



Members of the Tustin High School leadership team include, from left: Eric Zamora, Derek Johnson, Maribel Herrera-Olmedo, Ryan Miller, Melissa Trout, Celeste Kelly, Jamie Ernst, principal Christine Matos, Sheila Moeller, Delia Racines, Ali del Castillo, Joanna Vandal, Joanna Lane, and Randy Reta. Not pictured are team members Michele Boudreaux, Timothy Grave, Roland Jones, and Claire Gocke.

## Tustin High School wins 2016 Learning Team Award

The leadership team at Tustin High School in Tustin, California, has won the 2016 Shirley Hord Teacher Learning Team Award. The award is given annually to a school-based learning team that successfully implements a cycle of continuous improvement that results in increased teaching effectiveness.

Tustin High's leadership team is made up of 13 instructional coaches (called iCOACHes), as well as three assistant principals, a "coach of coaches," and school principal Christine Matos. The team engages in a cycle of improvement designed to increase members' coaching skills and help them use various forms of student and teacher data to improve teaching and learning.

"The Tustin High School leadership team exemplifies the elements of a team using the cycle of continuous improvement in a collegial way to

search out problems, explore solutions, and make changes to increase its effectiveness," said Learning Forward Scholar Laureate Shirley Hord. "Team members openly share their classroom practices and suggest to others how they might respond to classroom issues. The teachers' talk is about data and its basis for their professional learning goals. It is clear that they believe that student achievement and the learning of the school's adult professionals are undeniably related."

"I am impressed with the vertical and horizontal alignment of the instructional leadership team at Tustin High School," said Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh. "Team members are committed to the learning cycle, and they are data-driven and goal-oriented. This team demonstrates its understanding and application of the cycle of learning, and there is evidence that the team's

commitment to the process has led to improved outcomes for all. This leadership team sets a powerful example for all other learning teams in the school."

Teams from across the United States and Canada submitted applications for the award. Applications included documentation of each team's work and its impact on teaching and learning, as well as a video showcasing the team engaging in the cycle of continuous improvement.

Located in Orange County in southern California, Tustin High School is a Title I school serving 2,200 students.

The award, sponsored by Corwin, includes funds to support attendance at Learning Forward's Annual Conference for team members, \$2,500 to support collaborative professional learning, and a gift of Corwin books for the school's library.



## Learning in name and practice

Working collaboratively with teams of professionals continues to be a practice embraced within our educational communities. This is an important trend that should continue. In fact, I've seen the benefits of this approach in practice.

Collaboration can take many forms. There are collaborative teams, communities of practice, learning communities, and learning teams. Regardless of which type of collaboration occurs in your environment, learning is the key element.

In practice, I've seen teams of teachers come together with a strong purpose and a strong desire to improve — but even they need a structure in place to achieve meaningful learning. Often these structures are put in place to help expedite and frame the experience. For example, professional learning communities expert Rick DuFour has created four questions for professional learning teams:

1. What is it we want our students to know?
2. How will we know if our students are learning?
3. How will we respond when students do not learn?
4. How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient? (DuFour & DuFour, 2012)

Sticking tightly to such a structure

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

### on board JOHN EYOLFSON

is essential to improving learning communities in a way that increases student achievement. However, there must be a conscious effort to acquire new knowledge, skills, and dispositions that ultimately change teaching practices in the classroom.

I say this from experience. I am working with a group of teachers passionate about improving student achievement by implementing brain-based strategies in their classrooms. During professional learning sessions, teachers reflected on their practices and identified areas of weakness they wanted to address.

One teacher — a science teacher at a local high school — wanted to see how using specific and strategic questioning strategies would help students engage with scientific concepts. He applied a technique found in David Sousa's book, *How the Brain Learns* (Corwin, 2011). At his invitation, I came into his classroom to collect evidence of the change in technique through video. He wanted to know if these techniques would make a difference.

