

# JSD

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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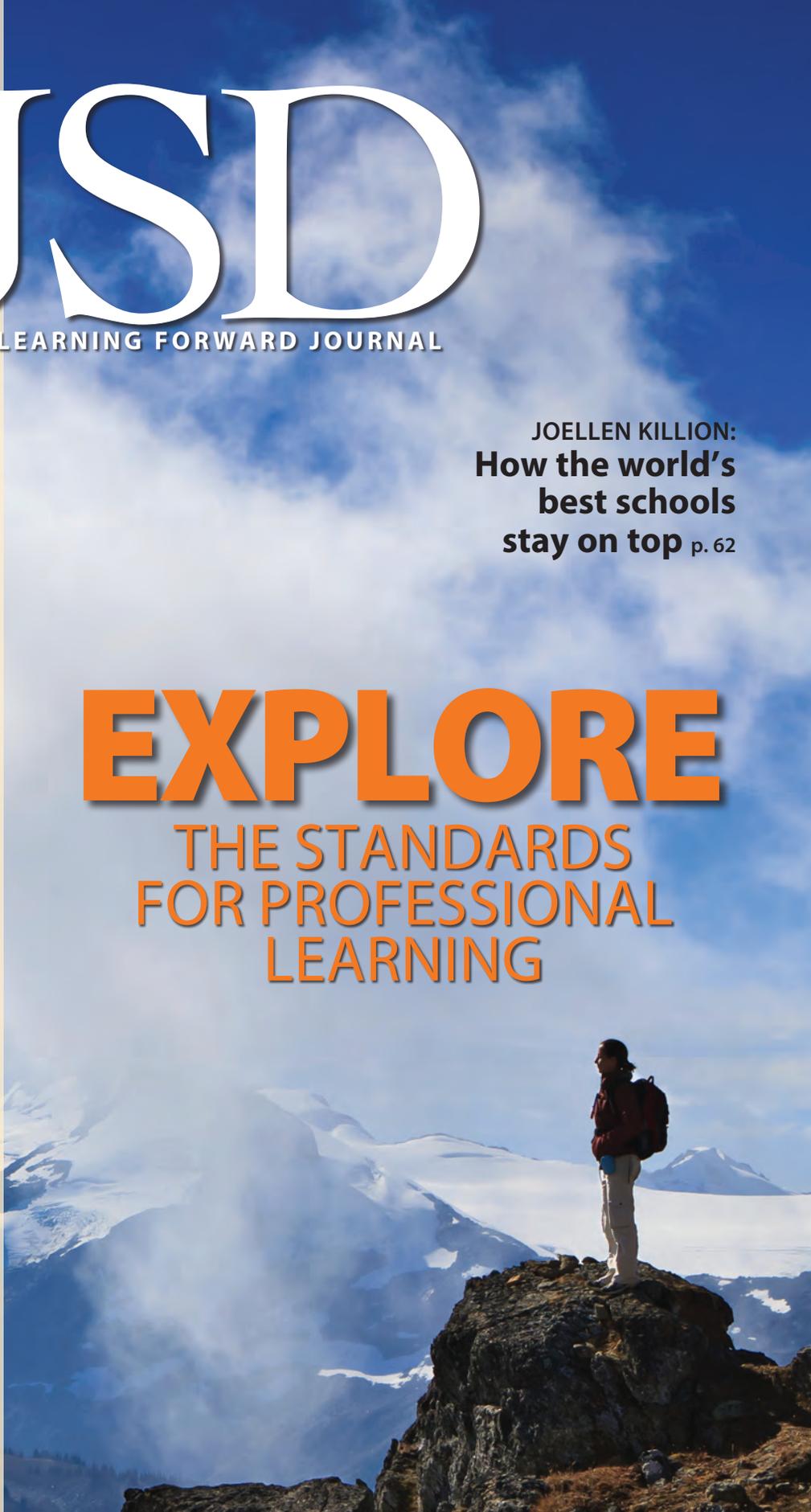
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## EXPLORE

THE STANDARDS  
FOR PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING



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# JSD

The  
Learning Forward  
Journal

FEBRUARY 2016  
VOLUME 37, NO. 1

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THE STANDARDS  
FOR PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING



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Learning Forward’s ultimate desire is that effective professional learning is so ubiquitous that we no longer need professional learning standards to define it.”

— Stephanie Hirsh, p. 80

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### 62 How the world’s best schools stay on top:

STUDY’S KEY FINDINGS PINPOINT PRACTICES THAT ALIGN WITH LEARNING FORWARD.

**By Joellen Killion**

Key findings from a new study highlight how Learning Forward’s long-standing position on professional learning correlates with practices in high-performing systems in Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and British Columbia.





## Standards have the most muscle when used together

In the introduction to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, we describe how educators can use the standards to plan, implement, and evaluate professional learning. The standards offer criteria against which to measure the quality of professional learning. In simpler terms, they are absolute must-haves for professional learning that leads to the results we desire for all learners.

We explore the standards one by one, whether in the published Standards for Professional Learning volume or in any of the tools, including the Innovation Configuration maps, Standards Assessment Inventory, or even this issue of *JSD*. As with any complex concept, we break apart the whole to study the parts. We go through each of the seven methodically to understand its components and what it means.

Perhaps some educators even have a favorite standard. I know I do, but I won't tell you which it is. Yet in the on-the-ground learning through which the standards come to life, the standards interlock to function as a whole. They can't stand alone, or what they are intended to accomplish is impossible.

As we go deeper in understanding the standards, it is just as important to seek connections among them as it is

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



to know what a single standard looks like. Take the Learning Communities standard, for example. In learning teams at the school level, this standard seems like the most important to study and comprehend. To be effective, teams know how to collaborate. They use steps of the cycle of continuous improvement to guide their learning and problem solving. Further, they develop a sense of collective responsibility as they commit to shared goals for all the students they teach. Learning teams operate in alignment with school and district visions for results and help schools achieve those results.

Those are the key concepts of the Learning Communities standard and are important guideposts to know that collaborative professional learning can lead to changed practices and improved student outcomes. Yet those critical elements of just one standard are both difficult to achieve and likely ineffective without the interplay of the others.

Teams can't sustain their work without the support of leaders who advocate for professional learning and who serve as learners themselves — that's the Leadership standard. Without clear information about where students struggle related to a school's vision and goals, adults won't be able to set meaningful learning goals for themselves. They need the conditions and elements that the Data standard outlines. Without coordinated attention to time structures and other resources, the team won't have time to meet, which is why the Resources standard is critical.

Team members will need to carefully select the adult learning strategies that help them achieve their learning goals. They'll apply their knowledge of how adults learn throughout the process, which is where the Learning Designs standard comes in. And without support to sustain their learning and attention to the change process, the team's learning won't stick, thus the Implementation standard. Finally, their learning is just an exercise if it isn't planned, implemented, and evaluated in light of the Outcomes standard, which highlights the importance of tying adult learning to student learning standards — and to adult performance standards.

As you read through this issue of *JSD*, please take note of the connections you see among the standards. The learning opportunities and systems you're building to serve educators and students will be stronger for it. ■

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*For more information, contact Associate Director of Consulting and Networks Tom Manning at [tom.manning@learningforward.org](mailto:tom.manning@learningforward.org) or 972-421-0900, or visit [www.learningforward.org/consulting](http://www.learningforward.org/consulting).*



## RETHINK TEACHING

### Smart, Skilled, and Striving: Transforming and Elevating the Teaching Profession

*Center for American Progress,  
November 2015*

The report's three authors argue that school districts have not reacted well to the enormous shifts in modern education, making it more difficult for teachers to succeed and subsequently eroding the public's trust in the profession. Because of this, "[s]ystemic change is critical for the future of the U.S. teacher workforce and the nation's students." The paper calls for a modernization of the entire teacher career continuum, from recruitment and training to support and professional development to compensation and advancement. Among its recommendations: Require districts to fund professional development that is aligned to high-quality evaluation systems and that improves student outcomes.

[www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2015/11/03/123747/smart-skilled-and-striving](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2015/11/03/123747/smart-skilled-and-striving)

## TEACHER RESOURCE

### Educator Competencies for Personalized, Learner-Centered Teaching

*Jobs for the Future & Council of Chief  
State School Officers, August 2015*

This guide describes ways in

which educators can best assess and address individual student needs and help them reach rigorous proficiency standards. The competencies are broken down into four areas: cognitive (need to know), intrapersonal (need to process), interpersonal (need to relate), and instructional (need to do). This framework is designed to translate current standards to the context of personalized, student-centered learning models. In this way, the competencies help teachers visualize a natural evolution from their legacy systems to ones that better meet the changing needs of learners.

[www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/Educator\\_Competerencies\\_for\\_Personalized\\_Learner-Centered\\_Teaching.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/Educator_Competerencies_for_Personalized_Learner-Centered_Teaching.html)

## POLICY SNAPSHOT

### Summary Analysis of the Every Student Succeeds Act

*EducationCounsel, December 2015*

EducationCounsel summarizes the 1,061-page Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaces the No Child Left Behind Act in establishing federal guidelines for public education evaluation and achievement. Although the bipartisan bill's impact will take months and years to play out, EducationCounsel notes several key themes, primary among them that although the "basic architecture" of standards-based reforms remains,



ESSA shifts responsibility to design and implement these systems from the federal level to states and districts. EducationCounsel notes that the bill's fundamental underlying change — from a focus on fidelity to law to a belief that reporting transparency will "inform evidence-based actions" by states and districts — creates both opportunities and risks.

<http://educationcounsel.com/?publication=summary-analysis-every-student-succeeds-act>

## ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK

### Called to Account: New Directions in School Accountability

*Education Week, January 7, 2016*

The 2016 edition of Education Week's "Quality Counts" report examines how new state and federal strategies are transforming the assessment of school performance and reshaping the consequences for poor results. Pressure is mounting for accountability systems to go beyond test scores and incorporate other academic and nonacademic factors in meaningful ways. Education Week's journalists investigate these and other pivotal issues, delivering in-depth insights and lessons learned from the work of states and local school systems already on the cutting edge of these trends. The report also issues "State of the States" grades and provides analysis of national achievement trends.

[www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2016/01/07](http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2016/01/07)

## LEARNING OUTLOOK

### The Future of Learning: Education in the Era of Partners in Code

*KnowledgeWorks, December 2015*

This report examines how the digital revolution — particularly

our interaction with personal digital devices — is disrupting society, business, and education. Focusing on how we are becoming “inextricably linked with our digital companions,” the report imagines what education will look like as we become “partners in code”: humans and their tools evolving together. The 10-year forecast looks at what the drivers of change might be; how people, structure, and society will be affected; and ultimately what all this could mean for educators. It calls upon educators to imagine what role they will play in this large-scale societal shift, as well as create strategies and structures to navigate the turbulent decade ahead.

[www.knowledgeworks.org/future-forecast-4](http://www.knowledgeworks.org/future-forecast-4)



## IMPROVING PRINCIPALS

### Six Superintendents' Experiences Building Principal Pipelines

*The Wallace Foundation, July 2015*

This series of eight videos looks at six superintendents in large urban districts who have participated in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative, a six-year effort to train, hire, and support talented principals. In these videos, the superintendents detail their efforts, lessons they have learned, and advice they can offer to other districts. Covering subjects that range from developing clear leadership standards to instituting training and support

programs for novice principals, these videos and the full report from which they sprang, *Districts Taking Charge of the Principal Pipeline* (January 2015), provide a path by which other districts can strengthen their leadership.

[www.wallacefoundation.org/view-latest-news/events-and-presentations/Pages/Six-Superintendents-Experiences-Building-Principal-Pipelines.aspx](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/view-latest-news/events-and-presentations/Pages/Six-Superintendents-Experiences-Building-Principal-Pipelines.aspx)

## REPORT ON EQUITY

### Destination: Equity

*Strategies, September 2015*

This special issue of *Strategies* highlights best practices and theories for engaging poor and minority students in rigorous work. It also asks, “Why are these best practices not being systematically and systemically integrated into our classrooms, schools, and districts?” The issue uses an in-depth case study to examine a Minneapolis-area school district trying to improve itself after a history of neglect in providing equity to all students. It also dives into evidence-based approaches that strive to do away with the link between race, poverty, and educational outcomes “that now constrain not only our systems of education but our potential as a nation.”

[www.panasonicfoundation.net/sites/default/files/strategies/STRATEGIES%20SEPT%2015%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.panasonicfoundation.net/sites/default/files/strategies/STRATEGIES%20SEPT%2015%20FINAL.pdf)



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# 4 MUST-HAVES FOR THE JOURNEY

The Standards for Professional Learning focus attention on educator learning that relates to successful student learning. Implicit in the standards are several prerequisites for effective professional learning. They are so fundamental that the standards do not identify or describe them. These prerequisites reside where professional learning intersects with professional ethics.

Professional learning is not the answer to all the challenges educators face, but it can significantly increase their capacities to succeed. When school systems, schools, and education leaders organize professional learning aligned with the standards, and when educators engage in professional learning to increase their effectiveness, student learning will increase.

## 1 Educators' commitment to students — all students — is the foundation of effective professional learning.

Committed educators understand that they must engage in continuous improvement to know enough and be skilled enough to meet the learning needs of all students. As professionals, they seek to deepen their knowledge and expand their portfolio of skills and practices, always striving to increase each student's performance. If adults responsible for student learning do not continuously seek new learning, it is not only their knowledge, skills, and practices that erode over time. They also become less able to adapt to change, less self-confident, and less able to make a positive difference in the lives of their colleagues and students.

## 2 Each educator involved in professional learning comes to the experience ready to learn.

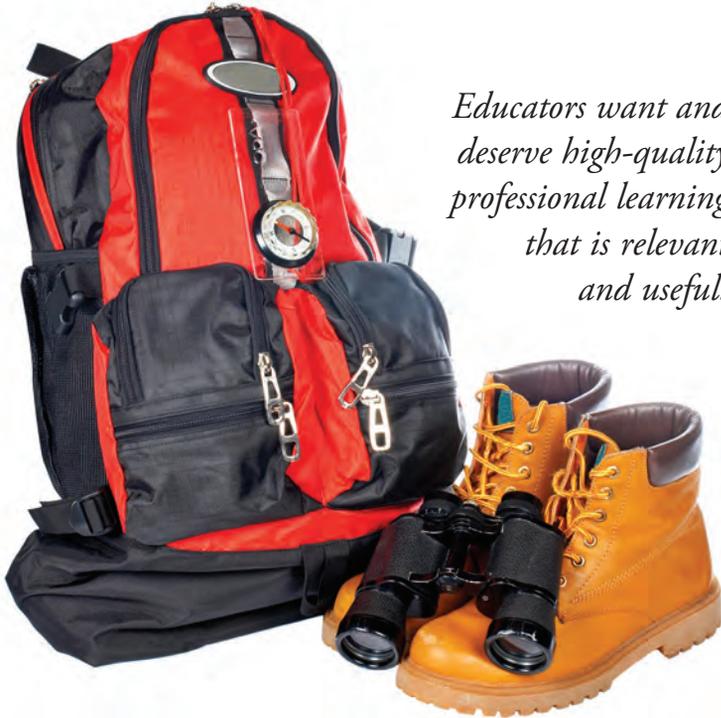
Professional learning is a partnership among professionals who engage with one another to access or construct knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions. However, it cannot be effective if educators resist learning. Educators want and deserve high-quality professional learning that is relevant and useful. They are more likely to fully engage in learning with receptive hearts and minds when their school systems, schools, and colleagues align professional learning with the standards.



## WHO USES the Standards for Professional Learning?

Every educator and policymaker who understands the importance of professional development needs to pay attention to the Standards for Professional Learning.

- **Policymakers** use the standards to impact policy, legislate higher-quality professional development, measure effectiveness, and ensure more educators have access to effective professional learning.
- **District staff** use the standards to guide the development of a system to ensure that effective professional development takes place in all schools.
- **Teachers and principals** use the standards to guide their own school-based planning, identify where to invest, advocate for access to effective professional learning, and call out professional development that does not meet the standards and is a waste of their time and their students' time.
- **Parents** use the standards to better understand what to expect when their school is reserving time for professional development and what to ask for so their children's teachers get the support they need to be their very best.



*Educators want and deserve high-quality professional learning that is relevant and useful.*

**4 Like all learners, educators learn in different ways and at different rates.**

Because some educators have different learning needs than others, professional learning must engage each educator in timely, high-quality learning that meets his or her particular learning needs. Some may benefit from more time than others, different types of learning experiences, or more support as they seek to translate new learning into more productive practices. For some educators, this requires courage to acknowledge their learning needs and determination and patience to continue learning until the practices are effective and comfortable.

**SOURCE:** Learning Forward. (n.d.). *Standards for Professional Learning quick reference guide*. Oxford, OH: Author. Available at [www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/standardsreferenceguide.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/standardsreferenceguide.pdf).

**3 Because there are disparate experience levels and use of practice among educators, professional learning can foster collaborative inquiry and learning that enhances individual and collective performance.** This cannot happen unless educators listen to one another, respect one another's experiences and perspectives, hold students' best interests at the forefront, trust that their colleagues share a common vision and goals, and are honest about their abilities, practices, challenges, and results. Professional accountability for individual and peer results strengthens the profession and results for students.

**MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS**

The Standards Assessment Inventory is a 50-item, web-enabled survey that assesses the alignment of a system's professional learning practices with the Standards for Professional Learning. States, regional service centers, and school systems use this valid and reliable tool to measure teacher perceptions of professional learning and to guide planning, facilitating, implementing, and evaluating professional learning to maximize its impact and investment.

Learn more about the Standards Assessment Inventory at [www.learningforward.org/consulting/sai](http://www.learningforward.org/consulting/sai).

**STANDARDS FACILITATOR GUIDE**

Introduce the Standards for Professional Learning to teams and assist with implementation using this online resource kit. Complete with handouts and presentation slides, the guide is organized to support a full-day learning session and includes variations for a two-hour introduction. Use practical activities and reflection questions to deepen educators' understanding of the standards and support them in planning, implementing, and assessing more effective professional learning.

With many interactive learning opportunities for participant discussion, conversation, and involvement, this guide models the kind of professional learning described in the standards. The tasks, discussion questions, and tools frame reflections and dialogue about the standards and provide opportunities to apply them in users' own work.

To learn more or download the guide, visit [www.learningforward.org/standards/facilitator-guide](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/facilitator-guide).



## By Eric Celeste

In 2011, Learning Forward revealed its third iteration of Standards for Professional Learning — seven characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The 2011 standards (see p. 11), built on those issued in 1994 and revised in 2001, combine decades of research, lessons learned, and input from 40 professional education organizations.

Undergirding all seven standards is this fundamental premise: The purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. The standards are not a prescription for how education leaders and public officials should address all the challenges related to improving the performance of educators and their students. The standards focus on one critical issue — professional learning.

The seven standards focus attention on educator learning

that relates to successful student learning, and it is vital that we support all educators in doing the same. Every educator requires professional learning that is interactive, relevant, sustained, and embedded in everyday practice. Only by achieving such a vision for professional learning is equity of access to high-quality education for every student possible.

It is not a simple matter to connect the dots between high-quality professional learning and student outcomes. However, the theory of action that drives the standards, and indeed much of Learning Forward’s work, is a continuous model of improvement: Standards-based professional learning leads to greater overall educator expertise, which causes changes in educator practice that results in better student outcomes (see “Relationship between professional learning and student results” on p. 12). There is much embedded in each of those four circles, and the aim of this issue of *JSD* is to encourage readers to explore the ideas behind the standards in depth through a range of lenses and consider next actions.

The quality of professional learning that occurs when the Standards for Professional Learning are fully implemented en-

# STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

*Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...*

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

**LEADERSHIP:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

**RESOURCES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

**DATA:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

**LEARNING DESIGNS:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

**OUTCOMES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

rolls educators as active partners in determining the focus of their learning, how their learning occurs, and how they evaluate its effectiveness. These educators are part of a team, a school, and a school system that conceive, implement, and evaluate carefully aligned professional learning that responds to individual, team, schoolwide, and system-wide goals for student achievement. The standards give educators the information they need to take leadership roles as advocates for and facilitators of effective professional learning and the conditions required for its success.

Why is this critical? Placing the emphasis on professional learning reminds all education stakeholders that educators' continuous improvement affects student learning. Increasing the effectiveness of professional learning is the leverage point with the greatest potential for strengthening and refining the day-to-day performance of educators.

For most educators working in schools, professional learning is the singular most accessible means they have to develop the new knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to better meet students' learning needs. If educators are not engaged throughout their careers in new learning experiences that enable them to better serve their students, both educators and students suffer.

And if those educators are not learning collaboratively in the context of a systemwide plan for coherent learning tied to a set of goals aligned from classroom to school to school system, their professional learning is less likely to produce its intended results.

This is not theory: We've seen it in practice. In the five years since Learning Forward issued the Standards for Professional Learning, there has been widespread adoption of its core tenets throughout 39 states and several municipalities. (See "Why adoption of standards matters" on p. 60.) Policymakers have used them to help form law and inform conversations about the value of professional learning to teachers, students, districts, and communities. They have proven to be a vital tool, necessary when incorporating high-quality professional learning practices into a school system.

Why then revisit them now, and in such depth? Three reasons:

**Teacher turnover:** Although a 2015 comprehensive National Center for Education Statistics study (NCES, 2015) proved that many reports of teacher turnover were overstated, it showed a 30% turnover rate every five years, on average. That means there are nearly one million new full-time teachers, public and private, since 2011, when we first examined the standards at great depth. We know also that

Learning Forward’s membership shifts and grows, with many educators taking on new learning leadership roles in their schools and school districts.

**A new landscape:** With the adoption of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), we see the continuation of a sea change in public education. As ESSA is interpreted state by state, efforts that revolved around measuring and improving teacher accountability and effectiveness — and tying those measures to student outcomes — will be adjusted and implemented. A discussion about the necessity of effective professional learning to those efforts is crucial. As well, ESSA offers many opportunities to rethink in depth how funds for professional learning are best invested. Absent attention to the standards, those investments are unlikely to bear the returns students, communities, and educators demand.

**Increasing relevance:** Five years is a long time in education. It’s vital the standards not be stagnant, but that they are viewed and re-viewed through a critical lens. We felt it important for the continuing examination of these standards to come from experts outside Learning Forward, from researchers and thought leaders also on the front lines of shaping the professional learning conversation. They can help educators more fully understand what the standards are and the myriad ways thought leaders with a range of perspectives consider their meaning and use. They can take their knowledge and relevant research to explain and give examples of how each of these elements function individually and in synergy to enable educators to increase their effectiveness and student learning.

