practice, what challenges and opportunities did you discover?
   - What else do you need to learn now that you have completed research, created a plan, implemented a new practice, and evaluated the results?
   - How can you and your colleagues broaden your understanding about improving your professional practice?
   - What did you learn from the data you collected while implementing the new practice?
   - Did the new practice help to make lessons more relevant at your site?
   - How did the new practice impact students at your site? How do you know?
   - What new questions emerged from the changes made?
   - What new or additional issues did your team uncover?
   - Which new questions or issues will the team address next using this process?

2. **Activity**: Present your findings to your colleagues at school .
   - When presenting your findings, consider using a technology that you have contemplated using in your classroom with your students. For example:
     - Podcasts
     - Blogs
     - Teacher Web pages
     - Web portals
     - Online tutorials
     - Student Web sites and Webcasts
     - Web-based research Simulations
     - Animation
     - Videography
     -

3. **Activity**: Go into more depth regarding Recommendation 4—Relevance by scheduling time to:
   - View the *TCSII* video: Career Technical Education: Agriculture Class (WMV; 6:19) | MOV.
     - Learn how Reyburn Intermediate School made real-world connections to engage students in learning.
   - View the *TCSII* video: Enhancing Science Instruction with Technology (WMV; 5:01) | MOV.
     - Discover how educators at Holmes International Middle School engage students by infusing state-of-the-art technology into their science classes.
   - *TCSII*

View the   video: Portfolio Day (WMV; 9:46) | MOV.
- ◈ Observe how Castaic Middle School students make a positive impression on community members by presenting their best school work and discussing career aspirations, interests, talents, and hobbies.
- ▪ View the *TCSII* videos: Zadina 1–Brain Matters: Research on Learning with Dr. Janet Zadina (WMV; 18:48) | MOV and Zadina 2–Adolescent Characteristics (Part I): The Survival Instinct and the Development of the Brain (WMV; 23:26) | MOV.
  - ◈ Then, complete the respective professional learning activities:
    - ▸ Professional Learning Activity: Zadina 1–Brain Matters: Research on Learning with Dr. Janet Zadina
    - ▸ Professional Learning Activity: Zadina 2–Adolescent Characteristics (Part I)

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Five

Relationships that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Acquaint: Familiarize yourself with the Recommendation

Recommendation 5—Relationships is one of twelve integrated recommendations intended to foster middle grades excellence. Recommendation 5 focuses on the critical component of educator-student relationships.

 Proceed to Assess

Professional Learning Activities Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Five

Relationships that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Assess: Self-Assessment Guide

This guide is provided as a starting point to assist you in assessing your status in implementing Recommendation 5—Relationships. Evaluate and rate your school's current program or strategy in each of these areas using the following ratings:

1 = Program (or strategy) is fully and successfully implemented with review process in place
2 = Program (or strategy) exists, but has no review process to determine if it is successful
3 = Pieces of a program or strategy are in place, but are not fully defined or implemented
4 = Program (or strategy) does not exist, or exists only at the discussion level

The rating scale is to be used as an informal guide for group or professional learning community (PLC) work. To assist you in determining an appropriate rating, the following are provided:

- Sample question suggestions to spark discussion for each area
- Links to sources of additional information that may be useful during the assessment process

---

Programs or Strategies for Self-Assessment

Relationships between students and adults: Every student at the school has a connection with a caring adult

- Q: What constitutes a connection?
- Q: What kind of connections have adults established with students in our school?
- Q: How do we know every student has a connection with a caring adult?

Relationships with Adults
Advisory programs (homeroom)
Looping

Interdisciplinary small learning communities: There is regular collaboration in small learning communities (grade-level and department teams) that foster relationships and allow students to know and be known by a small group of teachers and by a core group of their peers.

- Q: What communities do we currently have?
- Q: Are they effective? If not, what do we need to change?
- Q: What new communities would we like to establish?

