

## New reports highlight effective professional learning

Learning Forward has released two reports to give educators, policymakers, and community members a deeper understanding of high-quality professional learning and the role it plays in building educator capacity.

*Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Professional Learning Required* focuses on the critical role that professional learning plays in implementing content standards. Outlining a vision for educators supported through high-quality professional learning, the brief describes elements of effective professional learning as well as recommendations for action for educators at the federal, state, system, school, and individual level.

The brief is part of Learning Forward's initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core.

With an immediate focus on implementing Common Core State Standards and new assessments, the initiative provides resources and tools to assist states, districts, and schools in providing effective professional learning for current and future education reforms. The initiative is supported in part by the Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation.

The second report, *Building a Learning Community: A Tale of Two Schools*, documents the elements that make professional learning communities effective. Authors Dan Mindich and Ann Lieberman present case studies of two

### TO ACCESS THE REPORTS:

• *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Professional Learning Required*

[www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core)

• *Building a Learning Community: A Tale of Two Schools*  
[www.learningforward.org/publications/status-of-professional-learning](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/status-of-professional-learning)

schools drawn from survey data of 33 New Jersey public schools involved in a state-sponsored professional learning community training program.

Interviews and observations at the two case-study schools showed that a set of predicted variables — vision, community, resources (including time to meet and teacher expertise), and processes — seemed to be connected to the development of collegial professional practice, and that all of these factors were influenced by principal leadership and the wider distributed leadership structures at the schools. Among the key findings: Sustaining focus is vital, collegiality is not enough, and leadership is key.

The report is produced through Learning Forward and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE). This is the final report from the multiphase research initiative Status of Professional Learning.

### book club

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES AND THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM: A Guide for School-Building Improvement  
By Dean T. Spaulding and Gail Smith

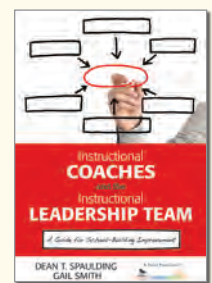
For instructional coaches, no two days are ever the same. This book melds theory and practice to show how coaches can seamlessly integrate themselves into the fabric of the school and help teachers improve their practice from day one. Dean Spaulding and Gail Smith address common challenges of coaches and instructional leadership teams, including:

- Observing classrooms and providing formative feedback;
- Reaching out to the hesitant or resistant teacher;
- Adapting data and analysis into usable information for the team; and

- Recruiting, training, and supporting new instructional coaches.

Journal entries based on real-life experiences give an inside look at the day-to-day work of an instructional coach and the power of coaching to improve teacher effectiveness. The book also includes field-tested activities, materials, and forms for collecting data, navigating busy days, and organizing information.

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. To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Sept. 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call **800-727-7288** or email [office@learningforward.org](mailto:office@learningforward.org).





## Take steps to create a simple model of feedback that helps practice bloom

Last year, I bought my parents a new gadget for Christmas called a Fitbit. Like a supercharged pedometer, the Fitbit is a small device that they wear during the day and even through the night. It collects vast amounts of data, including the number of steps they take, calories burned, and information on sleep patterns. The data syncs with an online profile so that my parents can see how active they have been over the last week, month, or year. Perhaps the most ingenious feature is an icon of a flower that appears to grow or shrink depending on how active my parents have been. It's an elegant and simple feedback mechanism that not only provides a status report, but also presents information that motivates my parents to change their exercise behavior. Could a similarly structured model of data-based feedback be designed to improve professional learning practices?

In schools and systems, we have no shortage of valuable data. Annual student performance data on state assessments are reported each fall. Formative assessments provide more regular benchmark data on student progress. Student attendance, behavior, and grade data are readily accessible. Similarly, data on teacher and administrator practice is collected more systematically. New educator

**Kenneth Salim is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.**

### on board KENNETH SALIM

evaluation systems and rubrics based on professional standards promise to generate more information on the state of our practice. Surveys on educator beliefs, school climate, and leadership provide important data on the views of teachers, administrators, parents, and students on school and district culture.

How do we ensure that we make these data actionable for professional learning?

Like the flower icon on the Fitbit, how can data provide a simple snapshot of progress for professional development practices? Here are two ideas for moving toward this type of feedback model:

#### 1. Use implementation and outcome data to make professional learning decisions.

Evaluation of professional learning typically assesses participant reaction through questionnaires or feedback forms, but seldom applies deeper levels of information, including participant use of new knowledge and skills and the effect on student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2000). Mapping the connections among student data, evidence of educator practice, and professional learning is complex but can support a more robust and refined feedback model.



#### 2. Identify the metrics that are grounded in current research.

Reeves and Flach (2011) write that they have observed many schools where “the availability of data is inversely proportional to meaningful analysis.” Similarly, it is easy to become overwhelmed by feedback data from practitioners. Using research to identify the key metrics that should be collected can be helpful in streamlining analysis and generating actionable data.

