

# MINNESOTA REPORT

*"Leadership for Learning"*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### Your Voice Needed on New Standards, Testing

**W**e are at a critical point in education today. Changes currently being considered and debated at the local and the national level will have a lasting impact on our schools over the next few years. Minnesota ASCD members need to carefully consider how new standards and testing legislation might affect how we help our students learn.

During the past few weeks, Minnesota's new Education Commissioner, Dr. Cheri Yecke, has been conducting hearings on the proposed new state standards. As an organization that is

comprised of professionals who work closely in schools to help students achieve academic success, Minnesota ASCD members have important perspectives to share. I urge all Minnesota ASCD members to check out the new standards at the state education web site: <http://cfl.state.mn.us/>. This is where you can read the proposed standards, find how to send in your comments, and locate the site for the public hearings on these standards.

As professionals who facilitate the implementation of the standards within our school districts and classrooms, we need to share our knowledge

and expertise with those who are creating these standards. As educators, we are the experts in our subject areas,

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Check out the new standards at the state education web site: <http://cfl.state.mn.us/>.

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and we are well versed in what is developmentally appropriate for students and in best practices regarding teaching and learning. Your voice is needed in the discussion of what Minnesota students should be expected to know as they progress through our schools.

The manner in which students will be held accountable for their learning is also an issue. When reviewing the standards, be sure to consider how student work toward these standards might be measured in an appropriate manner for students in your classroom or at a particular grade level. The testing of any new standards may be the most difficult aspect of any proposal. We need to share our understanding of the testing and evaluation formats that will clearly communicate how much our students are learning.

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*Developing leadership among educational decision makers to improve curriculum and instruction for Minnesota students.*

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*President Debra Pitton, left, presents the Minnesota ASCD Leadership Award to Maxine Strege, immediate past-president of Minnesota ASCD, at the winter conference.*

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*"Leadership for Learning"*

**Editor's Comments****2003-2004 Conferences Continue Instructional Theme**

When Minnesota ASCD has provided conferences in the past several years, we have tried to focus on themes. For several conferences in a row, we worked on assessment. More recently, our efforts were in the area of brain research and its practical implementation in the classroom. The most recent conference focused on student diversity and differentiating instruction to meet students' many needs. In February, Carol Ann Tomlinson presented many good ideas for teachers. The next two conferences in 2003-2004 will continue that instructional theme: the first attends to students' reading styles and the second deals with additional ways to provide diverse learning activities that extend and strengthen students' learning.



*Carol Ann Tomlinson, pictured during her presentation at our February conference, presented many good ideas for teachers. Our next two conferences will also feature aspects of differentiated instruction.*

**How to produce high reading gains**

On September 23, Resource Training & Solutions and Minnesota ASCD will present Dr. Marie Carbo, whose conference is titled, *Staff Development to Produce High Reading Gains*. Carbo is an originator of the Reading Styles Program and founder and Executive Director of the National Reading Styles Institute. You'll find a short piece about Dr. Carbo and her work on these pages.

**The need for a diversity of learning experiences**

Also within the pages of this *Minnesota Report* you will find an article by the next speaker. Dr. Vera J. Blake discusses the reasons that we have to provide a diversity of learning experiences for the children we teach. They bring many skills and abilities to the classroom and their diversity increases the need to meet their needs. Blake is a retired teacher and administrator of secondary students. In February, she will be in Minnesota to speak to us in much more practical detail about what she says here in her overview. We hope you can attend her presentation.

**Comments on the contents of this issue**

President Deb Pitton has contributed her thoughts about the necessity for

Minnesota ASCD members' active presence in the transition from the Profiles of Learning to the new graduation standards. There is reference in her article as to how to find the drafted graduation standards and the State Department's hearings schedule, so that you can give the new commissioner, Cheryl Yecke, your opinions about how to make the new standards the best they can be. Pitton then points out our parent organization's position statements. ASCD's position statements were drafted and confirmed at the recent ASCD conference in March, so will become a part of the international organization's concentrated efforts.

Ken Simon and RoAnne Elliott have penned an article that begins a series reacting to graduation standards. Minnesota's political winds are always blowing, and standards will change. There are important principles to which we can adhere that are fundamental to excellence in learning and which transcend political fluctuations.

