



A spirit of problem solving is leading the way to a future full of possibilities

The definition of innovation is quite simple — innovation means “something new.” Educators have been encountering innovations for decades, and we even have a set of tools — Innovation Configuration maps — to take the steps to realizing change. Yet

beyond its most basic meaning, innovation carries with it the hefty burden of expectation. Innovation evokes the future, the potential for solving difficult challenges, the possibility of reaching seemingly impossible goals.

In this issue of *JSD*, you’ll read about some of today’s exciting innovations with the potential to transform

professional learning. The potential for results from these innovations is high. New technology products and services are effectively reducing isolation, increasing efficiencies and effectiveness, and ensuring equity.

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Many educators who have seen initiatives come and go are wondering why there is always another innovation on the horizon. The answer is that, in education, we still have a huge job left undone. Students are not leaving high school ready for careers or college, and professional learning is not adequately supporting enough educators to reach all students. This isn’t acceptable.

While emerging technologies have a real wow factor, the innovations evolving in education weren’t created for innovation’s sake. There is a real spirit of problem solving that leads educators and researchers to find new ways of approaching intractable challenges. Those working to pioneer potential game-changing solutions see the possibility of systemwide transformations and collective impact — without which our huge job will remain undone.

That is why the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has made an enormous investment in what it calls iPD. Originally, iPD stood for innovative professional development, and now it means so much more — striving to move from individualized to personalized and beyond. Read Stephanie Hirsh’s Q&A with Carina Wong on p. 20 for a deeper understanding of the issue.

Laying the groundwork for the kinds of innovation covered under the iPD umbrella is no different than establishing a systemwide mindset that results in effective professional

learning in general. As always, systems must work in a culture that embraces the cycle of continuous improvement, considering data about student and educator learners, identifying critical needs and relevant strategies, and assessing progress along the way.

That inquiry mindset is identical to that of the most forward-thinking innovators. It’s wonderful to experiment with the cutting edge, but if such innovations don’t result in the desired outcome, they aren’t worth continuing. Unless, of course, in continuing to develop the innovations, those at work tweak, adjust, and refine until the solution meets the need.

By the same token, educators must hold iPD to the same standards to which we hold any professional learning. As part of her article exploring the potential for technology in professional learning, Joellen Killion shares criteria to consider when examining the role a particular tool or service might play in a professional learning system (see p. 10). An innovation doesn’t get extra credit on the standards scale for using cool technology. We must continue to demand results.

We offer our appreciation to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its support of this issue of *JSD* and our 2012 Annual Conference. The foundation’s support encourages Learning Forward members to explore the possibilities for and impact of innovation on professional learning. ■

