PERSPECTIVES THAT RESONATE

THE PASSAGES on these pages are drawn from articles that have been perennially popular on Learning Forward's website. Read the passages, explore the full articles online, and consider the following questions:

- **Why do these concepts continue to intrigue learning leaders?**
- **What implications do these ideas have for my practice?**
- **How will we know we're seeing progress in our school or system related to these ideas?**
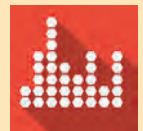
POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

"**S**chool culture enhances or hinders professional learning. Culture enhances professional learning when teachers believe professional development is important, valued, and 'the way we do things around here.' Professional development is nurtured when the school's history and stories include examples of meaningful professional learning and a group commitment to improvement.

"Staff learning is reinforced when sharing ideas, working collaboratively to learn, and using newly learned skills are recognized symbolically and orally in faculty meetings and other school ceremonies. For example, in one school, staff meetings begin with the story of a positive action a teacher took to help a student — a ceremonial school coffee cup is presented to the teacher and a round of applause follows.

"The most positive cultures value staff members who help lead their own development, create well-defined improvement plans, organize study groups, and learn in a variety of ways. Cultures that celebrate, recognize, and support staff learning bolster professional community."

— *Kent D. Peterson*

SOURCE: Peterson, K.D. (2002, Summer). Positive or negative. *JSD, 23*(3), 10-15. Available at www.learningforward.org/docs/jsd-summer-2002/peterson233.pdf.

LEARNING FORWARD OFFERS A CHALLENGE TO SCHOOL SYSTEMS

"Many central office administrators refer to their school systems 'providing' or 'delivering' professional development, but do they learn from it? School systems devote enormous resources to learning about their students' education, and its results, but they fail to examine and learn from the professional development of adults responsible for the students' education. To do so, administrators will want to regularly monitor and assess whether and to what extent professional development is accomplishing its intended purpose — raising the performance levels of educators and their students. Only by systematically and consistently collecting such data can school systems obtain the information necessary to learn how well professional development is working and how to increase its impact."

— Hayes Mizell

SOURCE: Mizell, H. (2010, Fall). Learning Forward offers a challenge to school systems. *The Learning System, 6*(1), 2. Available at www.learningforward.org/docs/learning-system/sys9-10mizell.pdf.

WORK ON THE FINAL 2%

"Schools and schools systems do many things in the name of professional development that may be important and even essential but, in and of themselves, do not affect learning and relationships in schools. Among these activities are establishing policies, forming planning committees, hiring instructional coaches, and providing released days. I think of these activities as the 'initial 98%' because they consume most of the time and energy devoted to professional development, although they have little demonstrable effect on teaching, learning, and relationships.
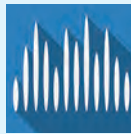
"The 'final 2%,' on the other hand, is that cluster of experiences that physically change teachers' and administrators' brains and alter their professional relationships in ways that improve teaching and learning in schools. Activities that comprise the 'final 2%' can take many forms, some familiar (for instance, direct teaching of a skill) and others less familiar to many teachers (for instance, lesson study or the examination of student work).

"It is critically important that professional learning employ methods that align with the school or system's sense of 'good teaching.' Like students, teachers' brains are changed when they are fully engaged in cognitively demanding processes such as reading, writing, observing, using various cognitive strategies, listening carefully, speaking thoughtfully, and practicing new habits of mind and behavior."

— Dennis Sparks

SOURCE: Sparks, D. (2008, May). Work on the final 2%. *The Learning Principal, 1*(8), 2. Available at www.learningforward.org/publications/learning-principal/learning-principal-blog/learning-principal/2006/05/01/the-learning-principal-may-2006-vol.-1-no.-8.

ARE YOU COACHING HEAVY OR LIGHT?

"What I am asking of coaches demands that they shift from being liked and appreciated to making a difference. Coaches may need to examine their beliefs about who they are as a coach, the role of coaching in the school, and about change. These beliefs drive who they are as coaches. Coaching heavy requires that coaches move to the edge of or beyond their comfort zone and even their competence to encourage teachers to move beyond theirs as well. For some coaches, the thought of this produces tremendous anxiety. When coaches opt to stay in their own or in teachers' comfort zone too long, they limit the impact of their work and even waste their precious time and the resource of coaching."

— Joellen Killion

SOURCE: Killion, J. (2008, May). Are you coaching heavy or light? *Teachers Teaching Teachers, 3*(8), 1-4. Available at www.learningforward.org/docs/leading-teacher/may08_killion.pdf.