You will also find out about the surveys that we have been handing out to participants at our conferences and curriculum expos. They were designed to provide the Board with direction in programming and services that will make membership worthwhile and that will set the tone of our themes for now and the future. Those of you who took the time to fill them out are very much appreciated: our thanks for giving us such invaluable information.

**MINNESOTA REPORT**

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*Designed and produced by Gloria Gritz*

# ASCD Position Statements

Drafted and confirmed at the ASCD conference in March, these statements represent a focus of the international organization's concentrated efforts.

## Low-Performing Schools

Every student has the right to attend a high-performing school. School performance and resulting "high" or "low" designations must be determined by multiple indicators that extend beyond the use of tests. Identification and intervention strategies should focus on improving, not penalizing, schools. Interventions in "low-performing" schools should include coherent strategies that include understanding each school's unique context, strengths, and needs; ongoing professional development for staff; research-based practices; parent, student and community involvement; and the necessary financial resources to support school transformations from low-performing to high-performing.

Clear expectations and appropriate support should accompany accountability policies that identify and label schools as low-performing. Before the implementation of rewards, sanctions, penalties or similar accountability policies, schools need adequate support for:

- Professional development that ensures the capacity of teachers to teach all children well
- Highly qualified teachers in every classroom
- Data-driven and research-based improvement efforts that focus on raising student achievement
- Assessment systems that are fair, balanced and grounded in pedagogy that provides for special needs, high-poverty, and language-minority students. Such systems should use multiple indicators that inform fair and just educational decisions on behalf of students. This includes taking into account the diversity of students and the need for timely data and formative assessment practices.

## Teacher Quality Amid Educator Shortages

Every child has the right to be taught by quality, fully licensed, certified teachers. To maintain quality in the wake of teacher and educator shortages, pathways into the education professions must prepare future teachers with the knowledge and tools for successful practice in teaching disciplines. Prospective educators must demonstrate competency, including the ability to implement innovations in teaching and learning and an understanding of the role of schools in a democratic society.

Preservice and inservice education must provide teachers, support staff, and administrators with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the needs of all students including special-needs students, language-minority students, and students living in poverty. To this end, both preservice and practicing educators need:

- Professional development that addresses the needs of all

learners and that is job-embedded, ongoing, reflective, aligned to state standards and expectations, research-based and results-driven, and uses multiple assessments and indicators to assess educator performance

- The necessary resources of time and money to sustain professional growth, achievement and recognition
- The establishment of clear and rigorous standards for ongoing professional performance with strong linkages among primary, secondary and higher education.



## President's Corner *(continued from page 1)*

At the national level, ASCD members ratified several position statements at the recent convention in San Francisco. Representatives from every state approved these positions, and Minnesota ASCD members may find the language helpful as we communicate with parents, community members and legislators regarding standards and testing issues. The position statements are listed on this page.

Whatever your role in our schools, please consider how your voice can be shared in this ongoing discussion about student learning. Those individuals who are making the decisions need to hear from every Minnesota ASCD member so that our professional opinions are heard and factored into the decision-making process. Please join your colleagues and be a part of the process.

—*Deb Pitton, President, Minnesota ASCD*



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# Differentiated Instruction: Next Steps

by Stan Hooper

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Our title is also that of Carol Ann Tomlinson's talk at our February 7 conference. Participants received Tomlinson's book, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms: 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, and a 76-page packet chock full of strategies for teachers from kindergarten to senior high to take back to their classrooms. Those were the tangible things. Tomlinson also spent several hours talking about differentiation and about implementation of many of the strategies in her packet. She began by acknowledging that across the country there is some understanding of the concept of differentiated instruction, and that among teachers it is stronger than in the general public, and it is growing. This article is derived from my own notes taken at the conference. I apologize in advance because they're incomplete: sometimes I was involved in other activities that took me away from note-taking. Others who would like to add concepts and information that I missed are welcome to do so – we'll happily and thankfully put your letters in the Fall *Minnesota Report*.

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**D**ifferentiation is what we put into the nature of the curriculum, of standards and in assessment/grading. It is the essence-definition, Tomlinson asserted. She recommended a book, *Through the Cracks*, by Carolyn Sollman. It is the story of how some children start falling through the cracks their very first day of school. These children are “lovely” because they're non-interventionists. Many are so quiet and withdrawn that they don't even communicate with other children who have also fallen through the cracks.

