



## Take ownership of your learning

A couple of weeks ago, one of my colleagues related a coaching experience where she was in the position of sitting and watching, when she could have been trying and doing. She knew she wouldn't be able to apply her learning until she put it into practice. While she needed her peer's expertise, she also recognized how her knowledge and skill would grow most efficiently. With that in mind, she stood up for herself as a learner and asked to take control.

Being intentional as a learner in any context is easiest when we each recognize how we learn best and then take the next step to make it happen. This applies in both individual and collaborative learning environments. For individuals, this might mean seeking opportunities that emphasize observation or video rather than loads of reading — or vice versa. Or maybe particular individuals don't have opportunities or preferences to network face-to-face but find that virtual networks suit them best.

On teams, each member has the opportunity to assert his or her needs as a learner even while contributing to a collective outcome. For example, one member learns best by writing things down, so he volunteers to keep notes. Another member needs more

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**Tracy Crow ([tracy.crow@learningforward.org](mailto:tracy.crow@learningforward.org)) is director of communications for Learning Forward.**

preparation time, so she contributes to agenda setting. Yet another learns best with visuals, so he takes the responsibility for finding related infographics and videos to bring to the team.

Throughout this issue of *JSD*, we highlight examples of schools and systems that find a successful balance of collective and individual learning practices. For example, in several districts in New Jersey, teachers across grades and subjects learned together about using argument in their classes and applied their learning in their individual classrooms (see p. 12). In the York Region District School Board in Ontario, learning leaders addressed the challenge of personalizing learning in a context where all educators work toward systemwide goals (see p. 36).

However, none of these successes is possible without the active engagement of the individual adult learners participating in them. While we know more than ever about how to engage learners in different ways, engagement is not a one-way street. Professional learners have the responsibility to dig into their learning in the ways that will change their practices and increase their skills to reach all students. A glance across the Twittersphere shows that teachers are certainly up for the challenge, asking for more voice and choice in their learning.

One part of taking ownership of learning is understanding deeply our own best ways of learning.



Learners who can explicitly share their understanding of how they learn best help their colleagues contribute to better learning for all. Such discussions also emphasize the importance of knowledge about adult learning. Prioritizing learning about learning helps students and educators alike.

While Learning Forward has high aspirations for schools and school districts to create comprehensive professional learning systems that include all of the elements that ensure sustained and effective professional learning for all educators, the learner herself has an enormous responsibility for making sure learning happens. Effective learning designs, skillful leadership, trusting cultures, sufficient resources, relevant data are essential — and the learner ultimately pulls it all together by committing to and participating in sustained engagement and improvement. ■