This is why we created a book series with Corwin — to invite the authors featured in this issue of *JSD* to explore these standards in depth. The seven-book series — one for each standard — was conceived to deepen learning leaders’ understanding of the standards. Each volume opens with a thought leader essay exploring the themes in the standards. These essays are not identical to what Learning Forward would write — we invited these particular authors because of their expertise. We knew they would approach the standards from a unique angle that would encourage learning and reflection.

Each volume in the *Reach the Highest Standard* series continues with a section geared toward practitioner implementation

## Relationship between professional learning and student results

1. When professional learning is standards-based, it has greater potential to change what educators know, are able to do, and believe.
2. When educators’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions change, they have a broader repertoire of effective strategies to use to adapt their practices to meet performance expectations and student learning needs.
3. When educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results.
4. When student results improve, the cycle repeats for continuous improvement.



This cycle works two ways: If educators are not achieving the results they want, they determine what changes in practice are needed and then what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to make the desired changes. They then consider how to apply the standards so that they can engage in the learning needed to strengthen their practice.

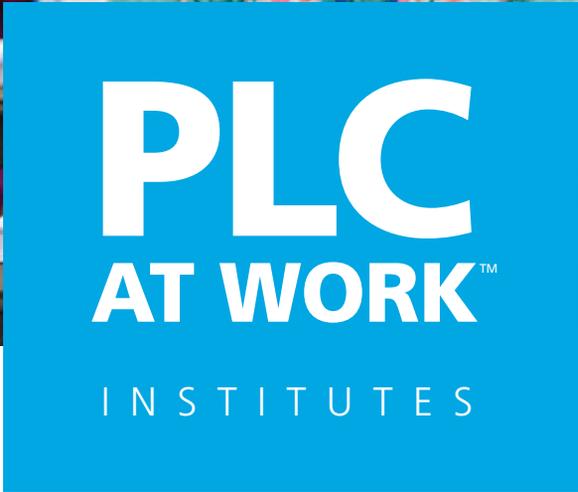
of the standards, complete with protocols and educator considerations. Finally, each volume concludes with a case example of a school system that has used the concepts in the standard to improve results. The cases highlight the real-world successes and challenges of improving professional learning through sustained effort, offering context information and inspiration.

We appreciate the partnership with Corwin on the series and their support of this issue of *JSD*. We hope that this issue helps educators begin to imagine and plan how to reshape the professional learning for which they are responsible — now and in the future.

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**Eric Celeste (eric.celeste@learningforward.org) is Learning Forward’s associate director of publications and editor of *JSD*.** ■



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As they write about the Learning Communities standard in **Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Learning Communities**, authors Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller consider why communities have gained widespread attention and support and summarize the established research base about them. They also describe three contexts in which professional learning communities have been enacted and consider the challenges professional learning communities face, concluding with an examination of the “questions professional communities raise and the implications they pose for school reform in general and the role of teachers in the reform agenda in particular” (Lieberman, Miller, Roy, Hord, & von Frank, 2013). This excerpt from their full chapter shares rationale and findings from research about learning communities.

# HARNESS THE ENERGY OF COLLABORATION

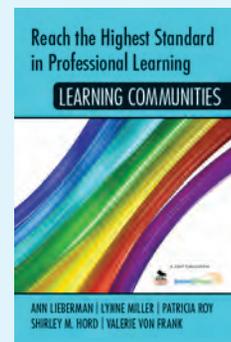
By Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller

In 2008, we characterized professional learning communities (PLCs) as “on-going groups of teachers who meet regularly for the purpose of increasing their own learning and that of their students” (Lieberman & Miller, 2008, p. 2). We have come to think that they are more than that. They are not just a way for teachers to collaborate, nor are they just one more promising approach to staff development. Professional learning communities have gained traction across the globe because of their potential for energizing a larger agenda: to reform schools, improve and professionalize teaching, advance learning for *all* students, and change the discourse about teacher accountability.

Professional learning communities in education owe much to the work of two organizational theorists whose initial inquiries focused on groups outside of education and whose ideas have since been applied to teachers and schools. Don Schon (1983) looked at how architects collaborated on design projects and came up with the idea of *reflective practice*, in which the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him and on the understandings that have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment that serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (p. 68).

Schon viewed reflective practice as a precondition for continuous learning. He described two kinds of reflective practice: *reflection in action* and *reflection on action*. It is reflection on action, which entails opportunities for sharing ideas, looking at practice with a critical eye, and jointly identifying problems of practice and hypothesizing about solutions, that is central to professional learning communities in education.

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students **occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Lieberman, A., Miller, L., Roy, P., Hord, S.M., & von Frank, V. (2013).** *Reach the highest standard in professional learning: Learning Communities.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Excerpted with permission.

The other thinker is Etienne Wenger, who studied apprentices in the process of becoming full members of a craft guild. He introduced the idea of *communities of practice* in which practitioners develop a shared repertoire of resources that allow them to identify and solve shared problems of practice. Wenger (1998) noted that these communities develop over time and have a powerful presence in the lives of members. They include rituals and routines that affirm membership, engage members in a variety of interactions, provide short- and long-term value, and promote a communal identity and a sense of belonging

(Wenger, 1998). Wenger adds to Schon's idea of reflective communities; both contribute to our understanding of the roots of PLCs as communities of practice that engage in reflection on practice. Nonhierarchical and self-governing, they offer opportunities for teachers to reflect on action, to learn from each other, to share resources and insights, to solve problems of practice, and to assume responsibility for results.

In their review of the literature on professional learning communities, Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) investigated the effects of professional learning communities on three outcomes:

teacher practice, school culture, and student achievement. In terms of teacher practice, they found evidence that teachers who participated in professional learning communities viewed their practice as having changed in the direction of student centeredness, though there were few descriptions of the specific pedagogical practices that had changed. When it came to effects on school culture, the researchers found substantial evidence that PLCs led to increased teacher collaboration, more focus on student learning, expanded teacher authority over instructional decisions, and the establishment of norms of continuous learning. In terms of effects on student achievement, the researchers concluded that the few controlled studies that were done indicated improvement in student test scores in schools where teacher collaboration was complemented by “structured work that was highly focused around student learning” (Vescio et al., 2008, p. 15). They found no evidence of effects on student achievement where this structured work was absent. At issue with this and all effectiveness studies is that the goals under study tend to be limited to quantifiable variables and that student achievement is narrowly defined as growth on standardized measures.

There is a growing body of research that provides a wider lens for viewing professional learning communities and that broadens the idea of “effectiveness” as a focus of inquiry. Qualitative in nature, these studies document the development and growth of professional learning communities and how they enact conditions that enable them to develop and grow. Talbert (2010, p. 257) identified four such conditions:

- Norms of collaboration;
- Focus on students and their academic performance;
- Access to a wide range of learning resources for individuals and the group; and
- Mutual accountability for student growth and success.

These conditions draw attention to the multiple dimensions of the “structured work” in which members of professional learning communities engage.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) described how successive professional learning communities that met in a university setting structured their work around inquiry into practice. The groups met for 12 months and included student teachers, faculty, and supervisors from the university and cooperating teachers from different schools in the area. Group members engaged in ongoing collaborative inquiry into a wide variety of issues, including “language and literacy, curriculum and pedagogy; race, class, gender; modes of assessment; and the cultures of schools and teaching” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 66) and how they impacted learning and teaching. In their later writings, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) reported how community members documented and made public the changes they made in their instructional practices and how these impacted observed student learning and engagement.

Little and Horn (2007) and Horn (2005) reported on a learning community that developed in one high school and

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LYNNE MILLER is professor of educational leadership and executive director of the Southern Maine Partnership at the University of Southern Maine. Miller has written widely in the field of teacher development and school reform and is an active participant in local and national reform efforts.

consisted of nine math teachers who met every week to work on ways to improve their teaching of algebra, increase student math achievement, and add to enrollments in advanced classes. The group members used a structured “check-in” to jump-start each session. During this time, each participant was invited to present a problem of practice or a new idea for group consideration. The honest and direct talk that followed focused on both teaching practice and student learning. It was a way for the members to develop norms of collaboration and hold each other accountable to the group for their practice. This dual emphasis on teacher and student learning had its desired results: The researchers reported changes in teaching practices and teacher leadership roles as well as an increase in student engagement and in the number of students taking higher-level math courses.

McLaughlin and Talbert’s (2001) ambitious study of 22 schools in Michigan and California provides insight into teaching communities within schools. The researchers identified three kinds of teaching communities and reported on the degree to which their differing teaching cultures, professional norms and values, and instructional practices influenced innovation, promoted reform, and affected student engagement and academic outcomes. *Weak communities* were characterized by teacher isolation, a high priority on teacher seniority in course assignment, text-based teaching practices based on a transmission model, and low expectations for students. In these communities, students were minimally engaged and showed little change in attainment levels. *Strong-traditional communities*, where teacher isolation was less pronounced and collegiality more normative, were characterized by sorting students by academic ability, differentiated student expectations (high for the most able, lower for others), seniority-based course assignments, and grading on a curve. In these schools, the highly tracked students demonstrated a high level of engagement and attainment, and the

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## LESSONS LEARNED FROM PRACTICE

If there are any implications for the future of professional learning communities, they are best derived from lessons learned from practice:

- Develop and nurture a professional teaching culture that provides an alternative to the norms and values of the bureaucratic culture of schools.
- Learn how to navigate between the two cultures and leverage bureaucratic mandates for authentic teacher learning.
- Dedicate time and resources to the work.
- Routinize structures for inquiry, reflection, and collaboration.
- Provide vehicles and supports for making teaching public.
- Maintain control of the agenda in the face of pressures to do otherwise.
- Embrace expansive definitions of teacher development and student learning.
- Practice patience and take time to navigate the fault lines that emerge.
- Take on issues of equity and accountability and make them your own.
- Make an effort to be inclusive rather than exclusive and to share practices and insights with a larger community of educators.

lower-tracked students did not fare so well. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) viewed these communities as being “stuck” in terms of innovation and reform.

In what they termed *strong teacher communities*, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) identified characteristics that set these groups apart from the strong-traditional communities. These included:

1. Teacher collaboration around problems of teaching and learning;
2. A belief that all students could learn;
3. High expectations for all students;
4. Nontracked classrooms;
5. A focus on developing a shared language and knowledge about teaching and learning; and
6. A commitment to active engagement and equitable achievement for all students.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) considered these strong teacher communities to be “moving” toward innovation and reform and noted the essential role of principal support in their success. In these schools, there was evidence of increased student engagement and gains in achievement.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) dug deeper into the strong teacher communities and described their stages of development. The first stage is the *novice stage*, in which teachers begin to focus on shared inquiry and do so by collecting data.

The second stage is the *intermediate stage*, where teachers move beyond the mere collection of data and begin to examine the data collectively, develop a shared language and goals for their work, and build leadership skills. The third stage is the advanced stage. Here the teachers consider how to change their practices in order to improve student outcomes, take on the reform agenda and make it their own, and accept shared responsibility for student learning.

Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001) also described the stages in the development of a professional learning

community. Working in one high school, they organized and documented the progress of a community of teachers of English and social studies who were charged with creating an interdisciplinary course.

They identified three stages of development. The first stage was the *beginning stage* in which teachers were involved in the formation of group identity and playacted at being a community, forming what was in effect a *pseudo-community*. The second stage was the *evolution stage*, where teachers engaged in a process of *navigating the fault lines*. They competed for attention, negotiated their tensions, and fought through their differences. The final stage was the *maturity stage*. When the group reached this stage, they took responsibility for each other and assumed “communal responsibility for individual growth” (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001). Like the McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) study, this study demonstrates a movement from individual to communal work and demonstrates the dynamics of growth and change of a community over time.

This research adds to our understanding of professional learning communities across a variety of venues. It highlights how work gets structured and focused on both student achievement and teacher learning, how norms of collaboration are built, how learning resources are used, and how by making their work public to colleagues, teachers assume collective responsibility for their own learning and that of their students — and, in so doing, expand the idea of what it means to be an effective professional learning community.

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*Continued on p. 25*

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In her full essay exploring the Leadership standard in **Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Leadership,**



author Karen Seashore Louis offers keen insights into the question of how leaders affect the learning of other adults in a school.

She writes particularly about how “school leaders can create a school culture in which all adults see themselves as part of the larger enterprise of continuous learning” (Louis, Hord, & von Frank, in press).

This excerpt takes a close look at what leaders need to understand about how learners approach change and their role in helping create a culture that recognizes the humans at the heart of change.

# A LEADER'S TOP TASK IS TO NURTURE TALENT

By Karen Seashore Louis

*“Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.”*  
— Albert Einstein

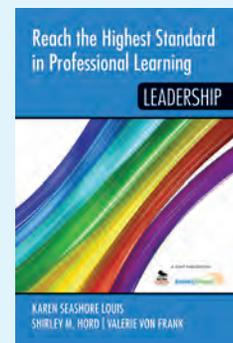
School leaders who take professional learning seriously recognize that they are in an important business: talent development. This is not a perspective that is typically taught during administrator preparation programs, nor is it a focus that one often associates with the perspectives of district human resources departments. Yet creating learning schools requires that we pay attention to cultivating a learning orientation among teachers, particularly if the individuals in those groups are not ready to engage in collective reflective practice. Teachers and other professionals have many talents, but they need to be assessed, honed, and shared if professional learning is to become a core feature of the school’s culture.

Before we begin thinking about leadership and the human dimension, it is important to interrogate the images about teachers and professional learning that we bring with us (Firestone, 1980; Morgan, 1997). Paavola, Lipponen, & Hakkarainen (2004) propose three useful metaphors of learning that have implications for leading: acquisition, social participation, and knowledge creation.

## ACQUISITION

For many years, critics bemoaned the weak links between research and practice and posited the cause as resistance to change among teachers which, coupled with lack of capacity, accounted for the poor performance of schools. A classic framework that challenged this assumption is the Concerns-Based Adoption

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students **requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Louis, K.S., Hord, S.M., & von Frank, V. (in press).**  
*Reach the highest standard in professional learning: Leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Excerpted with permission.

Model (Hall & Hord, 1987; Hall & Hord, 2001), usually referred to as CBAM. What the authors proposed was a developmental approach that linked individual concerns (typically about lack of capacity) with “levels of use” that were related to increasing understanding and confidence as a result of acquiring knowledge through practice. The continuing relevance of the CBAM model lies in its implications for helping individual teachers acquire the knowledge and skills that support individual change (Anderson, 1997). School leaders need to understand where each teacher or smaller groups of teachers

are on easily measureable “stages of concern” about any change that is occurring and the degree to which they have access to information that might help them take next steps. As a practical tool for keeping track of major schoolwide innovations, it has weathered the test of time.

The limitation of CBAM is that it focuses on particular innovations, such as a new curriculum or instructional practice. In most schools today, the number of known new practices that are attempted simultaneously is mind-boggling, and this does not take into consideration all of the adjustments and in-

novations that occur among smaller groups. An organizational learning model suggests that improved practices may come from many sources — external requirements or programs, internal examination of student work, or new ideas that are brought into the school community because a few teachers have attended a workshop.

In other words, the learning environment faced by today’s school leaders is extremely complex. School leaders are not therapists. They have neither the time nor the training to address all of the factors in any teachers’ world that might make them more or less likely to pay attention to learning opportunities. They must, however, as CBAM suggests, pay attention to what we know about willingness and capacity to learn.

### SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Teachers who already feel good about their teaching are more open to learning about ways of getting even better (Camburn, 2010; De Neve, Devos, & Tuytens, 2015). Therein lies the problem for school leaders, who need to support those who are less secure in their teaching capacities rather than just hoping that the sprinters will encourage slower colleagues to catch up. An approach that presumes individual learning has been the norm but is being supplanted by views that focus on the importance of relationships in creating richer learning environments for those who need more support. In particular, informal networks of sharing matter a great deal (Resnick & Scherrer, 2012), and this can be easily modeled by school leaders through more casual interactions as well as through more planned professional learning.

Teacher learning occurs most frequently when there is modest dissonance between what the individual believes and some knowledge or information that is easily available — or a dynamic tension between the status quo and intentional change (Printy & Marks, 2006). In other words, the sprinters — those that are far ahead and highly innovative — do not usually inspire those who need the most help in using new ideas. In many schools, however, even short but regular conversations among teachers and administrators about their professional learning are associated with greater willingness to look at the relevance of someone else’s experience.

We know that teachers bring their experiences and beliefs about teaching into their initial jobs — and unless these are challenged, past mental models will determine future practice and learning (Senge, 2002). New ideas that challenge personal beliefs and values that are not well-articulated cause teachers to retreat before engaging with them. There is also ample evidence that many adults learn best by seeing, doing, and reflecting rather than by reading and listening. Nonthreatening networks that develop because teachers and leaders are encouraged (or even required) to observe other classrooms informally may have many positive effects — including an increased propensity to talk about and try new practices (Ing, 2010; Zepeda, 2009).

KAREN SEASHORE LOUIS is the Rodney Wallace Professor of Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Her area of expertise includes improvement in K-12 leadership and policy over the last 30 years, particularly in urban secondary schools. Louis also conducts research on organizational changes within higher education, with particular attention to faculty roles, and on international comparative policy in educational reform.

We also know that teachers are more likely to take up new ideas if they can see their connection to existing frames. This is problematic because “there is little consensus both within and between subject fields about what teachers need to know or how they need to know it” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 387). In education, like other settings, effective leaders are involved in helping all members of a school community make sense of new ideas in the context of what is being done currently. In particular, when leaders directly or indirectly encourage teacher-to-teacher sharing, opportunities for creating consensus as well as challenging old beliefs increase (Gallucci, 2008; De Neve, Devos, & Tuytens, 2015).

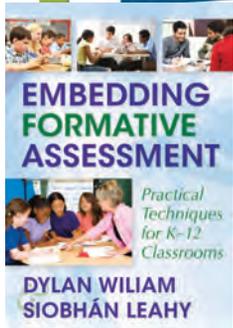
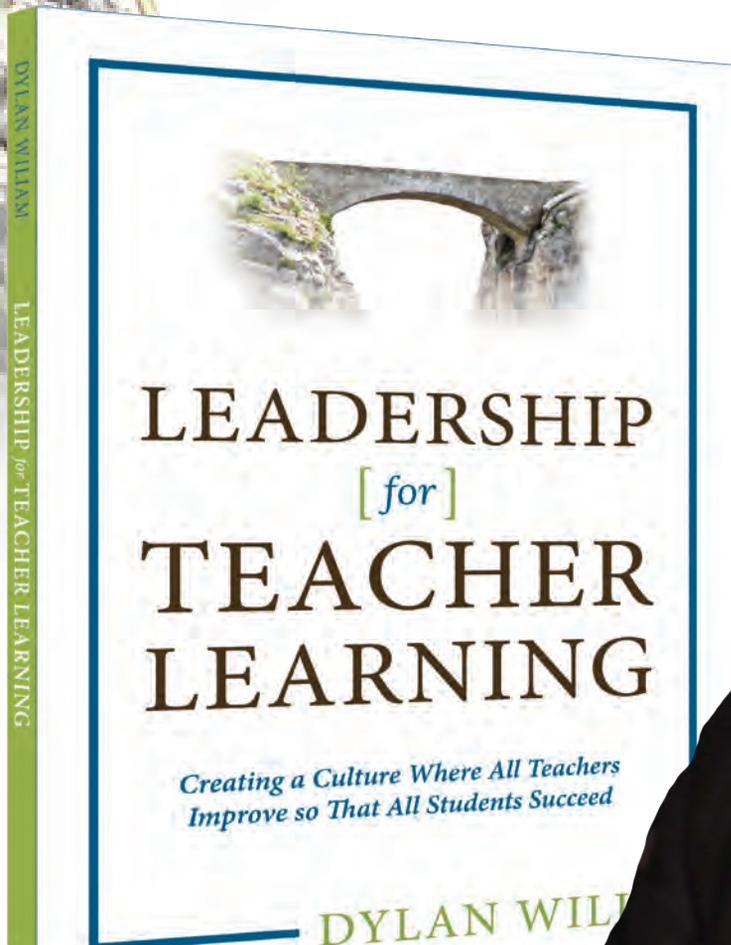
Effective school leaders are also storytellers who consistently weave together a larger picture of the innovations that are taking place in the school and how they can fit together. Stories are particularly useful as ways of exploring differences while creating consensus — as long as they are not instructional in their focus, but open-ended and dialogic. Thus, for example, a school leader who tells a story about how another school has integrated a controversial idea but emphasizes the journey and struggle rather than the final victory opens up opportunities for teachers to discuss their own and a group journey. Leaders do not have to make up stories themselves, but can repeat stories that they hear from others to encourage reflection and discussion. When shared, stories have the power to solidify groups because they are a form of shared knowledge that conveys an understanding of “how the world works” or “how we do things around here” that does not demand a logical exposition or a handbook of rules.

### KNOWLEDGE CREATION

We typically think of teachers as users of knowledge acquired through various professional learning opportunities, but it is important to remember that teachers also create new ideas and programs. A popular book such as *Teach Like a Champion 2.0* is, after all, a compilation of the effective teaching strategies that the author observed and not the result of a research project (Lemov, 2015). One of the most popular federally funded knowledge sharing programs of the 1970s through the 1990s

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was the National Diffusion Network, where the knowledge base consisted of programs that were often developed by teachers. Today, teachers take advantage of social sharing sites like Pinterest and other online communities to share their work.

Effective school leaders often simply expect teachers to take on the role of knowledge creation and build this into their job-embedded professional development plans. Teacher knowledge creation goes beyond inventing new teaching strategies that work. Action research, carried out well, can generate energy for reform that moves beyond a few individual classrooms

(Paavola, Lipponen, & Hakkarainen, 2004). School leaders can encourage shared knowledge development (which obviously has more impact on the whole school than a brilliant teacher in a single classroom) with very small nonmonetary rewards — supporting a group’s trip to get more information, providing time to explain an action research project to the entire staff, or, as in the case of one school that I studied many years ago, supporting teachers in developing a local conference to showcase the results of teachers as inventors (Louis & Kruse, 1998).

Acknowledging the creative side of teaching does not privilege professional knowledge over research knowledge or data. All forms of knowledge are important to professional learning, but the well-established principle is that sustained, disciplined tinkering is central to creating a learning organization.

Continuous improvement models derived from industry require translation to be useful in schools (Detert, Louis, & Schroeder, 2001), but we must trust the collective capacity of teachers to address quality through shared invention.

### TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

In the past, professional development was often confused with talent development, but the concepts are quite different. Professional development in schools has traditionally been synonymous with training (either orientation to or preparing for specific new skills) provided to individuals or work groups, often under the assumption that “a teacher is a teacher.” Talent development requires thinking more broadly about the human capital in the school, focusing on professional learning for each person and the group as a whole given where they are at any moment.

