

MetLife Foundation supports standards

Learning Forward has received a \$500,000 grant from MetLife Foundation to disseminate and implement its newly revised Standards for Professional Learning. Forty professional associations and education organizations contributed to the revision of the standards following extensive research and input from educators and policymakers worldwide. MetLife Foundation also provided funding for the research and development of the new standards.

MetLife Foundation

“We believe that high standards for professional development increase learning for everyone in a school, educators as well as students,” said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. “Our support will help Learning Forward, other leadership organizations, and schools across the nation promote the new standards and put them to work.”

“Revision of the standards is just the beginning of the process to transform professional learning so that it increases educator effectiveness and student results. The real work is moving the standards into both policy and practice to increase the

COMING SOON

As with past versions of the standards, Learning Forward will create a variety of resources to aid in dissemination and implementation. Look for the following in the coming months:

- Facilitator Guide: November 2011
- Innovation Configuration Maps, Vol. 1: February 2012
- Innovation Configuration Maps, Vol. 2: April 2012
- Innovation Configuration Maps, Vol. 3: June 2012
- Standards Assessment Inventory: August 2012

quality of professional learning,” says Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh. “This support from MetLife Foundation will enable broad-based dissemination, development of new tools to support implementation and evaluation of professional learning, and strategies to monitor the impact in both policy and practice,” she said.

book club

CONSTRUCTING AN ONLINE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK FOR SCHOOL UNITY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by Robin Thompson, Laurie Kitchie, and Robert Gagnon

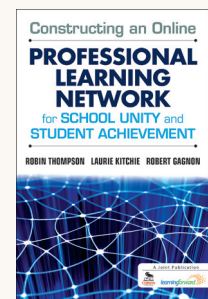
What if professional learning communities were available 24 hours a day, every day of the year? Learn about networks that create a space to share lesson plans, student work, a new curriculum, and provide a discussion forum for all stakeholders. The authors explain how they created an online professional learning network to share a new core curriculum, and provide a framework for constructing an online network to fit any school’s needs. Benefits include:

- Enhanced communication among teachers, administrators, and the community;
- Easy access to professional development for many more participants;

- Implementation of best practices and instructional strategies for improved teacher quality; and
- Increased understanding of and commitment to reaching educational goals.

Included are checklists, flowcharts, screenshots of an actual personal learning network, case studies, and a glossary of terms. This book provides all the tools educators need to build a successful and motivating online professional learning network.

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 \$59. To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Sept. 15. It will be mailed in October. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email office@learningforward.org.





When leaders value standards, they create effective work cultures

As a principal of a high-poverty campus, I am always on the lookout for additional funds. As I've mentioned before, I am fortunate to work with outstanding teacher leaders who are continually learning. We learn from each other, the students, parents, books, workshops, experts, and, on rare occasions, from the business world. As I consider the release of our new Standards for Professional Learning, I am reminded of my recent exposure to standards from another organization. My lesson learned: Standards guide effective practice.

As part of our 8th-grade curriculum, I teach an etiquette class. Our culminating activity is to eat out at an upscale restaurant to practice what we have learned. Unfortunately, the restaurant we chose offered a very small discount that made the excursion cost prohibitive. Fortunately, my son waits on tables at a restaurant that is owned by the same company that owns the upscale restaurant. The employees of these restaurants receive a 50% discount for up to four people on meals. We seized the opportunity to see if we could get a couple of employees to host our group of 8th graders. I can't say I was optimistic that we could get volunteers.

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Mark Diaz is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

on board MARK DIAZ

The day arrived with our students wearing their Sunday best. The "Chili Heads" (employees of Chili's restaurants) arrived with smiles on their faces, two more volunteers than we needed, and ate a meal with us. I was struck by their genuine kindness, their love of being together, their unstated mission of helping others, and the immediate rapport they created with the students. They talked about their futures with the students; all were going to college or culinary school, or are on the management track. They talked about working at Chili's as a family experience.

I wondered, why would employees take time from their personal schedule with no thought of remuneration to do this? What is the culture of Chili's, and what are the standards that encourage this behavior? To find out, I contacted Marcy, the manager for the past four years of the Chili's franchise where the Chili Heads came from.

Marcy was humble about her role as leader. She feels fortunate to have had an excellent mentor, a group of natural leaders as employees, and standards that indicated to her she was not crazy doing what she was doing. As a manager, she sees her job to develop leaders, invest in personnel, and create a "can culture" versus a "can't culture."

She describes the standards that guide their work culture. Employees hold each other accountable, value communication, offer healthy feedback, and support each other. Employees consider being a Chili Head an opportunity rather than a job.

When I asked her about districts' decisions to cut back on professional development in this financial environment, she said, "Leaders build leaders." While she couldn't put herself in district leaders' shoes, she did have a suggestion: "Can't they cut back on spelling instead?"

Doesn't this sound familiar? This restaurant understands the role of mentors, a positive culture, mutual accountability, communication, feedback, support, leadership development, and sustained investment in personnel. They have standards, and they use them every day.

When I returned to our campus, I wondered — are we Chili Heads? And I wonder with you — how can our standards help guide your work so your faculties have the opportunity to grow, lead, and serve? ■





LEARNING FORWARD'S PURPOSE: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

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Photo by MICHAEL JENKINS

From left: Teachers Debbie Brock and Shelia Jenkins, Principal Rachel Ray, and Assistant Principal Shirnetha Stinson work as a learning team at Clinton Elementary School in Lancaster, S.C.

3rd-grade team wins Shirley Hord Learning Team Award

The 3rd-grade team from Clinton Elementary School in Lancaster County (S.C.) School District is the winner of the 2011 Shirley Hord Learning Team Award. This award, presented by Learning Forward and Corwin, is given to a team of teachers that demonstrates Learning Forward's definition of professional development in action.

"Members of this team not only impacted their students, but also their colleagues," said Clinton Elementary School Principal Rachel Ray. "They understand that their actions have a direct impact on student learning." Schoolwide, 70% of Clinton students were reading independently on grade level in May 2011, compared to 8% in August 2009. Third-grade students have made a 26-point gain in English language arts and 28-point gain in mathematics. Through collaboration in professional learning teams, data analysis, analysis of student work, and the support of an instructional facilitator, the percentage of Clinton students performing below basic on the state English language arts test dropped 52% between 2009 and 2011.

Learning Forward's annual awards program recognizes individuals for their commitment to improving student achievement through effective professional learning. The Shirley Hord Learning Team Award honors the research Hord has conducted on the attributes and effects of successful professional learning communities. Learning teams from schools across the United States and Canada submitted nominations for the award, including videos of their teams at work.

Corwin sponsored the award, which included funds to support three representatives of the winning 3rd-grade team from Clinton Elementary to participate in Learning Forward's 2011 Summer Conference. Clinton Elementary School will also receive a \$2,500 gift to the school to support collaborative professional learning, and a gift of Corwin books for the school's professional library.

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- September:** Members will be asked to participate in the Board of Trustees election throughout the month.
- Sept. 16:** Proposal deadline for Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference in Denver, Colo.
- Oct. 15:** Last day to save \$50 on registration for Learning Forward's 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif.
- Dec. 3-7:** Learning Forward's 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif.
- March 15, 2012:** Deadline to apply to join Academy Class of 2014.