There's also a dichotomy between what we have historically considered good teaching and what encourages falling through the cracks: teachers who teach like a house on fire, not stopping for anything. Now, we're taking another look at that approach and examining how it can't meet every student's needs. Classrooms where students don't fall through the cracks are dynamic, with lots to do to engage students' minds and encourage interaction. “The worst thing we've done,” said Howard Gardner, “is to treat children as variations of the same basic child.”

That which is moderately challenging is different for each child. Moderately challenging is the instructional mode. The only thing that transcends it is children's high interest in the topic – they become totally focused and ignore the difficulty.



*Participants at the Tomlinson conference learned multiple ways to apply differentiated instruction in classrooms.*

Differentiation comes in many forms. The psychology of learning doesn't stop when you're 15 or 18 or 23. At every age, you still learn the same way. Schools and teachers need to adapt to the kids, not expect them to adapt to the school. We should check out Myra Levine's work on how the child's brain is wired. Dr. Levine is an MD.

Confucius knew about differentiation. He said that children differ in their gifts and talents. To teach them, we have to start where they are. So, how does one get there? Tomlinson offered a list of foundations derived from research which make a difference for students:

- Students engage most and achieve best when the work is at the right level and interest.
- Staff development works for teachers who differentiate as a result of that training.
- Effective teachers use a variety of strategies.
- Monitoring and assessment are key, especially when management of activities follows.
- Effective teachers know their students by their individual differences: achievement, abilities, learning styles, and needs (teachers who “touch” kids to do their best).
- The most effective teachers are able to bring higher achievement to all levels of children.

Differentiation is a way of thinking about teaching and learning, not a selective set of strategies to be used often. [A corollary: rather than just a set of screwdrivers from which to choose, it's a way of thinking about accomplishing learning through a much wider variety of tools of many kinds and from many fields. –Ed] “Artful teaching is a love triangle: teacher, students, content.”

**Strategies from the packet include these suggestions:**

- (1) set up an “agenda” for each student, based on what needs to be done. Each student has a personal agenda, with a list of tasks and special instructions for each task; the teacher initials a line to identify successful completion. It's one way to get into thinking differentially. Later, the teacher may

modify or drop the detail once differential thinking becomes more habitual.

- (2) prepare homework coupons in elementary grades that have a place for the student's name and instructions for parents. The coupons are written in a hierarchy of 4-to-8 tasks. A student gets one that fits the student's capabilities. Two examples:
- Please ask your child to tell you the story in the book he or she brought home today by looking at the pictures;
  - and second,
  - Ask your child to read with expression as if he or she were reading to entertain someone;
  - Ask your child to give you several reasons why he or she likes (or dislikes) the book;
  - Have your child tell you what feelings the character in the book has. Ask for evidence from the book.
- Later, students can contribute to building their own coupons.
- (3) Establish contracts for each student. Each has the same unit title but the subtopics have different levels of sophistication. For example, in poetry some of the subtopics could be headed "Create a Rhyming Wheel," "Write an Acrostic Poem," and so on.
- For the rhyming wheel, one of the contracts might say, "Use your spelling lists as a way to get started," and the other, "Use your spelling lists and the dictionary as a way to get started."
  - For the acrostic poem, one of the contracts might say, "Be sure it includes alliteration," and the other, "Be sure it includes alliteration and onomatopoeia."

The packet also showed more sophisticated versions of this strategy that had better learning purposes, used by a teacher who'd eventually become more adept at differentiated contracts, and more appropriate to secondary schools.

- (4) Using Sternberg's three intelligences (analytical, practical, and creative), create three learning activities at different levels. Each student gets a sheet of projects that use all three intelligences. Later, a teacher might use the more detailed list of 8 or 9 intelligences set up by Gardner as a way of helping students expand their perspectives. (Tomlinson smiled and counted "8-1/2.") Sternberg's three are well-researched and are clearly learner-focused.

#### **Tomlinson provided a framework of definitions.**

Differentiation is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that has as its goal maximizing individual growth by addressing student readiness, interest and learning profiles. Differentiation must be an extension of and not a replacement for high-quality curriculum. In other words, by differentiating we are not to be "dumbing down" the curriculum.