What does attention to the human side of professional learning mean for the broader question of developing a school’s capacity for improvement? First, there must be an architecture to any talent development model that acknowledges both individual and social characteristics of the teachers and other leaders in the school. The first step is, therefore, some diagnosis of the

capacities of the people who are already there, while the second step is coming to some agreement within the school on what kinds of talents are most important for moving forward. Then school leaders, along with others in the school, need to address designing recruitment and retention strategies, development approaches, and rewards that will help move the school forward. This requires understanding the differences that underlie the agreed-upon definitions of needed talent.

What newer teachers need is not usually the same as what more experienced teachers need — but they may have different kinds of expertise that each can contribute to the other. Any given department or grade-level team may have strong expertise in some areas, but may be weaker in others. Finally, groups may have greater or lesser capacities for working well together on professional learning, which means that one-size-fits-all may not work after an initial orientation.

Diagnosis points to the implied hierarchy in the perspective outlined above. Leaders cannot begin to support teachers as knowledge creators in a school where most of the teachers are relatively weak or are dispirited. The foundation, as indicated above, lies in increasing self-efficacy, which, in some cases, may initially rest on the school leader’s capacity to provide effective feedback that affirms what is important and what needs to be changed. This presumes instructional leadership capacity to model and coach, whether provided by the principal or others.

In a school where quite a few teachers have realistic and positive assessments of their capacity to improve, instructional leadership that helps to develop knowledge-sharing networks that focus on student learning may be most important. The value of networks lies in how frequently they are used to stimulate teachers to see and share ideas that create a more cohesive collective image of quality. Only schools that have established learning environments may be ready to encourage and support inventors.

But again — developing the human side also means paying a great deal of attention to the underlying architecture that supports effective professional learning. High teacher turnover, weak recruitment strategies, the absence of established ways of socializing new members, and a weak connection between individual professional learning goals and broader school improvement goals can undermine a learning culture very quickly. Management as well as leadership of the human side of the school still demands attention to create effective professional learning.

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**All forms of knowledge are important to professional learning, but the well-established principle is that sustained, disciplined tinkering is central to creating a learning organization.**

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## Harness the energy of collaboration

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*Continued from p. 18*

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theme

EXPLORE THE STANDARDS  
FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

RESOURCES

In their full essay for *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Resources*, authors Karen Hawley Miles, top, and Anna Sommers note that more rigorous instructional requirements combined with tighter budgets



challenge school systems to think more deliberately about where and how they invest in teaching effectiveness. They write



that forward-thinking school systems see adoption of a comprehensive, integrated approach to professional learning as

necessary — but also fraught with challenges.

In this excerpt, they outline ways in which school systems can repurpose people, time, technology, and money to enhance professional learning and more effectively build and retain a powerful teaching force.

# TAKE A WHOLE NEW LOOK AT HOW TO USE RESOURCES

By Karen Hawley Miles and Anna Sommers

Let's investigate in detail the most powerful resource levers for improving instruction. The following strategies, incorporating our findings from district research, case studies, and research on best practices, provide school system leaders with proven options for monitoring, trading off, reallocating, and coordinating professional learning resources in ways that maximize teaching and learning.

A system's ability and desire to implement these strategies depend on its current funding, capacity, and context. Identifying strengths, needs, and current limitations helps systems determine which areas to prioritize in the short term and which will require adjustments to current policies and contracts in the future.

A long-term perspective allows systems to tackle these levers for improving instruction, trading off and shifting precious resources in ways that, over time, balance the needs of individual teachers, teams, schools, and the system.

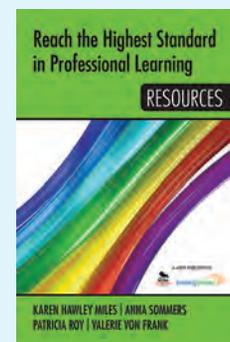
While we focus on the system level, individual principals can also act independently or in collaboration with district leaders on some of these steps.

## **Restructure compensation and career paths to increase teachers' effectiveness throughout their careers.**

A look at a typical 30-year veteran teacher's compensation reiterates the trend in traditional districts of lockstep increases in pay for years on the job and self-directed continuing education, despite the fact that education credits and additional degrees have minimal impact on teaching effectiveness. The figure on p. 29 shows the drivers of salary increases for teachers with 30 years of experience in nine urban school districts (Education Resource Strategies, 2013b).

Most of these districts compensate for experience, then education, with only

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students **requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Miles, K.H., Sommers, A., Roy, P., & von Frank, V. (2016).** *Reach the highest standard in professional learning: Resources.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Excerpted with permission.

Denver, Charlotte, and Los Angeles devoting even a relatively significant portion of spending to pay for increased teacher responsibility and performance.

To understand current compensation structures and opportunities to direct resources in ways that are more closely linked to outcomes, consider the breakdown of total compensation spending by component in two fairly traditional systems. The specifics of salary and benefits structures provide slightly different alternatives for reallocation.

System A devotes slightly more to base salary and benefits,

providing less for education and years on the job than System B. Neither system invests in teacher leaders or other career junctures aside from induction.

As these two systems look to find more resources to increase pay for teachers who contribute the most, dollars going to support education credits and longevity may provide an important source of resources for reallocation in the long term.

Changing the compensation structure could potentially free funds for professional growth as well as dollars that could be used to pay teachers for taking on roles that expand their impact. Dis-

districts can reduce spending by eliminating increases for experience after the novice years or reducing the number of times or span of time over which they continue to give these increases.

Systems can reduce spending on education credits by eliminating them entirely or having fewer increments. In a district where this represents up to 10% of total compensation, these kinds of changes could enable the reallocation of significant dollars.

**Redirect typical investments from general coaching to job-embedded teacher growth through school-based content experts and teacher leaders who work with teacher teams.**

Some districts will have an opportunity to redirect a portion of the current investment in coaching positions to better support expert-led collaboration and team- and classroom-based instruction common in high-performing schools. Given the high teacher-to-coach ratios and tendency to concentrate coaches in the lowest-performing schools, providing sufficient expertise across entire districts to individual teacher teams around grade- and lesson-specific content can be difficult.

Replacing some coaches with rigorously selected teacher leaders — classroom teachers with partial responsibility for leading grade or subject teams — is one cost-effective solution. Successful teacher leader models, such as Touchstone Education’s Merit Prep, D.C.-based Ingenuity Prep, and Aspire charter schools, rely on teacher leaders, who are accountable for team and student success, to develop, craft, and support effective teams.

The T3 program, operated by the non-profit organization Teach Plus, provides another potentially powerful option for school districts that may not have sufficient teacher expertise in-house. Teach Plus recruits and rigorously screens high-potential teacher leaders from inside and outside the district, places them to work in cohorts together in schools, and provides professional growth opportunities for them throughout the year (Education Resource Strategies, 2013d).

School systems typically provide few formal opportunities for teacher leadership roles, and they invest little to develop teacher leadership (Education Resource Strategies, 2013b). But providing opportunities for the most effective teachers to extend their reach can encourage a teacher’s professional growth, incentivize and reward performance, and increase retention of the most effective teachers without requiring broad changes to compensation models (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007).

Teacher leaders receive an increase in pay and a reduced classroom teaching load to allow time to oversee, support, and

KAREN HAWLEY MILES is president and executive director of Education Resource Strategies. She has worked intensively with school systems nationwide to analyze and improve their funding systems, school-level resource use, and human capital and professional development systems.

ANNA SOMMERS is a high school English teacher and former consultant at Education Resource Strategies, where she wrote about the strategic allocation of people, time, and dollars to improve student outcomes.

develop individual teachers while working directly with their students. Funding for these positions comes from reducing the number of nonclassroom specialists and the salaries of those with narrower instructional roles and fewer work hours.

Additionally, giving effective teachers leadership roles extends their reach to more students and teachers and should have a significant effect on student performance. In fact, highly effective teachers in teacher leader roles can reach up to four times more students. Research shows that children with highly effective teachers, those in the top 20% to 25%, demonstrate three times the learning as children with teachers in the bottom 20% to 25% (Hassel, 2011).

Placing these teachers in leadership roles should compound those gains, because research shows that highly effective teachers who also serve in coaching roles can support more effective instruction among their peers (Blase & Blase, 2006; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Larner, 2004).

Also essential to the success of teacher leaders is the power of the teacher teams that they support. Not only do teachers prefer the camaraderie and idea sharing across classrooms, but teaming also improves effectiveness. According to research by Carrie Leana (2011), teachers who are less effective can perform as well as average teachers with consistent and valuable interaction with expert peers.

To leverage this investment in teacher leaders, school systems must ensure support and vigilance in teacher teaming. Effective teacher leaders need regular assessment data, collaborative planning time, and teams that are deliberately balanced in terms of skills.

To succeed, teacher leaders incorporate the school’s specific curricular, faculty, and student needs (Miles & Ferris, 2015; Suescun, Romer, & MacDonald, 2012). Therefore, the selection and training process of these leaders must be rigorous. This focus on candidate screening and expert quality has helped make Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s Strategic Staffing Initiative a keystone in its school turnaround strategy (Travers & Christiansen, 2010).

**Some districts will have an opportunity to redirect a portion of the current investment in coaching positions to better support expert-led collaboration and team- and classroom-based instruction common in high-performing schools.**

**Extend and maximize the use of teacher time for collaborative learning and planning.**

Time is a prerequisite to a well-coordinated and powerful professional growth and support system, whether the strategies involve using teacher leaders as they work with teacher teams during collaborative planning time, introducing new curriculum related to the Common Core, or interpreting student assessment data to improve individual practice.

Despite its importance, time for teacher development is a rare commodity due to rigid state seat time requirements, collective bargaining agreements, and daily schedules that do not support collaboration. Making more time for teacher development can seem to conflict with the important goal of extending student instructional time. The majority of noninstructional time goes to released time and individual planning.

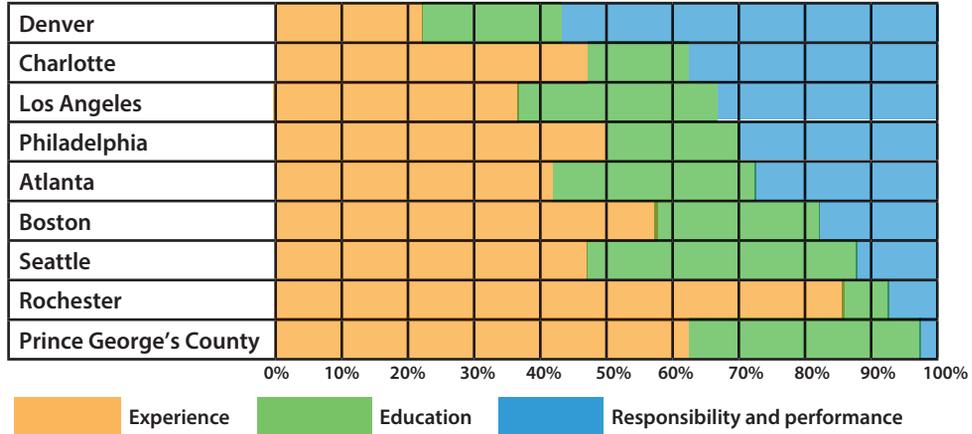
School systems that find time for growth focus on expanding noninstructional time and then ensuring that this time is carefully managed and used. School leaders in Columbia, Missouri, and Holt, Michigan, for example, created weekly collaborative learning time through careful scheduling that has students leaving school earlier or starting later on some days (von Frank, 2008).

As a charter management organization, Achievement First has significant control over the amount and use of time during the school year, with 45% more annual hours with which to work than most public school systems. This translates into nearly twice the noninstructional hours. In fact, half of these hours occur outside of the instructional day and year and do not compete with instructional time. This leaves 117 annual hours for collaborative planning time during the instructional day.

Making a portion of these professional growth hours available in traditional school systems is possible but usually requires changing teacher contracts and finding funds by restructuring the teacher compensation structure, as illustrated in the previous section, and capitalizing on the intrinsic appeal of collaboration and personal growth in the entire human capital value proposition for teachers (Shields & Lewis, 2012).

The 2010 report *Advancing High-Quality Professional Learning Through Collective Bargaining and State Policy* (NSDC, NEA, AFT, & CCSSO, 2010) details possibilities and includes examples for examining and adjusting bargaining policies in

**BREAKDOWN OF SALARY INCREASE FOR A TEACHER WITH 30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE**



Source: [www.nctq.org/customReport.do#criteria](http://www.nctq.org/customReport.do#criteria). Denver data represent teachers not on ProComp teacher compensation system.

context. Reworking the schedule to consolidate student noninstructional time — before and after school, around lunch and specials, reducing passing time with block scheduling, or offering elective blocks at the end of the school year — can increase time for teacher planning and collaboration. In addition, using inexpensive and part-time staff to cover lunch and noncore electives can free teacher time for professional growth and support (Shields & Miles, 2008).

**Leverage and coordinate the growing investments in teacher support through curriculum, assessment, evaluation, and technology to raise organizational and individual effectiveness.**

When combined, teacher support functions account for 10% to 15% of professional growth and support spending in Education Resource Strategies' partner school systems. Rather than manage curriculum development, student assessment, teacher evaluation, and professional development as separate silos with competing demands (see Miles, 2002), systems can forge connections between the departments to ensure that each support area complements and strengthens the others in the following ways:

- Standards-based learning goals and aligned curriculum materials provide the agenda for professional growth.
- Formative student assessment data, aligned to new standards, help target teacher learning needs. Frequent assessment results allow teacher teams to adjust instruction in real time.
- Evaluation rubrics capture the level of teacher performance across the range of skills and knowledge. Observation and evaluation data measure teacher growth and gaps, informing next steps for individual, school-level, and systemwide professional growth strategies (Education Resource Strategies, 2013a).

The figure at right highlights the optimal connections between curriculum, assessment, evaluation, and professional growth in a continuous cycle of teaching and learning standards; content, materials, and supports; and performance data, feedback, and adjustment.

Such integration allows school systems to take advantage of economies of scale and capture best practices to give students continuity of instruction and experience. Integration, however, is not without its challenges, especially when the diversity of school and student needs is large, instructional models vary, and professional growth and support is fragmented, controlled, and paid for by a variety of departments and cost centers.

Achievement First, with similar staff and student needs across the network and flexibility of resource use, has built a highly integrated system, one that more fully connects the specific components of an integrated professional growth system.

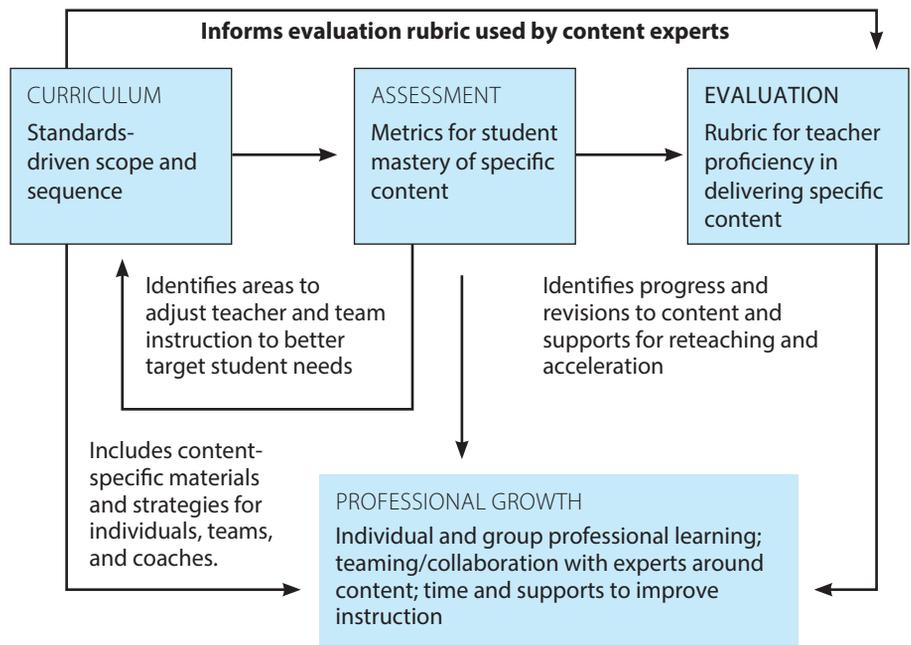
Most of the Common Core–based scope and sequence is delivered by “lead planners.” Curricula is aligned with assessments, via Athena, a new web-based platform that provides data by school, subject, teacher, and student for use by instructional coaches during team-based data days and one-on-one individual teacher sessions.

An online lesson platform allows teachers across the network to access guided curricula and share improvements. A teacher excellence framework guides frequent, informal meetings with evaluation coaches. Professional growth occurs from a mix of online material and support, weekly departmental meetings, data days, and team-based collaboration with content experts and adjusts to meet the evolving and identified needs of teachers and students.

These types of investments depend on adequate internal expertise and noninstructional time to analyze data and coach teachers to adjust instruction. School systems that lack the internal capacity or expertise can outsource materials, information, and support for better integration of professional growth and support.

Instructional guidance systems from outside vendors such as Agile Mind provide comprehensive systems for math and science when districts are unable to afford them (Education Resource Strategies, 2013c). Systems can purchase curricula and support in targeted learning areas that include daily content, formative

### PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND SUPPORT INTEGRATION



Source: Education Resource Strategies analysis.

assessments, student outcomes reporting, embedded professional development with coaching, and access to support materials.

A nonprofit organization, Achievement Network, provides integrated services to help schools leverage assessment data by providing data leaders, coaches, and tools organized by student and learning standard (Education Resource Strategies, 2013a).

A detailed annual calendar shows these activities as weekly and continual or at carefully designated intervals throughout the year. This ensures that information from one area informs others in a timely, useful fashion.

For instance, student assessment data feed into the evaluation system’s teacher effectiveness framework in time for formal and informal evaluations and is available during data days, when teams of teachers adjust instruction to fill gaps and keep pace with curriculum standards.

This deliberate orchestration of different functional areas ensures that goal setting, training, instruction, data gathering, analysis, feedback, and revision are coordinated as complementary streams of activity. The overlapping structure allows different decision makers to be aware of simultaneous efforts and reinforce and share a common vision.

Another significant challenge to school systems as they increase spending in Common Core curriculum, detailed assessments, and improved evaluation tools will be in providing adequate expertise to take full advantage of these investments:

- Implementing new curriculum requires training and coaching by content experts.
- Acting on assessment data requires analysis by data coaches.

*Continued on p. 42*

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Thomas R. Guskey is an international expert in evaluation design, analysis, and educational reform. His essay explains why the Data standard for professional learning is an essential



foundation for all of the other standards. "Because of its indispensable and fundamental nature,"

Guskey writes, "no other standard is more important or more vital to the purpose of the Standards for Professional Learning."

The full essay explores the meaning of data in the context of professional learning. In this excerpt, Guskey examines the use of data in the systemic evaluation of professional learning.

# GAUGE IMPACT WITH 5 LEVELS OF DATA

By Thomas R. Guskey

Effective professional learning evaluation requires consideration of five critical stages or levels of information (Guskey, 2000a, 2002a, 2005). These five levels represent an adaptation of an evaluation model developed by Kirkpatrick (1959, 1998) for judging the value of supervisory training programs in business and industry. Kirkpatrick's model, although widely applied, has seen limited use in education because of inadequate explanatory power. While helpful in addressing a broad range of "what" questions, many find it lacking when it comes to explaining "why" (Alliger & Janak, 1989; Holton, 1996).

The five levels in this model are hierarchically arranged, from simple to more complex. With each succeeding level, the process of gathering evaluation data requires more time and resources. And because each level builds on those that come before, success at one level is usually necessary for success at higher levels.

## LEVEL 1: PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS

The first level of evaluation looks at participants' reactions to the professional learning experience. This is the most common form of professional learning evaluation and the easiest type of data to gather and analyze.

At this level, questions focus on whether participants liked the experience. Did they feel their time was well spent? Did the content and material make sense to them? Were the activities well-planned and meaningful? Was the leader knowledgeable, credible, and helpful? Did they find the information useful?

Also important for some professional learning experiences are questions related to the context: Was the room the right temperature? Were the chairs comfortable? Were the refreshments fresh and tasty? To some, questions such



## LEVEL 2: PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING

In addition to liking their professional learning experiences, participants should learn something from them. Level 2 focuses on measuring the new knowledge, skills, and perhaps attitudes or dispositions that participants gain (Guskey, 2002b).

Depending on the goals of the professional learning program or activity, this can involve anything from a pencil-and-paper assessment (Can participants describe the critical attributes of effective questioning techniques and give examples of how these might be applied in common classroom situations?) to a simulation or full-scale skill demonstration (Presented with a variety of classroom conflicts, can participants diagnose each situation, then prescribe and carry out a fair and workable solution?). Oral or written personal reflections or examinations of the portfolios that participants assemble can also document their learning.

Although Level 2 evaluation data often can be gathered at the completion of a professional learning program or activity, it usually requires more than a standardized form. And because measures must show attainment of specific learning goals, professional learning leaders need to outline indicators of successful learning before activities begin.

Careful evaluators also consider possible unintended learning outcomes, both positive and negative. Professional learning that engages teachers and school leaders in collaboration, for example, can foster a positive sense of community and shared purpose among participants (Supovitz, 2002). But in some instances, individuals collaborate to block change or inhibit advancement (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Little, 1990). Investigations further show that collaborative efforts sometimes run headlong into conflicts over professional beliefs and practices that can impede progress (Achinstein, 2002). Thus even the best-planned professional learning occasionally yields unanticipated negative consequences.

If there is concern that participants may already possess the requisite knowledge and skills, evaluators may require some form of pre- and post-assessment. Analyzing this data provides a basis for improving the professional learning's content, format, and organization.

## LEVEL 3: ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND CHANGE

At Level 3, the focus shifts from participants to organizational dimensions that may be vital to the success of the professional learning experience. Organizational elements also can sometimes hinder or prevent success, even when the individual aspects of professional development are done right (Sparks, 1996).

Suppose, for example, that a group of secondary educators participates in professional learning on aspects of cooperative learning. As part of their experience, they gain an in-depth understanding of cooperative learning theory and organize a variety of classroom activities based on cooperative learning principles.

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Following their learning experience, they implement these activities in classes where students are graded or marked on the curve — according to their relative standing among classmates — and great importance is attached to each student's individual class rank.

Organizational grading policies and practices such as these, however, make learning highly competitive and thwart the most valiant efforts to have students cooperate and help each other learn. When graded on the curve, students must compete against each other for the few scarce rewards (high grades) dispensed by the teacher. Cooperation is discouraged since helping other students succeed lessens the helper's chance of success (Guskey, 2000b).

The lack of positive results in this case does not reflect poor training or inadequate learning on the part of the participating teachers, but rather organizational policies that are incompatible with implementation efforts. Problems at Level 3 have essentially canceled the gains made at Levels 1 and 2 (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). That is why professional learning evaluations must include data on organizational support and change.

