

The federal policy landscape:

A look at how legislation affects professional development.

By M. René Islas

Specific elements in federal laws have the potential to impact practices at state and local levels. Professional development's definition and importance in federal legislation, particularly the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, has evolved over the last couple of decades.

Key points in Learning Forward's definition of professional development.

Learning Forward described high-quality professional development in detail to influence the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Research from within and beyond education supports the specific strategies and elements of the definition.

The view inside the beltway:

Seattle teacher trades in her chalk for a chance to be a legislative fellow.

By Kristina Peterson

Working as an aide to the House of Representatives requires a different set of skills than teaching 5th grade, as one teacher learned. Her experience during a time when policy makers are focusing intently on teacher quality helped her understand the legislative process and the importance of teachers' voices in shaping policy.

Business teachers go to work and students get the dividends.

By GERALYN E. STEPHENS

The Carl D. Perkins Technical and Career Education Act required changes to the professional learning business education teachers experience. Teacher internships are one powerful strategy for more sustained learning that brings benefits to both educators and their students.

Alberta unites on teaching quality.

By Tracy Crow

Standards outlining teaching quality are the key policy guidelines affecting professional learning in Alberta. A committed collaboration among all of the province's education stakeholder groups resulted in a set of essential conditions that ensure effective implementation of education initiatives.

Policy across the pond:

British researcher talks about professional learning's impact in the United Kingdom and beyond.

By Louise Stoll, as told to Tracy Crow

Just as in the U.S., political changes in the United Kingdom and other nations affect education policy. School leaders in the U.K. have significant autonomy to shape school improvement and are increasingly turning to collaborations with other schools to spread best practices among schools.

The power of one, revisited:

Inspiring examples remind us we can all find ways to make a difference.

By Stephanie Hirsh

One person with passion and a commitment to action can make a difference. Three state-level education leaders worked within their bureaucratic contexts to significantly impact professional learning policy. Any committed educator can use specific strategies to make a difference.

Thought leaders:

Who they are, why they matter, and how to reach them.

By Hayes Mizell

Meaningfully engaging with those leaders who have the power to influence others has the potential to spread an important message widely. Educators can follow several steps to identify appropriate thought leaders, plan effective conversations, find common ground, and establish ongoing relationships.

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columns

Collaborative culture:

Steer the conversation toward — not away from — the elephant in the room.
By Susan Scott and Opal Davis Dawson

A principal asked her staff to join her in interrogating her reality to become a more effective leader.

Cultural proficiency:

Stay calm and detached, but be clear in response to racist remarks.
By Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson with Laura Ibonvber

When a parent made a racist comment, a principal's rational response made her values clear.

From the director:

Learning Forward's 'big bet' reaps big wins in practice.
By Stephanie Hirsh

Learning Forward has invested in influencing policy to affect practice and is seeing other benefits with partners in the field.

features

Circles of leadership:

Oregon district redefines coaching roles to find a balance between school and district goals.

By Amy D. Petti

Coaches and teachers working together to improve literacy education with elementary students is just one layer of collaboration. When principals and central office administrators joined the effort, every stakeholder had a deeper understanding of the goals and the support required to bring student learning up to higher levels.

District finds the right equation to improve math instruction.

By Annette Holmstrom

Leaders in math, professional development, and district administration all realized they had an important role to play in a coordinated effort to improve math learning in a Washington district. Professional learning communities concentrated on math-specific instructional strategies to improve student outcomes.

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

AdvancEd	50
The Breakthrough Coach	45
Brinkman-Forlini-Williams, LLC	51
Corwin.....	13
ETS	22
Evans Newton Inc.	15
Eye on Education	35
Florida Institute of Technology	38
Just ASK Publications & Professional Development.....	outside back cover
The MASTER Teacher	inside back cover
Measured Progress	38
New Teacher Center	34
Nike School Innovation Fund	43
Peabody College at Vanderbilt University	39
Pearson Assessment Training Institute	21
Promethean Academy	49
Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership, Walden University.....	23
School Improvement Network.....	1
Solution Tree	inside front cover, 27
Teachscape	29
The Wallace Foundation	33

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