

2012 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: CREATING CONDITIONS FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS TO SUCCEED



Mike Humphreys, a 2012 USDE Classroom Fellow and teacher at Patrick Henry Elementary School in Arlington, VA, facilitated the roundtable discussion on creating conditions for educator success. Approximately 100 people participated in the discussion, which focused on “what’s working?” in creating conditions for teachers and principals to succeed and “what steps could the USDE take?” and “what can educators do now” to promote conditions for success.

Participants discussed the topic in pairs, then as whole tables; Mr. Humphreys invited volunteers to summarize their table discussions.

In response to questions about “what’s working?” key themes included collaboration, using data and research-based techniques, and the importance of a caring school community. Comments about the USDE included calls for more funding, innovative thinking, and greater collaboration among USDE, states, districts, and schools. The discussion about what educators can do now concerned collaboration and focusing on student learning.

What’s Working: Collaboration

- *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or other capacity-building groups.*
- *Teacher mentoring.*
- *Allowing good teachers into other classrooms for observation and support.*
- *Between-school collaboration.*

What’s Working: Data-Driven Interventions

- *Using RTI and other interventions*
- *Interventions can be used for all students*

What’s Working: School Culture

- *Principals must act as instructional leaders.*
- *Knowing how to hire the right staff because having the right staff leads to success.*
- *Creating the right climate with cultural sensitivity.*
- *Maximizing the learning time and the school day.*

- *Strengthening connections between staff, with students, and with the community.*
- *Everyone must have the same vision of instruction and assessment.*

USDE Steps: Funding

Funding and access to high-quality education were common responses among attendees, including:

- *Budgets that accurately reflect the work required by new initiatives.*
- *Provide money for staff development, access to technology and training, and student interventions.*
- *Provide support for high-quality early childhood education.*
- *Equalize education and education funding across the country.*

USDE Steps: Greater Collaboration

Attendees suggested several ways USDE could collaborate with states, unions, districts, and schools—and support school-to-school collaboration. Sample comments:

- *Better communication with states, schools, and districts.*
- *Go into schools to find the models that work, and work to replicate success with struggling schools.*
- *Pair successful schools with struggling schools.*
- *Develop parent partnerships.*
- *Find ways to work with teacher unions.*
- *Help prepare districts, states, and schools for implementing the Common Core.*
- *Provide more good news about teachers and education to the public.*

USDE Steps: Innovative Thinking

- *Recognize that one size doesn't fit all—curriculum, instruction, and assessment need to fit the population being served.*
- *Create a new way to define poverty because self-reported data don't work, especially in high schools.*
- *Focus on more than test scores when defining success.*
- *Focus on better teacher training, with more emphasis on mentoring and more classroom experience time.*
- *“Stop looking at school reform as changing the players on the field and start looking at reform as changing the game being played by the players on the field.”*

What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Focus on Student Learning

- *Decide what works and what doesn't for your individual school, including classroom sizes and student-paced learning*
- *Let go of what doesn't work and what doesn't fit into the common core.*
- *Ask students what they need and want.*
- *Have high expectations*

- *Reward high performing teachers*

What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Support Collaboration

- *Share and network with other schools and with others in your school.*
- *Make time for collaboration, especially PLCs.*