



## Diverse voices enrich Common Core preparation

No matter what kind of school or organization you are in, there's always someone whose first reaction to a new initiative is to say no. No, we can't, no, that's not a good idea, no, we don't have the resources. And there's always someone else with another new idea — or an answer to any objection. We certainly have that at Learning Forward among our staff.

Maybe those immediate reactions indicate who is an optimist and who is a pessimist. Or maybe they point to the change-o-philes and change-o-phobes. Ultimately, though, any effective organization listens to all viewpoints and develops its capacity to move toward a deeper discussion, raise serious questions, and investigate possibilities for moving forward to achieve agreed-upon outcomes.

In these discussions, high-functioning organizations learn from all sides of the discussion. Those who first raise their hands to volunteer for the next new initiative may bring not only enthusiasm but also creative strategies to get started. Those who had immediate objections may also know what it takes for long-term success. The diversity of viewpoints adds up to a complete implementation plan to move an initiative forward.

In this issue of *JSD*, we ask if you're

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ready for the Common Core standards — a very big new initiative. The fact is, ready or not, here they come. As Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh writes on p. 72, schools and systems do have some time this year to build capacity, bolster content knowledge, and overhaul instructional skills. Another year isn't a lot of time, though, and we hope the authors in this issue will help you undertake your own preparations. In professional learning for college- and career-ready standards, the needs range from the very specific — teachers digging into a specific mathematics challenge — to the systemic — how districts logically and meaningfully integrate Common Core standards, assessments, and teacher evaluation systems.

As always, the Standards for Professional Learning underlie the professional learning outlined in any issue of *JSD*, and as Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh describe on p. 10, traditional professional development will not be up to the task for Common Core implementation. Their argument for resource investment in professional learning has a humorous counterpoint in Laura Thomas's look at how not to spend time and money effectively on p. 60.

On p. 34, Vicki Phillips and Lynn Olson share online tools that help educators develop and adapt research-based instructional tools. You'll also learn from practitioners doing the difficult work of unpacking content standards and building meaningful



adult and student learning at the school and system levels. For example, Valerie von Frank showcases how district leaders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) address challenges systemically and support educators at the school level. Garth McKinney, a teacher in New Hampshire, shares what he and his colleagues learned and what support helped them.

The issue draws upon what Learning Forward and its partners have learned through the initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. You'll learn more about that project throughout the issue and have an opportunity to sample a range of tools from the many workbooks and briefs created to help schools and school systems develop comprehensive professional learning systems to implement rigorous content standards. We are grateful for support from Sandler Foundation, MetLife Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. ■