

By Paul Barnwell

Why Schools Need More “Hybrid” Teaching Roles

For the first 10 years of my education career, I served as a full-time middle and high school language arts teacher. The work was always challenging, it was usually rewarding, and it kept me on my toes. Over the years, I got involved in site-based decisionmaking committees and served as a union representative, a PLC facilitator, and other traditional leadership roles.

However, it was the “non-official” leadership work—reading and writing professionally, webinars for groups such as the Center for Teaching Quality, interdisciplinary collaboration with colleagues, building community partnerships for my students, and summer residential graduate work at Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf School of English—that really kept me energized as an educator. The extra work, connections, and opportunities I got from these endeavors kept me motivated to remain in the classroom.

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Here's the irony I've discovered: Many veteran teachers, like me, have managed to thrive and improve at their crafts in spite of professional responsibilities and time demands, not because of official, formal leadership roles within schools. We have decided to remain grounded in the classroom but have also taken steps to pursue professional learning and expand our roles while doing so.

Now I'm writing from a new perspective. Since August, I've officially been a "teacherpreneur" for Jefferson County School District in Louisville, KY. I'm fortunate to have been given the opportunity, time, and autonomy to employ the same drive that led me to participate in outside leadership opportunities.

Grounded in the Classroom

I teach morning classes at Fern Creek High School, and the school district pays for my release time in the afternoon to work on designing and implementing opportunities for professional learning and engagement in virtual spaces, among other projects. Right now, this means leading a group of 14 teachers from all content and grade levels across the district in designing solutions to instructional challenges. I also collaborate with teachers within my building, our local NEA affiliate, the Jefferson County Teacher's Association, and other organizations. In all its phases, the work is varied, complex, and enriching.

This experience has jump-started my interest in promoting the growth of hybrid teacher roles like mine. Despite the challenges of my new position, I've found it empowering to remain grounded in classroom realities while working to elevate teacher efficacy and voice. I also think such roles are good for the teaching profession, since they give educators opportunities both to look more closely at the craft of teaching and to have an impact beyond their own classrooms.

There are too many effective classroom teachers who, because they want new challenges and a sense of advancement, leave the most important work there is: working with students. And when effective classroom teachers switch careers or positions, swapping one set of demands for another, public education suffers—the overall quality of the teaching force is diluted due to completely unnecessary attrition.

Why aren't there more pathways for motivated educators to remain in the classroom but also pursue other roles? Why do we financially reward those who leave the classroom for administrative positions, when we hear over and over again how teachers have the most essential nonfamilial role in students' lives? Why are other professions able to differentiate, encouraging employees with unique skill sets and passions to build upon those strengths? Clearly, something is amiss.

Here are several scenarios for school districts and building leaders to consider as they explore the new teaching frontier that is the creation and sustaining of hybrid teaching roles.

Converting Positions

Traditional school staffing, of course, gives little leeway for half-day positions, which is a direct trickle-down from human resource systems in which a blend of teaching and other roles are rare.

School enrollments are projected, principals are allotted a certain number of teachers, and master schedules are created. It's a lot easier to fill in a schedule with full-time teachers than a mash-up of hybrid educators, of course. As soon as one teacher no longer teaches half of his or her classes, who picks them up?

Hiring half-time positions is difficult, but that's not necessarily the only—or even best—approach. Converting existing resource or coaching positions is an easy



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way to start capitalizing on the potential of hybrid roles.

Building leaders should honestly assess the roles of any full-time instructional coaches or resource positions, consider the impact these positions have, and include surveys of teacher perspectives. Would the school—and students—be better off if the instructional/resource coach taught half a day?

Let's not fool ourselves: Teachers want to learn from and with teachers, not folks who have been out of the classroom for years, even decades. Converting existing nonclassroom roles into hybrid roles will strengthen district professional learning systems, creating continuity and credibility among more educators who are still invested in and experiencing classroom realities.