These are not simple tasks, but ones that require collaborative thinking and problem solving by practitioners and researchers. By drawing on this expertise, we can create the simple and elegant model of feedback that helps practice blossom at all levels.

#### REFERENCES

- Guskey, T. (2000).** *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Reeves, D.B. & Flach, T. (2011, August).** Meaningful analysis can rescue schools from drowning in data. *JSD*, 32(4), 34-40. ■



## Nominations open for new Learning Forward awards

If you or someone you know plans, advocates, or leads professional learning that gets results, Learning Forward wants to showcase your work and celebrate your success. Submit nominations for Learning Forward's new Annual Awards and help us recognize the exemplary work being done at all levels of professional learning. Here are the award categories:

- **Advancing Professional Learning** honors one individual for his or her contributions to demonstrate and document the impact and results of professional learning. Eligible nominees: Professional researchers, doctoral students, and school-based action researchers.
- **Excellence in Professional Learning Practice** honors two individuals (one district-level and one school-level) for their implementation and portrayal of Learning Forward's purpose, definition, and Standards for Professional Learning. Eligible nominees: School superintendents, professional development or other central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders.
- **Leading for Professional Learning** honors one individual for creating support systems, developing capacity in others, and advocating for effective professional learning. Eligible nominees: Those who work in state/provincial education agencies, higher education institutions, school districts, and state affiliates.

- Deadline for nominations is **Sept. 28.**
- Learn more at **[www.learningforward.org/get-involved/awards](http://www.learningforward.org/get-involved/awards)**.

### **VOLUNTEER FOR NEW ANNUAL AWARDS COMMITTEE**

JOIN THE COMMITTEE that will review nominations for Learning Forward's new Annual Awards, to be presented during the Annual Conference in December. The committee will discuss, review, and score nominations in three categories: Advancing Professional Learning, Excellence in Professional Learning Practice, and Leading for Professional Learning. Teams will read and rate three to five applications and participate in two conference calls. The review process runs Sept. 28 to Oct. 15.

If you are interested in serving on the committee, email your name and contact information to [awards@learningforward.org](mailto:awards@learningforward.org) by Sept. 14. You will be contacted by email with further details about participation.

### **SHOWCASE FOR LEARNING TEAMS**

EACH SUMMER, Learning Forward presents the **Shirley Hord Learning Team Award** to honor excellence in professional learning. Based on Learning Forward's definition of professional learning, the award recognizes a school team that successfully implements the cycle of continuous learning for professional learning that results in student achievement. The nomination cycle for this award will begin again in early 2013.





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

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## Help review conference proposals

Learning Forward is looking for reviewers who will ensure that conference sessions meet participants' needs and align with Learning Forward's expectations for high-quality professional learning. A wide range of members work with the Conference Program Planning Committee to review session proposals using a carefully developed protocol and rubric. Reviewing can be done from any computer.

If you are available to review proposals either remotely or in Minneapolis, Minn., on Sept. 21, contact **Suzanne Siegel** at [suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org](mailto:suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org).

## Spread the word, save some money!



You probably talk to friends about your cat, that political biography you're reading, and your newest guilty pleasure on television, but when was the last time you talked about your membership in Learning Forward? We know you appreciate the benefits of our organization — now share the great things Learning Forward has to offer with a friend.

Each new member you refer enters your name into a drawing for a free five-day registration to Learning Forward's Annual Conference Dec. 1-5 in Boston. You will also receive \$10 off your next membership renewal

for every new member you recruit. Now that's something to talk about.

**Learn more at [www.learningforward.org/join-renew/referral-program](http://www.learningforward.org/join-renew/referral-program).**

### APPLY BY SEPT. 19 TO PRESENT AT 2013 SUMMER CONFERENCE

Share your knowledge and expertise with colleagues from around the world by applying to present a concurrent or roundtable session at Learning Forward's 2013 Summer Conference, July 21-24, 2013, in Minneapolis, Minn.

Summer Conferences inspire, inform, and assist teacher leaders and administrators in providing the most powerful forms of adult learning. Conference strands are aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning. Proposals are due Sept. 19. Presenters and presentation teams will receive a discount on conference registration.

**For more information, contact Suzanne Siegel at [suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org](mailto:suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org). Submit proposals online at <http://proposals.learningforward.org>.**

### LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Sept. 19:** Deadline for proposals to present at 2013 Summer Conference.
- Sept. 28:** Deadline for nominations for Learning Forward's Annual Awards.
- Oct. 15:** Last day to save \$50 on registration for 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
- Dec. 1-5:** Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
- July 21-24, 2013:** Learning Forward's 2013 Summer Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.