

New report addresses investing for Common Core

Investing in professional learning is crucial, and even more so when implementing a high-stakes initiative such as the Common Core State Standards. That's why Learning Forward has published a new brief, *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning*.



To learn more about the Transforming Professional Learning Initiative or to download the brief, visit www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.

The brief explores the growing needs of educators with the advent of new standards and assessments, and calls attention to the urgent need for schools, districts, states, regional and national education agencies, and education vendors to rethink how professional learning resources are allocated.

Co-authors Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh outline the increasing need for professional learning, why traditional professional learning will fail, how the Standards for Professional Learning define resources, and how investments in professional learning must change.

"To achieve the results promised in Common Core Standards, states and district and school leaders must make

smart and new investments in the capacity of educators," the authors write. "Successful implementation of Common Core standards that leads to every student being college- and career-ready requires a renewed commitment and focus from all policy and decision makers, elected, employed, or engaged within school communities" (Killion & Hirsh, 2012, p. 10).

The report includes recommendations for investments that schools, districts, states, and other education agencies can make in professional learning.

"Professional learning is fundamental to ensuring teacher quality and effectiveness," says co-author Joellen Killion, Learning Forward's senior advisor and director of the Transforming Professional Learning initiative. "In order to have clear outcomes from professional learning, we must have a long-term plan and sustained resources for supporting implementation."

This brief is part of Learning Forward's initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core, which is supported in part by the Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation.

REFERENCE

Killion, J. & Hirsh, S. (2012). *Meet the promise of content standards: Investing in professional learning*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

book club

SCHOOLS CAN CHANGE:

A Step-by-Step Change Creation System for Building Innovative Schools and Increasing Student Learning

By Dale W. Lick, Karl H. Clauzet, and Carlene U. Murphy

Foreword by Carlene U. Murphy

Genuine effective school improvement requires leaders and teachers to be part of a broad-based, creative change system that focuses on generating improved teacher practices for enhancing student learning. Based on more than two decades of success with the Whole-Faculty Study Groups approach to professional learning, this guide provides educators with a step-

by-step, systemic "change creation" approach for:

- Forming action teams to develop teaching and learning approaches that measurably improve student performance; and
- Nurturing the right leadership, vision, culture, and relationships within schools for innovation and creativity.

The companion website includes practical online resources, including templates, checklists, action team assessment forms, and an action team rubric.

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 Dec. 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email office@learningforward.org.



With a focus on standards, coherence, and outcomes, we can realize ambitious and necessary goals

This summer, I was appointed superintendent of schools in Weymouth, Mass. Since starting this new role, I have focused on listening and learning from teachers and administrators, students and parents, and the partners who work with the school community — local businesses, neighborhood associations, parent councils, faith-based institutions, and others.

When taking on a new role, leaders benefit when they dedicate time to learn about the strengths and challenges of their new organization. The literature on entry for both public and private sector organizations (Jentz & Wofford, 1982; Watkins, 2003) emphasizes the importance of forming a “learning agenda” to understand an organization’s history and culture before developing goals or strategies. Indeed, as the first superintendent who has been hired from outside the district since the 1960s, I find it important to learn about the community’s successes, challenges, and opportunities from the practitioners and stakeholders who have been on the front lines.

The entry period has also given me a chance to express my core beliefs on educational improvement and professional learning. Several of these core beliefs share key elements with Learning Forward’s Standards

Kenneth Salim is president of Learning Forward’s board of trustees.

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for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). In meetings with staff, I discussed my view that exceptional standards must guide our decisions. If our goal is to produce graduates who are world-class citizens, we need to use world-class standards that shape our work and set the bar for student learning. Similarly, the Outcomes standard that is the focus of this issue of *JSD* describes the important role of standards when determining the content of professional learning. This standard notes that professional learning must consider performance standards that describe how educators effectively teach and successfully lead. In addition, professional learning should consider content learning standards and outcomes for students.

Another of my core beliefs is that teaching and learning need to be at the center of our work. We should consider how the decisions we make affect teaching and learning in the classroom. I believe that keeping the instructional core at the center of our work also supports stronger alignment and coherence between and among classrooms, schools, and central office. The Outcomes standard highlights the importance of coherence. Professional learning should build on what educators have learned and also align



with local and national curriculum and assessments. The standard puts forth a vision of coherence that extends beyond the school system to a model that aligns an educator’s preparation program experience with every stage of his or her career.

