Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

Learning Forward’s commitment to this purpose is stronger than ever. National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has changed its name to Learning Forward. The name change reflects not only the organization’s growth over its 41-year history, but also better represents the vision of the organization as a powerful advocate for teacher and student learning.

Learning appears first in the new name as a reminder that learning is at the heart of the organization’s purpose. Learning Forward signifies moving ahead to ensure effective professional learning that results in student achievement. Learning Forward expresses the organization’s call to action — actions the board, members, and staff commit to each day to ensure effective teaching for every student. The new name distinguishes Learning Forward as both a membership association and an advocacy organization that marries practice, policy, and research.

Learning Forward’s values, beliefs, and driving purpose remain the same: To strengthen teaching and learning through effective professional development. Learning Forward relies on its community of members as well as allies in the field to learn, grow, advocate, and serve.

Learning Forward will continue to offer the valuable products, services, and learning opportunities that support the important work educators do.

Are you learning forward?

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 4-8</td>
<td>2010 Annual Conference, Atlanta, Ga.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 15, 2011</td>
<td>Deadline to apply for foundation scholarships and grants.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm">www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1, 2011</td>
<td>Deadline for Awards nominations.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/awards.cfm">www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/awards.cfm</a></td>
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book club

UNMISTAKABLE IMPACT: A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH FOR DRAMATICALLY IMPROVING INSTRUCTION

Author Jim Knight’s latest book simplifies the process for becoming an “impact school” through targeted, consistent professional learning that is done with teachers, not to teachers. In the latest Learning Forward Book Club selection, the author illustrates how to translate staff members’ joy of learning into high-leverage practices that achieve dramatic student outcomes. Characteristics of impact schools include:

- A focused, clearly defined improvement plan that takes into account the complexity of teaching and learning relationships;
- A school culture that encourages enrollment in ongoing professional development; and
- Alignment of purpose and actions among all staff members.

Resources include tools for principals, workshop leaders, professional learning communities, and instructional coaches.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for $49. To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Dec. 15. It will be mailed in January. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or e-mail office@learningforward.org.

Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to advancing professional learning for student success.
Professional development on specific content and the ways in which students learn that content is vital to a well-developed teaching force. Teachers need to actively keep abreast of current research and best practices in their content areas. In today’s classrooms, teachers need to be flexible, open-minded experts on how a diverse student population learns that content. Teachers must simultaneously be teachers and learners. How do we ensure that teachers get the content and process they need to do the best they can for their students?

Teachers report that professional development that has a significant, positive effect on their knowledge and skills and that promotes changes in their classroom practice has a focus on content knowledge (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). When teachers in the same school and content area work collaboratively and learn collectively to increase their knowledge and skills, students benefit. With support and follow-up that includes peer coaching, peer observation, and critical reflection, teachers are able to confidently construct and implement new knowledge and skills. When they share a common language about their content, they help to create alignment and coherence for their students. Students experience a corps of well-prepared, confident, and motivated teachers who can then ensure a great opportunity for every student to learn.

Here is an example of what happens to students when teachers don’t participate in content-specific professional learning and collaborate on its implementation. Two 8th-grade social studies teachers in one school do not share a common planning period and are not required to work in the context of a professional learning community. Teacher A chose to participate in a district workshop about thematic units and how to incorporate current events into a standards-based lesson. Teacher B, who routinely spends too much time managing student behavior, simply assigned work from the social studies text. Teacher A collaborated with the school librarian to create a theme-based unit related to the trapped miners in Chile, and integrated both history and geography standards into the lesson. Students in that class were excited and motivated to learn about a current world situation. Students in the other class complained to the librarian that their teacher’s work was not up to date and would not help them become global citizens. Collective content-specific professional development along with a healthy dose of collaboration could remedy such a problem.

