

## THE BOTTOM LINE ON EXCELLENCE:

A guide to investing in professional learning that increases educator performance and student results.

*By Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh*

With the current challenges to school funding, it is crucial that education agencies carefully examine their investments in professional learning. Guiding principles based on the Resources standard in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning can assist schools and districts to prioritize, monitor, and coordinate resources for educator learning.

## 841 SQUARE MILES OF COMMITMENT:

Districtwide plan makes professional learning a priority.

*By Nancy Ames Slabine*

For the last eight years, Duval County (Fla.) Public Schools has focused on enhancing professional learning. Although its annual budget has grown by only 9% since 2003-04, funding for professional development has nearly doubled during that same period. As a result, teacher practice and student achievement have both improved.



## THE POWER OF 2:

Partnership paves the way for teacher leadership academy.

*By Jeanne Harmon, Kip Herren, Rod Luke, and Terese Emry*

The Auburn School District in Washington state created a district strategic improvement plan with a three-year

framework aimed at improving student achievement. By enlisting the help of an external partner, the district is getting maximum impact from its resources by focusing on teachers' instructional leadership skills.

## TIGHT BUDGET LOOSENS CREATIVITY:

School turns to distance learning to stretch development dollars.

*By Sue Chapman*

At McWhirter Professional Development Laboratory School in Webster, Texas, shrinking budgets threatened several key professional development initiatives in progress. A combination of face-to-face sessions and technology-assisted distance learning solved the problem for teachers working to deepen their understanding of mathematics teaching and learning.

## NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF CONNECTIONS:

Social capital's strength lies in expertise, reciprocity, and relevance.

*By Wes Johnson*

Simply providing teachers with opportunities to meet with one another is not enough to guarantee substantial professional growth. According to social capital theory, teacher conversations must be characterized by expertise, reciprocity, and relevance in order to best support teacher learning. Administrators who keep this in mind will be better able to assess the strength of their school's professional learning community and transform teacher learning at their schools.

## EYES ON THE PRIZE:

A struggling Wisconsin school forges a steady path toward academic achievement.

*By Jane Antonovich, Kelly Jones, and Deborah Hoffman*

Once labeled a failing school, Lincoln Elementary in Madison, Wis., looked to its core values to develop a whole-school system of professional learning. With creative use of resources to promote student achievement, the school met its goal of reaching Adequate Yearly Progress.

## THE 3 R'S OF LEARNING TIME:

Rethink, reshape, reclaim.

*By Shera Carter Sackey*

A key component of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning is a focus on collaborative learning, typically in learning communities. Traditionally, most of this learning has taken place outside the school day or during the summer. Schools that are part of the Learning School Alliance have found creative ways to embed time for collaborative learning into their school days.

## DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A DOUG FRANKLIN?

Teachers can be the most important resource in the building.

*By Linda K. Hoy, Janice Bradley, and Julie Horwitz*

When counting up the resources in your school, don't forget about human capital. Teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes are the real treasures that can enrich a learning community. Educators must consider each other as the most valuable resource in a system, to be developed and supported with leadership, structures, tools, and processes for promoting continuous professional learning.

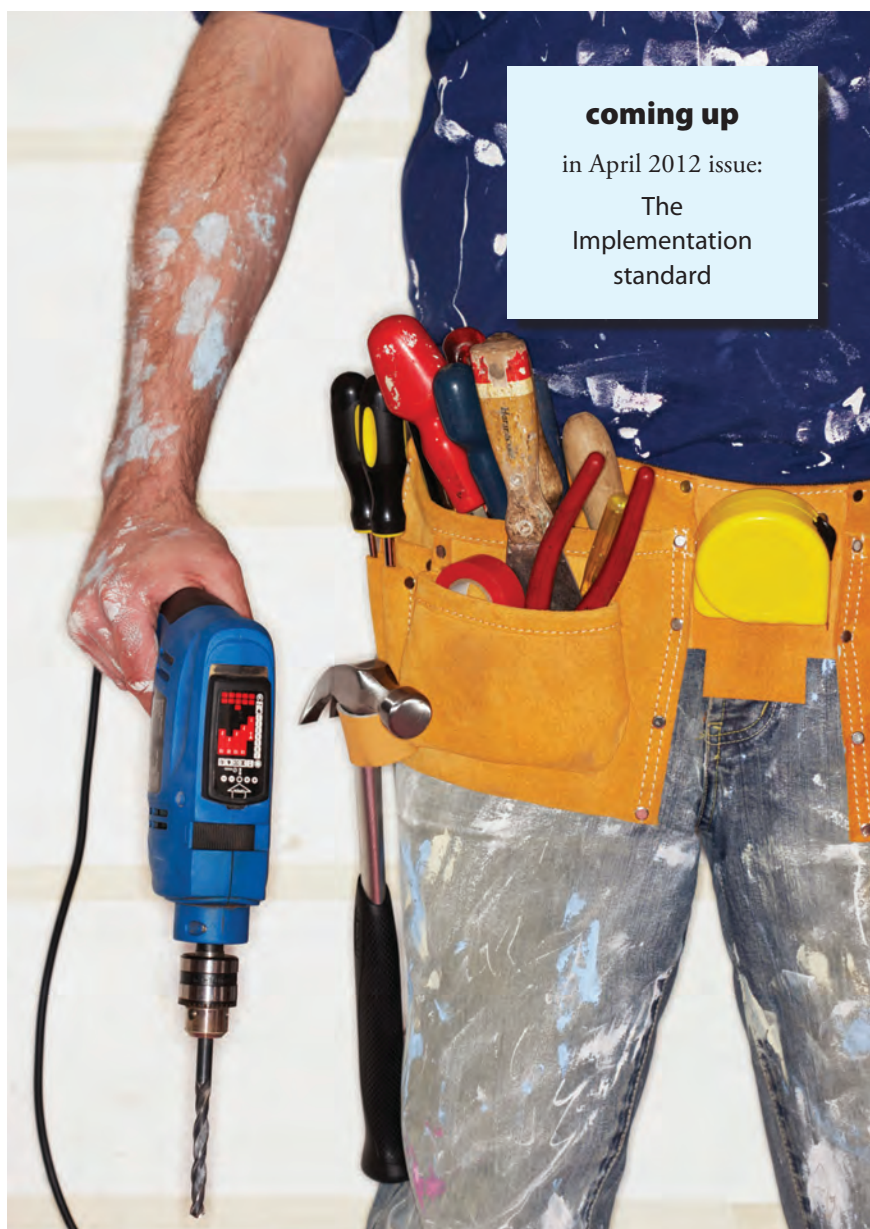
## feature

### The effective principal:

5 pivotal practices that shape instructional leadership.

By Pamela Mendels

What exactly is it that effective principals do that ripples through classrooms and boosts learning, especially in failing schools? After reviewing its body of research and field experiences, The Wallace Foundation pinpoints five practices central to effective school leadership: shaping a vision, creating a hospitable climate, cultivating leadership, improving instruction, and managing people, data, and processes. *This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.*



**coming up**  
in April 2012 issue:  
The  
Implementation  
standard

## columns

### Cultural proficiency:

Face-to-face interaction is best for developing cultural proficiency.

By Sarah W. Nelson  
and Patricia L. Guerra

While online learning has many advantages, technology reinforces distancing and isolation that contribute to cultural misunderstandings.

### From the director:

Do the homework on your investment in professional learning.

By Stephanie Hirsh

Produce data that can answer questions about and show the results of investments in professional learning.

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**Manuscript deadline:** April 15, 2012

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