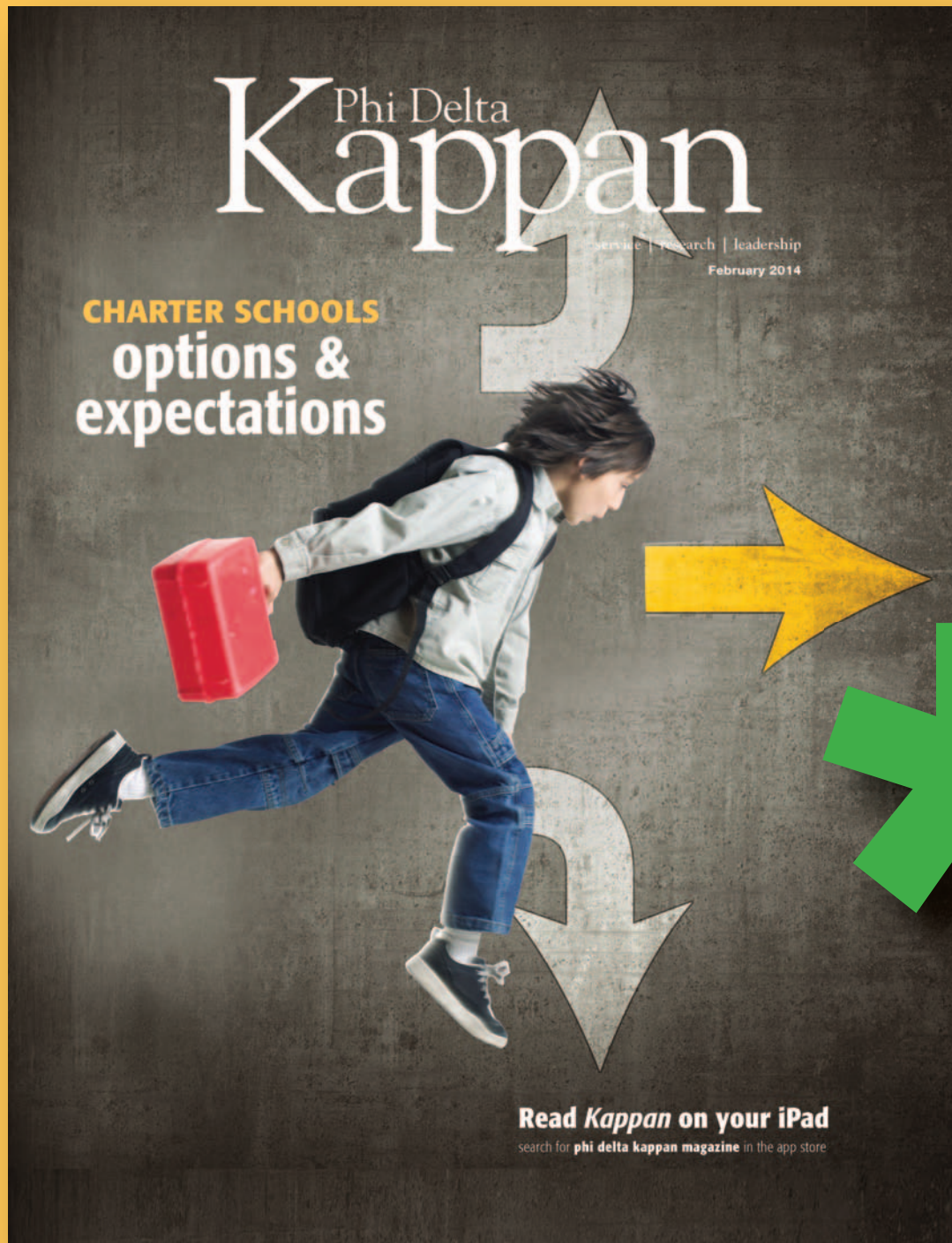


**SUPPLEMENT TO PHI DELTA KAPPAN**



for the  
February 2014  
issue

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**By Lois Brown Easton**

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## Using this guide

This discussion guide is intended to assist *Kappan* readers who want to use articles in staff meetings or university classroom discussions.

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# Charter, private, and public schools work together in Boston

By Diana Lam

*Phi Delta Kappan*, 95 (5), 35-39

## OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Boston teachers in three neighborhood schools — public, parochial, and charter — learn from each other as a result of one of five partnerships that are part of the Boston Compact between Boston Public Schools, the Archdiocese of Boston, and the Boston Charter Alliance.