"Should our chief criterion for the kids be that with this activity, the kids will really love it?" We need to know what they will learn and to know that it is meaningful, and "meaningful" goes beyond the immediacy of a "love it"

emotion into the emotions connected with success. Engagement and true understanding are what equate to success.

When thinking of Sternberg's perspective, most teachers are analytical, some are practical, and nearly as many are creative. Most students who are not familiar with the analytical approach aren't very familiar with the school experience. (Tomlinson ran a comparative activity test to show how many participants were analytical, practical and creative. The greatest number preferred the analytical story, and almost an equal – but smaller – number in the audience preferred the practical and creative stories.)

#### **Standards are the ingredients of lessons.**

If you give students the standards alone, and say this is dinner, you get people eating raw ingredients. To cook dinner, you prepare ingredients in any number of ways and serve them. The students eat a nourishing and interesting meal. Curriculum with standards is not all there is. You have to cook the ingredients, and differentiation is like cooking the ingredients. In Virginia, where Tomlinson resides, she said, "I think I've mentioned that our standards left a great deal to be desired [in their original form]." After much revision, Virginia apparently now has standards that are more appropriate. [One thought about that comment is that our present educational commissioner, according to the news media, seems to be going through much of what she did when in Virginia and before working at the nation's capital. This concept of continued standards refinement is apparently not a new process for our Minnesota commissioner. —Ed.]

#### **Assessment is pulse-taking from the beginning of the unit to the end.**

Grading is, "OK, now we're done with it all, so I'm going to grade you on where you have gotten to: where you are today." Pre-assessments yield matrixes of what students need to study, who's knowledgeable already, who's not, and to what degree. They can also be an opportunity to find out about learning styles, based on what a teacher can accommodate. The longer you do it, the more you can accommodate. Again, Tomlinson referred to some information in the packet: a simple pre-

*continued on page 10*

*These faces at the Tomlinson conference reflect the intense interest participants had in learning more about differentiated instruction.*



# Closing the Achievement Gap

By Dr. Vera J. Blake

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On February 6, 2004, Dr. Blake will be a presenter at the Minnesota ASCD winter conference. The title of her talk will be "Teaching Strategies to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners." Below, she gives us a short preview of her concepts about teaching for all the diverse talents children bring to the classroom.

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**I**t is important to efficiently and effectively use a wide repertoire of strategies with our diverse learners. We have to become more adept at infusing literacy strategies in our lessons to increase those skills. Developing an understanding, awareness and expertise in the use of more "small group activities" such as jigsaw, KWL, Think-Pair-Share, PVE, Snowballing, etc., are not options but expectations for every teacher. These and many other strategies develop skills that enhance learning but are not content specific, and they can help minimize and eliminate barriers to student success. Learning more about differentiating the curriculum to provide maximum opportunities for each student to learn, grow and succeed is necessary for each educator. Planning and implementing lessons that are matched to children's learning profiles, interests, and readiness is a positive response to the changes that evolve in classrooms as a result of the changing demographics and higher expectations of achievement from our stakeholders.

To do this most effectively, we can learn much from Carol Ann Tomlinson's research which recommends that teachers concentrate on two classroom factors, "the nature of the student and the essential meaning of the curriculum." We also benefit from including Bob Marzano's work which emphasizes the use of research-based strategies to improve and increase student achievement.

Supporting diverse learners includes developing greater understanding, appreciation and acceptance of the unique attributes of each student. We need to recognize that these

attributes can be used to enrich school experiences and benefit the entire learning community – valuing them will have a positive impact in the classroom, in the school, and in the community. We will explore some ways to create, support and sustain strong learning cultures in classrooms.

Prior to the current national emphasis of NCLB, educators across America worked very hard to "Leave No Child Behind." We didn't have a slogan or a widely recognized phrase that acknowledged our efforts. We were too busy during our day-to-day focus to pause, reflect, and articulate our endeavors in this manner. Today, it is exciting, heartwarming and encouraging to have the entire nation expressing support for what we are dedicated to doing.

Now that our nation faces the crisis of war, providing an exemplary education for every child is more important than ever for our present and most especially for our future. Maintaining and strengthening our learning communities are foundations that are essential to our nation's security and continued progress. Ensuring that all educators are engaged in seeking, learning and implementing best practices and strategies is more critical than ever in the coming years. We can only hope that the support will eventually include the funding that is essential to our success. An investment in public education is an investment in the future of the United States.

