



Examine the human values represented by policy

Being a step (or two or three) removed from policy makes it easy to forget that humans with particular values craft the guidelines that shape practices in any arena and at any level — local, state, provincial, or federal. Particularly during election season, I’m tempted to let my inner, rather noisy, cynic run wild and attribute any number of negative traits to any number of policy makers, and I know I’m not alone.



As I take a step or two closer to policies that matter to me, however, I see the human aspirations, beliefs, and values that drive policy

making. For a very local example, at Learning Forward we believe in the power of staff agreements that serve as guidelines for how we’ll work together. Our staff agreements include such statements as “Invest in the success of Learning Forward,” “Be open to other points of view,” and “Trust the competency of your colleagues.” The values we hold as a staff are evident in such statements.

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We take our agreements seriously. We review them annually to ensure they still reflect our values and the ways we believe we can best work together to achieve our purpose. As a set of policies, we have found that our staff agreements generally lead to good practices. While these agreements don’t serve as a binding set of rules, they are a key part of our workplace culture and give us a touchstone for when we want to remind one another that we strive to operate as our best selves.

The way our staff agreements serve us as a staff in practice illustrates the clear connection between policies and values. As policies, the agreements serve as a bridge between what we aspire to as an organization and what we accomplish for our members and the field.

Take a step out from such an intimate example of policy, and we’ll find that the same principle holds. Values and beliefs drive the work that all of the writers in this issue of *JSD* describe, and the challenge is finding the most effective strategies for translating those values into policies that fit specific contexts. Kristina Peterson, a 2nd-grade teacher from Seattle, put a human face on policy one conversation at a time when she served as a policy fellow in Washington, D.C. (see p. 18). The heroes Stephanie Hirsh admires for their state-level policy work (see p. 40) ensured that their values shaped how future teachers would learn

and grow. Hayes Mizell encourages educators to establish the relationships that put them in positions to express their values in ways that ultimately shape policy (see p. 46).

Whether the operating context is corporate, educational, or governmental, and whether government is big or small, all policies are crafted with particular values in mind. This can serve as a powerful reminder that the quest for effective policies not only matters to everyone, it belongs to everyone.

CORRECTION

In “Pockets of excellence: Study explores how policy affects professional learning in 4 high-performing states” in the October issue of *JSD*, editors introduced an error in the chart on p. 53. The table summarized professional development policy provisions in four states and incorrectly stated that Vermont does not have professional development requirements for license renewal. Vermont does have professional development requirements for license renewal. A corrected version of the table appears in the online version of the article (www.learningforward.org/news/articleDetails.cfm?articleID=2158). *JSD* regrets the error. ■