

## *Rethinking Teacher Learning*

# *emerging models*

**MORE TIME, MORE POSSIBILITIES:  
A Single-Subject Design**

### ***What We Know***

There is very little evidence that professional development (PD) in its current form is effective. Teachers are largely unsatisfied with their PD and view most of it as rules-driven rather than developmental. But teachers and principals agree on what ideal teacher learning looks like: job-embedded, personalized, based on authentic collaboration with peers, and focused on the components of teachers' jobs for which they feel accountable: planning and delivering instruction to students.

### ***It's About Time***

When we talk to teachers, the issue of time invariably comes up. Teachers consistently tell us they want more time to plan, design, and learn from each other. We've taken on the challenge of finding this time within already-tight school district budgets while also making sure the time is used well by teachers and contributes to student growth. We've found that when teachers are given time for PD, they really lean into solving day-to-day challenges. Teachers want to increase the success of their students. When they are given the time to observe each other's classrooms, reflect on their practices, and work together, improving student success across an entire system becomes possible.

As we have started to find this time in a few districts' schedules, we have seen new teacher leaders emerge and more innovation and risk-taking among both new and veteran teachers. A new form of coaching and support has started to develop as well. Rather than relying on a coach who may not have time to support each teacher's needs, teachers have begun to work collectively to support each other. Coaching (not simply coaches) is emerging as a critical strategy to give teachers feedback on their practice. Teachers feel that the time they spend together is more valuable than other forms of teacher learning and allows them to self-reflect.

The following pages present a case study of how one school district found the time within a traditional schedule to engage and support its teachers in powerful ways.

### ***Meet the Models***

The Innovative Professional Development (iPD) Challenge, organized and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is an effort to radically redesign PD systems. We've taken a systems-change view because PD affects so many elements of a school system and each of them must be reexamined. Our work focuses on supporting districts as they re-imagine teacher ownership and engagement; collective and individualized learning; use of high quality content; data and delivery infrastructure; leadership capacity; resource optimization; and supportive policies.

As we began redesign work with iPD districts, several models emerged for increasing peer feedback, collaboration, and reflection for teachers. This document describes one of the models, which we call a single-subject design, and which was implemented in schools where teachers were organized by department. But we predict that as our work continues, other models, as well as variations on this model, will emerge.



*“We work together better than before.”*

*Average middle school PD time during the 2012–2013 school year*



**99 hours**

*Average PD time during the 2013–2014 year for redesigned middle schools*



**195 hours**

*Difference in average PD time after redesign*



**+96 hours**



# Case Study: Fresno Unified School District

## A Single-Subject Design

FUSD is the fourth-largest school district in California. It serves more than 73,000 students in 94 schools. Student scores on state assessments have historically been low. Fresno also has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation. For the 2013–2014 school year, FUSD redesigned 11 middle schools (grades 7 and 8), using a single-subject design, to better serve students and embed PD time in the school day.

## How the School Schedule Works

The school schedule is organized into two types of weeks: regular weeks and iPD weeks. Both types of weeks have six-period days. During the regular-week schedule, students take six courses: ELA, social studies, math, science, PE, and an elective. Teachers share a daily departmental prep period and have the freedom to partner teach within single periods. They have the freedom to group and regroup students according to student needs and teacher instructional strategies.

Every two or three weeks, schools run an iPD-week schedule. During an iPD week, students take a seventh Common Core–focused course taught by an expert team of teachers called the Plus Team. This course replaces one regular class four times a week. During Plus time, core academic teachers within a department are freed to participate in a full day of iPD.