## KEY POINTS

- The Compact focuses on raising achievement for English language learners (ELL), black and Latino boys, and students with disabilities.
- Partner schools are matched by administrators of the Boston Compact so that each school has something to offer and something to give.
- This philosophy is different from the one that usually guides charter-public school relationships, which have been characterized by tension and a lack of cooperation.
- Rather than compete for the children in their neighborhoods, schools that are part of the Compact “work together to improve student outcomes for all students in their corner of Boston, acknowledging that all choices that parents and families make are legitimate.”
- Also, the cross-school collaboration is based on a philosophy that “all kids are our kids.”
- The activities, driven by the teachers and administrators in the three schools, lead to organic professional communities.
- Activities focus on the school as the unit of change and include shared coaching (including an outside coach shared among the schools) and classroom observations.
- Goals include designing units based on the Common Core State Standards, interim assessments, interventions for literacy and mathematics, arts programs, standards for social-emotional learning, and support for ELL students.
- The focus on ELL students has led to participation across schools in Quality Teaching of English Learners (QTEL).
- Each school in the partnership takes the lead in an area of expertise.
- At the end of a year, educators were able to pinpoint progress related to five goals of the partnership.

## DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

1. What has been your experience with charter schools?
2. In your experience, to what extent has the relationship among charter and other schools been collaborative? To what extent has it been competitive?
3. The authors note that originally charter schools were to share their learning with other schools. In your experience, has that happened? Why or why not?
4. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded collaborations in seven schools. To what extent can collaboration among different sectors of schools be accomplished without outside funding?
5. The partnership began with a top-down structure but developed in a grassroots way through the creation of an organic professional learning community. Which is a more effective way to create change? “Top-down,” “bottom-up,” or “both-at-once”? What examples do you have?
6. The collaboration described in this article focused on teacher learning related to student achievement and growth. In what other areas could the school collaborate?

7. How well do you think the schools involved in this partnership might handle bad news about performance?
8. What do you predict? Will partnerships such as the one described in this article increase? Why or why not?

### EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Engage with colleagues in a discussion of this article using a variation of the Success Analysis Protocol. First divide into two groups, A and B, then follow the directions below. As part of the protocol, discuss the application of your analysis to your own environment.

1. Both groups should meet separately to determine at least three specific elements that contributed to the partnership's success. Here are two examples:

**Example 1:** The work started small, with one set of teachers in each school working with one set of students (QTEL) before using a strategy with others.

**Example 2:** The School Performance Partnership was based on the earlier success of other schools that collaborated (the Neighborhood House Charter School and the Harbor School, a Boston Public School), thus building on success.

2. Begin with Group A as presenters. Group A should present one example from the article and describe how and why the strategy in that example led to success. Group B should be silent, listening to Group A and taking notes. (5 minutes)
3. Group B then asks probing questions about the example. Members of Group A respond to the questions, and members of both Group A and Group B can engage in discussion. (10 minutes) Here are some probing questions:
  - Would this strategy lead to success in other environments?
  - What would have to be present in these environments to ensure success?
  - What else could have been done to lead to success in this case?
  - What absolutely would NOT have worked in this situation?
  - What could have gone wrong with this strategy? What prevented it from going wrong?
  - What would happen if . . . ?
  - What do you assume to be true about . . . ?
  - What learning should we take from this example?
4. Members of Group A reflect aloud about the strategy while Group B members listen and take notes. In particular, members of Group A work together to apply the whole group's learning to situations in their own environment. They speculate about what would happen if they or someone else in their organization used the strategy to make substantive and lasting change. (10 minutes)
5. Members of Group B reflect aloud on what they heard Group A say about application of the strategy and debrief how well the protocol process went, using these and related questions. (5 minutes)
  - Did we describe the strategy well? Do we truly understand the strategy? Was it an important strategy for the schools in the article?
  - Did we probe the strategy sufficiently?
  - Did we determine whether the strategy led to success — as well as HOW it led to success?
  - Did we apply the strategy to our own environment?
6. Repeat Steps 2-5 above, but alternate groups. This time, for example, Group B presents a strategy the schools in the article used to achieve success, while Group A members listen and take notes (Step 2). Then, Group A probes the strategy while Group B listens (Step 3). Group B then discusses application to a local situation (Step 4). Finally, Group A debriefs the process (Step 5).
7. As long as there is time, repeat with other strategies, alternating the process as described above.
8. Finally, debrief the whole protocol with this question: What do we know about success in organizations such as our own and the schools and organizations described in the article? How well did the protocol help us understand success? What could we have done better to understand success? (10 minutes)