Our district has invested in some relatively inexpensive equipment known as Swivl that will track a teacher wearing a special lanyard/microphone throughout the classroom. I spent a short time helping him frame his question as well as identifying

specific short-term outcomes before the taping. I spent about 15 minutes in his classroom operating the video equipment. After the lesson, he watched the video alone, then I followed up with a coaching conversation. He was able to use the video as evidence of how students were interacting with the concepts. He could also track which students were engaged and home in on the responses.

He asked his class about the effectiveness of the new questioning techniques. Even though he had been teaching 20-plus years, he felt obligated to improve his teaching and learning environment. He not only could identify what went well, he also was able to identify his next short-term outcome and goal.

The structure did its job. It brought teachers together in a meaningful way to work together. And for this teacher's students, it came down to three steps: He acquired new knowledge and skills, implemented these new practices into his classroom, and received meaningful feedback through video and a coaching conversation. Through structure and a desire to improve, the "learning" in our learning community was not only in name but also in practice.

#### REFERENCE

**DuFour, R. & DuFour, R.B. (2012).** *Essentials for principals: The school leader's guide to professional learning communities at work.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree. ■

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## book club

HIGH EXPECTATIONS TEACHING:  
How We Persuade Students to Believe and Act on  
"Smart is Something You Can Get"

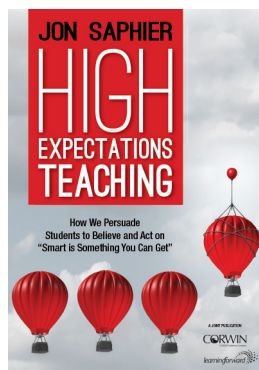
By Jon Saphier

**H**igh Expectations Teaching is an assets-based approach to advancing student achievement by helping students believe that "smart is something you can get" and that one's ability to do something is based on the effort extended to build it.

Author Jon Saphier debunks the myth of fixed intelligence by presenting evidence that effort creates ability. He emphasizes the critical importance of teacher language in building student self-confidence, promoting healthy risk taking, and perseverance.

High Expectations Teaching can serve as a catalyst for educational equity by helping teachers uncover biases that hamper their effectiveness with struggling students. Case studies highlight experiences of teachers and administrators who worked to implement high expectations practices in their work with students and teachers. A series of original video clips provide depictions of strategies in action.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for \$69 (for U.S. mailing addresses). To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before January 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email [office@learningforward.org](mailto:office@learningforward.org).



## NEW LOGIN PROCESS FOR MEMBERS

Learning Forward has implemented a new streamlined system for you to manage your membership and benefits. Here's how to access the new platform.

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Your email address is now your user name. You will be required to create a new password using these steps:

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- You will immediately receive an email with a link to set up your new password.
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- Use your email address and new password to log in.

If you encounter any problems logging in, contact the business office at 800-727-7288 or [office@learningforward.org](mailto:office@learningforward.org).

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# A brief look at Learning Forward projects in 3 states

Learning Forward is busy with projects in systems across the country. Here are some of the places where we are working with districts to improve professional learning and some of the programs we will be reporting on as implementation continues.

- This fall, Learning Forward launched a year-long engagement with Fort Bend (Texas) Independent School District to implement a new instructional coaching program. Along with supporting coaches and master teachers across the district, Learning Forward is also working with princi-

pals and district leaders in Fort Bend to ensure instructional coaching is a districtwide priority. Located southwest of Houston in one of the fastest-growing counties in the U.S., Fort Bend ISD serves 73,000 students.

- Learning Forward and the Utah State Board of Education have kicked off Year 2 of a five-year partnership to assess the quality of professional learning in the state. Teachers at every school in Utah are taking Learning Forward's Standards Assessment Inventory to provide input on their professional learning.

This data will be used to measure progress in the past year and inform recommendations to strengthen professional learning statewide.

- Stakeholders in Frederick County (Virginia) Public Schools are working with Learning Forward to develop a comprehensive, systemwide professional learning plan. This plan will provide the vision, infrastructure, and supports to ensure all educators in Frederick County work in a culture of continuous improvement and engage in professional learning that leads to great teaching and learning.

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g. Total distribution	4,779	4,449
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