I firmly believe that it is critical to leverage the energy and skills of our educators and the broader community. With a focus on standards, coherence, and outcomes for students and educators, we can realize the ambitious and necessary goals we have for students.

REFERENCES

- Jentz, B. & Wofford J. (1982).** *Entry: The hiring, start-up and supervision of administrators.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Learning Forward. (2011).** *Standards for Professional Learning.* Oxford, OH: Author.
- Watkins, M. (2003).** *The first 90 days.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press. ■



LEARNING FORWARD'S PURPOSE: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

BUSINESS OFFICE

504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
513-523-6029, 800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638
office@learningforward.org
www.learningforward.org

LEARNING FORWARD STAFF

Executive director

Stephanie Hirsh
stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org

Director of business services

Leslie Miller
leslie.miller@learningforward.org

Director of learning

Carol François
carol.francois@learningforward.org

Director of strategy and development

Frederick Brown
frederick.brown@learningforward.org

Director, Center for Results

M. René Islas
rene.islas@learningforward.org

Director of communications

Tracy Crow
tracy.crow@learningforward.org

Associate director of e-learning

Tom Manning
tom.manning@learningforward.org

Associate director of strategic initiatives

Jacqueline Kennedy
jacqueline.kennedy@learningforward.org

Distinguished senior fellow

Hayes Mizell
hmizell@gmail.com

Scholar laureate

Shirley Hord
shirley.hord@learningforward.org

Senior advisor

Joellen Killion
joellen.killion@learningforward.org

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Chidley recipient confronts challenges in rural Alaska

Game changers are visionaries — dreamers and innovators with ideas that make a difference. Tonio Verzone, a recipient of the 2012 Chidley Fund Academy Scholarship, is a game changer. Verzone is lead facilitator for Avante-Garde Learning Alliance, a not-for-profit organization in Anchorage, Alaska, that works through partnerships to build the capacity of Alaska's schools and communities to support student learning.

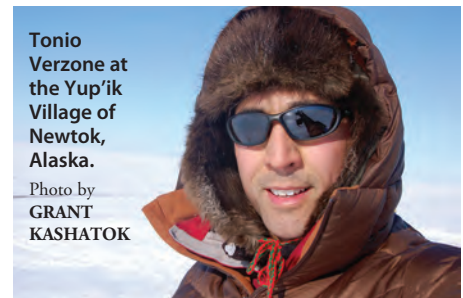
The Chidley award, funded by the Learning Forward Foundation, develops leadership in professional learning by providing two scholarships annually for recipients to participate in the Learning Forward Academy. Both scholarships are for educators working with large populations of underserved students.

Alaska's rural environment and extreme climate pose significant challenges to student success: high dropout rates, schooling that is disconnected from local cultures and needs, high teacher turnover, remote and rural school settings, high transportation costs, and limited opportunities for high-quality professional learning.

Verzone's goal is to increase student achievement in reading and mathematics in three rural communities by increasing educators' ability to individualize instruction and use assessments to drive instruction. By participating in the Learning Forward Academy, he will be able to provide culturally responsive professional development and technical assistance.

The Learning Forward Academy gives Verzone the chance to interact with peers across the nation for the next two years. Verzone believes the Academy's focus on collaboration and problem solving will give him a deeper understanding of how to confront and develop solutions to the challenges facing local communities and educators.

"Being here in Alaska, we sometimes feel disconnected and overwhelmed with large obstacles facing education in rural and Alaska Native schools," Verzone says. "I am grateful and eager to be connected to a wider community of practitioners committed to transforming professional learning in schools."



Tonio Verzone at the Yup'ik Village of Newtok, Alaska.

Photo by GRANT KASHATOK

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Help to change lives by donating to the Learning Forward Foundation. The foundation is dedicated to impacting the future of leadership in schools that act on the belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students. Donations to the foundation help to provide funding for a variety of grants and scholarships to support the continuous learning of superintendents, principals, leadership teams, and individuals.

www.learningforward.org/foundation

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Dec. 1-5:** Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
- Jan. 31, 2013:** Deadline for proposals to present at Learning Forward's 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.
- March 15, 2013:** Last day to apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools.
- March 15, 2013:** Last day to apply to join Academy Class of 2015.
- July 21-24, 2013:** Learning Forward's 2013 Summer Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.