Small Learning Communities

Advisory programs: Advisory periods allow time for students to discuss issues of concern with a caring adult.

- Q: Does every student participate in an advisory period?
- Q: Is the environment conducive to the sharing of confidences?

Advisory programs (homeroom)

Adult mentors: Each student has frequent contact with an adult mentor to plan and assess his or her academic, personal, and social development.

- Q: Does the school have a process for recruiting, selecting, and training mentors?
- Q: How is successful mentoring measured?

Adult mentors

Proceed to Access

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Five

Relationships that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Access: Ideas and examples for the Recommendation

These resources are intended to illustrate how other schools have implemented Recommendation 5 and to provide ideas that may be applicable to your unique situation.

Relationships between students and adults

"No-Dot" Kid Program
San Lorenzo Valley Middle | Felton | San Lorenzo Valley Unified | Santa Cruz County
Every student is connected to a caring staff person on campus. Through an established school-wide process, all staff 'adopt' at-risk students and provide them with added support.

Connecting with Kids, Part I (WMV; 5:06) | MOV

Ideas for fostering relationships between students and between teachers.
Successful Practices from Schools to Watch™ -Taking Center Stage

Quality Middle Grades Foster Relationships

Interdisciplinary small learning communities

Making Connections
Rio Norte Junior High | Santa Clarita | Wm. S. Hart Union | Los Angeles County
Teacher teams form interdisciplinary learning communities. Communities support students' academic and emotional development, making them part of a 'family'.

Making Connections (WMV; 5:19) | MOV

Looping

Edna Hill Middle | Brentwood | Brentwood Union | Contra Costa County
Teachers continue with the same students from one year to the next. Looping increases teacher-student connections and permits continuity and connection of instruction from year to year.

Looping

Advisory programs

PRIDE

Summit Intermediate | Etiwanda | Etiwanda Elementary District | San Bernardino County
Personal Responsibility in Developing Excellence (PRIDE) is incorporated in a daily 30-minute advisory period. Activities during PRIDE include roundtable discussions, team-building, and more.

Advisory programs

National Middle Schools (NMSA) Research Summary
This summary focuses on the effectiveness of advisory programs, including effects on student achievement and self perception.

NSMA Research Summary on Advisory Programs (Outside Source)

Adult mentors

Mentoring
Catherine L. Zane Middle | Eureka | Eureka City Unified | Humboldt County
Mentors for students are not limited to school staff. Community members such as AmeriCorps volunteers, university and college students participate in the program.

Adult mentors

Partnering for Student Success
Richard Henry Dana Middle | Hawthorne | Wiseburn Elementary | Los Angeles County
Employees from a business within the community act as tutors and mentors to middle grades students.

Partnering for Student Success (WMV; 5:34) | MOV

Proceed to Adapt

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Five

Relationships that Promote Success in the Middle Grades
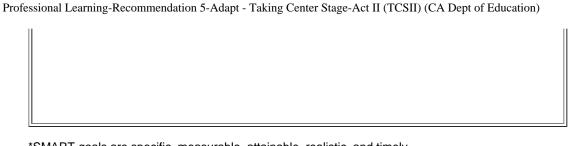
Adapt: Make it Your Own

Now that you have become familiar with Recommendation 5—Relationships, assessed your status to determine if improvement is needed, and reviewed some successful program ideas for strengthening relationships, what would benefit your school?

In brainstorming ideas and solutions, you might consider:

- Defining and answering questions included in the Self-Assessment Guide as a first step
- The timeframe needed for the implementation of selected ideas
- The need for reallocation or addition of necessary resources
- Using SMART* goals when creating your action plan
- Evaluation processes to review, assess, and modify plans as part of a continuous improvement cycle

Ideas for Implementation

Relationships between students and adults

Interdisciplinary small learning communities

Advisory programs

Adult mentors

*SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.

