

**Developing  
Learning  
Communities  
Through  
Teacher  
Expertise**

by Giselle O.  
Martin-Kniep,  
152pp., \$27.95, ISBN 0761946179,  
Corwin Press, Inc., Thousand Oaks,  
Ca., 2004



According to current research, school reform is best accomplished when a school operates as a “learning organization” that promotes staff collaboration and puts their ideas to use. This is the premise of *Developing Learning Communities Through Teacher Expertise*, a timely and relevant release from the Center for the Study of Expertise in Teaching and Learning (CSETL), a nonprofit center that seeks to “identify, package, and disseminate teaching expertise.”

Although teacher expertise should always be a resource of schools, it is not usually valued as a basis for learning communities and, as an extension, for school improvement. But who is better qualified than teachers to create learning communities? Learning communities support the exchange of ideas, the use of data and feedback to improve professional practices, collaborative curriculum development projects, the review and analysis of student work, teachers' presentations to their peers, action research, collaborative inquiry activities, and reflective work.

The book includes examples of “Backward Design” in the development of curriculum and assessment, including several models at different grade levels for interdisciplinary, curricular units with a science theme. The studies include methods for identifying and investigating problems and

sample rubrics to assess change or progress.

This book's emphasis on the “teacher as learner” supports ongoing professional development, and the author encourages teachers to document their achievements with a professional portfolio. The rationale and basis for creating such a portfolio is included, as is a professional portfolio rubric.

This book will benefit all teachers who are interested in professional growth and development, even if their schools might not yet be considered “learning organizations.” One committed teacher could spark interest in developing a learning community that would enrich the entire school, and this book provides a basic introduction to that process.

*Linda Schoen*  
Science consultant