Level 3 questions focus on the organizational characteristics and attributes necessary for success. Did the professional learning promote changes that were aligned with the mission of the school? Were changes at the individual level encouraged and supported at the building and district levels (Corcoran et al., 2001)? Were sufficient resources made available, including time for sharing and reflection (Colton & Langer, 2005; Langer & Colton, 1994)? Were successes recognized and shared? Issues such as these often play a large part in determining the success of any professional learning.

Procedures for gathering data at Level 3 differ depending on the goals of the professional learning. They may involve analyzing school records, examining the minutes from follow-up meetings, and administering questionnaires that tap issues related to the organization's advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition of change efforts.

Structured interviews with participants and school administrators also can be helpful. These data are used not only to

document and improve organizational support for professional learning, but also to inform future change initiatives.

#### **LEVEL 4: PARTICIPANTS' USE OF NEW KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

At Level 4, the primary question is: Did the new knowledge and skills that participants learned make a difference in their professional practice? The key to gathering relevant data at this level of evaluation rests in specifying clear indicators of both the degree and quality of implementation.

Unlike Levels 1 and 2, these data cannot be gathered at the end of a professional learning program or activity. Enough time must pass to allow participants to adapt the new ideas and practices to their settings. Because implementation is often a gradual and uneven process, evaluators may need to gather measures of progress at several time intervals.

Depending on the goals of the professional learning, these data may involve questionnaires or structured interviews with participants and their school leaders. Evaluators might consider oral or written personal reflections or examinations of participants' journals or portfolios. The most accurate data typically come from direct observations, either by trained observers or using digital recordings. These observations, however, should be kept as unobtrusive as possible (for examples, see Hall & Hord, 1987).

Analyzing these data provides evidence on current levels of use. It also helps professional development leaders restructure future programs and activities to facilitate better, more consistent implementation.

#### **LEVEL 5: STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Level 5 addresses the bottom line in education: What was the impact on students? Did the professional learning benefit them in any way? The particular student learning outcomes of interest will depend, of course, on the goals of that specific professional learning endeavor.

In addition to the stated goals, the program or activity may result in important unintended outcomes. Suppose, for example, that students' average scores on large-scale assessments went up, but so did the school dropout rate. Mixed results such as this are typical in education improvement efforts and reiterate the importance of including multiple measures of student learning in all evaluations (Chester, 2005; Guskey, 2007).

Furthermore, since stakeholders vary in their trust of different sources of evidence, it is unlikely that any single indicator of success will prove adequate or sufficient to all. When providing acceptable data for judging the effects of professional learning, evaluators should always include multiple sources of evidence. In addition, evaluators must carefully match these sources of data to the needs and perceptions of different stakeholder groups (Guskey, 2012).

Results from large-scale assessments and nationally normed

standardized exams may be important for accountability purposes and will need to be included. In addition, school leaders often consider these measures to be valid indicators of success. Teachers, however, generally see limitations in large-scale assessment results.

These types of assessments are typically administered once a year, and results may not be available until several months later. By that time, the school year may have ended and students promoted to another teacher's class. So, although important, many teachers do not find such results particularly useful (Guskey, 2007).

Teachers put more trust in results from their own assessments of student learning — classroom assessments, common formative assessments, and portfolios of student work. They turn to these sources of evidence for feedback to determine if the new strategies or practices they are implementing make a difference.

Classroom assessments provide timely, targeted, and instructionally relevant information that can be used to plan revisions when needed. Since teachers comprise a major stakeholder group in any professional learning, sources of evidence that they trust and believe are particularly important.

Measures of student learning typically include cognitive indicators of student performance and achievement, such as assessment results, portfolio evaluations, marks or grades, and scores from standardized tests. Affective and psychomotor or behavioral indicators of student performance can be relevant as well.

Student surveys designed to measure how much students like school; their perceptions of teachers, fellow students, and themselves; their sense of self-efficacy; and their confidence in new learning situations can be especially informative. Evidence on school attendance, enrollment patterns, dropout rates, class disruptions, and disciplinary actions are also important outcomes.

In some areas, parents' or families' perceptions may be a vital consideration. This is especially true in initiatives that involve changes in grading practices, report cards, or other aspects of school-to-home and home-to-school communication (Epstein & Associates, 2009; Guskey, 2002c).

#### **MEANINGFUL COMPARISONS**

Evaluations of professional learning that extend to Level 5 should be made as methodologically rigorous as possible. Rigor, however, does not imply that only one evaluation method or design can produce credible evidence. Although randomized designs (i.e. true experimental studies) represent the gold standard in scientific research, especially in studies of causal effects, a wide range of quasi-experimental designs can produce valid results.

When evaluations are replicated with similar findings, that validity is further enhanced. One of the best ways to enhance an evaluation's methodological rigor is to plan for meaningful comparisons.

In many cases, data on outcomes at Level 5 are gathered from a single school or school district in a single setting for a

restricted time period. From a design perspective, such data lack reliability and validity. Regardless of whether results are positive or not, so many alternative explanations may account for the results that most authorities would consider such outcomes dubious at best and meaningless at worst (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

It may be, for example, that the professional learning did lead to noted improvements. But maybe the improvements were the result of a change in leadership or personnel instead. Maybe the community or student population changed. Maybe changes in government policies or assessments made a difference. Maybe other simultaneously implemented interventions were responsible. The possibility that these or other extraneous factors influenced results makes it impossible to draw definitive conclusions.

The best way to counter these threats to the validity of results is to include a comparison group — another similar group of educators or schools not involved in the current activity or perhaps engaged in a different activity.

Ideal comparisons involve the random assignment of students, teachers, or schools to different groups. But because that is rarely possible in most education settings, finding similar classrooms, schools, or school districts provides the next best option.

In some cases, involvement in a professional learning activity can be staggered so that half of the group of teachers or schools that volunteer can be selected randomly to take part initially while the others delay involvement and serve as the comparison group. In other cases, comparisons can be made to matched classrooms, schools, or school districts that share similar characteristics related to motivation, size, and demographics.

Using comparison groups does not eliminate the effects of extraneous factors that might influence results. It simply allows planners greater confidence in attributing the results attained to the particular program or activity being considered. In addition, other investigative methods may be used to formulate important questions and develop new measures relating to professional growth (Raudenbush, 2005).

Student and school records provide the majority of data at Level 5. Results from questionnaires and structured interviews with students, parents, teachers, and administrators could be included as well. Level 5 data are used summatively to document a program or activity's overall impact.

Formatively, Level 5 can help guide improvements in all aspects of professional learning, including design, implementation, and follow-up. In some cases, data on student learning outcomes are used to estimate the cost-effectiveness of professional learning, sometimes referred to as return on investment (Parry, 1996; Phillips, 1997; Todnem & Warner, 1993).

### IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Three important implications stem from this model for evaluating professional learning.

**1. Each of the five evaluation levels is important.** Although evaluation at any level can be done well or poorly, the data

gathered at each level provide vital information for improving the quality of professional learning. And while each level relies on different types of information that may be gathered at different times, no level can be neglected.

- 2. Tracking effectiveness at one level tells little about impact at the next level.** Although success at an early level may be necessary for positive results at the next higher one, it is clearly not sufficient (Cody & Guskey, 1997). Breakdowns can occur at any point along the way. Sadly, most government officials and policymakers fail to recognize the difficulties involved in moving from professional learning experiences (Level 1) to improvements in student learning (Level 5). They also tend to be unaware of the complexity of this process, as well as the time and effort required to build this connection (Guskey, 1997; Guskey & Sparks, 2004).
- 3. Perhaps most important is this: When planning professional learning to impact student learning, the order of these levels must be reversed.** In other words, education leaders must plan backward (Guskey, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2014), starting where they want to end up and then working back (Hirsh, 2012).

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BACKWARD PLANNING

In backward planning, educators first decide what student learning outcomes they want to achieve and what data best reflect those outcomes (Level 5). Next they must determine, on the basis of pertinent research, what instructional practices and policies will most effectively and efficiently produce those outcomes (Level 4).

After that, leaders need to consider what aspects of organizational support need to be in place for those practices and policies to be implemented (Level 3). Then leaders must decide what knowledge and skills the participating professionals must have in order to implement the prescribed practices and policies (Level 2).

Finally, consideration turns to what set of experiences will enable participants to acquire the needed knowledge and skills (Level 1). What makes this backward planning process so important is that the decisions made at each level profoundly affect those made at the next.

The most effective professional learning planning begins with clear specification of the student learning outcomes to be achieved and the sources of data that best reflect those outcomes. With those goals articulated, school leaders and teachers then work backward.

Not only will this make planning much more efficient, but it also provides a format for addressing the issues most crucial to evaluation. As a result, it makes evaluation a natural part of the planning process and offers a basis for accountability.

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**The most effective professional learning planning begins with clear specification of the student learning outcomes to be achieved and the sources of data that best reflect those outcomes.**

## theme

EXPLORE THE STANDARDS  
FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## LEARNING DESIGNS

Eleanor Drago-Severson's research, writing, teaching, and coaching has helped show that supporting adult learning and professional development improves outcomes for students. Given the mounting adaptive challenges educators face in education today, teachers and school leaders must continuously learn and grow as they manage these tremendously complex issues and programs and the ambiguity inherent in them. Drago-Severson's full essay explains how the Learning Designs standard helps educators prioritize these designs, as well as understand how to effectively support learning and improvement.



The full essay looks at the three “big ideas,” or strands, that comprise the Learning Designs standard. In this excerpt, she examines the first strand, which concerns the way learning theories, research, and models help us understand the adults we want to support.

# USE A VARIETY OF PRACTICES TO CONNECT WITH ALL

*Cognitive psychologists, neuroscientists, and educators have studied how learning occurs for nearly a century. The resulting theories, research, and models of human learning shape the underlying framework and assumptions educators use to plan and design professional learning. While multiple designs exist, many have common features ...*

— *Learning Forward*, 2011, p. 40

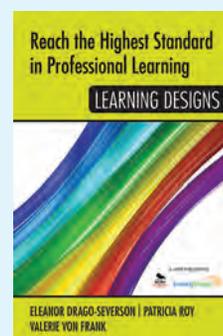
### By Eleanor Drago-Severson

The first strand of the Learning Designs standard focuses on the underlying beliefs and values that drive professional learning and the common features of robust learning environments that are informed by theories, research, and models. For example, the strand names “active engagement, modeling, reflection, metacognition, application, feedback, ongoing support, and formative and summative assessment” as key components of effective learning designs (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 40).

These are all very important. My approach and perspective have been informed and enriched primarily by constructive-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2000), a neo-Piagetian theory of adult development created by Harvard psychologist Robert Kegan. Kegan's theory sheds light on how adults make meaning at a given point and over time and how our ways of knowing can stretch and grow to be more complex if we are offered developmentally appropriate supports and challenges. While there is great promise in this premise in general — that adulthood can be a time of robust personal development rather than a fixed end-point — it is also particularly important for professional learning design.

Understanding that adults have different ways of knowing — or ways of tak-

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students **integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Drago-Severson, E., Roy, P., & von Frank, V. (2015).** *Reach the highest standard in professional learning: Learning Designs.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Excerpted with permission.

ing things in, making sense of them, and putting them together — reminds us that we need to employ a variety of pedagogical practices when facilitating professional learning. Doing so enables us to adequately meet adult learners — who have different ways of understanding their experiences — where they are (i.e. support) and offer developmentally appropriate challenges or stretching (in a psychological sense) to support their learning and growth. What feels like a good fit pedagogically for one learner might feel overly challenging for another, so paying careful attention to the fit and the expectations we convey in

designing learning opportunities can make a big difference for educators and for schools.

To provide a little more context, it might be helpful to understand that constructive-developmental theory is based on three central principles: constructivism, developmentalism, and what is referred to as the subject-object balance or meaning-making system.

*Constructivism*, the first principle, sheds light on the fact that human beings actively construct or make sense of experiences every minute of every day. How we interpret what we see

and hear and experience is qualitatively different from person to person and has a big influence on our understandings and perspectives.

The second principle, *developmentalism*, highlights the promising notion that the way we make meaning of our experiences can become bigger and more encompassing over time — that we can, in fact, continue to develop and grow throughout the lifespan. Professional learning environments can help us to do this.

The third major principle is what Kegan (1982) refers to as the *subject-object balance*. A person’s way of knowing or meaning-making system hinges on this balance. This system centers on the relationship between what we can have a perspective on and control (object) and what we cannot see about ourselves or others (subject). The more perspective we can have on ourselves, others, and our relationships, the better we are able to manage complexity and also give back to others.

While Kegan’s (1982, 1994, 2000; Kegan et al., 2001) constructive-developmental theory is composed of six qualitatively different stages or meaning-making systems, research suggests that adults today most commonly make meaning with one of three ways of knowing, which I refer to as the instrumental, socializing, or self-authoring (Drago-Severson, 2004b, 2009, 2012).

Like other, more recognized forms of diversity, one’s way of knowing is an important facet of who one is at any given point in time. A person’s way of knowing dictates and shapes beliefs about what constitutes effective help, successful practice, good teaching, effective leadership, and the necessary supports and challenges in order to learn and grow.

Moreover, a person’s way of knowing is not random. Rather, it is stable and consistent for a period of time and reflects a coherent system of logic. While context matters, a way of knowing might feel more like the way we are rather than something we have (Drago-Severson, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, & Asghar, 2013; Kegan, 1982, 1994).

A developmental approach to designing and facilitating professional learning takes into account adults’ different ways of knowing. Thus it helps us to shape learning experiences to be safe and productive “holding environments” (Kegan, 1982, p. 115) that support educators with different orientations — or ways of knowing — and expectations.

The concept of a holding environment was first described in the 1960s by pediatrician and psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. Kegan later used the term in his theory of adult development and maintained that we all need multiple forms of “holding” throughout our lives. His theory highlights that we must benefit from differentiated forms of holding — meaning support, nourishment, and care — in order to grow. Kegan’s (1982) work extends Winnicott’s (1965) definition of a holding environment to include the kinds of environments and relationships that provide opportunities for personal growth throughout the lifespan.

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To better understand how to think about and shape these kinds of holding environments in designing professional learning for educators, let’s examine the three most common ways of knowing in adulthood — the instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring — as well as strategies for supporting and stretching (in the developmental sense) adults with different ways of knowing independently and collectively.

Before turning to these ways of knowing, however, it is important to remember a few important facts. First, development is not the same as intelligence. A person can be very intelligent — as well as kind and caring — and make meaning with any one of the three ways of knowing. Second, each way of knowing has developmental strengths and limitations. Last, a particular way of knowing is not necessarily better than another. Rather, it depends on the fit between personal (internal) capacities and environmental demands.

That said, the demands of contemporary education, and especially the adaptive challenges that we encounter every day, are calling for greater internal capacities. Therefore, designing learning experiences that help adults to understand, identify, and expand their ways of knowing is one promising way to improve schools and school systems together.

### THE INSTRUMENTAL WAY OF KNOWING

Educators — and all adults, for that matter — who make meaning with an instrumental way of knowing have a “what do you have that can help me; what do I have that can help you” orientation to work, teaching, learning, relationships, and the world. Instrumental knowers understand that observable events have realities separate from their own but generally understand the world in very concrete (dualistic) terms.

Instrumental knowers orient strongly toward rule following and feel supported when others provide specific, explicit advice to help them navigate decisions and responsibilities. These knowers can be caring and loving — though in a concrete manner. A limitation to this way of knowing is the inability to take others’ perspectives fully.

To best support and challenge these knowers, professional learning needs to offer a deliberate balance of clear structure and safe, collaborative opportunities and chances to look beyond the “one right way” of doing things and consider multiple perspectives and multiple alternative solutions.

## THE SOCIALIZING WAY OF KNOWING

Educators with a socializing way of knowing have more complex (internal) developmental capacities for reflection and the capacity to consider and reflect on other people's perspectives and actions. Unlike instrumental knowers, socializing knowers can think abstractly (in the psychological sense rather than the mathematical sense). Their orientation is other-focused, and such adults often subordinate their own needs to those of others.

Interpersonal conflict is almost always experienced as a threat to the self, and acceptance by authorities and/or valued others is of the highest importance. When supporting the growth of socializing knowers, professional learning facilitators can create opportunities for these adults to voice their own opinions before adopting those of valued others.

Often, it is helpful to invite and encourage socializing knowers to share their perspectives in pairs or small groups before large-group discussions. This helps them clarify their own beliefs, values, and standards before addressing a larger audience.

## THE SELF-AUTHORING WAY OF KNOWING

Adults with a self-authoring way of knowing generate their own internal value systems and author their own standards (Drago-Severson, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). They can identify abstract values, principles, and longer-term purposes and are able to prioritize and integrate competing values.

These knowers can assess other people's expectations, standards, and judgments and compare them to their own. They have the capacity to reflect on and regulate interpersonal relationships but are not able to have perspective on their own self-system (ideology) because they are so closely identified with it.

Like other adults, educators with a self-authoring way of knowing can be both supported and challenged through professional learning. While they will likely welcome opportunities to lead or express their values and beliefs, they can also benefit from gentle challenges to let go of their own perspectives and embrace opposing points of view.

## DIFFERENTIATION AND DIVERSITY

Strategies that take into account these three concepts can be built into any of the four pillar practices for growth — teaming, providing adults with leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring — that can help make professional learning initiatives become developmental holding environments for adults with different ways of knowing.

It might be helpful to think about what it means — from a developmental perspective — to give and receive feedback. A very important part of learning, feedback means different things to different people — and the Learning Designs standard reminds us of the importance of differentiating our feedback to adults with different ways of understanding and experiencing learning environments and the world.

It also helps us to be mindful of the need to integrate a diversity of pedagogical practices and processes to enhance learning in order to meet the needs of adults with different ways of knowing. For a fuller discussion of feedback from a developmental perspective, see *The Art of Feedback* (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, in press).

Some adults, such as self-authoring knowers, might welcome concise, direct feedback on their practice — as well as the opportunity to voice their own opinions and perspectives in return. Others, such as socializing knowers, might have a harder time taking in critical feedback if it is not expressed in a way that feels genuinely supportive, caring, and appreciative of that adult's positive contributions as well. Yet others, such as instrumental knowers, might prefer more concrete feedback offered within a predetermined structure.

Nevertheless, when offering feedback as a support to another adult's professional learning and growth, the most effective holding environments meet adults where they are in a developmental sense and also gently encourage these adults to stretch beyond comfortable competencies and capacities over time.

In the end, both constructive-developmental theory and the first strand of the Learning Designs standard illuminate the critical importance of infusing our learning designs with the best of what we know from theory, research, and models.

There are many possible and promising theories, research, and models to draw from when shaping spaces as genuine learning contexts for self and others. Constructive-developmental theory is one that can be employed when designing learning experiences for adults. As such, it offers a number of key, unique takeaways that have important implications for designers and facilitators of learning.

**It might be helpful to think about what it means — from a developmental perspective — to give and receive feedback. A very important part of learning, feedback means different things to different people.**

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Take a whole new look at how to use resources

*Continued from p. 30*

- Leveraging evaluation information requires one-on-one debriefing time with coaches.

Even if a school system can find ways to shift resources to support these efforts, it may not have the necessary expertise to do so. This is why systems are turning to outside providers of teacher leadership, coaching, and analysis. It also puts a premium on using technology to lower the cost of mentoring, collaboration, and support.

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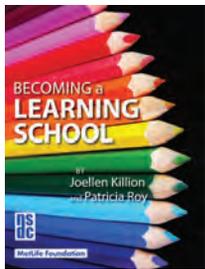
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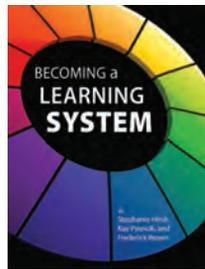


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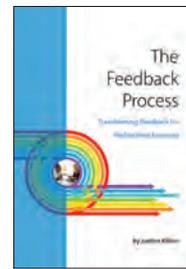


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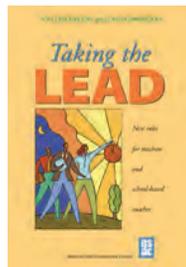


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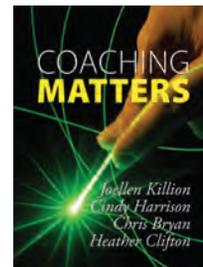


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Michael Fullan's insights on what it takes to make professional learning stick — in other words, Learning Forward's Implementation standard — have long helped leaders at the school



and system level create change in ways that lead to better outcomes for students. In his full thought leader essay in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Implementation*, Fullan begins by considering the failure of professional development and then explores promising models and offers recommendations for succeeding at implementation.

In this excerpt, learn about the role of human, social, and decisional capital in building educator capacity, and more importantly, a culture of learning within schools.

# AMPLIFY CHANGE WITH PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL

By Michael Fullan

In our recent work on professional capital, Andy Hargreaves and I (2013) have been explicit about the conditions at the school level that are essential for continuous professional learning.

We see professional capital as the key to scaling up change efforts from individuals to groups to schools and districts.

Professional capital is a function of the interaction of three components: human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. For a principal, human capital refers to the human resource or personnel dimension of the quality of teachers in the school — their basic teaching talents. Recruiting and cultivating the skills of individual teachers are one dimension of the principal's role.

Social capital concerns the level of quality and quantity of interactions and relationships among people.

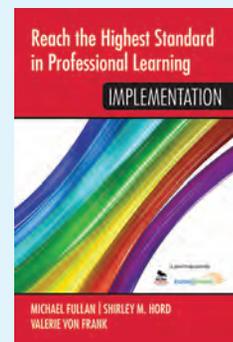
Social capital in a school affects teachers' access to knowledge and information; their senses of expectation, obligation, and trust; and their commitment to work together for a common cause.

Decisional (or decision-making) capital refers to the sum of practice and expertise in making decisions that may be spread across many individuals or groups in a school and its community.

Decisional capital is that which is required for making good decisions — especially decisions about how to put human and social capital to work for achieving the goals of the school.

This three-part conception of professional capital can be used as a way of organizing one's roles in leading learning. In effect, the role of school leaders is to build professional capital across and beyond the school. All three must be addressed explicitly and in combination.

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students **applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Fullan, M., Hord, S.M., & von Frank, V. (2015).** *Reach the highest standard in professional learning: Implementation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Excerpted with permission.

#### ENLIST THE POWER OF THE GROUP

More confirmation of the more powerful alternative of combining human and social capital comes from studies by professor Carrie Leana (2011), a management professor at University of Pittsburgh with strong credentials in learning research. She claims, as I do here, that commonly touted change strategies typically err in trusting too much in the power of individuals to solve educational problems while failing to enlist and capitalize on the power of the group. Just hire great teachers, great principals, and the problem will be solved.