Dr. Vera J. Blake  
verablake@verablake.com

Dr. Vera J. Blake is a retired principal from Fairfax County, Virginia, where she served 12 years as principal at Holmes Middle School. She is an experienced presenter who works part-time as a consultant to ASCD and to many schools and organizations internationally. Dr. Blake is a contributing author to *Transforming Ourselves, Transforming Schools* and was the 1999-2000 Fairfax County Principal of the Year and the 2000 Virginia Middle School Principal of the Year. She has extensive experience as an educator in a variety of roles, from classroom teacher in business education to middle school administrator, adjunct professor, and more.





## Doing It All: Getting Big Gains and Nurturing Lifelong Readers – Grades K -12

Minnesota ASCD and Resource Training & Solutions

### Fall Conference

September 23, 2003

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

St. Cloud Civic Center

(10 Fourth Avenue South, St. Cloud, MN)

**T**he Fall Minnesota ASCD/Resource Training & Solutions conference on September 23 will feature Dr. Marie Carbo, the nationally known, award-winning researcher who originated the concept of “Reading Styles.” Dr. Carbo is the founder and executive director of the National Reading Styles Institute and has created a nationwide network of schools that exemplify the power of her work to change children’s lives.

In this time of standards, tests and accountability, we still want our children to become competent lifelong readers. To do this, they must learn to read well, enjoy reading, and read a lot. At the same time, we demand that students demonstrate

reading competence on an ever-growing array of tests.

Only one-third of fourth graders read at or above grade level, but test-driven reading instruction has swung the pendulum back to an over-emphasis on discrete skills and boring worksheets.

Dr. Carbo’s session provides critical core knowledge to dramatically increase students’ reading motivation and achievement. Highlights include teaching with commitment and passion; applying brain research to the teaching of reading; capitalizing on students’ strengths and interests; designing research-based, exciting, nurturing, and balanced reading programs; and key strategies for big results.

In her latest book, *What Every Principal Should Know About Teaching Reading*, Carbo explains the keys to designing successful reading programs with all types of learners. Attendees at the conference will receive this book along with some preview information about Carbo’s next book, *What Every Teacher Should Know About Teaching Reading*.

Dr. Carbo has keynoted many national conferences as well as the National Reading Styles Conference. She serves nationally and internationally as a consultant for ASCD, Phi Delta Kappa, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), state education departments, universities, school districts and corporations.

The September 23 conference is titled “Staff Development to Produce High Reading Gains.” It will be held at the Civic Center in St. Cloud from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. (check-in that morning begins at 8:30 a.m.)

For conference information and registration, contact Sandra Cordie, Resource Training & Solutions, at [scordie@resourcetraining.com](mailto:scordie@resourcetraining.com). You can register online at [www.resourcetraining.com](http://www.resourcetraining.com) by clicking on the “Register for Workshops” button on the site’s home page and entering “6073” in the course code box.

**Fee: \$140 by June 30**  
**\$160 after June 30**  
**\$180 after Sept. 12**  
**\$70 students/retirees**

## The Surveys Are In: Here's What You Said

What are the two most important and least important things in this newsletter, *Minnesota Report*? This and many more pieces of information were handed over to the Minnesota ASCD Board of Directors in two sets of surveys that were distributed at conferences and completed by 153 attendees. Most of the results are presented in this article. The Board of Directors is using the surveys as one of the data sets that help them set goals and strategies for the next years and provide members with useful services and features that make membership worthwhile.

### Membership Information

The 17 items in the survey ranged from a short member/non-member inquiry to fixed response and open-ended questions. Most of you learned about Minnesota ASCD by receiving membership materials (34%) or getting a membership as part of a registration fee (35%). Roughly a quarter learned about this state affiliate through a colleague's recommendation.

Among members, 24% joined primarily because they wanted to become a part of a community of educators with similar interests. A slightly smaller number (19%) felt that membership was good professionally. If conferences matched topics that they liked best, they'd be more likely to join, said the 44% who responded to the question, and 36% would be willing to help Minnesota ASCD in sharing professional experience opportunities.

More than half had never attended a previous Minnesota ASCD conference; nearly 40% of those respondents hadn't known a conference was available, which speaks to our need to disseminate information more comprehensively. Nearly half of you, however, chose not to answer this question.

