

Sandler Foundation supports Common Core

Learning Forward has received a \$500,000 grant from Sandler Foundation to launch Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. This two-year initiative will lead a statewide, comprehensive professional learning system that supports educators as they implement Common Core State Standards and new student assessments.

Common Core Standards and new assessments are intended to prepare all students to be college- and career-ready at the end of their pre-K-12 education and will necessitate different learning experiences for students. Because the standards focus on students' construction of new knowledge and application of learning in authentic situations, teachers will need to employ instructional strategies that integrate critical and creative thinking, collaboration, problem solving, research and inquiry skills, and presentation skills.

Sandler Foundation is committed to increasing opportunity for underserved students. "We have an opening to prepare all of our students to be critical thinkers with the skills needed to solve the pressing problems we face," said Susan Sandler of Sandler Foundation, "but the potential of the Common Core

State Standards and assessments can only be realized through a serious commitment to professional development."

"Full implementation of Common Core State Standards and readiness for new student assessments require that all school-based educators expand their expertise to produce high-level learning for all students," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "This calls for new forms of professional learning that engage educators in the same learning experiences they will create for their students. We cannot expect to realize the promise of Common Core with old models of professional learning. These new standards and assessments require us to rethink the entire system from policy to practice."

Working in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and with support from the National Governors Association, National Association of State Boards of Education, and American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Learning Forward will select a demonstration state in which to transform professional learning and create a comprehensive system, guided by policy and modeled through practice, that spans from the statehouse to the classroom. Five critical friend states will serve as contributors and critics.

book club

REALIZING THE PROMISE OF 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATION: AN OWNER'S MANUAL

By Bruce Joyce and Emily Calhoun

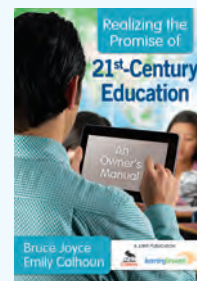
While many futurists tout the value of teaching students 21st-century skills, bridging the concept to practice is best accomplished by professional educators. Joyce and Calhoun know how to enact critical reforms that enable schools to prepare students for today's workforce. They outline a clear vision for advancing school reform that emphasizes infusing technology across the curriculum. Specific steps include:

- Providing technology access to *all* students to promote equity and engagement;
- Developing hybrid courses that prepare students to meet 21st-century needs;
- Designing professional development that connects technology to teaching;

- Improving literacy instruction;
- Changing the high school paradigm; and
- Involving teachers, parents, and community members in school leadership.

Educators can transform education using the information and communications technology. Joyce and Calhoun show how to deliver on the promise of a 21st-century education by teaching students the skills they need to achieve in their careers and in life.

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 Dec. 15. It will be mailed in January. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email office@learningforward.org.





Don't underestimate the value of a checklist for building a learning community

For school leaders faced with higher expectations for student success, time constraints, and diminishing resources, effective professional learning is critical. We need to identify what we need to know and learn it effectively for our students to be successful. This is not new — we have known it for a long time. So what's the issue?

For me, the issue is all the issues, the barrage of which sounds like rain on a tin roof. Like so many others, I wish someone would give me a checklist, a silver bullet for building an effective learning community. Impossible, you say. No, it isn't. Let me share my checklist for creating an effective model of learning.

These actions can change your school or district culture into a caring, high-performing learning community.

- Reorganize the schedule to encourage adult learning.
- Use a curriculum that addresses your state's assessment.
- Expand the curriculum so it addresses much more than the state's assessment.
- Assess frequently.
- Gather, study, and act on what the data scream at us.
- Engage all in the process of school improvement.

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on board MARK DIAZ

- Learn what it means to teach effectively — and then do it.
- Learning what it means to learn effectively — and make it happen.
- Create and maintain an atmosphere of trust.
- Care for one another.
- Address whether and how students are engaged in your system.
- Hire, develop, and nurture the best people.
- Encourage those who aren't the best to seek another profession.
- Use protocols.
- Be courageous.
- Laugh, smile, and celebrate often.
- Advocate for effective professional learning.

I am sure you can add to this checklist. Please do. And don't dismiss the power of the checklist. Atul Gawande, writer and surgeon, recently published *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* (2009). Gawande addresses the problem of "extreme complexity": There is so much knowledge to apply to so many big challenges, yet still we fail in a wide range of fields and circumstances. When a critical care specialist at Johns Hopkins University tried using a simple checklist to tackle just one of the many challenges his hospital faced, he demonstrated the value of delineating

the steps that make up one part of a very complex endeavor. Subsequent studies showed that disciplined use of checklists can save lives.

One key element of the success of the checklist, Gawande discovered, is the communication and teamwork that become a part of disciplined use of such a list. When everyone in the operating room commits to documenting their responsibilities against a checklist, the surgeon isn't the lone ranger anymore — she is a member of a team. The members all take collective responsibility for what happens as a result of their work together. Doesn't that sound like what we need to make happen in our schools?

My list is full of concepts that require a lot of work. I am asking you to detail the important steps you need to take, agree with your teams on your list, and commit together to the results you want to see. When you do that, you're well on your way to making Learning Forward's purpose a reality in your school: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

REFERENCE

Gawande, A. (2009). *The checklist manifesto: How to get things right*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. ■





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

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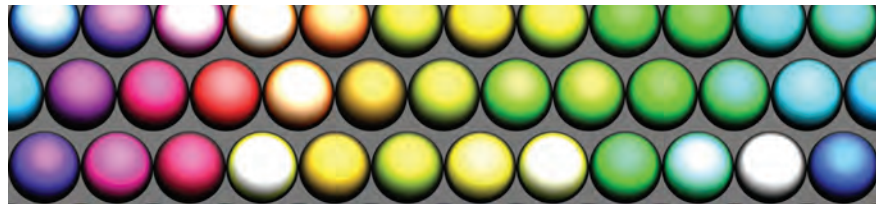
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E-learning session focuses on professional learning communities

The central word in professional learning communities is learning. Unfortunately, the learning often goes missing in many professional learning communities. In this five-week e-learning program, author and educator Lois Brown Easton takes an organic approach to purpose-driven professional learning and offers tools and strategies for focusing the work of learning communities on educator learning and student achievement. Participants will analyze their current learning communities and share strategies for strengthening existing professional learning communities and building new communities from the ground up. Through weekly live sessions and collaborative group activities, participants will learn and share strategies for building trust within a learning community, purposefully engaging colleagues in dialogue, and maintaining focus on a learning community's purpose.

All program participants will receive a print copy of Easton's book, *Professional Learning By Design: Putting the Learning Back Into PLCs*.



Easton

In addition, program participants will:

- Understand the professional learning structures and practices that lead to effective professional learning;
- Know how to link purpose to structure within a learning community;
- Understand the key elements of organizing a professional learning community;
- Explore strategies for helping colleagues work better in groups;
- Learn key skills related to facilitating dialogue and soliciting feedback; and
- Examine the purpose, mission, vision, organization, and other key elements of a community in which they currently participate.

The program runs Oct. 25-Nov. 22, with weekly live sessions Tuesdays at 1-2 p.m. Eastern time.

Program fee is \$199 for Learning Forward members; \$249 for nonmembers. For groups of four or more, the fee is \$149 per person.

Visit www.learningforward.org/elearning/programs for more information or to sign up.

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

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| Dec. 3-7: | Learning Forward's 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif. |
| Feb. 10, 2012: | Apply to present at Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass. |
| Feb. 28, 2012: | Apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools. |
| March 15, 2012: | Apply to join Academy Class of 2014. |
| July 15-18, 2012: | Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference in Denver, Colo. |