In a straightforward study of elementary schools in New York City, Leana measured only three main variables:

- Human capital — by gathering information on the classroom experience and qualifications of individual teachers;
- Social capital — by asking questions such as, “To what extent do you work with other teachers in the school in a focused collaborative way to improve learning for students?”; and
- Math achievement over a one-year period.

While Leana found that teachers with greater human capital

did get better math results, the teachers who got the greatest gains for their students were good at math teaching and worked with peers regularly to improve what they were doing and what they could learn from each other. She also found that teachers with lower skills who happened to be working in a school with high social capital got better results. The worst scenario was when both human and social capital were low.

Human capital should not be thought of as the main driver for developing the school. While it's true that, in situations where teacher quality is extremely low, bringing in great leaders (high individual human capital) is essential for beginning a turnaround process, little meaningful change results unless and until social capital enables the group to get its act together. Once you get started, social capital (the group) improves individuals more readily than individuals improve the group.

For example, it is very hard for a weak teacher who enters a highly collaborative school to remain there without improving. Conversely, a highly talented individual will not remain in a noncollaborative school for very long. To paraphrase the post-World War I hit about Paris, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they seen the farm?!" Good people will not stay at places that are unproductive.

### LET THE GROUP CHANGE THE GROUP

Ultimately, we need both human and social capital, and we need the group to change the group for the better. The principal who spends a lot of time at the individual level, as current strategies demand, has less time to spend fostering group work and thereby building social capital with and among teachers and with the community and other sources of external support. How's the following for a finding?

When principals spent more time building external social capital (with the community, and seeking other sources of ideas), the quality of instruction in the school was higher and students' scores on standardized tests in both reading and math were higher. Conversely, principals spending more time on mentoring and monitoring teachers had no effect on teacher social capital or student achievement. The more effective principals were those who defined their role as facilitators of teacher success rather than instructional leaders (Leana, 2011, p. 35).

Let's not misinterpret the direction that these findings are taking us. The implication is not that principals should abandon the focus on instruction, but rather that they should get at it by working with teachers individually and collectively to develop their professional capital. The press for continuous instructional improvement is central.

There is still a lot of precision to be had — what specific expertise is needed for learning in math, what teams are needed for what tasks, what new pedagogy has students as partners in learning and uses technology to accelerate and deepen learning. The principal is in there by helping the group get that good. The question is what combination of factors will maximize that

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press for most teachers learning and therefore for most students learning.

Schools that invest in both human and social capital and make them interact build the resources required for schoolwide success. They quite simply come to have the wherewithal to accomplish wider and deeper results. The principal's role is to participate as a learner and leader in ensuring that the combined human and social capital forces are devoted to outcomes in a targeted, continuous manner.

Further development on the job is the key. We know that most teachers do not get ongoing feedback about the quality of their teaching. The question, then, is what conditions or processes best serve that purpose. Formal appraisal schemes represent a crude and ineffective method as the main mechanism for giving constructive feedback. How many professions do you know in which formal appraisal looms as the major instrument of improvement?

There are better ways of improving all teachers or of getting rid of the bottom 5% — one of them being strong collaborative cultures (i.e. social capital). If you make culture the main strategy, formal feedback becomes a lot easier. Thus much of the effective feedback becomes built into the day-to-day purposeful interactions of the culture at work. The effective principal participates in shaping the culture of learning. It is more natural, organic, and by definition persistent so that it is more effective. Most teachers want constructive feedback to get better, and most find it lacking in the culture of the profession.

### FEEDBACK FOR GROWTH

In my experience, formal appraisal schemes become counterproductive when people bend over backward to separate coaching from evaluation, for example, by specifying that instructional coaches should give only nonevaluative feedback or by making principals responsible only for formal, consequential evaluation. This separation typically is associated with low-trust cultures. It's there to protect.

But put all the protective mechanisms you want in a low-trust culture, and you will still never get motivated development. All feedback in a sense is evaluative, and when carried out primarily for growth, it results in improvement. If feedback that is acted on is the main point, and surely it should be, then let's see how that can be accomplished best and not make formal

appraisal an end in itself.

Systems can and should “get evaluation right” in the formal sense. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013) has summarized well the key issues concerning using evaluation to improve teaching. Its TALIS survey of teachers in 25 countries strikes all-too-familiar notes: 22% of the teachers have never had any feedback from their principals (not to mention whether the feedback was valuable from any of those who did get appraised), over 50% have never received feedback from external source, yet 79% of teachers would find constructive feedback helpful.

And, as OECD also found, there are increasingly good formal appraisal frameworks around the world that contain valuable components and standards. The TALIS survey also found that 55% of teachers want more professional learning, but only if it is connected to their growth and implementation of improved practices. Only 33% report that they are engaged in cooperative professional learning communities — that is, collaborative cultures (Weatherby, 2013).

Formal teacher appraisal can never be the main driver of improving the profession. But since most jurisdictions are developing and requiring formal appraisal, let’s position it effectively:

1. Make the appraisal framework sound (based on best standards and efficient ways of assessing them).
2. Underpin its use with a development/improvement philosophy versus an evaluative/punitive stance.
3. Make the learning culture of schools and districts the main event, and integrate any performance appraisal in the service of this shared work.
4. Ensure that professional development/learning is a fundamental ongoing feature of the entire process.
5. Realize that by far the most effective and telling feedback that teachers will get is what is built into the purposeful interaction between and among teachers and the principal. Such interaction is specific to the task of learning. For example, collective analysis of evidence of student learning and the practices that lead to greater learning is at the heart of continuous improvement.

In short, schools should use formal appraisal of human capital to buttress the work of day-to-day improvement but should not expect it to have major impact on organizational learning. For the latter, you need well-led groups working together to make specific changes in instruction tied to student learning.

### TRUST PLUS EXPERTISE

As I suggested earlier, social capital is expressed in the interactions and relationships among the staff of any school that support a common cause. There is no question that a group with plenty of social culture is able to accomplish much more than a group with little — not a correlation, but cause and effect. Interpersonal trust and individual expertise work hand in hand toward better results. Social capital increases your knowledge

because it gives you access to other people’s human capital.

Absence of social capital helps explain why professional development often does not have much effect. Peter Cole (2004) was formerly with the Victoria (Australia) Department of Education and Training and is now a consultant who focuses on professional learning. Who could not be intrigued by the title of his paper: *Professional Development: A Great Way to Avoid Change*, in which he describes how people go to workshops, feel as if they are learning something new, and rarely follow through.

Of course, what matters is what happens after (or between) workshops: Who tries things out? Who supports you? Who gives you feedback? Who picks you up when you make a mistake? Whom else can you learn from? How can you take responsibility for change together? Productive answers to all of these questions depend on the culture to which one returns, especially its social capital.

Cole’s (2012) paper, *Aligning Professional Learning, Performance Management and Effective Teaching*, draws similar conclusions to the case I am making here: Make the culture of the school and the district the main focus, not the qualifications or expertise of individual humans.

Both Bryk et al. (2010) and Leithwood (2011) show that developing the social capital of schools and that of the community forms a powerful combination. When schools work on their own social capital, they are more likely to see parents and the community as part of the solution. When they remain isolated, individualistic cultures, they can easily treat parents as part of the problem, thereby reinforcing a downward spiral.

Decisional capital refers to resources of knowledge, intelligence, and energy that are required to put human and social capital to effective use. It is basically the capacity to choose well and make good decisions. It is best thought of as expertise that grows over time. It should be thought of at both the individual (i.e. a given teacher’s expertise) and group levels (i.e. the collective judgment of two or more teachers).

Like decision making itself, the process of accumulating decisional capital should also be deliberate. In schools, principals must have great decisional capital of their own, but even more of it should reside in the many other individuals and groups of which schools are composed. When human and social capital merge over time, based on the expertise of the people learning through deliberate practice, their professional judgment becomes more powerful.

This decisional form of professional capital can easily be taken for granted, yet it is at the heart of any profession. Working in isolation does not usually increase this type of expertise. Nor does working together automatically increase it. Beware of schools where teachers appear to be working together but mainly run on contrived collegiality, where administrators have mandated professional learning communities (PLCs), or “cozy collaboration,” in which there is little focus and intensity of effort.

Instead, decisional capital is developed through deep learning cultures. Consider an example from outside the field of education. When Liker and Meier (2007), who have studied Toyota over the years, found that Toyota's culture was so effective at continuous learning linked to top performance, they traced this strength to "the depth of understanding among Toyota's employees regarding their work" (p. 112). I prefer to say shared depth.

You don't get depth at a workshop, you don't get it just by hiring great individuals, and you don't get it through congenial relationships. You develop shared depth through continuous learning, solving problems, and getting better and better at what you do. Developing expertise day after day by making learning and its impact the focus of the work is what pays off. Expertise, individual and collective, on a wide basis is what counts.

### FOCUS ON SHARED GOALS

In schools and educational systems, decisional capital is about cultivating human and social capital over time, deliberately identifying and spreading the instructional practices that are most effective for the learning goals of the school. People don't learn these once and for all (and in some cases if at all) in preservice teacher education programs. They learn them best by practicing on the job, having access to coaches and skilled peers.

In education, as in any profession, there are discretionary decisions to make to determine the most effective response to the situation at hand. When a parent puts a difficult question to a teacher who has to consult the manual or check the scripted lesson, you know that teacher is not a professional.

When the school is organized to focus on a small number of shared goals, and when professional learning is targeted to those goals and is a collective enterprise, the evidence is overwhelming that teachers can do dramatically better by way of student achievement. Well-led school-based learning with peers is the best way to learn the fundamentals of teaching — let's call them the nonnegotiable basics.

When University of Melbourne education researcher John Hattie conducted his in-depth research analysis of over 1,000 meta-studies, he did us a favor by identifying the high-impact teaching practices. These practices (e.g. feedback to students, frequent examining and acting on effects of teaching, metacognition where students become self-aware and in control more of their own learning, peer learning among students) are best learned explicitly and with peers.

At the end of the day, says Hattie (2009), expert teachers "can provide defensible evidence of positive impacts of teaching on student learning." You get that way through deliberate practice on a continuous basis, which can be done on one's own but is much more likely to occur if forcefully led and accelerated by the group.

The latter is the only way to foster expertise at scale. If you want to change the group, use the group to change the group. The role of the principal in this endeavor is clear: It is to help

establish challenging goals and corresponding environments "for teachers to critique, question, and support other teachers to reach these goals [that] have the most effect on student outcomes" (p. 83).

In one of his best sellers, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell (2008) made the 10,000-hour rule famous. That figure comes up time and again for individuals trying to become accomplished at their trade: 10,000 hours of deliberate practice over 10 years or more. It is what separates professionals from the rest of us.

I suppose it is obvious that this process can be accelerated when people are learning from each other, and that, equally, it may never succeed (except for the odd genius) if a person simply goes it alone. Teaching is not the kind of profession where staying cloistered will often result in one's achieving personal mastery or ending up having much collective impact.

So it is practice at exercising judgment and a great deal of it that accumulates decisional capital. And power of judgment is sharpened and accelerated when it is mediated through learning with colleagues (social capital).

High-yield strategies become more precise and more embedded when they are developed and deployed in teams that are constantly refining and interpreting them according to impact on students across the school. At the same time, poor judgmental practices and ineffective procedures get discarded along the way. When clear evidence is lacking or conflicting, accumulated collective experience carries much more weight than idiosyncratic experience.

### HOW TO DEVELOP THE BEST LEARNING

Expertise and judgment become all the more critical in time of innovation. The Common Core State Standards represent a potential powerful opportunity or a disaster of titanic proportions, depending on the decisional capital of the teaching force and school leaders. Now that standards and assessments are being spelled out, the difficulty will be how to develop the best learning in relation to the standards.

Some states may very well provide specific directives that strip teachers of the opportunity to make independent judgments. Others may leave it to the discretion of individual teachers, with equally problematic results. In any case, I think it is accurate to say that, at this stage of the evolution of the Common Core, standards are the strongest part of the new direction, assessment is the second strongest, and by far the weakest is curriculum and instruction. This underscores my main conclusion that collaborative cultures focusing on instructional practice are a crucial part of implementing Learning Forward's Implementation standard.

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Continued on p. 56

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theme

EXPLORE THE STANDARDS  
FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

OUTCOMES

**D**elores and Randall Lindsey approach the Outcomes standard through the lens of their cultural proficiency work to highlight the equity focus embedded in the standard. In their full essay in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Outcomes*, they write, “Cultural proficiency is an approach to equity



and access for all learners.

... Our assumption, built on sound practice, is equitable professional learning experiences aligned with professional learning standards and student performance goals support equitable learning outcomes for educators and their students.” They also explore the idea of



“inside-out change” for individuals and systems and its importance in achieving equity of access and outcomes (Lindsey, Lindsey, Hord, & von Frank, 2016).

This excerpt dives into their cultural proficiency tools and framework and their connection to the Outcomes standard.

# BUILD CULTURAL PROFICIENCY TO ENSURE EQUITY

By Delores B. Lindsey and Randall B. Lindsey

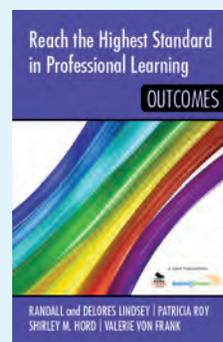
**C**ultural proficiency is about serving the needs of all students, with a laser-like focus on historically underserved students. When education is offered in a culturally proficient manner, historically underserved students gain access to educational opportunities intended to result in high academic achievement. When education is delivered in a culturally proficient manner, all students understand and value their own culture and the cultures of those around them. In the same vein, when educational experiences are delivered in a culturally proficient manner, all educators, legislators, board members, and local business community members understand and value the culture of those around them in ways they have rarely experienced or appreciated.

Culturally proficient professional learning focuses on the learner outcomes described in Learning Forward’s Outcomes standard. Professional learning aligned with educator effectiveness and focused on student performance takes into consideration the student’s culture, learning style, and academic need. Clearly stated outcomes with a system for monitoring and benchmarking ensure equitable student results.

## THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices on p. 52, begin reading at the bottom of the table and follow the arrows to the top. Observe that markedly contrasting sets of values guide behavior. Take particular note of the manner in which barriers are unhealthy while guiding principles as core values inform healthy practices. Recognizing and understanding the tension that exists for people and schools in terms of barriers versus assets

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students **aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Lindsey, D.B., Lindsey, R.B., Hord, S.M., & von Frank, V. (2016).** *Reach the highest standard in professional learning: Outcomes.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Excerpted with permission.

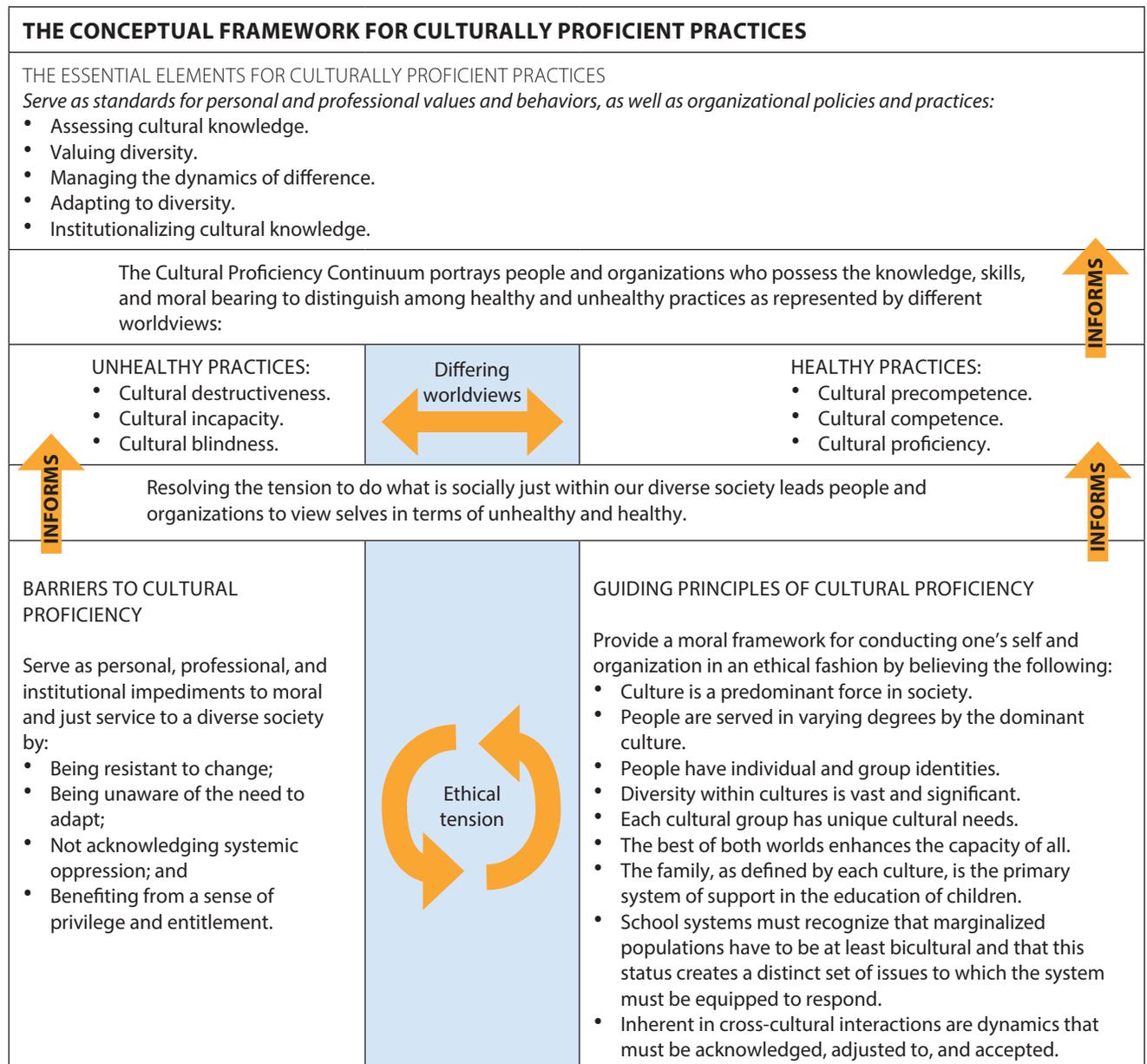
is a good first step in this journey of continuous improvement. Acknowledging barriers that exist for students and being able to see their cultures as asset-based prepares educators for serving the diversity of students in their classroom, school, and district. Take time to read each layer of the table and note how the arrows indicate relationships and patterns of influence.

#### BARRIERS VERSUS CULTURAL ASSETS

The barriers to cultural proficiency and the guiding principles of cultural proficiency are the invisible guiding hands of

the framework. Barriers inform the harmful aspects of the continuum — cultural destructiveness, incapacity, and blindness — while the guiding principles function as core values to guide the constructive aspects of the continuum — precompetence, competence, and proficiency.

Recognizing and acknowledging the barriers to cultural proficiency is basic to overcoming resistance to change within ourselves and our schools. The barriers to culturally proficient attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices are systemic forces that affect our daily lives and impact professional learning by



SOURCE: Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009.

embracing deficit conceptions of students and their cultures (Cross, 1989; Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 1999, 2003, 2009). Forces that serve as systemic barriers include:

- Being resistant to change and believing that, since the current system works for most students, there must be a deficiency with those who can't keep up.
- Being unaware of the need to adapt and expecting that it is those who are not currently successful who are failing to adapt.
- Not acknowledging systemic oppression by either being oblivious to forces, such as racism or sexism, or dismissing them as artifacts of bygone eras.

- Benefiting from a sense of privilege and entitlement that current policies and practices foster and either not being able to see that some communities are served poorly or summarily ignoring discrepant results in the school.

On the Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices above, note the line between the barriers and the guiding principles. That gulf between cultural blindness and cultural precompetence represents the paradigmatic shifting point where educators have clear choices.

On the left, educators are victims of social forces and embrace a cultural deficit approach to marginalized and historically underserved communities, or, every bit as damaging, they re-

THE CULTURAL PROFICIENCY CONTINUUM: DEPICTING UNHEALTHY AND HEALTHY PRACTICES					
Cultural DESTRUCTIVENESS	Cultural INCAPACITY	Cultural BLINDNESS	Cultural PRECOMPETENCE	Cultural COMPETENCE	Cultural PROFICIENCY
COMPLIANCE-BASED TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY			TRANSFORMATION FOR EQUITY		
<p><b>Cultural destructiveness:</b></p> <p>Seeking to eliminate references to the culture of “others” in all aspects of the school and in relationship with their communities.</p>	<p><b>Cultural incapacity:</b></p> <p>Trivializing “other” communities and seeking to make them appear to be wrong.</p>	<p><b>Cultural blindness:</b></p> <p>Pretending not to see or acknowledge the status and culture of marginalized communities and choosing to ignore the experiences of such groups within the school and community.</p>	<p><b>Cultural precompetence:</b></p> <p>Increasingly aware of what you and the school don’t know about working with marginalized communities. It is at this key level of development that you and the school can move in a positive, constructive direction, or you can vacillate, stop, and possibly regress.</p>	<p><b>Cultural competence:</b></p> <p>Manifesting your personal values and behaviors and the school’s policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive with marginalized cultures and communities that are new or different from you and the school.</p>	<p><b>Cultural proficiency:</b></p> <p>Advocating for lifelong learning in order to be increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of the cultural groups served by the school. Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy.</p>

SOURCE: Adapted from Terrell & Lindsey, 2009.

guard racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and heterosexism as societal issues too ingrained for schools to overcome. In contrast, on the right, educators choose to believe in their capacity to effectively educate all students, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual identity, special needs, or faith communities.

The guiding principles of cultural proficiency are core values that regard students’ cultures as assets. The guiding principles help identify and overcome both overt barriers that serve to marginalize students as well as the unrecognized and unintentional barriers that serve to limit students’ access and eventual academic success. The issue of intentionality is very important. To students, their families, and members of their community, overt and unintentional barriers feel the same whether they are intentional or unintentional on the part of educators and the school.

Culture embraced as asset serves to make the guiding principles inclusive. In order to be effective and manifest an inclusive approach to culture, your core values and the school’s core values must be deeply held beliefs and values fully vetted by you and members of your learning community. They cannot and must not be lightly agreed to in nodding assent, then carelessly disregarded.

Note that the guiding principles are brief, direct, and uncomplicated statements. As you continue your cultural profi-

ciency journey, you may choose to use these guiding principles as your core values. It is important to have core values that serve as the moral center of your work and your school’s work because it is our core values that shape our actions. The guiding principles inform our actions through the stages of cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency. The alignment of what we profess to value with our actions becomes our outcomes measurement. Members of the community can only assess what we do, not what we say.

