

Networks toward Improving Instruction

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The Dominant View

- Many current education reform proposals focus on the recruitment, preparation, and evaluation of teachers
- These approaches implicitly assume that effective teaching is an innate ability that some folks have but that most do not

Another View

- The dispositions, knowledge, and skills of effective teaching can be learned, but the educational system is not set up to support such learning
- Low-quality instruction is not a failure of recruitment, preparation, or evaluation but rather a failure to build a system in which instruction can improve systematically and in which the wisdom of practice gets refined

Instructional Quality

- Much of the rhetoric is about *teachers*, but real improvement requires that we focus much more on *teaching*
- Instructional quality, in other words, is better viewed as a characteristic of the system than as a measure of individuals
- And the system is broken

MET2 Draft Recommendation

5. Mathematics teaching, including the mathematical education of teachers, can be greatly strengthened by the growth of a professional community that includes mathematicians as one of many constituencies committed to working together to improve mathematics education.

Creating Community

- Build networks within and across states, including
 - K-12 teachers and district supervisors
 - University faculty in mathematics and mathematics education
 - State education agencies and regional support
 - Attend to both organizations and individuals
 - Administrators, ...
- Goal: Establish collaboration as normal and natural

Examples of Networks

- Focus on Math (Boston)
- TEAM-Math (Alabama)
- Math in the Middle (Nebraska)
- Other Mathematics and Science Partnerships
- Park City Mathematics Institute
- Math for America
- K-3 Impact (Ohio)

- *Few such networks serve as state networks*

Standards Revision in Ohio

- Writing teams of teachers, district leaders, and university faculty
- Advisory committee of representatives from key organizations
- Draft remained internal when Ohio focused toward the Common Core State Standards
- Draft informed Ohio's input to the CCSS
- Committees contributed to Ohio's CCSS feedback
- More group feedback than any other state
- Committees formed natural infrastructure for CCSS rollout

Some Lessons

- Establishing trust and mutual respect is critical work that takes time
- Specific tasks and deliverables can facilitate the process of finding common ground
- In some PD projects, teachers learn little the first year
 - But the project directors learn a lot
- Border crossing is both rare and necessary
 - Law of the Few (Gladwell)