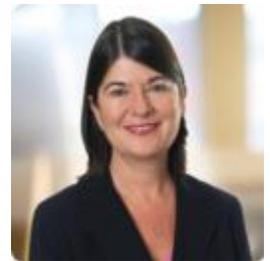


Partner NEWSLETTER

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 @drvickip

In my [last newsletter](#), I highlighted a number of video lessons and instructional resources developed by our partners to help teachers with the instructional shifts in the Common Core State Standards. Many of you asked us to keep those resources coming, so here are three additional things you may find helpful: The revised www.corestandards.org website includes a section for parents, as well as resources for educators. The [Fordham Institute](#) has produced a good report about how some districts are implementing the standards. And the foundation has developed some additional information about the [Common Core](#), which you should feel free to share.



As you all know, the Common Core is under attack in many communities, and misinformation threatens the progress we've seen thus far. In the weeks and months ahead there will be many challenges and facts will be the most effective tool in continuing to move this work forward. We also need to elevate the voices of teachers about what they need to help implement the standards in classrooms so their students succeed.

Last week, Bill Gates gave a [speech](#) at the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' Teaching & Learning conference to some 2,000 teachers about why we need the Common Core State Standards, what should be done to help teachers master them, and how they provide a platform for innovation. You can read his [blog](#) about the speech, including a video from teachers talking about the impact the standards are having in their classrooms, or read the [Washington Post's](#) coverage of the event.

Many of you have also seen my two blogs about the standards. The first can be found [here](#), and the second [here](#). I'm sharing them again because we all need to be working toward a common sense approach to accountability as the new standards and assessments are implemented around the country.

[A new survey](#) by Hart Research Associates and the Winston Group shows the majority of teachers approve their state's adoption of the standards (62%) and how their district is implementing them (66%). But similar to other surveys, teachers want more time, input, and resources to bring the standards to life in their classrooms.

That's why we're committed to supporting these changes with teachers' input and guidance. You can join the conversation on social media using the following hashtags: **#CommonCore**; **#CCSS**; and **#SupportTheCore**.

ECET2 – By Teachers, For Teachers

Since 2008, when the foundation launched our College Ready Strategy, we have committed to three things:

- ✓ We support the professionalism of teachers and will do everything we can to provide teachers with the support they need to do their work, especially given that teachers are asking for help on implementation of the Common Core.
- ✓ We listen to teachers and help elevate their voices to shape our work and that of our partners in the field. This includes the foundation's Teacher Advisory Group, which provides feedback on our strategy; support for teacher surveys, such as Scholastic's *Primary Sources*; and our work with teachers to develop the Literacy and Mathematics Design Collaborative tools.
- ✓ We collaborate with teachers unions where we can and disagree respectfully when we need to do so.

But I realize some of you might know less about one of our efforts, the teacher-led Elevating and Celebrating Effective Teachers and Teaching conferences, or ECET2.

The ECET2 meetings are designed to connect teachers with each other to share promising practices, engage in joint problem solving, and create communities of support that will last well beyond the events. As I wrote in a recent blog on Impatient Optimists, the energy and "can do" attitude teachers bring as ECET2 leaders, facilitators, and participants is palpable. You can see what teachers themselves are saying on Twitter ([#ECET2](#)).

The [2014 ECET2 convening](#) , held in February, focused on two interconnected themes: leadership and collaboration. While there were too many teacher-led workshops to detail each one in this newsletter, here's a glimpse of what participants experienced:

- Workshops such as *The Cage Busting Teacher* and *Breaking Free of the Faculty Lounge Walls* engaged [teachers](#) in strategies for pitching their ideas to local, state, and national policymakers as well as approaches for using social media to share their expertise and experience publicly.
- Other workshops focused on leading teacher collaboration around instruction, including using videos of classroom practices like the ones you can find on the [Teaching Channel](#) and on [ATLAS](#), an online case library of National Board Certified Teachers.
- Teachers also participated in sessions on how to move from classroom teacher to teacher leader without leaving the classroom permanently. [Hope Street Group Teacher Fellows](#) shared ways to take advantage of leadership opportunities; [Teach Plus Turnaround Teacher Team leaders](#) presented on using a Growth Mindset to engage colleagues in school improvement; and the [National Network of State Teachers of the Year](#) shared a road map and protocols to guide teachers in becoming leaders of change in their schools.