Sharing the Workload

According to recent studies, principals' jobs have become too demanding and too complex. When does a principal have time to be a true instructional leader in today's education environment? By creating more hybrid teacher roles, principals can lean on instructional leaders within their buildings to help design and facilitate professional learning community structures, model best practices, mentor new teachers, and lead technology implementation, among other tasks. Who can provide more instructional support than those within the buildings who work with kids every day? Nobody.

Admittedly, teaching can be complex, too. I've struggled with balancing the demands of working with adults and students every day, managing countless more connections and cognitive tasks. Yet it is this challenge that has given me more energy to teach and work with other adults in crafting solutions to other challenges.

"At-Large" vs. Localized Roles

Depending on a district's goals, size, and budget, hybrid roles can take different forms. They can be more localized, such as a literacy lead/coach who teaches a half day at a given location (the "convert" position). Or they can be "at-large" positions like mine, where the educator works on district-level projects. My projects are geared toward collaborating with folks as diverse as elementary school health teachers and educators at the alternative

school for teen moms. I consider the position "at-large" due to goals and projects that extend well beyond the walls of Fern Creek High School.

I envision many possibilities for at-large teacherpreneurial roles: A half-time English-language learner teacher could work to develop outreach programs to engage ELL parents across the district. A half-time science teacher could design field experiences for students across the district, recruiting more novice teachers to engage students in real-world science experiences. A half-time social studies teacher could network with city government to create internships and work-study programs. A half-time communications teacher with a penchant for thoughtful social media engagement could coach teams of students to help spread the word regarding all of the positive things happening in our schools. The list could go on and on.

More localized roles could be just as varied. My Jefferson County colleague Sarah Yost, for example, serves in a hybrid role at Westport Middle School as a language arts teacher and literacy lead. If a principal considers converting or creating hybrid roles within his or her building, positions can be tailored to local needs and demands.

I think about some of my colleagues who have chosen to remain in education but no longer teach. They are striving to make an impact in various ways, but I can't help but think that given the option, many of these educators would have embraced the opportunity to teach and lead, to remain grounded in the day-to-day realities of teaching while taking on new roles and expanding their impact, to push themselves professionally as practitioners and learners while working closely with students.

Teacher experts with big ideas and expertise are out there; it's up to district leadership to recognize the untapped potential of hybrid roles to improve and enrich teaching and learning for all. ■

For more educational insight by Paul Barnwell, visit teachingquality.org/blogs/PaulBarnwell

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Spring is for “Hands-in-the-Dirt” Learning



School gardens are a wonderful learning opportunity for students, according to the thousands of teachers around the country who use them. These teachers’ perceptions are backed up by the growing evidence that correlates garden-based learning with academic achievement, positive social-emotional outcomes, and healthy food choices.

Around the country, school districts are wrestling with where to invest their limited resources to have the biggest positive impact on children. Some of these districts are considering garden-based learning.

Bursting with color and texture, gardens are a perfect space for sensory learning. Bugs, worms, and other animal life can be found with the scoop of a hand trowel or a peek under a stone, revealing action-packed natural habitats even in urban neighborhoods. Sky and weather provide a constantly changing backdrop to these outdoor classrooms. And, of course, in any edible learning garden there is food. The school garden is an endlessly engaging place for kids to explore food systems and nutrition with a taste, nibble, or outright feast.

Over and over again, teachers say that their school garden reminds them of why they went into teaching in the first place: The garden sparks their students’ curiosity and they are excited to learn. Being in the garden with permission to dig, harvest, and plant is a brand new experience for many of their students, especially in urban neighborhoods. A learning garden in the schoolyard, teachers say, provides a lot of entry points for children’s interests, serving the needs of many different kinds of learners.

The garden is ripe with projects that need to be done,

problems to solve, solutions to discuss, and processes to explain. Teachers know that spending time in a school garden inspires collaboration, teamwork, and most of all, conversation. Experienced teachers use time in the garden as a springboard for math word problems, scientific observation and description, and writing practice. Teachers frequently note that garden-based learning is particularly beneficial for their English language learners and students with other special learning needs because the garden sparks students’ interest, and that, in turn, often leads to conversation and new vocabulary.