### Conference Preferences

There is a limit to how far you'll go for a conference. Ninety-one percent won't go more than 100 miles, and 53% of that group won't go more than 50 miles. Eighteen percent of you are more willing to go beyond 100 miles to a conference. That would suggest that regional conferences are still most important, and our venues in the Twin Cities and St. Cloud are helping in that regard. The Board has also talked about the feasibility of other venues, along with their costs and capacity to provide additional conferences.

Without using sophisticated ranking mathematics, it appears that your favorite conference day is Friday and the least appreciated is Saturday. Tuesdays, interestingly enough, are ranked fourth (out of 6), and that's often when we have the St. Cloud conferences. Hmm....

Conference topics was an open-ended question. Assessment was mentioned most frequently, but it wasn't a big break from the next most popular topics, which included differentiated instruction, brain research, performance assessment, and a few comments about curriculum development and its analysis-

evaluation. Many other topics were listed singly. Assessment also incorporated the issues of the federal NCLB Law (No Child Left Behind). With Grant Wiggins a few years ago and W. James Popham last fall, it looks like we've helped you a bit, but the comments tell us you can stand more about assessment. Differentiated instruction is getting a total of three conferences: Carol Ann Tomlinson was just here, Marie Carbo is coming next fall, and Vera J. Blake will be here next February. We also had three brain-based presenters a few years ago; perhaps it's time to consider whether to resurrect the topic in the future.

### The Need for Political Action

In the question about political action, in which more than one answer was acceptable, nearly three out of four said that the most important thing Minnesota ASCD could do is provide accurate information about educational issues to our politicians. Nearly three out of five said that we should lobby legislators for additional funding. Close to that was convening legislative forums about educational issues for our lawmakers. Next came a strong interest in position papers from Minnesota ASCD. Very few (7%) felt that the organization should stay out of politics.

### On Technology and Services

You believe that technology can help you get information from Minnesota ASCD while tight budgets reign. Several suggested technology such as video conferencing, a website learning community, videotapes, e-mail notices, electronic bulletin boards, and more. You also suggested shorter trips with more regional conferences at other venues, area workshops, school-site activities, seminar- or forum-like opportunities, and more. You provided a nice, long list in this area, in fact.

Another long list came from the last two questions and neither presented a trend because of the diversity of ideas. Two of you commented that not much is known about the organization, others mentioned that the organization has the potential to become extremely viable in education, and many thanked Minnesota ASCD for one or another of its services.

What are the two most useful or interesting things that should be in this newsletter? First, curriculum design and development; second, best practices in teaching, curriculum and leadership. The least important were award notifications and new member listings. A significant number made no response, but of those who did opine, 87% said the newsletter is "good" or "excellent." Similarly, half of those who responded said that they "always" read the newsletter and 35% said "sometimes."

The board has and will continue to analyze these responses. Future surveys may ask for additional information, and there will be a recommendation to make them much shorter next time: that was one of the comments most often seen. The board wants everyone to know that they appreciate your responses to the questionnaire: they are making a real difference in the planning of activities for your benefit.

## Let's Show What We Know

By RoAnne Elliott and Ken Simon<sup>1</sup>

Implementation of the Profile of Learning has been the classic “messy problem,” rife with complexity and multiple right answers. Like any messy problem, this one has caused discomfort and elicited strong reactions from those affected by it. We can't process truly messy problems in comfort and complacency because they challenge us to move beyond what we already feel sure about. They make us think and cause us to stretch and grow in ways simple problems cannot. That is precisely why educators value them so highly.

The Profile of Learning sparked a remarkable surge of professional learning, questioning, and dialogue about how best to ensure achievement for all students. The key questions have been ...

- What are the learning outcomes we envision?
- In what ways can progress toward those outcomes be observed?
- What will we do to increase the likelihood of observing those outcomes for every student?

Simple answers to such important questions fall short. Profile implementation has taught us to expect complexity, and to focus on how to embrace and address it, rather than how to prevent or escape it. Thus, in response to the demands of the Profile, teachers have learned about, adopted, and refined research-based instructional strategies. Teachers have used the standards to focus student work and their own professional development. The Profile of Learning has served as a catalyst for needed improvement in some places, and has affirmed and supported progress already underway in others. It makes sense, then, that in the minds of many educators, improvement efforts and the Profile of Learning are one and the same. This would not be a bad thing except that the Profile is not permanent.