To share your ideas and successes, contact the Middle Grades Improvement Office at tcsii@cde.ca.gov. School improvement examples, anecdotes, and program information are welcomed.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Six

Transitions that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Acquaint: Familiarize yourself with the Recommendation

Recommendation 6—Transitions is one of 12 integrated recommendations intended to foster middle grades excellence. Recommendation 6 focuses on the critical component of transitions from elementary school to middle grades and from middle grades to high school.

Proceed to Assess

Professional Learning Activities Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Six

Transitions that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Assess: Self-Assessment Guide

This guide is provided as a starting point to assist you in assessing your status in implementing Recommendation 6—Transitions. Evaluate and rate your school's current program or strategy in each of these areas using the following ratings:

1 = Program (or strategy) is fully and successfully implemented with review process in place
2 = Program (or strategy) exists, but has no review process to determine if it is successful
3 = Pieces of a program or strategy are in place, but are not fully defined or implemented
4 = Program (or strategy) does not exist, or exists only at the discussion level

The rating scale is to be used as an informal guide for group or professional learning community (PLC) work. To assist you in determining an appropriate rating, sample question suggestions are provided to spark discussion for each area.

Programs or Strategies for Self-Assessment
Staff knowledge and involvement is critical to successful student transition: Staff members understand the importance of easing transition for young adolescents.   ■ Q: Are staff members familiar with characteristics of young adolescent development?   ■ Q: What are some of the social, emotional, and academic factors that support a positive transition?   ■ Q: How will staff identify students who need immediate and ongoing interventions?
Transition programs help minimize academic or social disruption by facilitating students' adjustments to new surroundings: Seamless, articulated transition programs should be implemented beginning in elementary school through high school.   ■ Q: Does your school have transition agreements or programs for transition from elementary to middle grades?   ■ Q: Does your school have transition agreements or programs for transition from middle grades to high school?   ■ Q: Does your school have agreements or programs for transition between classrooms and grade levels within middle grades?   ■ Q: Does your school offer summer bridge programs?   ■ Q: Are any programs in place to make connections between middle grades students and high school students?
Articulation agreements are an effective strategy to reduce barriers to learning: Curriculum is aligned so that one concept builds on a prior concept and is consistent

between grade levels.

- Q: Do teachers, schools, and districts coordinate coursework between grade levels and among schools at different levels (elementary, middle grades and high school)?
- Q: Does your school support team meetings that include planning for interdisciplinary, articulated, and integrated learning?
- Q: Do staff from elementary, middle grades, and high school meet to discuss and coordinate articulation agreements, alignment of grade-level course work and materials to the content standards and sequenced common assessments and what academic and study skills are needed for successful transitions?

Proceed to Access

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Six

Transitions that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Access: Ideas and examples for the Recommendation

These resources are intended to illustrate how other schools have implemented this recommendation and to provide ideas that may be applicable to your unique situation.

Staff knowledge and involvement is critical to student transition

Rincon Intermediate School l West Covina l Rowland Unified School District l Los Angeles County
Staff members participate in the district's professional development training on developmental responsiveness.

Rincon Intermediate, Rowland Unified School District (Outside Source)

Rincon Intermediate School – DataQuest Reports

Richard Henry Dana Middle School l Hawthorne l Wiseburn Elementary School District l Los Angeles County
A full-time counselor works with resource staff to train teachers to recognize students with problems.

R.H. Dana Middle School, Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage
Model School Visitor's Guide (PDF; Outside Source)

Richard Henry Dana Middle School – DataQuest Reports

Transition programs

John Glenn Middle School of International Studies l Indio l Desert Sands Unified School District l Riverside County
Each spring, John Glenn counselors visit the fifth-grade classrooms at feeder elementary schools to talk with students about middle school.