# Charter school innovations: A teacher growth model

By Julie Radoslovich, Shelley Roberts, and Andres Plaza

*Phi Delta Kappan*, 95 (5), 40-46

## OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

South Valley Academy, a charter school in New Mexico, used a state requirement to submit annual professional development plans to create an evaluation process that inspires teachers to enhance their practice.

## KEY POINTS

- New Mexico requires all teachers to submit annual professional development plans (PDPs) annually from all schools, including charter schools.
- The staff of South Valley Academy (SVA) decided to use PDPs as action research projects.
- They established action research goals and calendared action research processes, collected artifacts of student learning, collaborated, and gave each other feedback.
- Tools for action research include a rubric that calibrates actions according to whether they're Innovating, Applying, Developing, Beginning, or Not Using (Marzano, 2011).
- Another tool helped teachers collect data from a variety of sources, ranging from observations to shadowing students.
- The year-long PDP process included weekly time in staff meetings, as well as department and grade-level meetings, "ed-teaming," and dedicated time to work on action research projects.
- The process began by developing PDPs, including feedback on early drafts and revision; teachers also used the rubric to assess themselves at the beginning of the year.
- Teachers were encouraged to revise their PDPs as their action research projects began to show results.
- Early in the year, the head teacher assessed the first five components of the rubric (goal, rationale, measurable student outcomes, actions/timeline, and resources) and, at the end of the year, the last three (artifacts, reflection, and progress towards meeting goals).
- The authors provide a case study of a new teacher who sets an action research goal related to vocabulary in chemistry; this teacher's journal entries are featured in the article.
- The PDP process had a positive effect on staff culture, helping educators become a true learning community.
- PDPs began to help teachers look at their teaching practices to improve student performance; they also became much more than an administrative task.
- Seventy percent of teachers were Applying or Innovating at the beginning of the year; this percentage increased to 95% at the end of the year.
- At SVA, action research is part of the evaluation process.

## DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

1. Have you ever participated in an action research project? If so, what were the processes and results of this project?
2. How have you been evaluated as an educator? To what extent has the evaluation process been a learning experience for you?
3. The authors describe measurement as 1) percentage of improvement, 2) targeted improvement over starting point, and 3) improvement over last year's results. On which basis (or another one) should educators be evaluated? Why?



4. Does your school, district, state/province/municipality require professional development plans? What are the requirements of these plans? To what extent do they promote educator learning? How useful are they?
5. What role do collaboration and feedback play in terms of action research? In terms of educator evaluation?
6. What should count as evidence of teacher improvement in the classroom?
7. In what ways is the new PDP action research process authentic? In what ways does it reduce isolation?
8. Which teachers in a school might find the PDP action research process most difficult? Most rewarding?
9. After you have read the article, consider whether SVA's action research evaluation project could be done in other than a charter school.

**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

The authors comment on the importance of language: “Familiarity with the rubric required careful introduction to wording and assessment language that is more growth-oriented than accountability-oriented.” SVA used Robert Marzano’s measurement ratings for its rubric.

With colleagues, discuss what the following words for rating measurements communicate. Add words used in your organization’s rubrics. Then, think about your own purposes in terms of using a rubric for educator or student work. State your purposes and select words that might best convey those purposes.

Words for low-level ratings	Words for mid-level ratings	Words for high-level ratings
Not Using . . . Beginning	Developing	Applying. . .Innovating
Beginning	Developing	Accomplished. . .Exemplary
Basic . . . Beginning	Developing . . . Competent	Mature . . . Exemplary
Novice	Apprentice . . . Proficient	Distinguished
Novice	Apprentice . . . Practitioner	Expert
Emerging	Developing . . . Using	Applying
1	2 . . . 3	4
Poor	Good	Excellent
Needs Improvement	Fair. . .Good	Excellent

**Creating your own ratings for rubrics**

**For whom:**     \_\_\_     **Teachers**     \_\_\_     **Students: Grade level** \_\_\_

**For what (Focus/content area):**

**Purpose (What you want teachers/students to aspire to):**

**Words on your rubric:**

Words for low-level ratings	Words for mid-level ratings	Words for high-level ratings

**Reference**

Marzano, R.J. (2011). *Effective supervision: Supporting the art and science of teaching*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



# Ethics at school: Let your conscience be your guide

By Edwin C. Darden

*Phi Delta Kappan*, 95 (5), 70-71

## OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Ethics, based on law and augmented by professional codes and personal values, require educators to choose the right thing to do in everyday practice and in particular educational dilemmas.

