

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.



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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.

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.

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.