

MAKING
MEANING
FROM

INSPIRATION

Conferences, institutes, meet-ups, workshops, TED talks — whatever the event, you're sure to walk away with new ideas and information. While serendipity brings amazing connections and unexpected possibilities, goal setting and planning lay the groundwork for a productive learning experience.

The questions below will help individuals or learning teams prepare for a learning event. Use or adapt these questions to suit a particular context or type of learning experience, whether virtual, face-to-face, short-term, or ongoing.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

- 1 Why did I/my team sign up for this experience?
- 2 What specific learning goals will this experience help me/us accomplish?
- 3 What data or information will help me/us be optimally prepared for this learning experience?
- 4 How can I/we put ourselves in the best frame of mind for intentional learning through this experience?
- 5 What changes in knowledge, practice, skills, or habits do I/we hope this will make possible?
- 6 What supports can I/we put in place now to ensure time and support for practice, reflection, and follow-up to this specific learning?

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Browse your program or the conference website (www.learningforwardconference.org/annual15) to explore all of the learning options at this year's conference.

TIPS FOR FIRST-TIMERS

Every education conference has its own culture and traditions. Learning Forward is certainly proud of the conference atmosphere we create every year, yet we understand that newcomers to any learning experience don't know where to start. Below are several suggestions for getting the most out of your first — or next — Learning Forward conference.

	Attend the first-timers session.	Learning Forward always offers a short session to orient novices to the conference. Not only will you pick up suggestions for navigating the conference, you'll have an opportunity to meet other attendees from all over the world.
	Scope out the conference space.	The layout of every conference is different, and there's nothing more frustrating than finding yourself at the end of the wrong hallway when the rest of your team is gearing up to learn.
	Find a conference mentor.	Anyone you meet who has been to a few conferences would be happy to help you make smart choices about where to go, whom to meet, and when to step out for a breather.
	Sample the wide range of opportunities.	Like most conferences, Learning Forward offers a variety of learning options. While you may be inclined toward lectures or full-day sessions, allow yourself the flexibility to sample a shorter session, a FastForward presentation, or a Q&A after the keynote.
	Eat with new friends.	Until you sit down with them, you'd call them strangers. Once you start sharing your stories, you're building a network that can help you find answers and make enduring connections. Learning Forward is one of the few conferences to build in common meal times for just this purpose.
	Introduce yourself to the executive director, keynote speakers, and your heroes from the field.	You're in the richest gathering of professional learning thought partners — take advantage of it. You'll find that everyone on site is eager to learn with you and establish new relationships.
	Make time for reflection.	With session after session to attend, a learner's brain fills up quickly. Create space in your day to process what you're hearing, whether with a team, on a tablet, or using social media.

What's new, what's next

Over the last couple of years, Learning Forward has introduced new formats and learning designs to broaden the options for conference attendees. At this year's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., you can try:

Networking sessions

Take advantage of networking opportunities to meet up with colleagues facing similar challenges in job-alike and special interest sessions. Sessions are available for principals and assistant principals, superintendents, and educators from the 50 largest school districts in the nation.



FastForward

Attend these fast-paced, concise presentations, also known as PechaKucha, Ignite, or Bytes. Each presentation includes 20 slides at 20 seconds each. Stop in for some or all of the presentations.

Technology Showcase and Smart Choices Experience

Experience vendor demonstrations in the Exhibit Hall Technology Showcase. Find cutting-edge solutions to your greatest professional learning challenges. Explore the latest in tools, resources, and strategies to help develop and support educators in implementation efforts.

Summit sessions

Top off your learning on Wednesday, the last day of the conference, with a summit session. Summit sessions provide a three-hour, in-depth look at topics ranging from leadership to 21st-century skills.

Field trips

Explore the D.C. area with one of three field trips or site visits. Two options take attendees to area schools, while another offers an opportunity to visit Capitol Hill for a policy briefing.