# Feature 7: Well-Prepared and Well-Supported Teachers

"[When] you're in isolation and you're just doing stuff in your classroom, you don't know if it's good. You don't know if you're actually having an impact. But when you can share it out with other teachers and get their ideas, it becomes not *my* idea but *our* idea. And if I'm struggling, I have someone who can support me on it."

-Teacher in Madera, CA114

## **What Students Need**

A substantial body of research suggests that one of the most important school determinants of student achievement is the quality of teachers. A recent study of California districts that are "positive outliers" in terms of student achievement for Black, Latino/a, and White students found that key factors in their success were teachers' strong preparation, their stability, and the opportunities they had for professional collaboration, with strategies for developing common norms and practices and sharing them systemwide. 116

Teaching in ways that connect with each student and enable them to learn deeply is one of the most complex and difficult jobs there is. As one recent entrant to the profession noted:

You can be a mediocre to poor teacher very easily. And in that case, I think it's a simple job. But to be a good teacher and one that expands and keeps learning, it's the hardest job I've ever done—and I've done a lot of jobs. ... I had no idea how complex it was and how much of a profession it is.

It is even more difficult to do this job in the factory-model design that created "egg-crate" classrooms in which teachers are lone operators who stamp students with a lesson as they stop in during 5 or more periods a day. With little collaboration and planning time, and few deep learning opportunities themselves, U.S. teachers in traditional high schools have one of the most difficult teaching jobs in the industrialized world.

Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2018, for example, U.S. teachers were among those who taught the most hours per week and year and had among the least planning time. U.S. teachers worked directly with students about 50% more hours than the international average, leaving them 8 fewer hours per week for nonteaching tasks, such as collaborative planning and professional development, reaching out to parents and students one-on-one, or assessing student work. (See Figure 7.) U.S. teachers also had above-average class sizes and taught more students from low-income families than teachers in most other OECD countries.

Redesigned high schools take a different approach, investing deeply in training and supporting their teachers and providing them with time and opportunities to create a coherent set of practices and become experts at their craft. Teachers with these opportunities are more effective and likely to stay for the long run, with a payoff in student achievement. 120

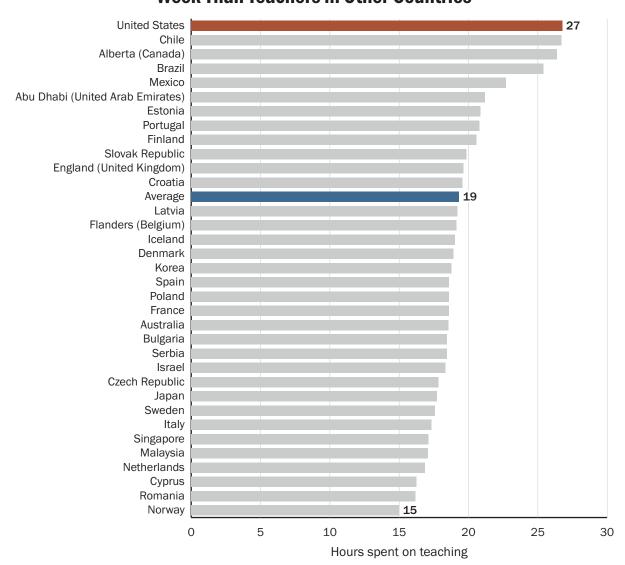


Figure 7. U.S. Teachers Teach More Hours per Week Than Teachers in Other Countries

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2018). Teaching and learning international survey.

## **Key Practices**

## **Teacher Preparation**

If teachers are viewed primarily as transmitters of information to students, one could argue that they need little more than basic content knowledge and the ability to string together comprehensible lectures to do an adequate job. But if teachers are to ensure successful learning for students who learn in different ways and encounter a variety of challenges, then they must be prepared as diagnosticians, planners, and leaders who know a great deal about the learning process and have a wide repertoire of tools at their disposal.

There are three key areas in which teachers must be experts: (1) their subject matter and curriculum, (2) the needs of diverse learners and the learning process, and (3) teaching itself. Teachers not only need to know the **subject matter** in their content areas well; they also need to know how to access curriculum resources and how to represent the ideas in their content areas so they are accessible to others.