Garden-based learning in the hands of a skilled teacher, in other words, adds up to a big impact on student learning.

Environmental changes and the public’s increasing awareness of healthy food choices and healthy living add an urgency to making outdoor, garden-based education a reality for children.

It’s an exciting vision: Every child growing up with garden-based learning at school; every child engaged and curious, emerging from a learning garden carrying questions, observations, and interest back to the classroom; every child familiar with the food they see growing in their garden and comfortable with the natural environment right where they live, learn, and play. Consider bringing garden-based learning to your school. ■

Read the full article on EdWeek.org.

Jane Hirschi is the founding director of CitySprouts, a garden-based-learning program for schools, located in Cambridge, MA. Her book *Ripe for Change: Garden-based Learning in Schools* will be published in April by Harvard Education Press.



AAE Celebrates Math Awareness Month: Math Drives Careers

Each year in April the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics sponsors Mathematics Awareness Month (MAM) to recognize the importance of mathematics.

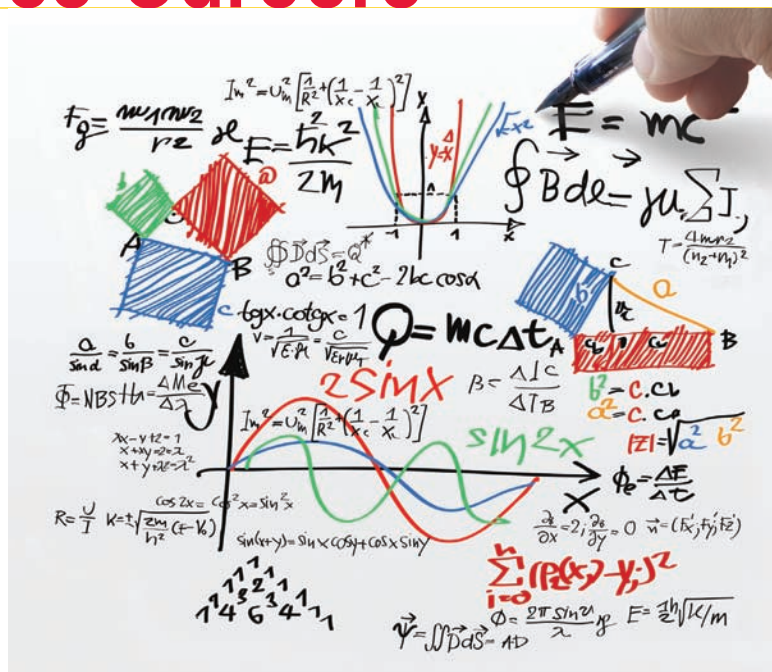
This year's theme is **Math Drives Careers**.

Innovation is an increasingly important factor in the growth of world economies. It is especially important in key economic sectors such as manufacturing, materials, energy, biotechnology, healthcare, networks, and professional and business services. The advances in and applications of the mathematical sciences have become drivers of innovation as new systems and methodologies have become more complex.

The goal of the 2015 Math Drives Careers program for the coming year is to increase awareness of the breadth of careers available to those who study the mathematical sciences.

Career opportunities for students trained in the mathematical and statistical sciences are available in virtually every business sector.

- Mathematical modeling and the design of associated software are indispensable in manufacturing for the design and optimization of increasingly sophisticated products and processes.
- In financial and insurance companies, quantitative modeling has become essential in designing financial products, estimating model risk, and developing processes for executing transactions.
- In biotechnology companies, the analysis of gene networks, rather than single genes alone, has been a key to progress in attacking common diseases such as diabetes. This necessitates a quantitative approach including data mining, modeling, and simulation.
- In the oil and gas extraction business, the ability to exploit new and unconventional sources through the use of enhanced discovery and production techniques has led to greater production.
- Corporations across the economic spectrum are adopting business intelligence (i.e., data) and analytics (i.e., quantitative methods) in areas such as marketing, human resources, finance, supply chain management, facility location, risk management, and product and process design.



