



# New Hampshire Task Force on Effective Teaching: Supporting Excellence in Teaching and Learning

BY VIRGINIA M. BARRY

*We are all faced with a series of great opportunities—brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.* —John W. Gardner

**J**ohn Gardner knew about leadership; he served as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, and founder of Common Cause. My insoluble (intractable) challenge arrived in the name of Race to the Top shortly after I was appointed New Hampshire Commissioner of Education. Yet in the end, this challenge provided the opportunity to bring together educators and key stakeholders throughout the state to create collaboratively a comprehensive strategic plan for the New Hampshire Department of Education. From that strategic plan, we started our next initiative to develop a framework to support effective teachers and leaders.

Although New Hampshire was not selected to receive Race to the Top funding, the benefits from creating a strategic plan enabled the department to establish clearly the following educational priorities:

- standards and assessment
- data systems to support instruction
- great teachers and leaders
- turning around the lowest achieving schools

These educational priorities will help New Hampshire education build the human and social capital needed to support a vibrant New Hampshire economy.

The teacher and leader priority presented itself as a critical and challenging area of focus within the Race to the Top application. How does student performance inform that work? In New Hampshire, we determined that it was imperative to develop a consensual understanding of how best to support human capital in our schools. The New Hampshire Association of School Principals agreed to work on the issue of a system of supports for school leadership.

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It is evident that the common goal for all the stakeholders is to provide the best education possible for New Hampshire children. This challenge focused New Hampshire educators on finding a common understanding to build a successful framework for a comprehensive teacher effectiveness system.

To support effective teaching, the New Hampshire Task Force on Effective Teaching was established in fall 2010, composed of 60 representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups. The charge of the task force was to

- provide a common definition of effective teaching for all schools,
- identify different teaching frameworks that are research based and are critical components to a fair and equitable teaching evaluation process,
- develop a system of preparation, professional development, and continuous advancement of teachers to impact student learning,
- develop a set of recommendations that will lead to a statewide system of teacher effectiveness.

The New Hampshire Task Force on Effective Teaching finalized the Phase I report, which represents the New Hampshire Department of Education's initiative to create a unified system for teacher effectiveness across the state.

In our Race to the Top work, department leadership discovered that nearly 70 percent of school districts are using Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Danielson believes the quality of teaching is the single most important variable to children learning. Her research has led her to the conclusion that good teaching is sequential, cumulative, and collaborative. New Hampshire is now collaborating and working closely with skilled and professional representatives of the Danielson Group.

As the work of the task force continues with Phase II, school districts awarded School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds are piloting Danielson's Framework for Teaching. This pilot program provides a structured framework for school districts to create a comprehen-

sive teacher effectiveness system to improve student performance. While New Hampshire works on identifying effective systems, school districts are testing theoretical frameworks in action.

You can view the Phase I report at the following link: <http://www.education.nh.gov/teaching/documents/phaseIreport.pdf>.

In September 2011, the task force began Phase II to build upon Phase I work and to respond to my charge of creating a framework for implementing a comprehensive teacher effectiveness system. This task force includes teachers, administrators, faculty from colleges and universities, legislators, state board of education members, local school board members, Department of Education staff, psychometric experts, technical assistance providers, content experts, parents and community members, and business leaders. The goals for the Phase II work are to

- review the recommendations developed by the Phase I task force,
- respond to the issues and questions identified by the Phase I task force,
- examine comprehensive teacher effectiveness models from other states that are examples of the New Hampshire recommendations "in practice,"
- create a framework for a comprehensive teacher effectiveness system,
- develop a three-year implementation plan, including an initial pilot phase,
- identify guidelines for preparing those who will evaluate teachers within this system,
- establish criteria for selecting the New Hampshire school districts that will participate in the pilot process,
- identify a communication and outreach strategy to develop public awareness about New Hampshire's effort in this area.

Phase II of the task force convened on a bimonthly basis from September 2011 through January 2012. Implementation of the pilot phase of New Hampshire's teacher effectiveness framework will begin in fall 2012.

With the determined work of committed educators and stakeholders, Phase I of the task force is successfully completed. Phase II of the task force is making progress towards identifying student measures of teaching effectiveness. Our challenge, brilliantly disguised as an insoluble problem, has provided the opportunity to support excellence in teaching and learning in New Hampshire.

*Former PSU educator and administrator Virginia Barry was appointed New Hampshire Commissioner of Education in 2009.*