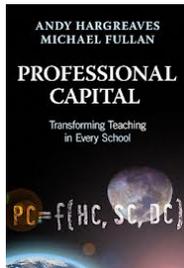


Building Professional Capacity By John Ross



In their book *Professional Capital*,¹ Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan provide a detailed description of a more homegrown version of capacity building—developing the *professional capital* of the educators in your own school or district. Professional capital was the focus of a recent webinar hosted by staff of the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), who explored how state education agencies (SEAs) might leverage the concept in their work with district and school staff.

While individual teachers are undoubtedly important, Hargreaves and Fullan note that student success is the result of the cumulative impact of many teachers over the course of a student's academic life. The practical implication of this for education leaders is to find the best people for the job of teaching and provide them ongoing opportunities to build professional capital so students are exposed to many strong teachers throughout their tenure—by design, not chance. The authors describe professional capital as a function of three other types of capital: *human* (knowledge and skills), *social* (collegial relationships and networks), and *decisional capital* (reliable professional judgment and insight).

First to present was Jeannine Branch, a technical assistance specialist with the ARCC and a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) who has worked as a coach and trainer for many teachers. Branch examined a number of considerations to keep in mind when undertaking to improve social and decisional capital. She then explored how communities of teachers using best practices and next practices together could serve to build professional capital.

Dr. Sharon Harsh, director of the ARCC, discussed how professional capital relates to the mission of the Comprehensive Centers, which is to help build the capacity of state education leaders. She also proposed several strategies SEA staff can use to implement change in the teaching profession, and identified initiatives the ARCC and other Comprehensive Centers will engage in to help SEA staff learn about and develop these strategies.

The ARCC was also pleased to include the comments of Kelle Stewart, a lawyer-turned-teacher currently serving as an early education specialist for the Portsmouth Public Schools in Virginia. She is also a member of the first cohort of the Ron Brown Scholars, a partner in the ARCC. Stewart discussed parallels and differences between the teaching and legal professions, and lessons learned from both about how to support practitioners at various stages in their careers.

The full webinar is available on the [ARCC YouTube channel](#). Please feel free to subscribe to our channel to get updates about future webinars and other media.

¹ Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.