In the Spotlight: John Glenn Middle School of International Studies

John Glenn Middle School, Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage
Model School Visitor's Guide (PDF; Outside Source)

Olive Peirce Middle School l Ramona l Ramona City Unified School District l San Diego County
Students at Olive Peirce Middle School developed videos to provide incoming students with a "virtual tour" of the school and to show new students what to expect in middle school.

Olive Peirce Middle School (Outside Source)

Olive Peirce Middle School – DataQuest Reports

Toby Johnson Middle School l Elk Grove l Elk Grove Unified School District l Sacramento County
Through its Jump Start program, Toby Johnson Middle School conducts outreach to sixth graders in feeder schools to promote a seamless transition to seventh grade.

In the Spotlight: Toby Johnson

A Jump Start into Middle School (WMV; 8:18) | MOV

Toby Johnson Middle School, Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage
Model School Visitor's Guide (PDF; Outside Source)

Articulation agreements

Bernice Ayer Middle School l San Clemente Capistrano Unified School District l Orange County
Monthly meetings of school leaders from seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and San Clemente High School help the schools provide for vertical articulation and planning.

Bernice Ayer Middle School, Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage
Model School Visitor's Guide (PDF; Outside Source)

Bernice Ayer Middle School – DataQuest Reports

Granite Oaks Middle School l Rocklin l Rocklin Unified School District l Placer County
Members of this high-achieving middle school faculty place a priority on articulation with incoming sixth graders. Principals from feeder schools meet with the Granite Oaks principal to discuss articulation.

In the Spotlight: Granite Oaks Middle School

Granite Oaks Middle School (Outside Source)

Perris Union High School District l Perris l Riverside County
Articulation agreements with feeder middle schools address all math sequences offered by the district's high school. This practice helps in making more accurate placement in freshman math. The district uses the same system for English/language arts.

In the Spotlight: Perris Union High School District

Perris Union High School District (Outside Source)

Proceed to Adapt

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Six

Transitions that Promote Success in the Middle Grades

Adapt: Make it Your Own

Now that you have become familiar with Recommendation 6 —Transitions, assessed your status to determine if improvement is needed, and reviewed some successful program ideas for strengthening transitions, what would benefit your school?

In brainstorming ideas and solutions, you might consider:

- Defining and answering questions included in the Self-Assessment Guide as a first step
- The timeframe needed for the implementation of selected ideas
- The need for reallocation or addition of necessary resources
- Using SMART* goals when creating your action plan
- Evaluation processes to review, assess, and modify plans as part of a continuous improvement cycle

Ideas for Implementation

Staff members understand the importance of easing transition for young adolescents.

Seamless, articulated transition programs should be implemented beginning in elementary school through high school.

Curriculum is aligned so that one concept builds on a prior concept and is consistent between grade levels.

*SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.

To share your ideas and successes, contact the Middle Grades Improvement Office at tcsii@cde.ca.gov. School improvement examples, anecdotes, and program information are welcomed.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Seven

Access that Promotes Success in the Middle Grades

Acquaint: Familiarize yourself with the Recommendation

Recommendation 7—Access is one of 12 integrated recommendations intended to foster middle grades excellence. Recommendation 7 focuses on providing all middle grades students with equal access to a rich learning environment.

Proceed to Assess

Professional Learning Activities Index

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Seven

Access that Promotes Success in the Middle Grades

Assess: Self-Assessment Guide

This guide is provided as a starting point to assist you in assessing your status in implementing Recommendation 7—Access. Evaluate and rate your school's current program or strategy in each of these areas using the following ratings:

1 = Program (or strategy) is fully and successfully implemented with review process in place
2 = Program (or strategy) exists, but has no review process to determine if it is successful
3 = Pieces of a program or strategy are in place, but are not fully defined or implemented
4 = Program (or strategy) does not exist, or exists only at the discussion level

The rating scale is to be used as an informal guide for group or professional learning community (PLC) work. To assist you in determining an appropriate rating, sample question suggestions are provided to spark discussion for each area.