Content-specific professional development for teachers can eliminate opportunity gaps, teaching gaps, and achievement gaps. Every student deserves a highly effective teacher in each core area. When teachers continue to develop their knowledge and skills through content-specific professional learning, students have more opportunities to learn. Their learning is no longer dependent on being assigned to the “right” teacher. The teaching gap is eliminated because teachers have learned together and can support and provide technical assistance to each other’s efforts to teach rigorous content in a compelling way. And finally, achievement gaps will close when all children have equal opportunities to learn from highly qualified teachers.

**REFERENCE**


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Deep content learning for better teaching is the day-to-day work of a learning team

**on board**

**INGRID CARNEY**

Ingrid Carney is president of Learning Forward’s Board of Trustees.
We have a TV star in our midst

Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh, second from right, prepares recently for an appearance on “The Balancing Act.” Here she joins show hostess Danielle Knox, seated at left, and Judith Baenen, educational consultant with National Middle School Association, right, on the Pompano Beach, Fla., set of the show, which airs 7-8 a.m. weekdays on Lifetime Television.

Learning Forward will be featured in the show’s Parent-Teacher Corner, along with several organizations belonging to the Learning First Alliance. Hirsh filmed two segments — on effective teaching and on high-quality professional development. Watch www.learningforward.org for dates. Urge your peers to share the dates with parents and community members who share an interest in effective professional learning.

STANDARDS REVISION UNDER WAY

The revision of NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development began with the first meeting of the task force in Washington, D.C., in October. The task force includes representatives from many of the associations that contributed to the original standards and the first revision. This revision process will include an opportunity for feedback from our members, an advisory team representing a wide variety of organizations in education, and the general public. The revised standards will be shared publicly at Learning Forward’s Summer Conference in Indianapolis in July 2011.

Powerful words

“Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?”

— Erich Fromm
LEARNING FORWARD IN THE NEWS

GREAT TEACHERS: In the Sept. 20 issue of Education Week, Hayes Mizell writes, “It’s time to have a serious discussion about what it takes to develop and sustain great teachers.” In his commentary, “The misuse of professional development,” Mizell says that professional development’s primary role must be to raise student and teacher performance, and such a focus will require meaningful change.


NOT SATISFIED: On the Learning First Alliance blog, Anne O’Brien speaks with Deputy Executive Director Joellen Killion, NEA Senior Policy Analyst Linda Davin, and NEA Executive Committee member Joyce Powell about the recent report, Advancing High-Quality Professional Learning Through Collective Bargaining and State Policy. In discussing the report’s findings, Killion says, “We are not satisfied with the fact that there’s fragmentation and inconsistency. We’re not satisfied with the fact that professional development fits into so many different places in state policy without a coherent system. And we want to address some of those issues as we have opportunities to work with state policy makers and with union leaders in districts and states.”

www.learningfirst.org/visionaries/AdvancingProfessionalLearning

WORKING TO TRANSFORM: Maggie Hos-McGrane, a blogger and teacher in an international school in Switzerland, shares her reactions to Learning Forward’s book Becoming a Learning School. Hos-McGrane reflects on the potential benefits and implications for herself and her colleagues as they work to transform their learning environment to become more collaborative.


Foundation honors Georgia superintendent

The Impacting the Future Now Foundation has awarded the first Leading for Learning Sybil Yastrow Superintendent’s Grant to Samuel T. King, superintendent of Rockdale County Public Schools in Conyers, Ga. King has served as Rockdale’s superintendent since 2005. During that time, he has led the district of more than 13,000 students (62% free and reduced lunch) to noteworthy achievement gains and earned recognition from the state and governor of Georgia.

King refers to himself as the lead learner in his district. He gives priority to ensuring that the leadership team provides the highest-quality service to meet the social, emotional, physical, and academic needs of all students.

Thanks to generous contributors to Impacting the Future Now, Dennis Sparks, NSDC executive director emeritus, will guide King and his district’s leadership team to continue their learning journey to ensure the success of all students. Sparks will work as a teacher and thinking partner to assist the team in realizing their goals through in-person and virtual learning sessions.