In March, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education proposed a different set of standards. It is too early to say for sure what kind of standards will eventually emerge from the political process, but many educators are already wondering if a repeal of the letter of the Profile will mean a repeal of the spirit of innovation that it engendered. We had better make sure that does not happen – we cannot move

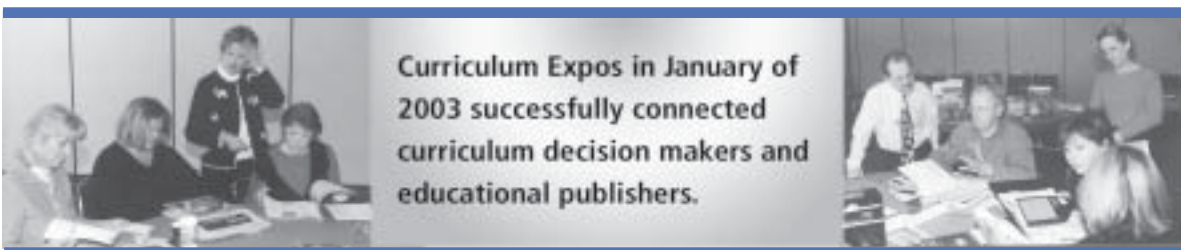
backward. Thanks to all the work we have done, we have what it takes to continue moving forward to the best possible education for every child.

Just as we expect students to apply their learning to solve problems, make decisions, and create new things, educators will need to apply what we have learned over the past several years. In true Profile of Learning style we will have to “show what we know” and demonstrate our grasp of complex concepts of teaching and learning. We have to believe that it is within our power to deliver on the promise of an enabling education for all students, regardless of the kind of standards state politics give us.

As our students become competent and confident in their skills, we ask them to demonstrate them in unfamiliar situations. We need to ask the same of ourselves. Our knowledge and skill with the following concepts can be clearly evident in our daily work with students and colleagues.

- All students can learn when engaged in the learning process. Teachers engage students through the quality of their relationships with them, through flexibility with curriculum, and through classroom work designed to uncover and address learning needs, strengths, and interests.
- All students need to feel the expectation to develop and apply skill with reasoning processes. Information will be more useful and memorable to students who do things like analyze it, ask questions about it, create personal expressions about it, and model it in various ways.
- The primary purpose of on-going classroom assessment is to increase students' learning potential.
- Student learning is linked to teachers learning about students, about content, about teaching and about learning itself. Educators are learners.
- Schools, teachers and students succeed within a larger system that helps create their success through concrete, proactive, and reliable support.
- State standards are important, but kids rely on teachers, not standards, for support in surmounting challenges and developing their gifts.

<sup>1</sup>RoAnne Elliott is a Curriculum Coordinator at Mounds View Schools and Ken Simon has a double assignment of Middle Grades Platform Implementation Coordinator at the district level and of Middle Grades Resource Coordinator at Benjamin Banneker Middle School. They have indicated they will continue this theme in future issues of *Minnesota Report*.



## Differentiated Instruction: Next Steps

*continued from page 5*

assessment sheet covering “vertebrates,” directing the students to “show what you know about vertebrates. Write as much as you can.” The sheet was divided into quarters, labeled “Definition,” “Information,” “Examples” and “Non-examples.” Another assessment is to have students choose between one of two items and write. Task “A” is for students who know the problem cold; Task “B” is for students who have an understanding of the problem at the practical level.

- Write a step-by-step set of directions, including diagrams and computations, to show someone who has been absent how to do the kind of problem we’ve worked on this week.
- Write a set of directions for someone who is going to solve a problem in their life by using the kind of math problem we’ve studied this week. Explain the problem first. Be sure the directions address the problem as well as the computations.

### In post-assessment you are still in the teaching mode.

It isn’t time for final grades, but it is a near-final check. An item highlighted from the packet was a matrix of two rows each with four sets of directions. The rows were labeled “Create One” and “Pick a Way to Explain.” Columns in the first row directed students to use the computer, paint, construct a model, or create a book or puppet show. The second row’s columns directed students to make labels and explain, write sentences that identify each part of their creation, write a story explaining, or write a poem explaining. Students were to pick one item from the “create” row and another from the “explain” row and use them together.