Programs or Strategies for Self-Assessment
Access to Instructional Materials: Providing students with adequate instructional materials is critical to student success. The importance of adequate instructional materials was highlighted by the Williams case (Eliezer Williams et al. v. State of California et al.). It calls for public schools to provide students with equal access to instructional materials, safe and decent school facilities, and qualified teachers. "The California content standards were designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student . . . "[1] "Districts must still insure that every students has standards-aligned instructional materials in the four core subjects (state-adopted in grades K-8 and locally adopted for grades 9-12)."[2] California *Education Code* "(*EC*) Section 1240.3 states the following: '1240.3. (a) For the purposes of Section 1240, for the 2008-09 to 2014-15 fiscal years, inclusive, sufficient textbooks or instructional materials include standards-aligned textbooks or instructional materials, or both' . . ."[3] The California Department of Education (CDE) Web site contains considerable information about instructional materials. For more information, please refer to Instructional Materials FAQ on the CDE Web site. ■ Q: Is our school/district providing sufficient access to quality facilities and instructional materials to adequately meet content standards? ■ Q: If not, what do we need and how will we obtain it? ■ Q: Do we have a plan in place for anticipating new instructional material needs as they develop (i.e., digital textbooks)? Access to facilities and instructional materials
Access to Leadership and Recognition Opportunities: Just as it is important for all students to have access to electives and enrichment activities, it is also critical that they

have equal access to leadership and recognition opportunities. Caring teachers can encourage students to take leadership roles in clubs, multicultural event planning, community service projects, and classroom activities. Participation in these activities helps students gain leadership skills needed for later participation in community, career, and home life. Similarly, struggling students need people to recognize their strengths so that they are encouraged to keep trying. A student who receives only deficiency marks is unlikely to remain in school.

- Q: What opportunities does our school offer for students to demonstrate leadership skills?
- Q: How can teachers encourage students to participate in leadership and recognition opportunities?
- Q:What barriers exist for students to participate in leadership and recognition programs (e.g., grade requirements, after-school transportation, and after-school obligations) and how can they be overcome?

Access to leadership and recognition opportunities
Student leadership

Universal Access for Special Education Students: Under federal regulations, states must ensure universal access to a standards-based education for special education students. The requirement stipulates that teacher- and district-wide assessments and classroom assignments must be universally accessible. If students have processing difficulties or if they lack specific academic vocabulary, direct instruction may be one method of teaching the material. Direct instruction includes different formats for presentation. As necessary, materials will need to be available in Braille, large text, and on tape or compact disk.

- Q: How do we ensure universal access for our special education students?
- Q: Do we have any unique challenges that require solutions?
- Q: What types of direct instruction do we offer?

Access to special education supports

Access to High Teacher Quality: A comprehensive study by the nonprofit Education Trust found that low-income and minority children benefit the most from access to good teachers. The study also demonstrated that students—even those in middle-and upper-income families—gain higher scores on state exams and demonstrate better preparation for college if they attend schools where teacher quality is high. Many of California's lowest-performing schools are unable to attract and retain the most qualified and experienced teachers and administrators. In some districts, veteran teachers may perceive assignment to low-performing schools as punitive and administrators may prefer to work in schools with fewer challenges.

- Q: What are we doing to ensure our school/district attracts high-quality teachers, staff, and administrators?
- Q: What strategies and programs are in place to ensure that our high-quality teachers, staff, and administrators continue to develop professionally?
- Q: How are we ensuring that we retain our high-quality teachers, staff and administrators?