### TRANSFORMING SCHOOL CULTURE

In considering issues of diversity, equity, and access, the organizational culture must be the focus of professional learning. Researchers have studied organizational and school cultures extensively and concur that schools need leaders who understand and manage that culture in a constructive manner (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Fullan, 2003; Schein, 1992, 2010; Wagner et al., 2006). Experienced and new educators agree that change is not easy. Implementing new practices in schools is often difficult and made even more challenging when addressing the educational needs of historically underserved or marginalized students.

No Child Left Behind and similar state-level initiatives have contributed to a slowly evolving national context of responding to the educational needs of marginalized communities in ways not previously confronted. While it may be true that change is

not easy, we know also that change in our increasingly diverse society is inevitable and natural.

Formal and nonformal school leaders must be able to recognize and acknowledge personal and institutional barriers to creating conditions for teaching and learning while advocating for practices that benefit all students, schools, and districts. The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices is a mental model for managing change that we use to understand and tell our stories in ways that may inform as you continue your journey to increased effectiveness as an educator (Dilts, 1990, 1994; Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Senge et al., 2000).

### CULTURES AS ASSETS

With this basic grounding in acknowledging barriers and using core values informed by the guiding principles, we are now prepared to get to the doing. The Cultural Proficiency Continuum (see p. 53) and the Essential Elements for Culturally Proficient Practices (see below) are the most visible tools of cultural proficiency and are represented by what we do, not by what we say we do. The essential elements are standards for personal and professional behavior as well as for organizational policies and practices. The guiding principles are core values that inform and guide the essential elements. When culture is embraced as an asset, professional learning goals can be crafted for ourselves as educators and for the communities we serve.

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum on p. 53 aligns the six phases of cultural proficiency to illustrate that the effects of the barriers are in contrast to the effects of the guiding principles. The cultural destructiveness, incapacity, and blindness phases are composed of harmful behaviors that explicitly or implicitly foster actions that limit the academic and social success of historically marginalized students or the effective exclusion of historically marginalized colleagues and community mem-

DELORES B. LINDSEY, a retired associate professor, uses the lens of cultural proficiency to help education leaders examine their organization's policies and practices as well as their individual beliefs and values about cross-cultural communication.

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bers. In marked contrast, the culturally precompetent, competent, and proficient phases are inclusive and support policies and practices for students, educators, parents, and community members by esteeming their cultures.

The Essential Elements for Culturally Proficient Practices are carefully crafted standards borne out of a deeply held value for culture in all its manifestations. Engaging in effective professional learning experiences that honor and recognize diverse communities combined with the view that students' cultures are assets on which to build a relationship better equips educators to meet the academic and social needs of historically marginalized students.

Valuing culture and diversity through commitment to the essential elements prepares educators to manage change effectively.

### COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT

A school or district's change initiative is often the primary indicator of success or failure in reaching student performance goals. A variety of factors reflect the level of commitment: edu-

### THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR CULTURALLY PROFICIENT PRACTICES

1. **Assessing cultural knowledge:** Becoming aware of and knowing the diverse communities within your school. Knowing how educators and the school as a whole react to marginalized communities. Learning how to be effective in serving these communities. Leading and learning about the school and its grade levels and departments as cultural entities in responding to the educational needs of the underserved communities.

2. **Valuing diversity:** Creating informal and formal decision-making groups inclusive of parents/guardians and community members whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours and the dominant group at the school, which will enrich conversations, decision making, and problem solving.

3. **Managing the dynamics of difference:** Modeling problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies as a natural and normal process within the culture of the schools and the diverse contexts of the communities of your school.

4. **Adapting to diversity:** Learning about underserved cultural groups different from your own and the ability to use others' experiences and backgrounds in all school settings.

5. **Institutionalizing cultural knowledge:** Making learning about underserved cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives an integral part of the school's professional development.

SOURCE: Adapted from Terrell & Lindsey, 2009.

## NESTED LEVELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE



SOURCE: Adapted from Lindsey, Martinez, & Lindsey, 2007.

cators' public pronouncements, the allocation of resources (i.e. time, people, money, and materials) assigned to the initiative, the widely held belief that the initiative can produce desired results, the overall efforts to sustain growth over time, and the ability of teachers and leaders to identify change initiatives as part of "the way we do things around here."

Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman expanded the work of Gregory Bateson and Robert Dilts by developing a model of intervention based on the nested levels of learning (Garmston & Wellman, 1999). The Nested Levels of Organization Change above is a model of behavioral and organizational change that supports consideration and implementation change efforts, such as those in the college- and career-readiness standards.

The nested levels indicate that behavioral and observable changes most significantly occur when all levels are addressed. Change that occurs at one level impacts behaviors below that level (i.e. allocation of resources, decision making, problem solving, professional development, assessment, curriculum, and

instruction decisions). Change processes that reside only at the lower levels have little impact or influence on the levels above, limiting the chances or opportunities for large-scale changes (Lindsey, Kearney, Estrada, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2015).

School improvement efforts focused at the two lowest levels — providing or improving facilities, purchasing materials of instruction, and implementing new academic programs as mandated by local, state, or federal agencies — are common in schools and districts. Such interventions represented as change or improvement processes are often employed as the answer to problems such as disproportional suspensions and expulsions of specified cultural groups of students. The same answer is often applied to the cultural characteristics of students in advanced placement or honors classes.

Although these lower-level interventions are important and necessary, they should be employed only after considering whether they are the most effective. Beginning at the lower levels of the change process often becomes "fill-in-the-blank"

responses to problems, issues, or needs. Schools or districts often see new programs or interventions as the solution to disproportionality or underrepresentation even before analyzing student data or student needs and posing questions that challenge operating assumptions.

Implementation decisions for school change initiatives should be based on student achievement and participation data, involving educators in collaboratively selecting intervention programs, developing instructional techniques, and designing assessment strategies that reflect student needs. Educators have to be engaged in collaborative conversations and data dialogues as part of their districtwide reform efforts to support all students, parents, and community members.

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## Amplify change with professional capital

*Continued from p. 48*

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# Standards self-assessment and follow-up



**PURPOSE:** This tool will assist learners in gauging their own experience with standards implementation and determining solutions to common gaps in implementing the standards.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 60 minutes.

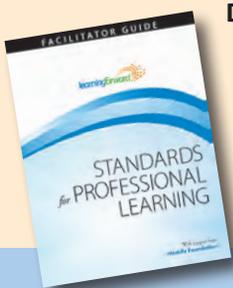
**PREPARATION:** Create table tents with each standard listed to use as part of the discussion and place them on separate tables. Make copies of the following two pages for each participant.

**SUGGESTED PROCESS:** Arrange participants in similarly sized groups.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Ask participants to work independently to complete the Standards for Professional Learning Self-Assessment on p. 58, providing a rating and noting evidence that informed their rating of each question. Allow five to seven minutes to complete the assessment.
2. Ask table group members to discuss their self-assessment results, moving around the table in round-robin fashion, sharing their responses to each standard and any evidence they included.
3. Following table group discussions, ask participants to identify their strongest and weakest standard using the tool on p. 59.
4. Invite participants to move to the table labeled with what they consider their strongest standard for a discussion among participants with similar strengths. Have them work together to develop a list of their collective strategies to share with their original table group members later. (Allow 10 minutes for groups of four to six participants, adding two minutes for each additional participant per group.)
5. Ask participants to move back to their original table groups to discuss their weakest standard. Ask group members to describe specific gaps that demonstrate the impact of the weakest standard.
6. Using their list of strategies collected in step 4, have group members identify possible strategies they might consider to address their gaps. (Allow 10 minutes for groups of four to six participants, adding two minutes for each additional participant per group.)
7. Give participants time to write their reflections independently using the questions on p. 59. Debrief participants' strengths and gaps by asking for volunteers to share strategies they collected to support their gap area.
8. Ask for volunteers to share any strategies they intend to consider for implementing a specific standard.
9. Provide any additional salient points based on the discussion, and engage participants in summarizing their learning.

## DOWNLOAD THE FREE FACILITATOR GUIDE



This tool has been adapted from *Facilitator Guide to the Standards for Professional Learning*, which is designed to assist facilitators in introducing and helping others implement the standards.

The guide, which users can download at no cost from Learning Forward's website, includes practical activities, reflection questions, and tools to deepen users' understanding of the standards and how effective professional learning leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.

The guide is available at [www.learningforward.org/standards/facilitator-guide](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/facilitator-guide).

# Standards for Professional Learning

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

<i>Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...</i>	<b>1</b> low	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> high	<i>Evidence</i>
<p><b>LEARNING COMMUNITIES</b> Occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.</p>						
<p><b>LEADERSHIP</b> Requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.</p>						
<p><b>RESOURCES</b> Requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.</p>						
<p><b>DATA</b> Uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.</p>						
<p><b>LEARNING DESIGNS</b> Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.</p>						
<p><b>IMPLEMENTATION</b> Applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.</p>						
<p><b>OUTCOMES</b> Aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.</p>						

## STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS
WEAKNESSES

<b>What does this mean for you and your work?</b>
<b>How do you continue to develop your strength areas?</b>
<b>What is one strategy you will take away to strengthen a weak standard area?</b>



# WHY ADOPTION OF STANDARDS MATTERS

A total of 39 states have adopted, adapted, or endorsed the Standards for Professional Learning, including the standards issued in 2011 (labeled in red) and those published earlier (labeled in blue). Making a commitment to the standards is a commitment to continuous learning for all educators in a school.

## WHAT ADOPTION MEANS

When a state adopts the standards, they become part of the state's policies and regulations.

In Arizona, for example, the standards are listed verbatim in a June 2012 state policy document with the statement, "These standards shall guide all ADE [Arizona Department of Education] involvement with Local Education Agencies (LEA), schools, programs (e.g. Early Childhood, CTE, Adult Education, etc.), and educators that are related to educators' professional learning and shall guide agency interactions with others in the formulation and execution of professional learning activities and policies. They shall guide ADE's planning, facilitation, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning" (Arizona Department of Education, 2012).

Other states share similar information in legislative documentation or state department of education policies.

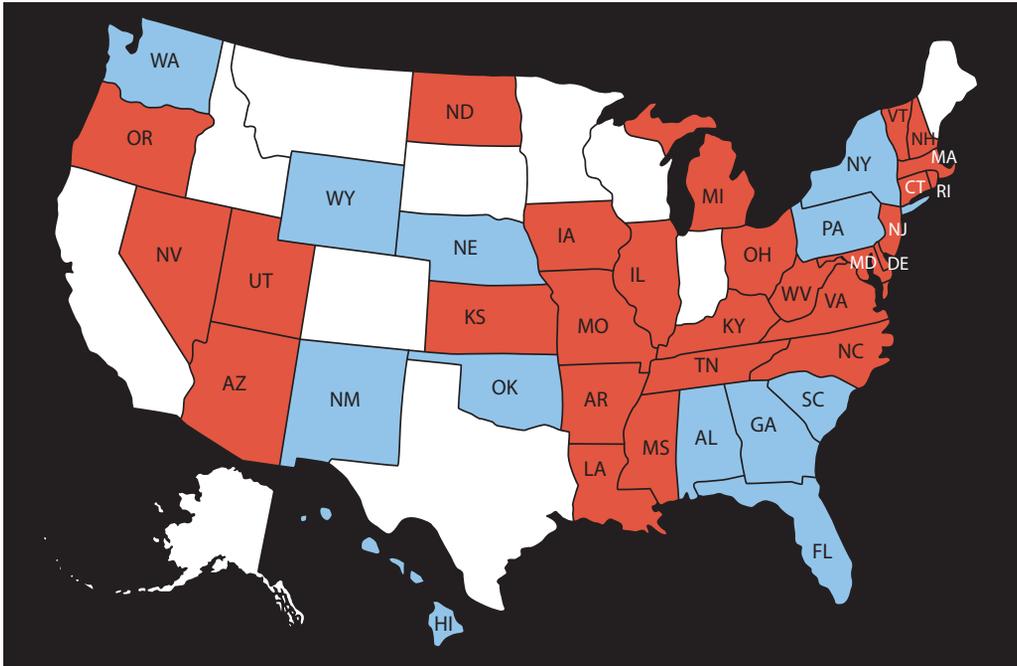
## STANDARDS DRIVE POWERFUL LEARNING

Signing on to the Standards for Professional Learning indicates stakeholders' intention to hold professional learning to high expectations. They serve as an important tool in striving toward equity of access to powerful learning for all educators. If a state or local entity holds all learning

## LEARNING FORWARD'S IMPACT

The map shows the 39 states that have adopted, adapted, or endorsed Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

■ 2011 version ■ previous versions



to rigorous standards, then every learner should experience high-quality learning. Making the standards a part of policy sets an explicit vision for learning at a high level and offers meaningful criteria for monitoring professional learning practices and results.

Having standards embedded in policy can also be useful in funding professional learning. If a state demands that any professional learning it funds must meet these standards, then investments are more likely to support effective learning. At the same time, through the standards adoption process, educators can advocate for learning that results in changes in educator practice so that students experience better teaching and learning.

### ADOPTION IS THE FIRST STEP

While adoption is a great first step and essential in establishing meaningful systems

of professional learning, it isn't sufficient for ensuring great learning for all. Implementation of standards is where the action happens, as teachers and leaders working to bring college- and career-ready standards to life in classrooms experience every day. Implementation is the daily work of not only understanding standards and how they impact learning, but also integrating the intended shifts implicit in the standards into the planning, doing, and assessment of professional learning.

### REFERENCE

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## HOW HAS ADOPTION SHAPED YOUR PRACTICE?

Learning Forward is eager to hear how state and local adoption of standards has affected the learning you plan and the learning you experience. We're also interested to know which local education agencies have adopted the standards. Email [learningforward@learningforward.org](mailto:learningforward@learningforward.org) to share your experiences, get more information, or update the standards adoption map.

# HOW THE WORLD'S BEST SCHOOLS STAY ON TOP

STUDY'S KEY FINDINGS PINPOINT PRACTICES THAT ALIGN WITH LEARNING FORWARD

By Joellen Killion

**T**eacher professional learning drives school improvement, according to a new study from Learning First commissioned by the Center on International Education Benchmarking of the National Center on Education and the Economy, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Based on the premise that continuous professional learning is fundamental to teacher and student success, *Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems* (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016) is a cross-case analysis that examines teacher professional learning practices in four high-performing school systems — Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and British Columbia — and identifies common practices across the

four systems. These four systems have retained positions at or near the top of international student assessments and are systems in which policymakers and educators leverage teacher professional learning as a driver in student success.

The research study describes how schools and school systems leverage professional learning for improving teaching and student learning. The study examines how the school systems employ common practices of teacher learning in contextually different ways to achieve high levels of practice among professionals and results for students. In addition, authors Ben Jensen, Julie Sonnemann, Katie Roberts-Hall, and Amélie Hunter provide specific descriptions with accompanying web-based tools from the four school systems to guide others in reforming their professional learning practice. These tools are available at [www.ncee.org/beyondpd](http://www.ncee.org/beyondpd).

This article has two purposes. The first is to share key findings from the study so that educators might apply them





to strengthening professional learning in their schools and school systems. The second purpose is to compare the findings from the study to Learning Forward's long-standing position about professional learning grounded within its definition of and standards for professional learning.

### STUDY BACKGROUND

Learning First, applying qualitative research methods, conducted the study by tapping into OECD's global evidence database, analyzing documents from the school systems, and interviewing education agency and school and school system staff, policymakers, providers, and other relevant stakeholders within each school system. This study compiles descriptions about how each of the school systems organizes professional learning for teachers within the school, system, and ministry context in which professional learning occurs. It seeks to unpack the role of professional learning in major education reforms within each system over the multiple years.

The findings from the study provide both insight into and guidance for schools and school systems related to professional learning. Major findings are described briefly below.

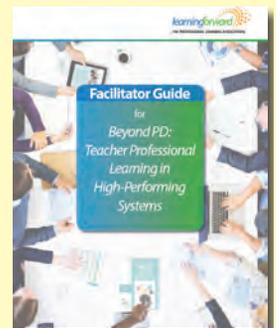
### FINDING 1:

**"The strategic approach adopted in these systems requires all professional learning to be developed around an improvement cycle in schools that is always tied to student learning" (Jensen et al., 2016, p.4).**

According to researchers, "High-performing systems transform the improvement cycle into a culture of continuous professional learning that, in time, turns schools into true learning organizations" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 4). They add, "In other words, high-performing systems tend to be prescriptive about what constitutes effective professional learning in schools. Rather than being 'tight' on the specific professional learning programs that schools offer (learning communities, mentoring, courses, and so forth), effective systems establish the expectation that quality professional learning will proceed within an improvement

### TOOL KIT FOR TEAM STUDY

*Facilitator Guide for Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems*, by Joellen Killian, offers ways to unpack and apply findings from the study to assist education leaders, policymakers, and decision makers in improving the quality of professional learning in schools. With more than 35 tools, the guide offers multiple entry points into the latest knowledge from the field, focusing stakeholders on practical implications and next steps. Access the guide at [www.learningforward.org/publications/beyond-pd-resources](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/beyond-pd-resources).



COMPARISON BETWEEN LEARNING FIRST'S IMPROVEMENT CYCLE AND LEARNING FORWARD'S CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	
LEARNING FIRST'S IMPROVEMENT CYCLE	LEARNING FORWARD'S CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
Assess students' learning to identify what they are ready to learn next.	Analyze student, educator, and school data to determine student and educator learning needs.
	Define educator professional learning goals based on student learning needs.
	Develop educator professional growth/learning goals.
Develop the teaching practices that will provide for the next stage of student learning (and be clear what evidence supports this).	Select and implement evidence-based professional learning to achieve professional learning goals.
	Provide job-embedded coaching and other forms of assistance to support transfer of learning.
Evaluate the impact.	Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of professional learning.
	Inform ongoing improvement in teaching, leadership, and learning.
	Tap external assistance when necessary.

cycle, with student learning as the organizing principle” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 12).

Common in the school systems studied was the implementation of professional learning within schools that focused on teachers’ work and was supported by policies that enhance the quality of, responsibility for, and accountability for professional learning. The professional learning was not a random selection of programs disconnected from the daily work of teachers. Rather, professional learning is the implementation of the improvement cycle within learning communities at school in order to elevate and enhance teaching practice to achieve greater results for students.

The three-step improvement cycle drives professional learning and grounds it in improvement work at the classroom and school levels. The cycle includes:

1. Analyzing what students need to learn next;
2. Developing instructional practices to achieve the student outcomes; and
3. Evaluating the impact of new practices on student learning.

This cycle emphasizes that teacher learning, when related directly to their students’ learning, results in changes in professional practice. The content of and approach to professional learning varies within and across schools to respond to the needs of students teachers serve. All four systems used this improvement framework for guiding teacher learning and overall school improvement efforts. The improvement cycle sits on several foundational principles:

1. The quality and effectiveness of professional learning is

nonnegotiable and is more tightly monitored than other systems.

2. There is strategic alignment and focus with clear goals and expectations within the schools and school systems.
3. Teachers and principals are responsible for the quality of teaching and professional learning.

### LEARNING FORWARD'S PERSPECTIVE

Learning Forward’s cycle of continuous improvement — delineated within its definition of professional learning and the foundation for books such *Becoming a Learning School* (Killion & Roy, 2009) and *Becoming a Learning System* (Hirsh, Psencik, & Brown, 2014) — is an expanded version of the improvement cycle found in the four high-performing school systems. The table above depicts the crosswalk among the components of each. In addition, Learning Forward advocates a similar process in the backmapping model for planning professional learning that begins with the end in mind — results for students and educators — as the first step in planning professional learning.

Several of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning — including Learning Communities, Data, Learning Designs, Implementation, and Outcomes — speak directly to the role of the improvement cycle and support the improvement cycle, as explicated within the cycle of continuous improvement.

### FINDING 2:

**“Distinct roles are created to lead professional learning in schools and throughout the system” (Jensen et al., 2016, p.**

#### 4) and purposely develop new leaders to assume these responsibilities.

Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hall, and Hunter identify teacher leaders, principals, and school system leaders as pivotal to the quality of professional learning and describe the various roles these leaders have within schools, school systems, and ministries of education.

Within schools, individual teachers, teacher leaders, and principals are responsible for the quality of professional learning, and school performance systems hold them accountable for providing evidence of its success. Teacher leaders, often called master teachers, senior teachers, school staff developers, or other titles, drive a school's professional learning. They earn their roles through demonstration that they have the skills and specialized expertise in pedagogy, content, and facilitating professional learning and mentor or coach directly within their school with individual novice and experienced teachers and facilitate or support learning communities.

Career pathways identify roles for teachers within schools, school systems, and ministries of education, and the school systems provide professional learning to develop master teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices to prepare them for and support them in the role of master teacher. The primary work of teachers within the advanced level roles is improving the quality of teaching by employing common professional learning programs or approaches — learning communities, mentoring and beginning teacher initiatives, and external expertise.

Principals lead the strategic planning and alignment of professional learning to school improvement efforts and the needs of teachers and students. Researchers note, "Professional learning cannot be effective in bringing about a learning culture in schools if it not aligned and firmly embedded in school strategic planning" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 16). Principals are accountable to their supervisors for the quality and effects of professional learning within their schools.

School system master teachers with expert content and pedagogy knowledge and practice lead and facilitate professional learning within schools and within the school system. They help prepare and advance the next generation of master teachers. Specialized preparation and support is available to assist with leading professional learning for both principals and teachers on career advancement pathways to develop their understanding of effective professional learning.

Principals' evaluation, for example, emphasizes accountability for the quality and effectiveness of professional learning and, in turn, teacher evaluation does the same. Through the efforts of professional learning leaders, the climate and culture of a school improves and the purpose and content of professional learning remains tightly focused on teaching and learning.

#### ■ LEARNING FORWARD'S PERSPECTIVE

Learning Forward acknowledges and places significance

emphasis on leadership for professional learning and incorporates into its efforts support for administrators with direct and indirect responsibilities for professional learning as well as teacher leaders who are directly responsible for the professional advancement of their peers.

One of Learning Forward's fundamental beliefs states, "Successful leaders create and sustain a culture of learning" (Learning Forward, n.d.). In addition, Learning Forward includes a specific priority within its strategic plan focused on leadership:

- "Leadership and practice: Learning Forward builds the capacity of its members, clients, partners, and staff to establish and sustain effective professional learning" (Learning Forward, n.d.).

Since their inception in 1994, Learning Forward's standards have addressed the role of leaders of professional learning. Its current Leadership standard states that leaders "develop capacity for, advocate for, and create support systems for professional learning" (Learning Forward, 2011). Through its Innovation Configuration maps (Learning Forward, 2012, 2013, 2014) that specify what leaders in 12 distinct roles do to support implementation of effective professional learning, as well as its publications, conferences, and resource materials, Learning Forward has long advocated strong leadership at all levels of a school system for effective professional learning. Without leadership, professional learning loses the potential for sustained and deep change in teaching, leading, and student learning.