During the event, teachers gathered in Colleague Circles around themes they selected, from Common Core implementation, to reaching all learners, to student engagement and instructional strategies. In these teams, ECET2 teachers shared experiences, sought advice from colleagues, and took on joint challenges. The teachers defined how and when they would work together and what topics they wanted to address in the coming year. You can read the description of one Colleague Circle on [Impatient Optimist](#).

We're excited about the possibilities of the Colleague Circles. We started this strategy at the 2013 ECET2 convening and love seeing what teachers are doing as a result. For instance, Louisiana teacher Sheila Banks and her colleagues have completed a [literacy guide](#) to help

teachers implement the CCSS literacy standards. Teachers Lillie Marshall, Clint Smith, Katie Novak, Chris Crouch, and others have joined together to form the [Teacher PR Corps](#) —a colleague circle dedicated to engaging teachers in using social media to promote their own stories of teaching and teachers. And, we are seeing numerous examples of Colleague Circles encouraging and supporting their members to take on instructional leadership roles in their school, district, and state.

ECET2 is transforming from a national convening to a community that builds teacher leadership school by school, teacher to teacher. Teachers also are bringing ECET2 back to their regions. ECET2 regional convenings have been hosted by teachers for their colleagues at home in Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. The Foundation is continuing our support for regional ECET2 convenings going forward, and the 2014 ECET2 participants have been invited to submit an application to host a local event.

To me, ECET2 is the perfect reminder that we should not allow ourselves to get bogged down by the negative, by the challenges that seem overwhelming, when there is actually so much to celebrate and so much good work already being done to build upon.

Learning Globally

We have added a new(ish) member to our team, who will help us connect with global experts, practitioners, and system leaders to learn about best practices around the world that can accelerate the impact of our work. Senior Program Officer Sandra Licon is supporting existing networks like Asia Society's [Global Cities Education Network](#) and the Global Education Leaders' Program ([GELP](#)), which are connecting leading states and districts, such as New York City, Houston, Colorado, and Kentucky, with their counterparts in high-performing systems to help exchange best practices and explore common problems. Looking ahead, we aim to connect all of our partners with access to some of the best global research and experts focused on critical issues, such as designing strong professional learning systems for teachers, creating career lattices that promote teacher leadership, and next generation metrics and assessments.



As an example, we recently made a grant to Ben Jensen, a leading Australian economist and researcher to work with the National Center on Education and the Economy to develop a set of case studies on the world's best professional learning systems. Ben's past research, including his 2012 report: [Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia](#),

has helped inform Australia's overall approach to school reform. In the report, Ben outlines some of the key elements that contributed to the fast paced improvements in Shanghai, Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Here are some of the specific things these high-performing education systems are doing to generate change at scale:

- Provide high quality initial teacher education. In Singapore, students are paid civil servants during their initial teacher education. In Korea, government evaluations have bite and can close down ineffective teacher education courses.
- Provide mentoring that continually improves learning and teaching. In Shanghai, all teachers have mentors, and new teachers have several mentors who observe and give feedback on their classes.
- View teachers as researchers. In Shanghai teachers belong to research groups that continuously develop and evaluate innovative teaching. They cannot rise to advanced teacher status without having a published paper peer reviewed.
- Use classroom observation. Teachers regularly observe each other's classes, providing instant feedback to improve each student's learning.
- Promote effective teachers and give them more responsibility for learning and teaching. Master Teachers are responsible for improving teaching throughout the system.
(Jensen, Ben. 2012. Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia, p.12)

Up Next: Professional Development

In these quarterly newsletters, I try to share information about the work we're supporting at the foundation across the College Ready Strategy. One of the things I'm really excited about is the work underway in redesigning professional development for teachers, and enabling teachers to have job-embedded time for professional learning and collaboration. I look forward to telling you more about those investments and the work of our partners in the next newsletter.

Until then, I look forward to hearing from you about what's going well in Common Core implementation and in other work you're doing on behalf of the nation's students and how we can help.

Onward!

