



## Put yourself in someone else's shoes

Being comfortable is nice, but it can also be dangerous. While education professionals are always dealing with change, sometimes we can get stuck in our perspective. We know how critical it is to develop a vision and a point of view, we know what matters to us, and we know where we're headed. Operating with a steady perspective keeps us focused.

And yet, it can be limiting. We may not see potential solutions or new possibilities for coming at challenges from a different direction. We may not see that the problems in front of us aren't the problems we should be concerned about. Often when Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's deputy executive director, hears educators talk about a problem such as curriculum implementation, they assume the solution lies in the curriculum, when, in fact, effective professional learning might be the answer. He has a different perspective — one that can help those educators achieve better results.

There's value in opening ourselves up to new perspectives — and that is, in itself, a growth strategy. Here are three starting points for creating new windows into the world.

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

### Read literature from other fields.

Many of the challenges educators face are not unique. When we talk about adult learning, there are models to consider in law, medicine, and sports. When we talk about organizational culture, there are valuable perspectives from a wide range of business arenas. We should also go further afield — reading about music and art, or science and technology, exposes us to vastly different ways of thinking about the world that can create valuable eureka moments.

**Seek out those with whom you disagree.** In the midst of an argument or at a time when you are advocating for a particular point of view, it can be difficult to sympathize with the person you consider your opponent. However, when you step back from your opinion, you create an opportunity for dialogue with that person. Approach with an inquiry stance, one where you don't want just to understand or empathize, but where you are open to upending your view entirely. This can force you into cognitive dissonance, and, in that state, there are many possibilities for new thinking.

**Become someone else, if just for a moment.** Sometimes a person you admire might act or react in a way that you'd like to be able to emulate. Consider what it would mean to just become him or her in that moment and behave accordingly. I've used this



strategy recently more than once. I might be in a spot where I know that Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward's executive director, would say the right thing, and so I tell myself to say what she might say. Putting that hat on gives me a different attitude to act in that moment.

What strategies do you use to learn through another's eyes? How has it helped? We hope *JSD* can contribute to broadening your view.

### Note:

The October *JSD* article "It's not just *what* you say" by Kendall Zoller, Antonia Issa Lahera, and Anthony H. Normore should have included a reference to *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools* by Arthur L. Costa and Robert J. Garmston. We apologize for the omission. The online version of the article includes the full citation. ■