## KEY POINTS

- Three guideposts help educators determine the difference between right and wrong and act accordingly: laws, professional codes of ethics, and personal values and beliefs.
- These interact and may conflict.
- A true ethical dilemma — which may be about something small or large in scope — isn't easily solved; it requires reflection, deliberation, and searching for appropriate solutions.
- People involve themselves in situations related to ethics by establishing a policy or practice that is unethical, by succumbing to pressure to do something unethical, or by challenging a perceived ethical violation by whistleblowing.
- Personal beliefs lead to a personal ethical code that may diverge from others' codes and from professional ethics codes, which are usually job-title specific.
- The law is a blunt instrument, made sharper through ethics, which "start where the law ends."
- Educators may believe that they're doing what's best for students but actually they may be violating personal and professional ethics codes.
- The author cautions that "just because you can doesn't mean you should" and warns that "everything that is permissible is not necessarily wise or, ultimately, ethical."

## DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

1. What values and beliefs guide your personal ethical code?
2. What ethical dilemmas have you faced? How did your personal values and beliefs influence your decisions? What else influenced your decision?
3. Does your organization have a set of professional ethics? Is it published?
4. What ethical dilemmas has your organization faced? What influenced those decisions?
5. Are you required to read your organization's code of ethics (if your organization has one)? Have you and your colleagues, including supervisors, discussed it? In what context (with whom, where, when, how, why)?
6. Is there an ideal relationship among these three aspects of ethics: laws, professional codes of ethics, and personal values and beliefs?
7. How do you know you are doing the "right" thing in terms of day-to-day responsibilities as well as ethical dilemmas?

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## **EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

Strictly defined, ethics is a set of “rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad” (Merriam-Webster). However, that definition didn’t help a group of high school students. Ethics became clearer to them when they were told that ethical behavior is *doing what’s right when no one is watching or listening*.

What do you think of this description? Discuss it and the other descriptions, below, with your colleagues. What description is appropriate to use with students in grades K-3, 4-8, 9-12? What description is appropriate to use with adults?

In law, a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others. In ethics, he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so. (Immanuel Kant)

Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do. (Potter Stewart)

Let me give you a definition of ethics: It is good to maintain and further life; it is bad to damage and destroy life. (Albert Schweitzer)

Ethics is nothing else than reverence for life. (Albert Schweitzer)

Moralities, ethics, laws, customs, beliefs, doctrines — these are of trifling import. All that matters is that the miraculous become the norm. (Henry Miller)

Grub first, then ethics. (Bertolt Brecht)

Action indeed is the sole medium of expression for ethics. (Jane Addams)

Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what’s right. (Isaac Asimov)

The time is always right to do what is right.” (Martin Luther King Jr.)

Honor is better than honors. (Abraham Lincoln)





# From homework to home learning

By John T. Spencer

*Phi Delta Kappan, 95 (5), 74-75*

## OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Speaking as a parent and an educator, the author describes a variety of approaches to homework, determining finally that he wants students to engage in meaningful work that is extracurricular and voluntary, with variations when parents request them.

## KEY POINTS

- As a parent, the author noticed that his child lost his love of art because it was required as homework.
- As a teacher, the author used to assign projects as homework but then moved to skill-based practice homework. Neither approach worked well.
- Then, he assigned “meaningful” homework that connected students with their parents and interests.
- He determines that compulsory homework of any kind kills learning and does little to help students develop a work ethic.
- His approach invites parents and students to extend learning concepts at home.
- Students also voluntarily do “homework” when they create documentaries.
- Homework is neither required nor graded.

## DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

1. How did you feel about homework when you were in grades K-12? Did it change as you got older? Did your perceptions of it change as you got older?
2. How do students today feel about homework?
3. How is homework handled at your school (or a school you know well)?
4. To what extent does homework achieve the following purposes?
  - a. Helps students be creative
  - b. Helps students create projects that they can't do in school
  - c. Helps students move faster in terms of meeting standards
  - d. Helps students who are struggling with skills
  - e. Helps students “make up” work they have missed
  - f. Helps students practice their learning so they can retain it
  - g. Helps students apply their learning
  - h. Helps students connect their school learning with their home learning
  - i. Helps students extend their learning
  - j. Motivates students to learn
  - k. Provides a rich home environment for learning
  - l. Develops work ethic; helps students work hard
  - m. Takes students away from real, at-home learning

## EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

In 2007, the MetLife Foundation surveyed American teachers about homework in *The MetLife Survey of The American Teacher: The Homework Experience* (available at [www.metlife.com/teachersurvey](http://www.metlife.com/teachersurvey)). In this survey, MetLife also talked with students and parents. Here are the statistics about the surveys themselves:

Here are some of the findings. Read them individually. With colleagues, discuss some of the survey findings in light of this column. Summarize your discussion by reflecting on BEST and WORST both in terms of homework in general and homework in your school or a school you know well.

***“Most teachers, students and parents believe in the value of homework. A majority of each of these key stakeholders thinks that doing homework is important and helps students learn more in school.***

- Eight in 10 teachers (83%) believe homework is important or very important and nine in 10 (91%) agree that doing homework helps students learn more in school.
- Eight in 10 parents (81%) believe that doing homework is important or very important and nine in 10 (89%) agree that doing homework helps students learn more in school.
- Three-quarters of students (77%) believe that doing homework is important or very important and seven in 10 (69%) agree that doing homework helps them learn more in school” (p. 19).

***“Teachers’ ratings of the quality and amount of homework have improved over the past 20 years.***

- Teachers in 2007 are more likely than those in 1987 to rate the quality of the homework assigned by their school as excellent (24% vs. 12%).
- Teachers in 2007 are more likely than those in 1987 to rate the amount of homework assigned by the school as excellent (20% vs. 12%).

***“Teachers and students devote substantial amounts of time to homework each week.”***

- Teachers spend an average of 8.5 hours a week on responsibilities related to students’ homework, accounting for 15% of the time they spend on school-related responsibilities in a week.
- Three-quarters of students (77%) spend at least 30 minutes doing homework on a typical school day, and 45% of students spend at least one hour on homework on a school day (p. 20).

***“However, sizable numbers of students say that their homework is not relevant to their current schoolwork or their future goals.”***

- One-quarter of students (26%) agree that their homework is busywork and not related to what they are learning in schools.
- Students who aren’t planning on college are more than twice as likely as others to believe that doing homework won’t help them reach their postgraduation goals (19% vs. 7%) (p. 20).

***“A majority of parents believe that the right amount of homework is assigned.”***

- Six in 10 parents (60%) think that their child’s teachers assign the right amount of homework and an additional 25% think that too little homework is assigned (p. 20).

***“Many teachers do not communicate with other teachers about homework quantity. More than one-third (36%) speak only a few times a year or less to their students’ other teachers about how much homework they are assigning” (p. 20).***

***“While most students say they have enough time to do their homework, one-quarter report that they do not have enough time and one-quarter do not always finish their homework.”***

- One-quarter of students (24%) say that they don’t have enough time to do all of their homework. Students who typically get C’s or lower are less likely than A students to almost always finish their homework (53% vs. 94%).

- One-quarter of students (23%) say they finish their homework only sometimes, rarely or never, compared to 77% who almost always finish their homework.
- Half of secondary school students (50%) and over one-third of elementary school students (37%) spend one hour or more doing homework on a typical school day (p. 20-21).

***“Nine in 10 students (89%) feel stressed about doing homework, including one-third of students (34%) who frequently feel stressed about homework” (p. 21).***

***“Lower-achieving students and high-achieving students differ in their approach to doing homework, with lower-achieving students spending less time on homework and less frequently doing homework at home.”***

- Students who typically get C’s or lower are less likely than A students to do homework after school (70% vs. 87%) or at home (77% vs. 89%).
- Students who typically get C’s or lower are less likely than A students to say they have enough time to do all of their homework (70% vs. 80%).
- Students who typically get C’s or lower are less likely than A students to be assigned homework every day (34% vs. 52%).
- Students who typically get C’s or lower are less likely than A students to spend one hour or more doing homework on a typical school day (35% vs. 50%).
- Students who typically get C’s or lower are more likely than A students to frequently feel stressed about doing homework (38% vs. 28%) (p. 21).