#### FINDING 3:

##### High-performing school systems leverage both accountability and evaluation for effective professional learning.

Jensen et al. noted that high-performing systems establish expectations and procedures for accountability for effective professional learning and integrate responsibility for professional learning as an essential criterion within performance management systems for schools, leaders, and teachers.

"Ensuring that quality professional learning is supported through evaluation and accountability mechanisms starts — in these high-performing systems — with system leaders setting strategic directions for quality professional learning. From this point, evaluation and evaluation systems can measure how they are being implemented in both external (e.g. courses and workshops) and internal professional learning programs (e.g. learning communities and mentoring programs)" (Jensen et al., 2016, pp. 17-18).

In other words, principals are held accountable for the effects of professional learning within their schools and are expected to apply the improvement cycle in individual, team, and schoolwide professional learning. School reviews or inspections emphasize the quality of professional learning as a priority in the review process, and broader accountability focuses on student performance, the quality of instruction, and the quality of professional learning.

Ongoing performance management of staff at all levels — including teachers, principals, district office, and ministry staff as well as external consultants — addresses the degree to which individuals are continuing to grow professionally and contributing productively to the professional learning of others. Career pathways for teachers are based on capacity to contribute to professional learning of others.

Mentors and master teachers, for example, are evaluated on how well their teachers improve their instructional practice, they contribute to their peers' professional learning, and their students perform. Accountability for the quality of teaching practices leads naturally to accountability for student success, not just achievement on tests. When the improvement cycle is used, teachers and principals know if student learning is occurring and expand their learning to address gaps that may occur.

### ■ LEARNING FORWARD'S PERSPECTIVE

Learning Forward advocates establishing federal, state or ministry, and local policy about quality professional learning and provides the leading resources to support accountability at all levels. Its Standards for Professional Learning, first developed in 1994 and now in their third edition to reflect current research, are integrated into policy in more than 35 states and numerous school districts.

Learning Forward's affiliate leaders are active advocates of state and local adoption of the standards to provide guidance and accountability for the quality of professional learning. The Standards Assessment Inventory, first developed in 2003 and revised since then to align with the most recent edition of the standards, is a highly reliable and valid electronic survey that measures teachers' perspectives about the quality of their professional learning through implementation of the standards.

The definition of professional learning integrated into the Every Student Succeeds Act specifies that professional learning means activities that "(A) are an integral part of school and local education agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals,

other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in the core academic subjects and to meet challenging State academic standards; and

(B) are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, and short-term

workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, classroom-focused ... and may include activities that ..." support a wide range of learning designs.

Learning Forward's advocacy influenced the change in the definition that now emphasizes the collaborative, job-embedded, sustained, classroom-focused, and data-driven nature of professional learning, much as it is practiced in the high-performing systems studied. Between 2009 and 2011, Learning Forward commissioned a series of studies on the state of professional learning. The reports are available at [www.learningforward.org/publications/status-of-professional-learning](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/status-of-professional-learning).

Linda Darling-Hammond and a team of researchers at the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education led the studies, which examined teacher professional learning practices and policies with a deep analysis of four states that had indicators of strong professional learning and simultaneously improving student achievement on NAEP assessments. These studies informed Learning Forward's position about the role of state policymakers in professional learning.

In recent years, Learning Forward has actively engaged in transforming state policy related to professional learning through Transforming Professional Learning, a multistate initiative funded by the Sandler and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations. These reports are available at [www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core).

Through this initiative, Learning Forward, in collaboration with other professional associations and education agencies, developed numerous resources to assist states and districts in creating comprehensive professional learning systems and policies to ensure that state and local conditions such as evaluation for professional learning, standards for quality, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and adequate resources are available for educators' ongoing learning. Learning Forward's Learning Communities, Leadership, and Resources standards specifically address the need to establish policies and conditions for effective professional learning.

#### FINDING 4:

**"What is needed is more time for effective professional learning practices that are incorporated into daily school life" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 28).**

Jensen et al. (2016) state, "... [P]rofessional learning is effective when it becomes a normal part of daily work life in schools. Separating professional learning from daily teaching routines is counterproductive, and limits the benefits for teachers and students alike" (p. 28). They stress that teachers in the high-performing school systems have fewer hours of daily teaching responsibilities, giving them more time to enhance their teaching practice and student results. They note that the time available for professional learning within the systems studied are not "ring-fenced around specific activity that is separated from teaching and learning" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 28), but rather

**Learning Forward has actively engaged in transforming state policy related to professional learning through Transforming Professional Learning, a multistate initiative funded by the Sandler and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations.**

integrated into teachers' routine work and connected intimately to their teaching responsibilities.

Researchers note that teachers do not have more time designated for professional learning, yet that the time is fully integrated into what teachers do each day. This time is the result of a different timetable for teacher workdays. According to researchers who used OECD and interview data, U.S. teachers teach on average 27 hours per week, while teachers in other high-performing school systems directly interact with students in classrooms fewer hours per day and, in some cases, with larger numbers of students.

British Columbia teachers, with the closest amount to their U.S. counterparts, teach 22 to 23 hours per week. Singapore and Hong Kong teachers teach 17 hours per week, and Shanghai teachers teach 10 to 12 hours per week. Researchers note that "teachers are ... relatively free to pursue professional learning opportunities through the working week and not as an out-of-hours extra" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 28).

Even in British Columbia, where teachers teach approximately 10 hours more per week than those in other high-performing systems, teachers are allocated one to two periods per week for formal professional learning: "Professional learning time is embedded in daily work life; and teachers have time throughout the school week to improve their teaching" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 29).

The high-performing systems discovered through their reform efforts that "being 'tight' on the number of hours is not in itself an effective strategy on making the most of professional learning. Rather, what will make the difference to student outcomes is the quality of professional learning, and the alignment of structures within and between schools to ensure that teachers have the time to make the most of professional learning opportunities" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 29).

## ■ LEARNING FORWARD'S PERSPECTIVE

When Learning Forward's definition of professional learning was initially developed and recommended for inclusion in federal legislation, it included a phrase that some questioned. That phrase — "primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a continuous cycle of improvement" — frequently surprises education policy and decision makers and educators.

For most who view and experience professional learning as an episodic event occurring occasionally on designated days at the beginning or end of or throughout the school year, the concept of ongoing time for continuous learning several times per week remains incomprehensible. One can only guess at the response to the concept of several hours each day devoted to collaborative professional learning might generate.

Too many schools and school systems across North America and around the world have discovered ways to integrate profes-

sional learning into the routine school day for this mystery to continue. Yet, given time without clear accountability for improving instruction and student learning, increasing consistency in the quality of professional learning, and restructuring the responsibilities of teachers to minimize noninstructional tasks, the additional time will not result in strengthened professional practice and student success.

The first in the series of State of Professional Learning studies compared time available for professional learning in U.S. schools with those in other countries. Like this current study, researchers reported that teachers in the U.S. have more teaching responsibilities and less time for collaborative professional learning. This study strengthened Learning Forward's advocacy for effective professional learning embedded into the school day rather than an extra duty, particularly in the midst of sweeping reforms in content standards, pedagogy, and performance evaluation that systems in states and local school systems were undertaking.

Among the resources that emerged from the Transforming Professional Learning initiative is *Establishing Time for Professional Learning* (Killion, 2013b). In addition, Learning Forward provides practical examples of schools and school systems that are creating collaborative time for professional learning and highlights practices in its weekly news update, *Professional Learning News* (<http://multibriefs.com/briefs/lf>) and reviews research in *JSD* that links professional learning to educator effectiveness and student success.

*Becoming a Learning School* (Killion & Roy, 2009) and *Becoming a Learning System* (Hirsh, Psencik, & Brown, 2014) offer concrete and specific tools and processes for establishing productive collaborative learning teams and supporting and monitoring their success.

## FINDING 5:

**Implementing professional learning programs that align closely to school, educator, and system needs and monitoring the quality of those programs lead to educator and student success.**

The research team studied how the high-performing systems implemented professional learning and found three predominant programs or approaches to professional learning common across all systems. They are learning communities, mentoring and beginning teacher initiatives, and external experts. While each system approached each program in unique ways, the programs have strong similarities and are grounded in the improvement cycle.

**Learning Forward provides practical examples of schools and school systems that are creating collaborative time for professional learning.**

In Part II of the research report, researchers describe how systems implemented the programs. Learning communities, which they state have emerged as “a cornerstone program for effective professional learning” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 33), are not “simply platforms for exchange and coordination of teaching plans and materials. Rather, when well-organized, learning communities help to initiate a cultural shift towards creating expectations for improvement within schools and teachers” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 33).

Within the spiral of inquiry in British Columbia, research and lesson groups in Shanghai, professional learning groups in Singapore, or collaborative lesson planning in Hong Kong, lesson observations add opportunities for teachers to cultivate an open-door policy that deepens and expands professional practice and provides a vehicle for measuring the effects of professional learning on students.

While the programs of professional learning are neither unknown nor novel to educators as individual efforts, what is remarkable in the systems studied is the depth of systemic implementation and the deliberate coherence among the programs. Each weaves together with the others in an interdependent system of professional learning that begins with teacher preparation and continues through a career-long pathway of role advancement, keeping an intense vision on cultivating teacher expertise in pedagogy and content.

**This study makes it clear that the changes are not light switches to flip.**

The research team selects examples of practice from each school system studied to describe the individual types of professional learning, yet continues to emphasize the role of leaders in establishing and evaluating the ability of the system to design and implement a professional learning system and be accountable for its results.

Mentoring and beginning teacher initiatives in all four high-performing systems acknowledge the complexity of the teaching professional and integrate systemic programs for continuous development of teaching professionals from their earliest stages and continue through career advancement. “High-performing systems use mentoring in their professional learning packages to enrich the teaching professional and improve student performance. In these systems, mentors encourage teachers to measure the impact of their teaching practices on student learning” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 41) and use observation and feedback routinely to support teacher development.

Mentoring is intensive support within the classrooms, and it continues for multiple years. In addition, mentors, master teachers, school-based teacher leaders, and others with responsibilities for teacher development share responsibility for the success of the students of teachers they support.

Some high-performing systems provide subject-specific

as well as pedagogy-focused experts to support teacher development. These experts are culled from the most successful teachers and participate in intensive development programs to achieve the status of mentor, master teacher, or principal master teacher. A key function of the expert teacher is developing teachers’ capacity to conduct classroom research on improving student learning.

A third program is the use of external expertise. External support comes from agencies within and outside of the education arena, such as universities, consultants, research institutions, government departments, teacher organizations, and other organizations to schools and systems.

For example, in Singapore, the Academy of Singapore Teachers and the National Institute of Education provide professional learning courses and direct support to schools. In Hong Kong, Education Bureau school-based support services offers teaching consultants for in-school support. In Shanghai, principal master teachers and subject researchers support schools and teachers and support teacher research. British Columbia uses district-level subject experts to support professional learning at the school site.

In addition to support provided at local schools, external experts provide a suite of courses and workshops that teachers may elect to attend. “[H]igh-performing systems encourage teacher uptake of both in-school programs and external courses, workshops, and further certifications in order to expose teachers to the fullest range of innovative and effective teaching practices” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 48). External agencies, in turn, work closely with systems to align to the needs and context of the systems and schools they serve.

High-performing systems still grapple with how to ensure that the quality and relevance of courses and workshops remains high. “Efforts are made to ensure that it is tied into within-school professional learning that always requires professional learning to start and end with student learning in the school” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 49). Some accountability measures are being undertaken to increase the quality and effectiveness of externally provided professional learning.

## ■ LEARNING FORWARD’S PERSPECTIVE

The Standards for Professional Learning are specifically designed to guide both educators and external agencies toward high-quality professional learning. External experts — whether working with broader school systems and providing support to schools within that system or working outside the education system — share responsibility and accountability for the effectiveness and results of professional learning.

Learning Forward standards and resources support implementation of this finding. The Learning Designs, Data, Implementation, Outcomes, and Resources standards speak directly to how external expertise can be tapped to support reform efforts. *Standards Into Practice: External Roles: Innovation Con-*

*figuration Maps for Standards for Professional Learning* (Learning Forward, 2014) describes in detail the responsibilities of external partners, education agencies, professional associations, and institutes of higher education in ensuring effective professional learning.

The companion volumes, for school-based roles and system-based roles, delineate responsibilities of those within school systems in leading effective professional learning and guiding external partners. *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Third-Party Providers* (Killion, 2013c) guides school and system leaders in working effectively with external experts to support professional learning. *Comprehensive Professional Learning System: A Workbook for States and Districts* (Killion, 2013a) describes the components of a system of professional learning, outlines the steps to achieve the system, and provides tools and resources to support states and districts in remodeling their existing system. *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (Easton, 2015) offers guidance on implementing 24 different learning designs.

#### STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

*Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems* provides specific examples of effective professional learning practices and policies in four high-performing school systems that advance professional practice and student success. The findings of the study reinforce the consensus emerging from qualitative research that professional learning is the primary vehicle for strengthening educator practice and student results.

Multiple previous studies have offered evidence about effective professional learning practice. Jensen et al. provide rich insights about the nuances of professional learning as an improvement strategy and illuminate common professional learning practices across systems renowned for their student performance.

This study makes it clear that the changes are not light switches to flip, but rather are the result of persistent and focused efforts of committed leaders who understand that schools are only as effective as their teachers and who build structures, dedicate necessary resources, and leverage accountability and evaluation policies to ensure that effective professional learning leads to results for students.

As states, school systems, and individual schools read and analyze this contribution to the field, they will discover that, for educators in high-performing systems, “professional learning is central to their jobs. It is not an add-on. It is not something done on Friday afternoons or on a few days at the end of the school year. Teacher professional learning is how they all improve student learning; it is how they all improve schools; and it is how they are evaluated in their jobs. They work in systems that are organized around improvement strategies explicitly anchored in teacher professional learning” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 3).

In studying the implications of this research study find-

ings for application to their own professional learning work, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders will find the coherence between these findings and Learning Forward’s available resources and advocacy and for professional learning policies, additional research and resources, and effective practices compelling and convincing. What this study, its predecessors, or Learning Forward cannot provide is the will to act on these findings. That remains the sole responsibility of those who truly want to improve student learning.

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## Pairing new science curriculum with professional learning increases student achievement

### WHAT THE STUDY SAYS

A randomized trial study, conducted over two school years in 18 high schools in Washington, finds that *An Inquiry Approach*, a three-year, educative curriculum for high school science, has a positive impact on student achievement, teacher practice, and fidelity of implementation of the curriculum when the curriculum is paired with professional development for teachers.

#### Study description

Taylor et al. used a pre/post-test control group design to assess the efficacy of *An Inquiry Approach*. An external researcher assigned the 18 Washington high schools participating in the study to either treatment or control group. Using measures of student achievement, science teaching practice, and fidelity of curriculum implementation, the research team analyzed the effects of the curriculum and its accompanying professional development that spread over seven

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#### At a glance

Well-designed, educative curriculum and materials, coupled with face-to-face professional development related to the curriculum, lead to more effective implementation of the curriculum, improved teacher practice, and student achievement.

#### THE STUDY

**Taylor, J., Getty, S., Kowalski, S., Wilson, C., Carlson, J., & Van Scotter, P. (2015).** An efficacy trial of research-based curriculum materials with curriculum-based professional development. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(5), 984-1017.

days (three in the summer, four during the school year) on student achievement using Washington state's science assessment, the High School Proficiency Exam; on teacher practice using the Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol; and on fidelity of implementation using Fidelity of Implementation Protocol.

#### Questions

The study had three main goals: the overall efficacy of the research-based curriculum materials with associated professional development to improve student achievement; the role of teacher practice in the relationship between the use of the materials and student achievement; and the extent to which the treatment effects were equitable across demographic groups. The study addressed these goals with three corresponding research questions:

1. What is the main effect of treatment on student achievement,

- controlling for various covariates?
2. To what extent does teacher practice mediate the effect of the treatment on student achievement?
  3. To what extent do student demographic characteristics moderate the effect of treatment on students?

#### Methodology

Eighteen high schools that had previously used a traditional science curriculum enrolled in the study in the 2009-10 school year and participated over two years in a program to support implementation of the three-year *An Inquiry Approach*. Biological Sciences Curriculum Study designed the educative curriculum for high school science to align with the Next Generation Science Standards, the Framework for K-12 Science Education, and constructivist instructional practices.

The study addresses the gap that

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTITIONERS

This study focuses specifically on a single science curriculum for high school students. Yet it confirms common practices for which there is limited empirical evidence. Among those practices, as specified in the **Outcomes** standard, teacher professional learning must align with student outcomes and teaching practices aligned to those outcomes in a coherent and integrated fashion. The professional learning teachers experienced focused on curriculum, curriculum implementation, teaching practices, fidelity of implementation, and increasing student achievement in an integrated fashion.

New programs, such as new curricula, require sufficient professional learning to support implementation. The **Implementation** standard explains that support must extend over time and provide opportunities for feedback and collaborative support. One goal of the professional development in this study was to build collaboration among teachers for implementation support. The description of the professional development program

included no information about how or if it included feedback to teachers and classroom-based support outside the daylong sessions that occurred throughout the school year.

In addition, the **Learning Designs** standard states that the instructional practices used in professional learning should model and advance the expected pedagogical practices. Providers modeled lessons and applied pedagogical practices that teachers would use in their implementation of the curriculum.

A noteworthy element of the selection of participants was engaging school principals as advocates for teacher participation in the professional learning. This often-missing element of teacher professional learning aligns with the **Leadership** standard.

Overall, this study clarifies the significance of teacher practice in program implementation and student success. It verifies that teacher practice mediates student achievement and provides confirming evidence that professional learning as a core component of curriculum or program implementation is a worthy investment.

exists between limited empirical evidence about the role of research-based curriculum materials and professional development in achieving the standards and student achievement in science. As a result, the study sought to test the causal connection between curriculum materials with curriculum-specific professional development and student achievement. It used the following theory of change: “The combination of educative curriculum materials for teachers, research-based materials for students, and curriculum-based PD will produce a positive effect on both students and teachers and that the effect on students is in part mediated by positive effects on teachers’ practice” (p. 998).

Researchers acknowledge that teachers mediate how curriculum is enacted in the classroom. When there is alignment between the curriculum’s design and philosophy and a teacher’s understanding, beliefs, and practice, there is likely to be stronger implementation of the curriculum in ways its developers intended. Educative

curriculum materials support teachers as learners by integrating aspects that deepen teachers’ content and content-specific pedagogical knowledge, providing ideas for presenting complex information to students using reform-based instructional practices, and determining how to assess students. *An Inquiry Approach* integrated these components.

Because an educative curriculum is often complex, researchers hypothesized that curriculum-specific, face-to-face professional development, integrating the elements of effective professional learning and sustained throughout the school year, would support teachers’ understanding and implementation of the curriculum. The goals of the yearlong professional development included implementation fidelity, collaboration among teachers based on common experiences and materials, and enhancement of teachers’ ability to implement the instructional model integrated into the curriculum.

Providers modeled lessons and incorporated pedagogical methods

embedded in the curriculum. The curriculum developers provided the professional development over three days in the summer and four one-day sessions throughout the school year. Principals encouraged participation in the professional development.

Comparison group teachers used extant curriculum materials and participated in the professional development typically provided by their districts or schools. The comparison group schools used a variety of textbooks and supplemental resources for instruction at different levels.

### Analysis

Researchers applied multilevel modeling to estimate the effects of the curriculum on student achievement and used as covariates student achievement scores from 8th-grade math and science, 7th-grade writing, and student demographics. The analyses estimated that treatment students’ performance was positive different from comparison students’ performance at a statistically significant ( $p = .035$ ) level. Researchers

adjusted for missing data and found no systematic bias toward the treatment resulting from the imputation of data.

Researchers also estimated effect using Hedge's *g* effect size. Using comparison effect sizes for high school, researchers found the .09 standard deviations to be within expectations and a statistically significant positive effect, estimating that students in the treatment group would begin 11th grade after two years of the curriculum about four months ahead of comparison students in science achievement.

Teacher practice was measured using eight observations per teacher — about one per month, conducted by external evaluators — and achieved an outstanding level of interrater reliability. The Fidelity of Implementation measure for 183 independent observations was 2.1 on a 3.0 scale for a resulting score of 71% overall implementation. This level of implementation was consistent with developers' intent.

### Results

Researchers report positive effects of the treatment. Student achievement in the treatment group improved. Curriculum implementation occurred at an expected level.

The outcomes analyses provide evidence that the research-based curriculum accompanied by curriculum-specific professional development produced positive and statistically significant effects on student achievement and teaching practice. As

noted earlier, students at the end of two years of the curriculum are predicted to enter the third year four months ahead of comparison group students.

The exploratory analyses of mediation and indirect effects produced strong mediational effect among teacher practice and treatment ( $p < .001$ ), between teacher practice and student achievement ( $p < .07$ ), and the estimated effect between the treatment and student achievement ( $p = .49$ ). Researchers estimate that 59% of the total effect of the treatment is explained by the teacher practice. This result strengthens the proposition that educative, research-based curriculum with accompanying face-to-face professional development improves teacher practice and that teaching practice matters more than the curriculum.

A moderation analysis to address the question regarding equitable effects produced mixed results. These results lead researchers to conclude that there aren't more equitable results for students in the treatment group.

### Limitations

The research study provides important and essential information about the need for effective curriculum and accompanying professional development, yet the design leaves a number of unanswered questions for future researchers to explore. Questions include identifying the specific effects of treatment features, either in the curriculum or professional development, on student achievement, teacher practice, or program fidelity.

Researchers recognize a potential for observer bias toward the treatment group because of the evidence of treatment materials available in classrooms during observations. They identify the potential for an implementation dip influencing the estimates of treatment effect. This is particularly important to acknowledge in any implementation study.

Comparison group teachers used familiar and comfortable curricula and practices while treatment teachers were using new ones. In some cases, researchers noted that some teachers in the comparison group used reform-based practices and students had some experiences similar to those in the treatment group. These factors, unexamined by researchers, affect overall significance of the efficacy of the curriculum.

As with all long-term studies using students as the unit of change, missing data is problematic. Researchers adjusted for this potential bias, yet they provide no information on the schools other than their location as rural or suburban and the student demographics. No information is provided about the number of teachers implementing the curriculum and any variations among teachers. Because the school is the unit of measure, this gap is understandable, yet additional information might generate questions for further research related to how teachers engage with the professional development and how the professional development is tailored to meet the needs of teachers. ■



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## Establishing time for collaborative professional learning

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## Increasing rigor to meet today's standards

Toni Enloe, a 32-year education veteran, facilitates this webinar that discusses the new generation of standards, which have significant requirements for increasing the amount of higher-order thinking and the depth of knowledge that students must obtain with content. Learn how to provide opportunities for students to think logically and go beyond acquisition of knowledge and skills in each lesson. Explore strategies for consistently incorporating higher-order questions, expectations, instruction, and activities across lessons. See how to select higher-order thinking strategies based on standards and learning goals.