Teachers also need to understand the needs of diverse learners and the learning process. This includes knowing about child and adolescent development—including how young people's cultures, languages, and experiences affect them—as well as how multiple intelligences and learning differences shape their approaches to school and learning. Each student has a unique mind, and teachers must know how to figure out how students are thinking and learning so they can shape lessons to connect with what students already know and how they learn well. They need to know what motivates people to learn and how people learn in different ways and for different purposes. No matter what content area they are teaching, they must understand language learning and literacy development, which are at the heart of the learning process for all students, especially English learners, who must learn how to communicate in English while they are simultaneously learning content.

Teachers must have deep **knowledge about teaching itself**, which is very complex, involving the development of a safe learning community, the use of a range of pedagogies to meet disciplinary demands and student needs, and skillful use of assessment to identify students' strengths and needs and help them learn more effectively.

In addition to these areas of **knowledge**, teachers must develop **skills** such as adaptive expertise, inquiry and reflection, and curriculum design, which allow them to listen to and observe what is happening in the classroom on a daily basis and make adjustments to lessons and units to ensure that their students are learning. To accomplish this, teachers must possess and develop **dispositions** including empathy, social-emotional capacity, cultural competence, and a commitment to equity. (See Figure 8.)

Teachers who enter teaching without adequate preparation and who do not receive adequate supports often wind up stereotyping and blaming the students whom they do not understand, especially when their own lack of skills renders the teacher less successful. One teacher who entered teaching through a short summer training program explained: "I found myself having problems with cross-cultural teaching issues, blaming my kids because the class was crazy and out of control, [and] blaming the parents as though they didn't care about their kids." This teacher later entered a teacher education program and found that the tools she acquired transformed her ability to reach her students. Students need access to teachers who themselves have access to knowledge about how to implement a culturally responsive pedagogy that supports students from diverse backgrounds. (See Feature 3: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching.)

Effective schools and districts do not leave teacher hiring to chance. They devote resources and attention to recruiting well-trained educators, often by establishing professional development school partnerships with local teacher education programs. Teachers who enter with comprehensive preparation are half as likely to leave teaching after the first year than those who enter without preparation. Grow Your Own

pathway programs, including paraprofessional pathways and teacher residencies, can support local community members to become effective teachers and provide opportunities for seamless support for new educators, starting during their student teaching and continuing with intensive coaching and mentoring during their initial years in the classroom. These programs, especially when combined with adequate financial supports, can make entering teaching more affordable and reduce attrition while developing a highly skilled teaching force.

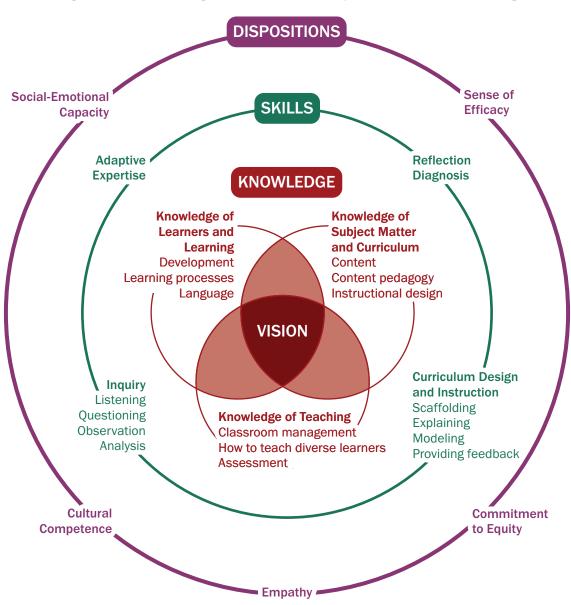


Figure 8. Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Teaching

Source: Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Schachner, A., & Wojcikiewicz, S. (with Cantor, P., & Osher, D.). (2022). *Educator learning to enact the science of learning and development*. Learning Policy Institute.

## **In Practice: Creating Teaching Pathways for Redesigned Schools**

Many redesigned high schools that are developing more student-centered practices focused on deeper learning and equity are helping to prepare new teachers in partnership with local universities that share similar values. These partnerships are creating pathways for recruiting and mentoring strong, dedicated teachers who understand how to work in these settings effectively. Both Hillsdale High School in San Mateo, CA, and June Jordan School for Equity in San Francisco, CA, created professional development partnerships with Stanford University. These schools support substantial numbers of student teachers or teacher residents on the campus, many of whom ultimately become part of the faculty. The former principal at Hillsdale, who launched the school's redesign, described the pipeline of student teachers from Stanford as a major element in the school's reform strategy, giving an opportunity to train and recruit like-minded teachers into a new way of doing school.

