

Let's make 2015 the year of impact

As the U.S. Department of Education and Congress debate the future of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh pledges to work toward three goals in 2015 that will offer compelling evidence of professional learning's importance and affirm stakeholders' commitment to invest in it.

These goals are:

Highlight professional learning successes. Learning Forward is gathering stories about how effective professional learning has improved educator practice and results for students in order to share them with local, state, and federal decision makers, educators, and parents. These stories need to include specifics about the professional learning, including the goals, processes, and measures of success. Educators are invited to share examples of effective professional learning in action at www.learningforward.org/get-involved/tell-your-story.

Challenge ineffective professional development practices. Learning Forward is working to put an end to professional development that wastes resources — human, time, and financial — and find effective alternatives. To do this, educators must ask tough questions, such as: Is professional development an acceptable use of resources if only one teacher is touched when

so many need help? Just because the way we've always done it leads to some growth, is that all we should expect? Is scheduling schoolwide professional development the day before a holiday the best timing? What are the best uses of professional learning dollars — large auditoriums filled with educators or small groups working on writing common formative assessments?

Study the field. In order to be respected spokespersons for the field, educators need to be connected to the latest information and research on adult learning and development. While the Standards for Professional Learning provide educators a foundation for organizing study, discussing understandings, raising questions, and supporting future study, learning must extend beyond the standards because the field continues to evolve. Educators can accomplish this by following new learning from the field's chief advocates as well as those with different perspectives and focusing on the learning process that enables successful spread of practice in other sectors.

"Our expertise in our subject provides the foundation and credibility required to recognize and share success and eliminate waste," says Hirsh. "Please join me in sharing your observations, questions, and new learning related to the standards."

Share successes at www.learningforward.org/get-involved/tell-your-story

book club

OPENING DOORS TO EQUITY:

A Practical Guide to Observation-Based Professional Learning
By *Tonya Ward Singer*

How do we make educational equity a reality, lesson by lesson? This book focuses on observation-based professional learning to elevate teaching practice.

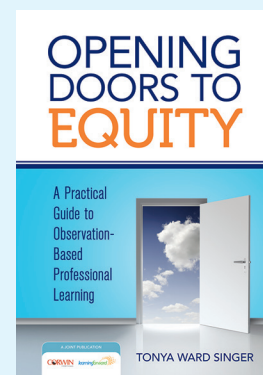
Learn how to bring team observation into the classroom to test, refine, and transform instruction so that students of all backgrounds achieve. Ideal for classroom teachers, grade-level team facilitators, department chairs, and all education leaders, this guide shows how to:

- Create a culture of deep collaboration that closes opportunity gaps among students;
- Effectively redesign instruction to reach culturally and linguistically diverse learners, using observation data and shared best practices; and

- Center instructional conversations on developing students' skills for college and career success, including hard-to-assess skills.

The book includes tools and handouts for facilitators and teachers as well as video clips of teams to illustrate and practice essentials of the process.

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 \$69 (for U.S. mailing addresses). To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before March 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call **800-727-7288** or email office@learningforward.org.



Galveston County project supports school leaders

Learning Forward has launched a professional learning initiative that will help Galveston County, Texas, area superintendents and their leadership teams support school leaders, change educator practice, and improve student results.

The Galveston County Learning Leaders initiative, with support from the Houston Endowment, will provide participants the intensive training and coaching necessary for developing essential knowledge and skills to build strong district systems of support for their schools.

Working in learning communities will enable participants to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their school districts' professional development investments as well as solve their immediate challenges.

In addition, participants will apply continuous improvement processes toward achieving district priorities, including helping principals become more effective instructional leaders and coaches.

This initiative will impact system leaders, principals, teachers, and students across multiple districts and diverse populations in the Galveston area. By working with leadership teams from multiple districts, Learning Forward's goal is to strengthen the existing network of superintendents and central office leadership in the region so they can sustain support for one another beyond the three-year program.

Participating districts are Dickinson ISD, Friendswood ISD, LaMarque ISD, Santa Fe ISD, Texas City ISD, Hitchcock ISD, Clear Creek ISD, and Galveston ISD.



SPRING WEBINAR SERIES BEGINS

Learning Forward's spring webinar series kicks off Tuesday, Feb. 10, as Jennifer Abrams hosts "Being Generationally Savvy."

Participants will learn strategies for embracing generational differences in their schools and gain resources and tools to enhance communication with all generations.

Additional spring webinar topics include assessment that supports learning, building leadership capacity, planning and designing professional learning, and more.

Webinars are free for Learning Forward members. Learn more at www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/webinars.

LEARNING FORWARD FOUNDATION'S REACH IN 2014

Donations and gifts to the Learning Forward Foundation fund scholarships and grants to individuals, teams, systems, and affiliates. Here's a quick overview of the foundation's impact in 2014. Grants and scholarships involved:

- 669 elementary, middle, and high school educators representing six states: Georgia, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.
- 69 elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Of those, 42 are Title I schools.
- 27,761 elementary, middle, and high school students.
- A 13.2% increase in the number of students in the proficient or advanced range as compared to the year before.

Projects focused on increasing student learning in mathematics, reading, and writing, with an additional focus on enhancing teacher leadership and equity, induction programs for new teachers, individual learning plans for experienced educators, developing collaboration, and job-embedded professional learning. Participants learned to use and apply the Standards of Professional Learning to enhance and extend educator knowledge and skills.

One grantee described a key learning from her grant: "A deep culture of collaboration must be present in order for high-fidelity implementation to occur. This includes trust and respect amongst team members, presence of vulnerability, consistent use of norms, and a belief in students."

To learn more about the foundation or to make a donation, visit www.learningforward.org/foundation.



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

LEARNING FORWARD'S VISION: Excellent teaching and learning every day.

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ENROLL IN THE WINTER INSTITUTE IN PHOENIX

Black Canyon Conference Center in Phoenix, Arizona, is the site for Learning Forward's Winter Institute Feb. 26-27. Learning Forward's Institutes offer two days of intensive learning that dig deep into topics that matter to educators.

Winter Institute topics include:

- Developing facilitation and presentation skills for effective leadership;

- Learning-focused feedback: The key to educator effectiveness; and
- Transforming professional learning: Applying proven strategies and tools to elevate educator practice and student results.

Learn more at www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/institutes.

learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/institutes.

Be a conference volunteer

Volunteers support Learning Forward staff and host committee with Annual Conference activities by assisting the host committee with registration, hospitality, publicity, student presence, program execution, exhibits, sponsors, and operations.

Each conference host committee recruits volunteers 12-18 months prior to the conference convening. For more information, visit www.learningforward.org/get-involved/volunteer/conference-volunteers.



Apply for Academy Class of 2017

The Learning Forward Academy brings together like-minded education professionals for a 2½-year, coach-led, collaborative learning cohort to tackle their biggest challenges in advancing teaching and learning in their systems.

The academy is a guided learning and problem-solving experience based on what we know about the causal relationships between professional learning, educator effectiveness, and student results.

Application deadline for the Academy Class of 2017 is March 15. To register or get more information, visit www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/academy.

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Feb. 15:** Manuscript deadline for the August 2015 issue of *JSD*. Theme: Learning with the best.
- Feb. 26-27:** Learning Forward Winter Institute in Phoenix, Arizona.
- March 15:** Application deadline for Learning Forward Academy Class of 2017.
- April 15:** Manuscript deadline for the October 2015 issue of *JSD*. Theme: Career pathways.
- May 15:** Learning Forward Spring Institute in New Jersey.