***“A sizable number of students, parents and teachers do not believe that homework is important.”***

- One-quarter of students (23%) do not believe that doing homework is important.
- Two in 10 parents (19%) do not believe that doing homework is important.
- Nearly two in 10 teachers (16%) do not believe that doing homework is important. Students who do not believe that homework is important are lower achieving and say they receive a poorer quality of education than others. Students who do not believe that homework is important are more likely than other students:
  - To usually get C’s or below (40% vs. 27%);
  - To not plan to go to college after high school (26% vs. 15%); and
  - To rate the quality of education that they receive as only fair or poor (29% vs. 13%) (p. 21).

***“Minority parents have greater expectations for homework than others.”***

- Black and Hispanic parents are more likely than white parents to believe that doing homework is important (89% vs. 77%).
- Black and Hispanic parents are more likely than white parents to strongly agree that doing homework helps students learn more in school (67% vs. 56%).
- Black and Hispanic parents are more likely than white parents to think that doing homework will help their child a lot in reaching his or her goals after high school (77% vs. 59%) (p. 23).

***“Similar to parents, minority students place a higher value on the importance of homework than do white students, but they are also more likely to encounter friends who mock those who always do their homework.”***

- Black students (55%) are more likely than white (45%) or Hispanic (38%) students to believe that doing homework is very important.
- Minority students (black and Hispanic) are more likely than white students to report that their friends make fun of people who always do their homework (20% overall vs. 15%) (p. 23).

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***“Teachers assign homework to meet a variety of student needs, including skills needed for their current school work, as well as skills that can be applicable to their future schooling, employment, and ability to successfully navigate life in general. Secondary school teachers are twice as likely as elementary school teachers to use homework frequently as a continuation of class time to cover material not able to be addressed during class.”***

- Nearly nine in 10 teachers (86%) frequently use homework to help students practice skills or prepare for tests.
- Eight in 10 teachers (80%) frequently use homework to help students develop good work habits.
- Two-thirds of teachers (67%) frequently use homework to develop critical thinking skills.
- Two-thirds of teachers (65%) frequently use homework to motivate students to learn.
- Six in 10 teachers (63%) frequently use homework to assess students' skills and knowledge.
- Secondary school teachers are twice as likely as elementary school teachers to frequently assign homework because there was not enough time during class to cover all the material (26% vs. 10%)” (p. 23).

# Applications

This Professional Development Guide was created with the characteristics of adult learners in mind (Tallerico, 2005):

- Active engagement
- Relevance to current challenges
- Integration of experience
- Learning style variation
- Choice and self-direction

## As you think about sharing this article with other adults, how could you fulfill the adult learning needs above?

This Professional Development Guide was created so that readers could apply what they have learned to work in classrooms (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001):

- Identifying Similarities and Differences
- Summarizing and Note-Taking
- Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
- Homework and Practice
- Nonlinguistic Representations
- Cooperative Learning
- Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
- Generating and Testing Hypotheses
- Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers

## As you think about sharing this article with classroom teachers, how could you use these strategies with them?

### References

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# About the Author

**Lois Brown Easton** is a consultant, coach, and author with a particular interest in learning designs — for adults and for students. She retired as director of professional development at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo. From 1992 to 1994, she was director of Re:Learning Systems at the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Re:Learning was a partnership between the Coalition of Essential Schools and ECS. Before that, she served in the Arizona Department of Education in a variety of positions: English/language arts coordinator, director of curriculum and instruction, and director of curriculum and assessment planning.

A middle school English teacher for 15 years, Easton earned her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. Easton has been a frequent presenter at conferences and a contributor to educational journals.

She was editor and contributor to *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004 & 2008). Her other books include:

- *The Other Side of Curriculum: Lessons From Learners* (Heinemann, 2002);
- *Engaging the Disengaged: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed* (Corwin, 2008);
- *Protocols for Professional Learning* (ASCD, 2009); and
- *Professional Learning Communities by Design: Putting the Learning Back Into PLCs* (Learning Forward and Corwin, 2011).

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