

Champions of learning:

District leaders build skills to boost educator practice.

By Kay Psencik, Frederick Brown, Laura Cain, Ramona Coleman, and C. Todd Cummings

At a turnaround high school where staff had experienced four leaders in as many years, a first-year principal brought teachers together to change the way they work. He zeroed in on a few strategic goals and asked teachers to collaborate around those. Then, along with the administrative team, he provided the support they needed. This is what leadership looks like in Fort Wayne (Indiana) Community Schools.

Wisdom from the factory floor:

For best results, limit initiatives, build capacity, and monitor progress.

By Chad Dumas and Craig Kautz

Central office staff at Hastings (Nebraska) Public Schools have created the conditions for change to occur: They focus their efforts by limiting initiatives. They build the capacity of people in the district to make change happen. And they monitor implementation of learning throughout the district. The district uses four learning approaches aligned with the district's focus: monthly learning team meetings, classroom walk-throughs, leadership workshops, and school improvement leadership days.

Partners in achievement:

Synergy fuels growth in literacy and student engagement.

By Wendy James, Dave Dersken, and Kerry Alcorn

Saskatoon Public Schools in Saskatchewan, Canada, decided 10 years ago to undertake major changes in how it supports professional learning. The district began with two major priorities: increasing literacy in elementary schools and student engagement in high schools. To support that, the central office facilitates planning to clarify goals, helps narrow the focus, marshals evidence of progress, and lays a research foundation for district leadership and teaching practices.

Learning to be a change agent:

System leaders master skills to encourage buy-in for reforms.

By Nonie K. Lesaux, Sky H. Marietta, and Emily Phillips Galloway

The authors designed and led professional learning institutes for system leaders who support school-based literacy improvement in a large school district. Their goals were to create professional learning that simultaneously builds participants' knowledge about the content of the literacy-based reform and participants' knowledge about leading and supporting implementation.

Beyond buses, boilers, and books:

Instructional support takes center stage for principal supervisors.

By Sarosh Syed

The principal's job has evolved into one that centers on promoting high-quality teaching and learning in classrooms. But in most districts, the principal supervisor's job hasn't adapted to that change. Around the country, 14 districts are participating in a program funded by The Wallace Foundation to build up the role of principals' managers in the central office as a means to improve principal effectiveness. *This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.*

To move your career forward — retreat:

Set aside uninterrupted time to view your work from a distance.

By Billie F. Birnie

It is all too easy in the fast-paced life of the central office to lose sight of things that really matter. That's why every staff member needs to schedule personal retreats — uninterrupted time when you can focus on your career. A retreat offers the opportunity to look at your work from a distance to be sure it's becoming the picture you want it to be.

A fresh approach for fresh faces:

Central office leaders adopt strategies to support new teachers.

By Suzanne Molitor, Dina Burkett, Allison Cunningham, Cheryl Dell, and Anna Presta

In Ontario, Canada, supporting new teachers and mentors as part of new teacher induction is a mandate for all districts in the province. The Peel District School Board embraced this as an opportunity to be intentional, adaptive, and responsive to the learning needs of mentors and beginning teachers. District leaders adopted new strategies and processes for performing their work, and roles have shifted as central leaders adopt conceptual and interactive roles.

From theory to action:

Learning shifts into high gear with structured supports.

By Andrea Anderson, Beth Steffen, Chad Wiese, and M. Bruce King

The transformation of La Follette High School in Madison, Wisconsin, into a model for educators and university researchers is due to instructional leadership around three essentials of strong professional learning communities: a focus on learning, collaborative culture, and results orientation. Administrative and teacher leadership is evolving, promoting adult learning that fosters improved classroom practices and increased student achievement.



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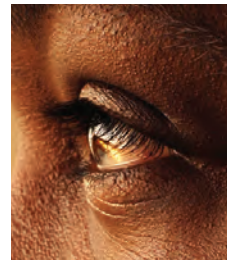
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Eyes on the prizewinners:

Foundation partners with recipients to set goals, measure growth, and encourage reflection.

By Janice Bradley and Shirley Hord

The Learning Forward Foundation began as a fundraising organization to support learning opportunities for superintendents, principals, learning teams, and individuals. Over time, the foundation has grown to become a more robust system of responsibility and accountability to donors and recipients. Foundation members have learned alongside recipients about the need for clear goals for direction, a clear image of the results, and the need for tools and processes to assess progress. Recipients also need support from a reflective partner — someone who asks clarifying questions that promote reflection, push thinking, and create space for generating solutions that respond to changing conditions.



columns

Lessons from research:

Study links professional learning to impact on students' civic literacy.

By Joellen Killian

A study of professional development for humanities teachers shows the impact on teachers as well on 9th- and 10th-grade students' historical understanding and civic literacy.

From the director:

Standards serve as guideposts for today's central office.

By Stephanie Hirsh

As the role of the central office evolves, the Standards for Professional Learning are key to ensuring effective professional learning for all teachers.