Similarly, principal Mauro Bautista from Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School (Mendez) in Los Angeles described recruiting and retaining quality teachers as "one of the highest leverage points for the success of our school." He received his teacher and principal training at the UCLA School of Education, which focuses on preparing social justice educators to teach in an urban setting. He invites candidates from the program to observe classes and do their student teaching at Mendez and often makes job offers to promising candidates. An aligned vision and supportive leadership are two of the reasons Mendez had no turnover of staff from 2017 to 2020.

The UCLA Community School (UCLA-CS) was designed as a teaching school where residents from UCLA's Teacher Education Program learn and teach alongside mentor faculty and with the support of UCLA's teacher educators. The arrangement benefits both UCLA-CS and the aspiring educators. The school often hires residents as teachers, confident that these new faculty members will be aligned with the school's culture and practices.

Jihyun Park was one such resident. She immigrated to the United States at 19 and knows firsthand the challenges of learning English and navigating a new city and country. Her passion to educate emergent bilingual students blossomed when she worked with new students at UCLA-CS as a UCLA undergraduate intern in 2014. "That is when," she reflected in an interview, "I decided that I wanted to work at UCLA-CS, where they gather every single resource to accommodate newcomers [so they can] achieve success and feel welcomed and wanted." After Park graduated from UCLA in 2014, she worked at the school as a community representative and supervision aide and then as a substitute teacher. She later enrolled in the teacher residency program offered by UCLA's Teacher Education Program and was hired as a teacher in 2019.

These opportunities become more powerful for schools and for teacher candidates as they become increasingly deliberate. Principal Matthew Willis at Hinkley High School in Denver, CO, a comprehensive urban high school that has become a professional development school partner with

the University of Colorado at Denver, described the importance of training and recruiting teachers who understand that deeper learning is collaborative, social, and personalized, explaining to novices what he expects them to see and learn in the classroom:

What you see will contrast with rows, teachers talking, students taking notes, sitting still. This school believes in rigor, relevance, relationships, with relationships being the key to the others. Relationships are what are worked on most; then how to leverage relationships to get depth of knowledge, rigor, and relevance. You will see norms of relational discourse, moving up cognitive levels, and using relationships to do that. Interactive, collaborative, independent work. Relationships is probably the number one value for instruction and classroom management.

He sees a double benefit to Hinkley being a professional development school. He and his faculty get a "stream of people whom we get to train and expose to our approach," and at the same time, he gets to know and choose strong new teachers to stay at the school. The faculty also appreciate the on-site support and professional development from their university partners, which both help to keep their values and concepts aligned and contribute to the school's own improvement efforts.

Source: Darling-Hammond, L., Oakes, J., Wojcikiewicz, S., Hyler, M. E., Guha, R., ... Harrell, A. (2019). *Preparing teachers for deeper learning*. Harvard Education Press.

## **Ongoing Learning for Teachers**

Effective teachers are not only well prepared; they are also continually learning. Redesigned schools commit serious time and resources to collaborative planning and ongoing professional development. This supports both more thoughtful and effective teaching within the classroom and greater coherence across courses and grade levels, with associated gains in achievement. Without expert teachers who are continually learning and growing as professionals, much of the other work that schools seek to do cannot be successful.

Teachers in factory-model schools have often experienced professional development in the form of one-time "sit and get" sessions that are disconnected from their daily practices or their individual needs. However, effective professional development is quite different. From studies that document teacher learning—associated gains in student learning, researchers have learned that effective professional development:

- is content focused;
- · incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory;
- supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts;
- · uses models and modeling of effective practice;
- provides coaching and expert support;
- offers opportunities for feedback and reflection; and
- is of sustained duration.<sup>124</sup>

Effective schools design professional learning along these lines, creating adult learning experiences that not only enable teachers to expand their repertoires to help students learn more but also provide opportunities for school staff to revisit the school's vision and goals, develop a collective perspective on teaching

practice—which creates a more coherent experience for students—and create a stronger school culture. They also provide time for teachers to plan curriculum together and talk together about individual students to determine how to best support them. Consistent high-quality teaching across a school is developed by creating a deliberate repertoire of strategies and a well-sequenced plan for content that connects to students' prior learning, and doing so in collaboration with other faculty so that knowledge is shared.