Regular Week <b>Sample School Schedule</b>								
	FTE	Average Class Size	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
ELA	4	29–31	4 classes	Prep				
SS	4	29–31	4 classes	4 classes	4 classes	4 classes	Prep	4 classes
Math	4	29–31	4 classes	4 classes	4 classes	Prep	4 classes	4 classes
Science	4	29–31	4 classes	4 classes	Prep	4 classes	4 classes	4 classes
PE	3	39–41	3 classes	Prep	3 classes	3 classes	3 classes	3 classes
Electives	4	29–31	Prep	4 classes				
FTE Subtotal	23							
Plus Team	4							
TOTAL	27							

## Understanding Plus Time

When core academic teachers within a department attend iPD, a Plus Team replaces them. These positions were filled almost exclusively with experienced educators who had previously worked in the district. During Plus time students work on mini tasks. This work focuses on Common Core standards, such as citing evidence to make a strong argument. On regular days, students are grouped heterogeneously (all learning levels are represented), but during Plus time, students are grouped homogeneously (by ability level). On non-iPD weeks, the Plus Team provides coaching and partner teaching and works with students who need extra help.

<i>iPD Week</i> <b>Sample Student Schedule</b>						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
M	ELA	SS	Math	Science	PE	Electives
T	<b>Plus time</b>	SS	Math	Science	PE	Electives
W	ELA	<b>Plus time</b>	Math	Science	PE	Electives
Th	ELA	SS	Math	<b>Plus time</b>	PE	Electives
F	ELA	SS	<b>Plus time</b>	Science	PE	Electives

## How iPD Works for Teachers

<i>iPD Week</i> <b>Sample Teacher Schedule</b>						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
M	Plus Team has iPD.					
T	ELA team has iPD.					
W	SS team has iPD.					
Th	Science team has iPD.					
F	Math team has iPD.					

Teachers participate in one full day of iPD every two or three weeks. This adds up to 16 full days of new PD time annually. This is almost double the amount of time teachers had before the redesign.

On their designated iPD days, teachers meet by department at a central location. They work together to improve their teaching using a common lesson study model, which is loosely modeled on the Japanese lesson study. FUSD uses Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Math Design Collaborative (MDC) as the spine for the iPD content. (For more information on LDC and MDC, visit [www ldc.org](http://www ldc.org) and <http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/Learning/MathDesignCollaborative>.) An iPD coordinator manages the iPD, although teachers are increasingly leading their own learning.

*“Redesign has changed my outlook on being an educator.”*

*“I have become more mindful of my teaching. I am more patient with my students and not rushing to get through to the next standard. I reflect more and try to see things through the eyes of my students.”*



### **Design Principles**

**1. Classroom conditions must be better for teaching and learning.**

The school redesign must lead to improved conditions in the classroom.

**2. What students are doing in Plus time must serve them well.**

The work students do while teachers are collaborating needs to be instructionally strong, supportive, and engaging. Early dismissal from school is not an option.

**3. PD must be relevant and real.**

The content of teacher learning must be driven by classroom realities and teacher needs.

### **Model Highlights**

This single-subject model was built using a process called School by Design. Strategies included:

- creating a streamlined, high-efficiency model for participating middle schools in FUSD
- adjusting the school allocation formula to better match the budget to the design requirements of the model
- setting aside a team of teachers who are deployed to free teachers for iPD
- using common lessons and a lesson study protocol as the focus of teachers’ work on iPD days
- building district capacity to use the process without the need for outside assistance, creating a pathway to sustainability