[www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/webinars/increasing-rigor-to-meet-today's-standards](http://www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/webinars/increasing-rigor-to-meet-today's-standards)

## Teacher voice: A necessary ingredient for change

Hear from a panel of education leaders who spoke at Learning Forward's 2015 Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Moderated by Irvin Scott of the College and Career Ready team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this video features district leaders from around the country who are part of an emerging movement of teachers making their voices heard in new ways on policy issues and practice. Their discussion focuses on identifying the elements needed to create the leadership, trust, growth, and collaboration necessary for teachers to transform classrooms and schools.

[http://bit.ly/learningforward\\_teachervoice](http://bit.ly/learningforward_teachervoice)



## The evidence for elevating teachers

*In this Education Week PD Watch blog post, Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh and Knowledge Alliance President Michele McLaughlin explain why teachers need more research-based evidence about teaching and learning.*

**"A**s the race for the White House continues to gain momentum, the various campaigns are, not surprisingly, focused on issues such as national security and the economy. At the same time, national polling data show that Americans remain interested in improving education and, in particular, how to modernize and elevate the teaching profession.

"To that end, the TeachStrong campaign has rallied leading education groups around nine key principles to draw more attention to the national imperative to invest in teaching and teachers. The principle we most embrace is the imperative to provide teachers with the time, tools, and support needed for success."

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning\\_forwards\\_pd\\_watch/2016/02/the\\_evidence\\_for\\_elevating\\_teachers.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning_forwards_pd_watch/2016/02/the_evidence_for_elevating_teachers.html)



Hirsh



McLaughlin

## Learning Forward welcomes new president, members to board of trustees

Learning Forward's board of trustees has a new president and two new members.

John Eyolfson, district science coordinator at Cherry Creek School District in Colorado, began his term as president in December. Eyolfson succeeds Deborah Renee Jackson, special project administrator for Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia. Jackson now serves as past president.

Eyolfson, a science educator for 27 years, has been a member of Learning Forward since 2001 and joined its board in 2013. In his current position, Eyolfson leads the design of the school system's K-12 science curriculum and implements its high-quality professional learning. He was a recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in 1998 and is a regular contributor to *JSD*.

"Serving the membership of Learning Forward is a great honor," Eyolfson says. "I am excited to work with the members, the Learning Forward staff, and the members of the board of trustees to help advance the mission and vision of the organization as well as advance the implementation of the Standards for Professional Learning."

Scott Laurence is Learning Forward's new president-elect. Laurence is the superintendent of schools for the Carmel Unified School District in California.

Joining the board this year are newly elected board members Steve Cardwell and Leigh Wall. They begin three-



Steve Cardwell



Leigh Wall

year terms of service.

Cardwell, a Learning Forward member since 1998, is director of the Transformative Educational Leadership Program at

the University of British Columbia. He served as the superintendent/CEO of the Vancouver School District until the end of February 2015.

Wall is the superintendent of the Santa Fe Independent School District in Santa Fe, Texas. She has been an integral part of several Learning Forward conferences and presentations since becoming an association member in 2005.

"Our board members live and breathe Learning Forward's mission and vision every day, whether in their day-to-day positions in their organizations or through their service to Learning Forward," says Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "I appreciate their leadership throughout the year and their commitment to our continuous improvement."

## APPLY FOR A LEARNING SCHOOL DESIGNATION

Learning Forward has partnered with AdvanceEd to offer a Learning School designation to qualified schools. The designation provides schools with a set of criteria and research-based practices that indicate a quality professional learning program has been established and sustained at the school level.

Achieving the designation demonstrates the school places a high value on professional learning that increases teaching effectiveness and student achievement. To qualify, schools must demonstrate adherence to the Standards for Professional Learning and be accredited by AdvancED.

Applying for the designation sends a powerful message to all community stakeholders that the school values learning for both adults and students.

For more information on the program and to apply, visit [www.advanc-ed.org/services/learning-school-designation-certification](http://www.advanc-ed.org/services/learning-school-designation-certification).





## Learning Forward offers the opportunity to learn, grow, and give back

I am Learning Forward! I want to share with you how I became a learning leader and a Learning Forward leader — both through the same process.

In 2000, I applied to become an instructional technology specialist. This job was not about the hardware. It was about working with teachers to change their practice with classrooms that integrate technology with teaching and learning. I assumed that if I could teach children, I could teach adults.

Although there are many pedagogical practices that translated for me — “good teaching is good teaching” — I found myself trying to adjust my skills to fit my new job.

One year later, I attended Learning Forward’s Annual Conference in Denver. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to be an effective teacher of adults and to understand underlying ideas about change. The experience helped me understand what it means to be a Learning Forward member.

Over the next few years, I attended many of the Annual Conferences. I took a deep dive into the Standards for Professional Learning. I became a better instructional coach, and I understood how to design and evaluate the effect of professional development. I could see how this work had a direct impact on teachers and students in my Colorado district.

**John Eyolfson is president of Learning Forward’s board of trustees.**

### on board JOHN EYOLFSON

I see also how my district — Cherry Creek Schools in Colorado — has gained from its participation in Learning Forward. Over the past 15 years, the district has embraced learning communities, designing professional learning experiences that change the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavior of educators, all with the ultimate goal of improving the educational experience of all learners. We have used the Standards for Professional Learning to plan for and evaluate the district’s efforts to develop professional learning communities in our schools.

In 2007, I applied for and was accepted to the Learning Forward Academy — the first person in my district to take this step. I became immersed in a learning experience that transformed me as an instructional leader in my state and district. I also began to present at the Annual Conferences.

In 2011, I led the host conference committee for Learning Forward’s Summer Conference in Denver. For the first time, I saw the intentionality of the design that would bring powerful learning to educators attending the conference. In 2012, I was elected to the board of trustees and, in 2014, became president-elect.

As I reflect on my journey, I realize

I began as a consumer of what Learning Forward has to offer. As I grew and moved through the organization, I began to shift from just being a consumer to becoming a contributor. I believe that there is tremendous satisfaction as well as growth when you give back to an organization with a cause.

In addition to continuing my own growth, I am pleased to see new members continue their growth as effective leaders in education. Where



else do you see such transformation with diverse learners from across the world? This organization has allowed me to learn, grow, and give back — that’s why I’m Learning Forward. How about you? ■

# Learning Forward appoints associate director of publications

Eric Celeste has joined Learning Forward as associate director of publications. Celeste will help coordinate Learning Forward's communication channels, primarily the member journal *JSD*, as well as the newsletter *Tools for Learning Schools* and the *Education Week*-hosted blog PD Watch.

Celeste comes to Learning Forward after a long career editing and writing in consumer magazines, with a recent focus on urban education. For the past 26 years, Celeste has managed print and digital editorial operations for various media, corporations, nonprofits, and political campaigns. Most recently, he was a senior editor for the American Airlines in-flight magazine *American Way*, as well as the city columnist for *D Magazine*, the city magazine of Dallas. It was at the city magazine where Celeste edited and wrote for an education blog, Learning Curve, in which he covered urban education issues.

"This position at Learning Forward combines the most



Eric Celeste

enjoyable aspects of my previous experience and combines them into one job," Celeste said. "It allows me to dig deep into issues facing educators, explain the characteristics of high-quality professional learning, and tell these stories in a way that will help teachers improve student outcomes."

"Eric brings a unique perspective to Learning Forward," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "His background as a media professional will help us communicate with a membership and a public that receives information in increasingly diverse ways. And his passion for telling stories about education that makes a difference for students will both inspire educators and prompt them to reflect upon their own practice."

**This position "allows me to dig deep into issues facing educators, explain the characteristics of high-quality professional learning, and tell these stories in a way that will help teachers improve student outcomes."**

## Standards Assessment Inventory available on Amplify

Learning Forward has released its Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) on the Amplify Professional Learning Maps platform. The partnership with Amplify — an industry leader in digital instruction, curriculum, and assessment — will provide schools and districts with an efficient and insightful method to determine the quality of professional learning their educators are receiving.

The Standards Assessment Inventory is a 50-item, web-enabled survey that includes questions on the nature of professional learning in teachers' schools and districts. The Amplify Professional Learning Maps platform aggregates survey responses to provide school, district, and state leaders with a visual representation of the quality of alignment of teach-

ers' professional learning with Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

Professional Learning Maps then suggests actionable next steps to improve practices, based on Learning Forward's extensive library of resources tied to specific opportunities for improvement.

"Professional Learning Maps places our Standards for Professional Learning into a very practical context," says Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "By efficiently aggregating educators' insights on their learning experiences, the platform will help school and district leaders improve the quality of the professional learning they provide and oversee."

"Learning Forward's survey, stan-

For an overview and demonstration of how you can make Professional Learning Maps work in the classroom, visit [www.amplify.com/services/plm](http://www.amplify.com/services/plm).

dards framework, and rich library of resources are a perfect fit for Professional Learning Maps," says Emily Lutrick, CEO of Professional Learning Maps at Amplify. "Our platform was designed to save teachers time and provide meaningful insights to school and district leaders. We are proud to partner with Learning Forward around their nationally recognized content."

## FORT BEND ISD PARTNERS WITH LEARNING FORWARD

This spring, Learning Forward will launch a 10-month partnership with Fort Bend Independent School District in Texas to develop a comprehensive professional learning plan that will guide educator learning in the system.

Learning Forward senior consultant Linda Munger will facilitate the work of a professional learning task force made up of stakeholders across Fort Bend ISD. The task force will develop a comprehensive professional learning plan that establishes a vision and guiding principles for professional learning in the district, is grounded in the Standards for Professional Learning, and is focused on student and educator learning outcomes.

Fort Bend ISD, located in the Houston area, is the seventh-largest school district in Texas, serving more than 77,000 students.

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- How do you use *JSD* in your work?

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Email your comments to  
**learningforward@learningforward.org.**

### LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- April 7:** Webinar: Creating Communities of Thought: Enhancing Social Capital.
- April 15:** Deadline for October 2016 *JSD* manuscripts. Theme: Equity.
- May 5:** Webinar: Differentiating the Flipped Classroom.
- May 15:** Deadline for December 2016 *JSD* manuscripts. Theme: Communities of practice.
- June 15:** Deadline for February 2017 *JSD* manuscripts. Theme: STEM.
- June 30:** Last day to save \$75 off registration for the 2016 Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.
- July 21-24:** Learning Forward Summer Institutes in Chicago, Illinois.
- Aug. 15:** Deadline for April 2017 *JSD* manuscripts. Theme: Measuring impact.
- Dec. 3-7:** Learning Forward Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.



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## Discover the possibilities.

By Eric Celeste

Undergirding Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning is this premise: The purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. The standards combine decades of research, lessons learned, and input from 40 professional education organizations. This issue of *JSD* takes a fresh look at the field and the standards since their publication in 2011.

## Harness the energy of collaboration.

By Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller

As they write about the Learning Communities standard in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Learning Communities*, authors Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller consider why communities have gained widespread attention and support, summarize the research about them, and consider the challenges professional learning communities face. This excerpt from their essay shares

rationale and findings from research about learning communities.

## A leader's top task is to nurture talent.

By Karen Seashore Louis

In her essay exploring the Leadership standard in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Leadership*, author Karen Seashore Louis offers keen insight into the question of how leaders affect the learning of other adults in a school. This excerpt takes a close look at what leaders need to understand about how learners approach change and their role in helping create a culture that recognizes the humans at the heart of change.

## Take a whole new look at how to use resources.

By Karen Hawley Miles and Anna Sommers

In their full essay for *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Resources*, authors Karen Hawley Miles and Anna Sommers note that more rigorous instructional requirements combined with tighter budgets challenge school systems

to think more deliberately about where and how they invest in teaching effectiveness. In this excerpt, they outline ways in which school systems can repurpose people, time, technology, and money to enhance professional learning and more effectively build and retain a powerful teaching force.

## Gauge impact with 5 levels of data.

By Thomas R. Guskey

In his essay for *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Data*, Thomas R. Guskey, an international expert in evaluation design, analysis, and educational reform, explains why the Data standard is an essential foundation for all of the other standards. In this excerpt, Guskey examines the use of data in the systemic evaluation of professional learning.

## Use a variety of practices to connect with all.

By Eleanor Drago-Severson

Given the challenges educators face today, teachers and school leaders must continuously learn and grow.

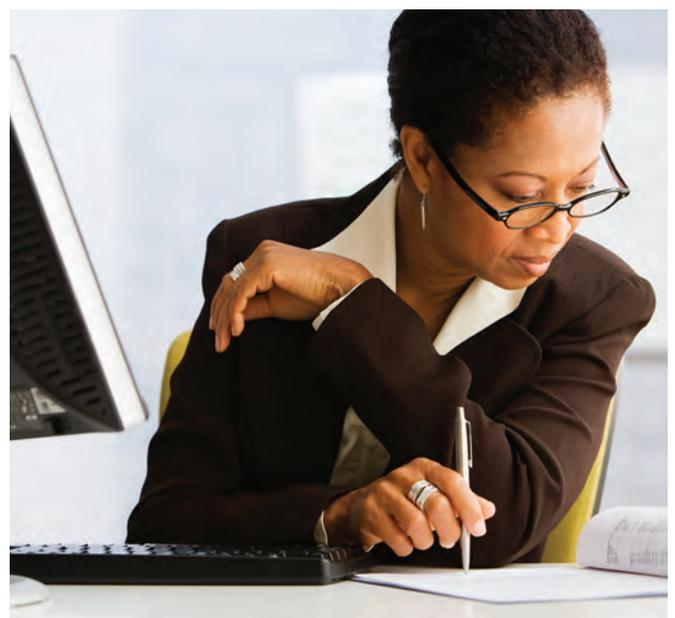
## Share your story

Learning Forward is eager to read manuscripts from educators at every level in every position. If your work includes a focus on effective professional learning, we want to hear your story.

*JSD* publishes a range of types of articles, including:

- First-person accounts of change efforts;
- Practitioner-focused articles about school- and district-level initiatives;
- Program descriptions and results from schools, districts, or external partners;
- How-tos from practitioners and thought leaders; and
- Protocols and tools with guidance on use and application.

To learn more about key topics and what reviewers look for in article submissions, visit [www.learningforward.com/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes](http://www.learningforward.com/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes).



Eleanor Drago-Severson’s essay in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Learning Designs* explains how the Learning Designs standard helps educators prioritize these designs and understand how to effectively support learning and improvement. This excerpt examines the way learning theories, research, and models help us understand the adults we want to support.

**Amplify change with professional capital.**

*By Michael Fullan*

Michael Fullan’s insights on what it takes to make professional learning stick have long helped leaders create change in ways that lead to better outcomes for students. In his essay in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Implementation*, Fullan considers the failure of professional development, explores promising models, and offers recommendations for succeeding at implementation. This excerpt explores the role of human, social, and decisional capital in building educator capacity, and more importantly, a culture of learning within schools.

**Build cultural proficiency to ensure equity.**

*By Delores B. Lindsey and Randall B. Lindsey*

Delores and Randall Lindsey approach the Outcomes standard through the lens of their cultural proficiency work to highlight the equity focus embedded in the standard. This excerpt from their essay in *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Outcomes* dives into their cultural proficiency tools and framework and their connection to the Outcomes standard.

**Why adoption of standards matters.**

Making a commitment to the Standards for Professional Learning is a commitment to continuous learning for all educators in a school. Adopting the standards makes them part of a state’s policies and regulations, indicates stakeholders’ intention to hold professional learning to high standards, and can ensure that funds support effective learning.

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- Themes are posted at [www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes).
- Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure ([christy.colclasure@learningforward.org](mailto:christy.colclasure@learningforward.org)).
- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at [www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines).

**columns**

**Lessons from research:**

Pairing new science curriculum with professional learning increases student achievement.

*By Joellen Killion*

Well-designed, educative curriculum and materials, coupled with face-to-face professional development related to the curriculum, lead to more effective implementation of the curriculum, improved teacher practice, and student achievement.

**From the director:**

Standards connect the dots between teaching and learning.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Follow the evolution of the Standards for Professional Learning, which define the support educators deserve if we expect high levels of performance by educators and students.

**feature**

**How the world’s best schools stay on top:**

Study’s key findings pinpoint practices that align with Learning Forward.

*By Joellen Killion*

Teacher professional learning drives school improvement, according to a new study. Based on the premise that continuous professional learning is fundamental to teacher and student success, *Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems* examines teacher professional learning practices in Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and British Columbia and identifies common practices across the four systems.

Key findings highlight how Learning Forward’s long-standing position on professional learning correlates with those practices.



## Standards connect the dots between teaching and learning

**H**ave you ever wondered about the impetus for professional learning standards? Here is my view of how professional learning has come to be seen as one of the most powerful strategies for ensuring a great education for all students.

In the early 1990s, new accountability systems demonstrated the inequities of educational experiences within schools and across school systems. The initial response by many focused on better test preparation and any strategy that made schools score and look better. At the same time, numerous studies affirmed the belief that the most powerful indicator of a student's success is the quality of teaching. When scores again flatlined, system and school leaders were ready — and, in some cases, forced — to turn their attention to improving classroom instruction. And many recognized that quality professional learning had to be a big part of that.

In 1994, Hayes Mizell, a program officer for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, challenged the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, now Learning Forward) and other education associations to develop the first set of nationally accepted standards for staff development for middle grades. Later, NSDC worked with two

national principals organizations to develop a related set of standards for elementary and high school grades. By 2000, changes in the field demanded a revision of the standards. NSDC, again with support from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, collaborated with 15 national education organizations to publish the first inclusive K-12 Standards for Staff Development, a definitive, research-based framework of characteristics of high-quality staff development. The standards were grounded in evidence and research to support the relationship between the standards and changes in educator practice and student learning.

These standards guided planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development for more than a decade. Numerous states, organizations, and school systems adopted policies and guidance documents related to the standards. When consistently implemented and regularly monitored and evaluated, the standards delivered on their promise.

Between 2001 and 2011, considerable research emerged in the field of professional learning with mixed results. The characteristics of effective professional learning became clearer. New technologies to support educator learning emerged. A deeper research base, combined with new reforms, research, and increasing accountability for schools, focused the professional learning needed to ensure that all educators and students meet

new standards. In 2011, with support from the MetLife Foundation, Learning Forward released the Standards for Professional Learning.

Representatives from 40 leading education organizations participated in developing these standards. Together, these representatives reviewed research and literature to contribute on behalf of their constituencies, which include teachers, principals, superintendents, and local and state school board members.

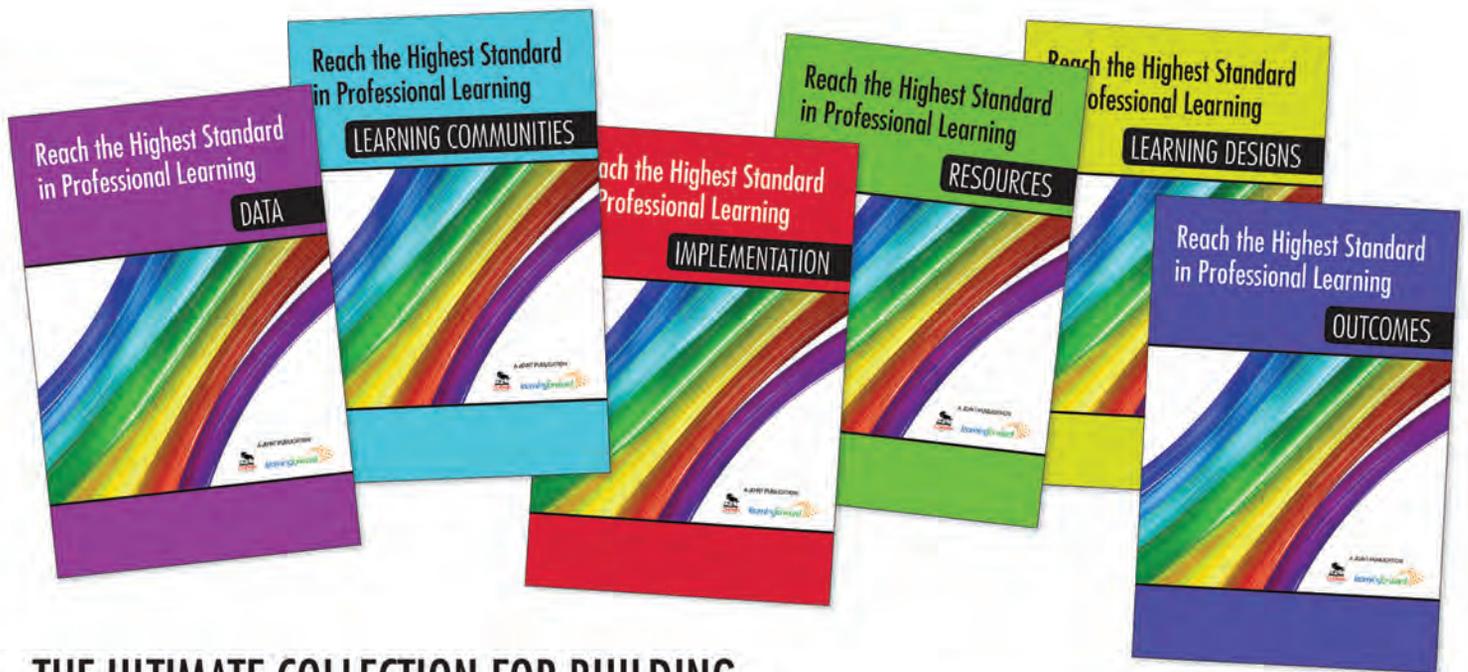
Naming this version Standards for Professional Learning signaled the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous improvement. By making learning the focus, those who are responsible for professional learning can concentrate their efforts on ensuring that learning for educators leads to learning for students.

Today, the standards continue to serve as the hallmark of effective professional learning. They define the support educators deserve if we expect high levels of performance by educators and students. More than 35 states have introduced the standards into their policy, guidance, or regulations, demonstrating their own understanding of and commitment to consistent, high-quality, and effective professional learning for all educators. Learning Forward's ultimate desire is that effective professional learning is so ubiquitous that we no longer need professional learning standards to define it. ■

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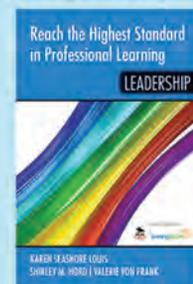
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—**Stephanie Hirsh**, Executive Director  
Learning Forward

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