## **Time for Teacher Collaboration**

This work is made possible by building in significant time for teacher collaboration during the workday to allow for joint planning and learning. However, in many American schools, teachers spend their Sunday nights sitting at their kitchen tables, all by themselves, inventing their lessons for the week. The scientific managers who created the factory design felt that teachers are only working when they

Good teachers constantly learn with and from one another, and they need time to do it.

are alone in their classrooms, stamping students with lessons on the conveyor belt of the industrial-model school. The presumption of the assembly line school was that teachers would not need time to plan or evaluate their teaching, because they would merely march through the lessons in a prescribed curriculum. Expertise in teaching—as in many other fields—comes from a process of sharing, attempting new ideas, reflecting on practice, and developing new approaches. Good teachers constantly learn with and from one another, and they need time to do it. As a teacher in one New York City redesigned school put it:

Now that the schedule allows teachers to meet, we help each other. We write curriculum together. The variety of work we do with students is greater. ... Teachers share what they are doing in a formal way in team meetings. They plan together and share what they have done. There is whole school sharing and there are summer institutes where we have more time to reflect. There is more coherence than in schools where teachers work alone. 125

As noted earlier, this shared planning is something that many other countries and some schools in the United States build into their structures for schooling. On average, teachers in OECD countries spend about 19 hours of a 40-hour work week in their classrooms with students. Thus, they have 20 hours or more per week to plan lessons, to meet with students and parents, and to work together and learn from one another. This collaborative work includes developing curriculum and assessments, observing each other's classes, and participating in study groups and other professional development activities.

The results of this collaboration are seen in improved student outcomes, both in other countries and in the many redesigned schools in the United States that have prioritized teacher expertise. They have demonstrated that if collaborative planning and professional development are a priority in school design, it is possible to reallocate resources and reorganize the schedule so that teachers teach fewer hours during the day and have at least 5 hours per week to work together. (See Feature 1: Positive Developmental Relationships and Appendix A: Sample Budget and Staffing Models.)

## **Strategies for Teacher Learning**

This collaboration time can be used not only for planning but also for peer-supported learning. One example of collective learning is **teacher action research**, in which educators engage in systematic and rigorous inquiry about a question of practice, including cycles of planning, acting, observing results,

and reflection. Action research can focus on the needs of a particular student or group of students, broader questions of classroom practice, or analyses of schoolwide practices. For example, Darlene Tieu, a 10th-grade chemistry teacher at Mann UCLA Community School in South Los Angeles, wanted to adjust the way she was teaching climate change so it would be more relevant to her students' everyday experiences. Listening to her students, she found that they were concerned about the lack of parks in their community compared to wealthier neighborhoods. Through the action research process, Tieu partnered with a colleague to develop and test a unit that linked students' questions about urban parks and trees to the scientific concepts of the carbon cycle as well as sociological and geographic issues such as redlining, urban displacement due to freeways, and gentrification. 127

**Reciprocal peer observations** are another effective learning practice used in many schools. Teachers schedule time to observe one another's lessons and provide structured feedback, sometimes responding to questions the teachers themselves have posed or another agreed-upon set of questions or criteria linked to their goals for effective practice. Sometimes teachers film one another's lessons and choose a segment of the lesson to watch and analyze together during a reflection meeting.

A more in-depth form of peer observation and analysis is a technique called **lesson study**. Initially launched in Japan and now used in many countries, including the United States, lesson study allows teachers to plan lessons together and try them out, first on one another and then in the classroom, with other teachers observing and offering feedback. For example, a teacher might use their colleagues as the audience for a new lesson on solving algebraic equations. Teachers would plan and role-play the lesson together, offering suggestions for fine-tuning it. Then when the teacher gives the lesson in their classroom, their colleagues might observe the lesson in the classroom, taking notes on what happened, and then debriefing it together. Researchers Jim Stigler and Harold Stevenson have called the shared lessons that result from this type of planning "polished stones" because they are so carefully crafted. Lead by Learning, a program of Mills College at Northeastern University in Oakland, CA, calls a similar collaborative process "Public Learning," which supports teachers to honestly explore teaching dilemmas to drive improvement.

Collaborative practices can be even more powerful when teachers share expertise and ideas across schools and districts. California's Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC) is an example of a teacher-driven network that supports educators to lead professional development with their colleagues in other schools. Rather than relying on outside consultants to provide one-time sessions that usually do not change practice, ILC networks support ongoing relationships. Newer teachers can observe teacher leaders modeling lessons with their students and then try the strategies in their own classrooms and receive feedback. Not only do teachers value professional learning led by their colleagues, but these types of networks allow veteran teachers to grow as mentors and leaders. A teacher in Madera, CA, explained that involvement with the program did more than allow ILC members to provide support for other teachers' individual practice; it also helped teachers understand how they could work together as a professional community to move student learning forward:

[When] you're in isolation and you're just doing stuff in your classroom, you don't know if it's good. You don't know if you're actually having an impact. But when you can share it out with other teachers and get their ideas, it becomes not *my* idea but *our* idea. And if I'm struggling, I have someone who can support me on it.