Access to qualified and caring teachers and staff

Beyond Mentoring: How to Attract, Support, and Retain New Teachers (Outside Source), Jon Saphier, Susan Freedman and Barbara Aschheim, 2001

Access to Equal Education via Heterogeneous Grouping: Effective middle schools avoid segregating students into permanent groupings in less rigorous tracks. Typically, such tracking minimizes student engagement in the broader school community. In contrast, heterogeneous groupings avoid stigmatizing and segregating students who

are most at risk. The success of this method, also called mixed-ability grouping, depends on the teacher's skill in differentiating instruction so that all students feel challenged and successful. Many studies support the educational benefits of heterogeneous grouping. Advocates say heterogeneous grouping prevents lower-track classes from becoming dumping grounds and ensures that all students have access to high-status content. Opponents say it is difficult for teachers to manage, hampers the brightest children from moving at an accelerated pace, and contributes to watering down the curriculum.

- Q: To what extent does your school use heterogeneous grouping?
- Q: Mixed-ability grouping requires more lesson preparation and support for slower learners. What kinds of collaboration can teachers at your school undertake to develop and share strategies?
- Q: What online education opportunities are available as an alternative for providing specialized or advanced course work for students?

Access to heterogeneous groups to the fullest extent possible

Proceed to Access

Professional Learning Activities Index

Footnotes

[1]Content Standards, California Department of Education.
[2] Instructional Materials FAQ, Question 10, California Department of Education. [3] Instructional Materials FAQ, Question 11, California Department of Education.

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Seven

Access that Promotes Success in the Middle Grades

Access: Ideas and examples for the Recommendation

These resources are intended to illustrate how other schools have implemented this recommendation and to provide ideas that may be applicable to your unique situation.

Access to Instructional Materials: Canyon Middle School | Castro Valley | Castro Valley Unified School District | Alameda County. Canyon Middle School uses an individual handheld response system to facilitate the interaction of all students—even those who lack confidence to participate in regular class discussions.

In the Spotlight: Canyon Middle School

Universal Access for Special Education Students: Rincon Middle School | Escondido | Escondido Union Elementary School District | San Diego County. Now in its seventh year of inclusion of special education, Rincon is a CalSTAT (Technical Assistance and Training) Leadership site.

In the Spotlight: Rincon Middle School

Access to High Teacher Quality: Holtville Middle School | Holtville | Holtville Unified School District | Imperial County. To provide access to a teacher qualified to teach advanced mathematics classes, this high-poverty school near the California-Mexico border employed a teacher who lives in Arizona to teach students via fiber optics, a Viacom camera, and a document camera.

In the Spotlight: Holtville Middle School

Access to Equal Education via Heterogeneous Grouping: McKinleyville Middle School | McKinleyville | McKinleyville Union Elementary School District | Humboldt County. The school schedules a three-period core class in which two periods focus on English-language arts and one period focuses on history/social studies. Resource teachers team with English-language arts and social studies teachers to support special education students in heterogeneous classes.

In the Spotlight: McKinleyville Middle School

Proceed to Adapt

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top

Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Professional Learning Activities

Recommendation Seven

Access that Promotes Success in the Middle Grades
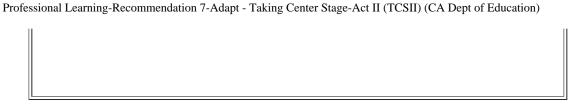
Adapt: Make it Your Own

Now that you have become familiar with Recommendation 7 —Access, assessed your status to determine if improvement is needed, and reviewed some successful program ideas for strengthening transitions, what would benefit your school?

In brainstorming ideas and solutions, you might consider:

- Defining and answering questions included in the Self-Assessment Guide as a first step
- The time frame needed for the implementation of selected ideas
- The need for reallocation or addition of necessary resources
- Using SMART* goals when creating your action plan
- Evaluation processes to review, assess, and modify plans as part of a continuous improvement cycle

Ideas for Implementation

Access to Instructional Materials

Access to Leadership and Recognition Programs

Universal Access for Special Education Students

Access to High Teacher Quality

*SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.

To share your ideas and successes, contact the K-12 Innovation and Improvement Office at tcsii@cde.ca.gov. School improvement examples, anecdotes, and program information are welcomed.

Professional Learning Activities Index

Back to Top