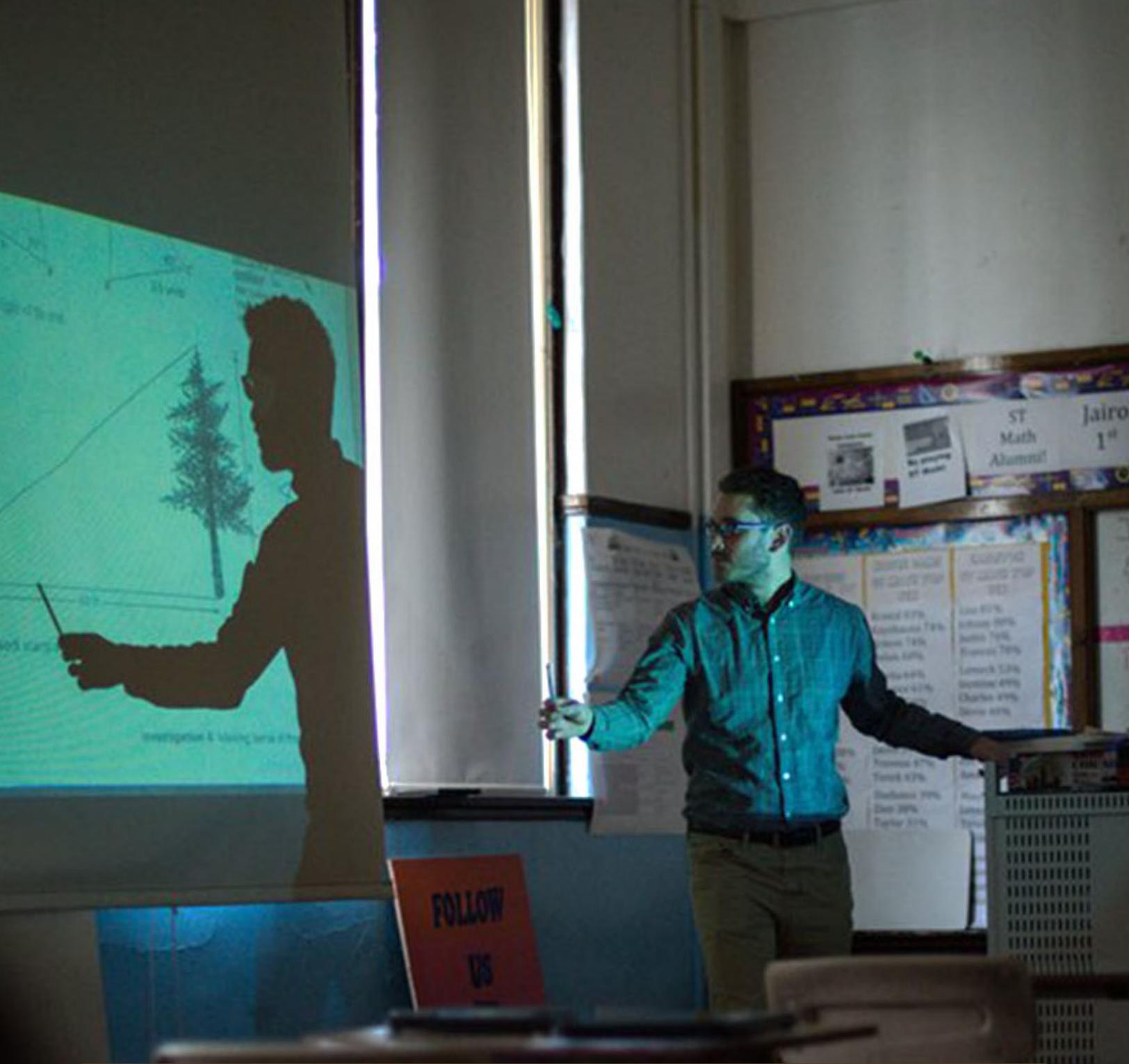


### **Model Variations**

The School by Design process is not limited to restructuring school schedules to find time for PD. The process can be used to create time and resources to accommodate a number of instructional priorities and innovations.

There are many variations to a single-subject design, including:

- making iPD appropriate for every level: elementary, middle, and high school
- creating multi-year personalized learning pathways in each subject
- using blended learning for Plus time to provide targeted, flexible supports that fit students’ evolving needs
- creating a full day of iPD every week so all teachers, include the Plus Team, teach four days a week
- extending the school day (at no cost) using offset staff start times for support personnel, such as counselors



The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is supporting a number of districts as they redesign their PD systems. We seek to put teachers at the center of our work by engaging them in the design, delivery, and implementation of innovation.

<http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org>

 #ipdchallenge

The School by Design process is developed by TimeWise Schools. Together, we are looking to capture other school models that use teacher and student time innovatively to support teacher growth and development and accelerated student learning. Let TimeWise know if you have a model in mind: [timewiseschools@gmail.com](mailto:timewiseschools@gmail.com)