### Grading departs from assessment.

We learn best when effort and success are in balance. Effort has to be perceived as “hard work which brings results.” Bright kids who don’t work hard represent one imbalance. The kid who tries hard without much success is another imbalance. Our grading system rewards the former for doing nothing and belittles the latter for very hard work. We know that – it’s simply that, and nothing more: it’s the way it is.

Every student should get a task that is 10-15% too hard, regardless of skill level or ability. Then, as teachers, we need to

help them get there and be successful. Common parent response: “What do you mean you’re giving my child something that’s harder to do than the other kids get?” Tomlinson suggests the following retort: “I’m giving everyone the same thing – something that’s 10% more than what they already know.” That’s differentiation, too.

*Note-taking in various forms was evident at the Tomlinson conference.*



The annual election for Minnesota ASCD officers was recently held by mail. Each year, members vote for a President-Elect, and in alternate years either Secretary or Treasurer. This year was Treasurer year. Ballots were mailed to members in late March, and the deadline for voting was April 15, a well-known American deadline day. Voting can be done by mail or by FAX. If you get this issue before April 15 and haven’t already voted, please do!

There are two unopposed candidates. Dr. Pamela Paulson is running for President-Elect and Dr. Douglas Warring is running for Treasurer. Paulson is the Director of the Research, Assessment and Curriculum Center (RACC) at the Perpich Center for Arts Education. She helped found the Perpich Center, legislatively created in 1985. Other positions she has held there include Director of the Center’s High School Dance and Music programs and Director of Resource Programs (since renamed the Professional Development Institute). One of her major achievements was the establishment of a statewide Arts Best Practice Network which engages educators and artists in the research and development of effective instructional practices. She is president of the National Dance Education Organization and has served on the INTASC committee as dance representative for the arts. She was Minnesota Dance Educator of the Year in 1993, received a Governor’s Commendation in 1998, and received the “Sally” award for leadership in Arts Education from US Bank and the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. She received the Minnesota ASCD Staff Development Award in 2000.

Doug Warring, Treasurer candidate, is a professor in the School of Education at St. Thomas University. His PhD is in Educational and Social Psychology. He received his MA in Education and his BA in Psychology and Sociology. Previously he served as Program Chair, Director of Student Teaching and Associate Dean of Outreach at the University. Prior to being at St. Thomas, he taught at the high school and community college levels and at several other colleges and universities. His service for Minnesota ASCD on the board of directors dates to 1988. He also serves on the Board of Examiners for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, is a past President of the Minnesota Association of Teacher Educators and former member of the Board of Directors for the Association of Teacher Educators.

The position of Treasurer has a two-year term, from June of 2003 to May 31 of 2005. The President-Elect position is a three-year position with title changes each year. The President-Elect position becomes President in the second year and Immediate Past President in the following year. In addition, the President and President-Elect serve as Minnesota ASCD representatives to the ASCD Leadership Council at the national level.



## Membership Form

Name (first, last, middle initial): \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

School Affiliation (*please include ISD# whenever possible*):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (*circle one*): Work Home  
\_\_\_\_\_

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( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Position (check one):**

- |   |  |
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**I would like more information about:**

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New Member    Renewal

Are you currently a member of our parent organization, International ASCD?

yes    no

**Annual Membership Dues:**

\$35.00 Active   \$5.00 student/retired

If you chose student or retired, please enter the name of your school or former employer: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please mail complete application with a check payable to Minnesota ASCD to:**  
Lori Sandvig  
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### Membership form for you and your colleagues

Pass the form on this page to your friends, or make copies and distribute them among colleagues who can benefit from membership in Minnesota ASCD. The \$35 for dues provides basic funding for organizing several conferences and preparing follow-up materials, publishing newsletters, organizing Curriculum Expos, and other services for Minnesota educators.

One key feature of a membership in Minnesota ASCD is the unique opportunity it provides to educators in all career tracks to network with each other, share important ideas and information, and gain insights into the latest developments in educational initiatives designed for curriculum and instruction.

Thanks for your own membership, and many thanks for encouraging others to join, too!

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Goodwin, Wanda  
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## Welcome New Members

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