#### An ILC coach noted:

Creating the professional development with my team has pushed me to want to become better, to notice the need. ... Professional development is never-ending. There's always the need to develop as a professional.

# School Profile: Teacher Collaboration to Develop Social Justice Teaching at June Jordan School for Equity



Photo source: June Jordan School for Equity. (2013). JJSE Portraits: Giulio Sorro [Video].

June Jordan School for Equity is a small high school in San Francisco, CA, that was founded in 2003 by a community organizing effort among teachers, parents, and youth. The school serves students of color from low-income families in a city with high levels of socioeconomic inequality. Part of the school's commitment to the community was to be transparent with families and students about what a good education looked like, so they could help hold the staff accountable for providing it. The school was founded with a performance assessment system that answered the questions: What do we want students to know and be able to do when they graduate? and How will we know? But the answer to a critical third question was less consistent: What are we going to do in our classrooms to make sure all students get there? Thus, over the course of 4 years, the faculty worked together to develop a pedagogical framework that came to be known as "The Art of Social Justice Teaching," which the school community uses to define excellent teaching.

The staff examined outside resources, including the popular book *Teach Like a Champion*, which provided helpful labels and video examples of specific teaching techniques—but they found the "Champion" approach to be too shallow and reductionist for the kind of intellectually rigorous, student-centered classrooms they were working to create. So they observed one another teaching and created their own categories to describe important aspects of practice, and they took their own videos of one another teaching to highlight examples of strong practice. This process made classrooms into public spaces, where it was common for colleagues (and later, student and parent observers as well) to visit and analyze teaching, with the goal of highlighting successful practices and making them more consistent. "It's like a hitter in baseball," explained one staff member. "Even the best batters make outs two thirds of the time, and sometimes it's good to ask what you're doing wrong. But it's even more important to analyze how you get the base hits, and to work on hitting more of them." This approach allowed teachers to be vulnerable with their colleagues and led to more requests for help when they were struggling.

Drawing on their observations, teaching videos, and research around best practices, the faculty developed a categorization of pedagogical techniques that allowed them to talk about teaching using common language. The resulting Art of Social Justice Teaching Framework (see Figure 9) has six categories, which, together, characterize teachers as "warm demanders" who coach students as intellectuals in a safe classroom community grounded in knowledge of students and a social justice curriculum.

Now that the framework has been developed, classrooms have an open-door policy in which informal observations by teachers, students, parents, and other visitors are commonplace, using the six categories as the starting point for discussion and analysis. Evaluations by administrators often use the language of the framework and reference specific techniques teachers are consistently strong at and areas in which they are working to grow their skills. Teachers use videos and observations of their colleagues' strong practices to learn and improve their own teaching.

Student leaders offer teachers the opportunity for formal observations and feedback, using a modified version of the framework with the same six categories but more "student-friendly language," which students themselves developed to help their peers understand how the adults on campus were talking about teaching. These common expectations of what good instruction looks like also allow students to give teachers informal real-time feedback about their pedagogy so teachers can design lessons that better meet all students' needs.

Matt Alexander, the school's former principal, emphasizes that the instructional framework is not describing something new, but rather making the invisible visible: "Good teachers everywhere are already doing this work. This just creates common language and a forum to talk about it. It helps new teachers grow and creates authentic public accountability for everyone."

## **Figure 9. Art of Social Justice Teaching Framework**

### **WARM DEMANDER**

Develop your students as human beings first

Family and Culture: Understand and honor the strengths of the community

**Authenticity:** Model vulnerability and humility, be an ally, respect your students

**Clear Boundaries:** Show strength, listen and affirm, challenge and offer a choice

**Growth Mindset:** Believe in the "impossible," embrace failure

## STUDENTS AS INTELLECTUALS

Develop your students as a community of warrior-scholars

**Inquiry:** There is no "right answer," questioning, evidence, students as sources of knowledge

Collective Accountability: Classroom as intellectual community

**Code Switching:** Academic language and discussion formats

Intellectual Challenge: High-level multicultural texts, complex problems, big ideas, less is more

### **KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS**

Start where your students are, not where you want/imagine them to be

**Prior Knowledge:** What do students know? What are their experiences, preconceptions?

Student Voice: What do students care about? What do they think? (Examples of activities like sort, chalk talk, dot voting, etc.)

