
Foreword

This is a time in American educational history when it finally has been empirically confirmed that teachers matter. We now know through science what we have always known in our hearts, namely, that what teachers believe and what they do in classrooms make a difference in the lives of our children. New, uncertified teachers do not do as much for our children as do certified teachers from the universities. Experienced teachers do more for our children than do novice teachers. It has been shown that there is an enormous difference in performance between children who have had exemplary teachers for three years and those who've had poor teachers for three years. For students of average ability, the quality of their teacher can determine whether they will attend college. As with all professionals, teachers need to be good at what they do.

But then how do we treat our teachers? With few exceptions, we isolate them from each other, refuse to pay much for their professional development, provide the wrong kinds of professional development, evaluate them in perfunctory or demeaning ways, and in general make the task of teaching so onerous that many of the best and brightest who enter the field leave within the first three to five years. Those who stay often lose their joy of teaching. This is certainly no sensible way to run a profession. But sometimes little things can have a big impact.

The 2 + 2 program described in this volume has characteristics that make it possible to positively impact our teachers and our students, with a minimum investment of time and money. It is clear to me that the 2 + 2 program is worth trying in our schools, and its influence is worth evaluating. We have learned from Asian teachers that lesson study—where groups of teachers regularly visit other teachers and provide feedback on the lessons they observe—is an important part of the professional development of teachers. In fact, it

is how Asian teachers learn to teach. America's teachers are not yet engaging in this remarkable approach to teacher development, though we are slowly learning how to do that. But an American version of the Asian style of lesson study seems integral to the 2 + 2 program described in this book. The 2 + 2 program functions as a version of lesson study that is compatible with American school culture and the norms of our teaching profession. Like the Asian version of lesson study, this program provides teachers with a mechanism to receive feedback from peers. It also reduces the isolation of teachers from one another, and it should increase mutuality—the sense that at a particular school site teachers feel that they are in this profession together and that they are teaching so that their students can learn. Any program of staff development that might move us toward these ends should be promoted.

The description of the 2 + 2 program that follows comes from authors who know schools and have experience with the program they promote. They also wrote this book in a descriptive, caselike form, rather than a didactic one, making it very clear to readers. In my professional life, I see few educational ideas and practices that are both simple and rich with possibilities. This, however, is one of those. I hope educators will try and learn from 2 + 2 as they implement it in many and diverse school settings.

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