- There is a need for development of algorithms and software to handle large amounts of structured and unstructured data at low cost and derive relevant conclusions for effective business decisions.
- In the pharmaceutical industry, statisticians design and analyze clinical trials. In manufacturing, they analyze risk and quality control. As data science grows across industries, statisticians will become indispensable.
- Traditional engineering areas such as aerospace and automotive design have relied heavily on mathematics and often employ people trained in the mathematical and computational sciences as part of their technical teams.

Today, the mathematical sciences continue to provide a pathway to many career areas. We see increasing demand for people trained in data science—an interdisciplinary field that involves mathematics, statistics, and computer science. And as much more of our world has become quantified and digitized, mathematics has found its way into many new areas. Even motion picture production, with the increase in animation and digital special effects, now relies on mathematics and those trained in the field.

Visit mathaware.org for essay contest info, links to related resources, to submit your school's Mathematics Awareness Month celebration activity, and more! ■

Wisconsin Becomes 25th Right-to-Work State

For decades, states across the South, Great Plains, and Rocky Mountains enacted policies that prevented organized labor from forcing all workers to pay union dues or fees. The industrial Midwest resisted.

Those days are gone. After a wave of Republican victories across the region in 2010, Indiana and then Michigan enacted right-to-work laws that supporters said strengthened those states economically, but that labor leaders asserted left behind a trail of weakened unions.

Now it is Wisconsin's turn. Last month, Gov. Scott Walker—who in 2011 succeeded in slashing collective bargaining rights for most public sector workers—signed a bill that makes his state the 25th to adopt the policy and has given new momentum to the business-led movement, its supporters say.

“This freedom-to-work legislation will give workers the freedom to choose whether they want to join a union, and employers another compelling reason to consider expanding or moving their business to Wisconsin,” Mr. Walker said.

Even before the legislature passed the measure, Mr. Walker's political backers were raising money on the

issue, saying of the bill in an email pitch to donors, “You know how it is: It threatens the power the Big Government Labor Bosses crave and they are going to come after the Governor with everything they've got.”

Battles over union fees are also emerging in other states. Republican legislators in Missouri and New Mexico are weighing similar measures. In Kentucky, where a split legislature and a Democratic governor pose obstacles to a statewide bill, leaders in more than a dozen counties have approved or are weighing measures, and efforts in six other counties are awaiting final approval.

And in Illinois, a long-held Democratic territory with Democratic supermajorities in the legislature, the new Republican governor, Bruce Rauner, announced an executive order barring state workers who opt out of unions from being forced to pay fees based on a constitutional argument, offering a new model for states where split partisan politics have slowed right-to-work policies.

Federal law already permits workers not to join unions. However these laws go further, permitting workers to not pay fees to them. Unions argue that the fees are fair for nonunion members who still benefit from the contracts they negotiate, and that without a requirement, their membership, financial support, and very existence are threatened.

The effects of such measures are fiercely debated, with dueling experts and research papers.

In Michigan, the percentage of workers in unions has dropped to 14.5 percent from 16.6 percent before the changes. Yet in Indiana, the percentage of union members grew to 10.7 percent from 9.1 percent in 2012, a statistic some labor experts say shows how difficult it is to gauge the effects of such measures given other factors at play.

In Wisconsin, the percentage of workers in unions dropped to 11.7 percent in 2014 from 14.2 percent in 2010, before Mr. Walker took office.

Soon after taking office, Mr. Walker pressed for a bill that cut collective bargaining for most public sector workers and removed requirements that they pay fees if they chose not to join unions that represented them. Republicans elsewhere followed suit, but not all of those measures flew through. Ohio, where Republicans had taken sole control of state government, passed a measure limiting collective bargaining, but it was rejected months later in a statewide ballot measure.





Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican, signed legislation that made Wisconsin the 25th state to prevent organized labor from requiring all workers to pay union dues or fees. Credit Mike De Sisti/*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*; via Associated Press

Then, for right-to-work advocates, came an even more memorable turning point: In November 2012, voters in Indiana (where a law was repealed in the 1960s) re-elected Republican legislative majorities even after labor leaders pledged to defeat them for passing a right-to-work law earlier in the year. On the same election night, voters in Michigan rejected a labor-backed ballot measure to enshrine collective bargaining rights in the State Constitution.

“The combination sent a clear message to elected officials in the region: You can end forced dues by passing right-to-work, and voters will reward you for it,” said Patrick Semmens, a spokesman for the National Right to Work Committee, who keeps a copy of *The Indianapolis Star* outside his office from the day after the law passed there.

A month after the 2012 election, the Republican-held Legislature in Michigan, a cradle of the American labor movement, passed a right-to-work measure, which was promptly signed by Gov. Rick Snyder, a Republican who had said the matter was not on his agenda.

In Missouri, Republican lawmakers said they were concerned that they might be left behind by their Midwestern neighbors, given all that had changed. A measure that had stalled for several years passed the State House last month, and a Senate committee is expected to send it to the floor in a matter of weeks.

“But when you see a Wisconsin, a Michigan, when they can get it done there,” said Missouri Senator Mike Parson, “it’s pretty tough to sit here in Missouri with the makeup of things here and we can’t get it done?” ■

To read the full article, visit nytimes.com.

Let AAE Know You Read *Education Matters* and Win!

Did you read this month’s newsletter? AAE offers an opportunity for teachers to win cash and prizes in every issue of *Education Matters* just to reward you just for being an active member of the AAE community.

This month, teachers who send us photos of themselves pointing to their favorite articles from this edition will be entered in a raffle for a \$20 Amazon gift card!

To submit your entry, email your photo to editor@aaeteachers.org using the subject line, “I LOVE *EDUCATION MATTERS!*”



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National Library Week

Celebrate National Library Week 2015 (April 12-18) with
 the theme "Unlimited possibilities @ your library®."



First sponsored in 1958, National Library Week is a national observance sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the country each April. It is a time to celebrate the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians and to promote library use and support. All types of libraries—school, public, academic, and special—participate.

Best-selling author David Baldacci will serve as Honorary Chair of National Library Week 2015 (April 12-18). Baldacci's novels have been translated into more than 45 languages and have been adapted for film and television. Over 110 million copies of his books are in print worldwide. In addition, Baldacci is involved with several philanthropic organizations, including his family's Wish You Well Foundation®, which fosters and promotes the development, and expansion of literacy and educational programs.



Celebrations during National Library Week include:

- **National Library Workers Day**, Tuesday of National Library Week (April 14), a day for library staff, users, administrators and Friends groups to recognize the valuable contributions made by all library workers;
- **National Bookmobile Day**, Wednesday of National Library Week (April 15), a day to recognize the contributions of our nation's bookmobiles and the dedicated professionals who make quality bookmobile outreach possible in their communities; and
- **Celebrate Teen Literature Day**, Thursday of National Library Week (April 16), aimed at raising awareness among the general public that young adult literature is a vibrant, growing genre with much to offer today's teens.

Social Media Promotion

Today's libraries are more than just books. Increasingly, they are places of creativity where people can meet to share a hobby, use a 3D printer, edit a video, or use software to record their own music. Libraries offer access to the tools and technology essential to the economic and cultural lives of their communities.

The possibilities really are endless. Share what you've made with the help of your local library on Twitter or Facebook using the hashtag #librarymade for the chance to win a \$100 gift certificate to Maker Shed or Amazon. Promotion begins Monday April 13 at noon CT and ends Friday, April 17 at noon CT. ■