Individual Needs: Differentiation without tracking, adjusting instruction based on formative assessment

**Choice:** Students have real choices about how and what they learn

## SAFE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Protect your students in a potentially dangerous world

**Prevention:** Clear expectations, talk about values, Teacher Voice, One Mic

**Rituals:** Mindfulness, Talking Circle, Strong Start, Strong Finish

Jedi Awareness and Control the Mood: Be aware of the class culture and respond proactively

Intervention: Assume positive intent, keep it in perspective, deliberate escalation, when to stop the curriculum and when/how to remove students

#### **TEACHER AS COACH**

Let your students do the work

**Metacognition:** Students should know how they learn and how to self-assess

Academic Skills: Binders, annotations, note-taking skills, etc.

**Culture of Revision and Practice:** Models of excellent work, multiple revisions, guided practice

**Teamwork:** Heterogeneous groups, clear roles, focus on the process, address status

# SOCIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM

Teach a curriculum that helps students understand the real world

Clear Purpose: Students know what they are doing and why it matters

Relevance: Curriculum helps explain the real world and oppression (including multicultural curriculum, community connections, and cross-curricular connections)

**Encourage Dissenting Opinions:** Critical thinking is the goal

**Human Values:** Curriculum grounded in justice, fairness, dignity, and cultural strengths

Source: Provided by Matt Alexander, who served as principal at June Jordan School for Equity from 2006–2018 and worked with staff to develop and use this framework for professional development and teaching practice there.

## **Additional Resources**

## **Professional Learning**

- EdPrepLab, Learning Policy Institute and Bank Street Graduate School of Education: This collaborative initiative aims to strengthen educator preparation in the United States by building the collaborative capacity of preparation programs, school districts, and state policymakers.
- Effective Teacher Professional Development, Learning Policy Institute: This report reviews
  35 methodologically rigorous studies that have demonstrated a positive link between teacher
  professional development, teaching practices, and student outcomes. It identifies features of these
  approaches and offers descriptions of these models to inform those seeking to understand how to
  foster successful strategies.
- Lead by Learning, Mills College at Northeastern University: Lead by Learning provides resources and support for adult learning and collaboration. Their signature practice, "Public Learning," enables teachers to improve instruction by collaboratively exploring dilemmas of practice—in contrast to the more typical professional development approach of highlighting and displaying an educator's most successful teaching practices as a model.
- Learning Forward: The Professional Learning Organization: Learning Forward is the only professional
  association devoted exclusively to educator professional learning. This website offers multiple
  resources for designing and guiding effective job-embedded professional learning.
- Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning, Linda Darling-Hammond and Jeannie Oakes: This book
  describes programs in which teacher candidates learn to create personalized, inquiry-based learning
  opportunities for all children. Through interviews, on-site observations, candidate surveys, and
  document review, the authors describe the curriculum, practices, and institutional structures that
  make teacher preparation for deeper learning possible.
- reDesign: This site offers resources for educators, districts, and state leaders to foster learner-centered communities. The organization also offers consulting services for school and system redesign.
- Teaching Profession Playbook, Partnership for the Future of Learning: This report provides numerous
  examples of educator preparation programs, including teacher residencies and Grow Your Own
  programs embedded in school districts. It also highlights other key strategies for recruitment and
  retention of effective educators, providing detailed examples in each area.
- Toolkit: Connected Professional Learning for Teachers, ERS: This toolkit covers strategic practices, how to organize resources, and where to get started to shift school systems to engage teachers in effective connected professional learning.
- Transcend: This organization offers professional development for school communities to develop equitable learning environments. They offer virtual workshops, cohorts, and fellowships.

## **Teacher Collaboration Time**

- Finding Time for Collaboration, Mary Anne Raywid, ASCD: This resource compiles 15 examples of
  creative ways that schools throughout the country have made or found time for shared reflection and
  collaboration among teachers.
- Finding Time for Collaborative Planning, David Rosenberg, Rob Daigneau, and Melissa Galvez, ERS: This resource highlights six strategies for finding sufficient time for collaboration.
- It's About Time: Organizing Schools for Teacher Collaboration and Learning, Soung Bae, Stanford
  Center for Opportunity Policy in Education: This report details the benefits and challenges of creating
  time and capacity for teacher collaboration and shared learning, along with detailing how Hillsdale
  High School redesigned its master schedule to facilitate the school's collective mission and goals to
  support collaboration and relationships.