

inquiry

A Districtwide
Approach
to Staff and
Student Learning

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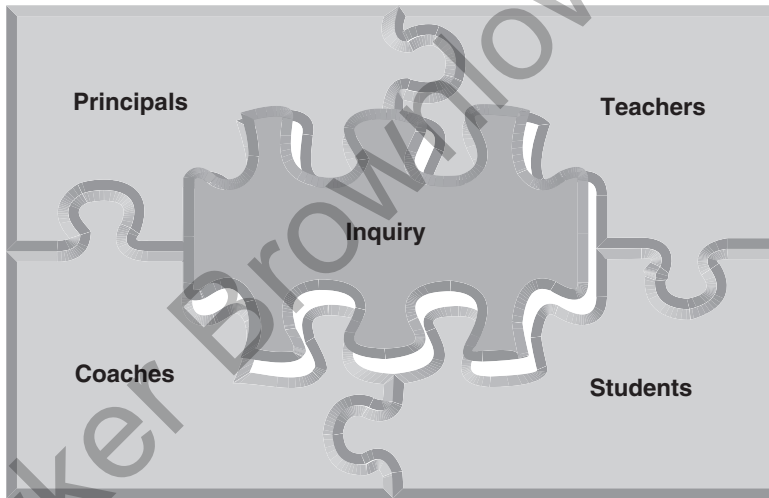
Online resources related to *Inquiry: A Districtwide Approach to Staff and Student Learning* can be found at go.hbe.com.au.

Online Resources

- Resource 1. Randy's Educational Standards Relevant to Student Inquiry
- Resource 2. Structure of High School Action Research Elective
- Resource 3. Sample Action Research Lesson Plan
- Resource 4. Inquiry Coaching Series Calendar
- Resource 5. Sample Inquiry Briefs
- Resource 6. Inquiry Planning Template

Introduction

Job-Embedded Learning and Inquiry for All Stakeholders



It takes a village to raise a child.

It takes a district to teach a child.

Parents know that raising a child is incredibly complex and demanding work. Because of this complexity and the demands of meeting the needs of children as they grow, responsibility for their growth and

development must not lie solely with the parents but with the extended family and the community as well. Perhaps this ancient African proverb from the Igbo and Yoruba regions of Nigeria has become so popular because it rings so true: It *does* take a village to raise a child. That simple but profound statement resonates with parents everywhere.

We think our restatement and adaptation of the original proverb to the world of education—it takes a district to teach a child—will ring just as true for teachers. Teachers know that teaching is incredibly complex and demanding work. To illustrate, let's talk for a moment about what it means to be a teacher. Effective teachers must know their content deeply, know pedagogy, know human development, and know the 25 (in elementary schools) to more than 100 (in secondary schools) students they interact with each day, including identifying each one of these learners' academic, social, and emotional needs, and teachers must attend to these 25 or so individuals' needs, all unique and varied, all at the same time during each instructional moment of the day. Teachers must understand lesson planning and understand that with every lesson taught, there will be a unique outcome that results from the interaction of the context in which one teaches it, the timing of the teaching, the teacher himself or herself, and the learners in the room. Teachers must attend to management and transitions of large groups of learners before, during, and after each lesson. Teachers are bombarded with decisions each minute of their day, ranging from deciding the next steps when a planned lesson is not progressing productively to deciding whether Johnny, who just asked to use the bathroom for the third time that day, should be given permission to leave the lesson to take care of his personal needs.

In addition, teachers must constantly assess their students' learning and progress formally and informally. Teachers make contributions to the running of the school, managing such tasks as the collection of lunch money, lunch counts, bus duties, and lunch duties. They must communicate and collaborate with parents and other education professionals such as guidance counselors, the principal, school psychologists, and other teaching colleagues. In their spare time, they serve on committees, attend faculty meetings, and read professional journals and books to keep abreast of the latest developments in their field. They do all of this while simultaneously keeping an eye on high-stakes testing and their students' performance, balancing preparation for test taking and the teaching of test-taking skills with real teaching and learning of content.

Given the great complexity inherent in teaching, coupled with the numerous conversations today focused on the critical importance of raising student achievement, there is a great lesson for educators in that old African proverb. Just as raising a child must not be the sole responsibility of the parents, teaching a child and raising his or her achievement must

not be the sole responsibility of an individual teacher. It really *does* take a district to teach a child.

For a district, the key to making student achievement a communal responsibility lies in enhancing teacher quality districtwide. More than a decade ago, research on this topic conducted by Linda Darling-Hammond at the Center for the Study on Teaching and Policy established the relationship between raising student achievement and teacher quality. Darling-Hammond's (1999) work examined the ways in which teacher qualifications and other school inputs were related to student achievement across states, with the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses in this study suggesting that policy investments in the quality of teachers may be related to improvements in student performance:

The findings of this study, in conjunction with a number of other studies in recent years, suggest that states interested in improving student achievement may be well advised to attend, at least in part, to the preparation and qualifications of the teachers they hire and retain in the profession. It stands to reason that student learning should be enhanced by the efforts of teachers who are more knowledgeable in their field and are skillful at teaching it to others. Substantial evidence from prior reform efforts indicates that changes in course taking, curriculum content, testing, or textbooks make little difference if teachers do not know how to use these tools well and how to diagnose their students' learning needs. (pp. 38–39)

Although the link between student achievement and teacher quality has been established for some time, districts across the nation struggle with putting into practice effective ways to enhance teacher quality and thereby harness the resources, capabilities, and energies of the entire district to teach, and reach, each individual child.

The purpose of this book is to provide districts with a comprehensive guide to building a powerful, systemwide professional development program that will enhance the quality of teachers they employ, thereby raising student achievement. Ultimately, it will help districts across the nation demonstrate the power inherent in our adaptation of the ancient proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" to "It takes a district to teach a child." In this introduction, we begin building the foundation for this program with a discussion of the latest research and thinking on teacher professional development and the power of job-embedded professional learning and inquiry.