

Emerging Leader: **Rounding out teaching and leadership with research**

Since 1998, Daniel J. Quinn has been an economics and social studies teacher at Grosse Pointe North High School, Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich. But a year ago, he stepped up to become the part-time executive director of Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice, a provider of education research intended for teachers. He's also served on the board of directors for the National Education Association and the Michigan Education Association. He's been a track and field and cross country coach. He also is a 2013 PDK Emerging Leader. Recently, Quinn answered some questions from *Kappan*.

There's been much focus on improving teaching via college training and bringing in mid-career professionals. From your vantage point, what are some of the most important changes that would improve teaching?

Some of my closest personal friends are second-career teachers who have switched from a variety of experiences to the classroom. Mid-career teachers bring real-world experiences and expand and enhance teaching as a profession. However, all of these teachers have had solid educational training and have gone through rigorous certification programs. I don't believe in alternative certificates for nontraditional educators. All educators need the pedagogical background of going through a school of education before entering a classroom. Teaching is not and cannot be allowed to be a way station en route to another career. If I could make one change that would improve teaching, it would be to hold all preparation programs — college-based and fast-track — to a high standard, never letting an inexperienced teacher learn "on the fly." Teacher preparation programs need to ensure that teachers are prepared to enter the classroom and be excellent teachers on day one. The professionalism of teaching is enhanced when we hold all educators to high standards.

In addition to being in the classroom, you've been in leadership, and now you're doing research as well. How does your work in leadership and research make you better in the classroom?

All of our decisions in school need to be research-based, not motivated by ideology. Currently, I'm involved in planning, evaluating, funding, and disseminating research. This adds value to my classroom and to my fellow teachers as a resource provider — someone who shares instructional and policy resources. Currently, I'm a consumer of education research, but my long-term plan is to move into the role of a research producer, providing support to my fellow teachers. That's what good leaders do — they provide support for the profession.

You've also been an athletic coach — track and cross country — at the high school level. What did you learn from coaching that can help improve academic performance?

The time I spent coaching was the most rewarding of my career. I miss it. I wouldn't be the teacher I am today if I hadn't spent time coaching. Coaches get to spend quality time with kids, working toward a common goal. All educators need to spend time coaching kids outside the classroom. The relationship that a teacher develops with a student-athlete can never be replicated in classrooms. The lessons I learned while coaching distance running are applicable to the classroom: Hard work, self-sacrifice, and team building are all enhanced by athletics in school.

— Greg Patterson

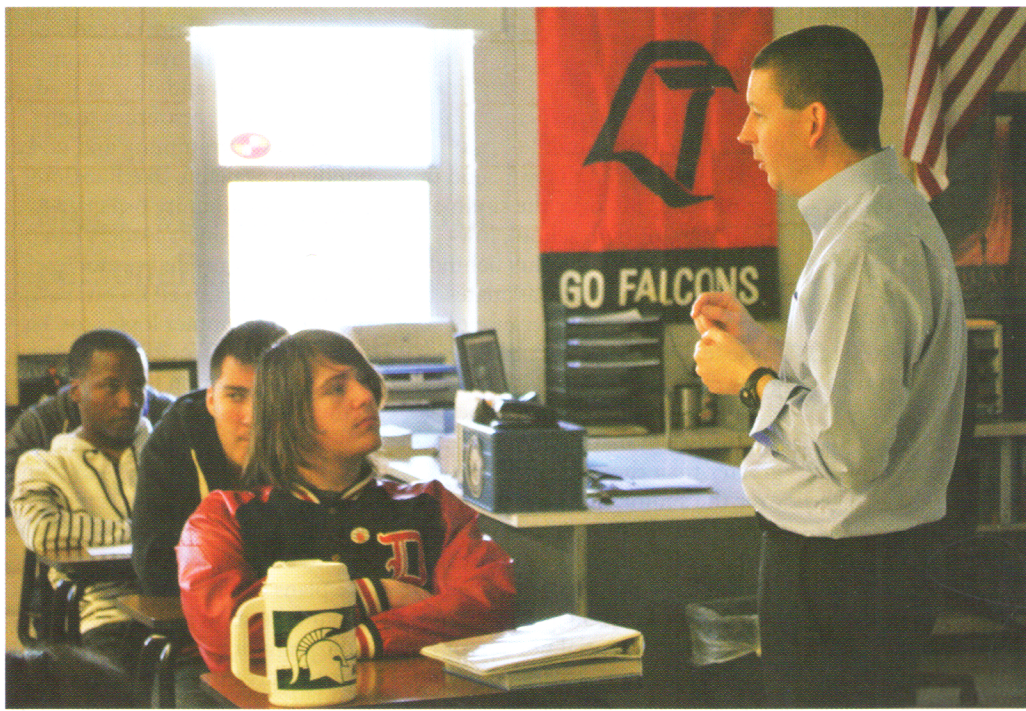
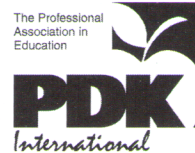


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