



New Standards for Professional Learning help leaders create excitement, take risks

The new Standards for Professional Learning define the essential elements of and conditions for professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students. As coaches and teacher leaders, you are challenged to guide instructional improvements to increase student learning regardless of conditions or circumstances.

In *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy* (2009) Michael Fullan describes two change-savvy principles for creating positive movement: excitement prior to implementation is fragile and risks are necessary for learning. These principles complement the new standards in that they require that educators have a strong foundation to improve professional learning and that they take risks.

Excitement prior to implementation is fragile

The standards are not a workbook, tool kit, or technical assistance guide. To facilitate action and deep learning, use your leadership role to engage others in study, reflection, discussion, and planning using the standards to shape effective professional learning. Fullan (2009) asserts, “excitement in advance of doing something is understandable, but it does not have much of a foundation” (p. 28). While teacher leaders can use the new standards to create excitement, to be catalysts for change, you can take several steps to build a foundation. Specifically, you can:

- Study and learn the standards with others to develop a foundational knowledge about effective professional learning.
- Conduct a gap analysis to benchmark current professional learning practices against the standards to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Apply the standards in the development of team and school professional learning plans.
- Acknowledge real problems, such as instructional problems revealed when examining student work, content standard knowledge deficiencies discovered during planning, or student learning gaps identified during data analysis, and collaborate with others to seek solutions.
- Use the standards to plan, design, facilitate, and evaluate professional learning.
- Share and celebrate small and early successes along the way.

Risks are necessary for learning

Applying the standards to your work as a learning facilitator takes risk. You take risks in the design of professional learning that uses a variety of models and includes technology to maximize adult learning; in the use of data that is more comprehensive in its sources and leads to informed changes in practice; and in garnering support for varied uses of resources and proposing new and different ways to use funds, technology, and time for professional learning.



You are in a position to break away from the norm, equipped with evidence from research and practice embedded in the standards. Challenge the status quo and the “way-we-have-always-done-it” attitudes and beliefs by advocating, demanding, expecting, and facilitating the kind of professional learning described in the standards.

As teacher leaders, dare not to play it safe or contain your eagerness when it comes to communicating and sharing the Standards for Professional Learning. Be purposeful, tenacious, maintain momentum, and take risks to learn.

Reference

Fullan, M. (2009). *Motion leadership: The skinny on becoming change savvy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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