



McWhirter Elementary team members are, from left, Hope Farrell, Nelda Ditta, Melissa Heidman, Nakia Washington, Karen Trinh, Vicky Landers, Leticia Morales, and Sandra Burciaga.

## 2nd-grade team in Texas wins Shirley Hord Award

**T**he 2nd-grade team at McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School, Clear Creek Independent School District, Webster, Texas, is the winner of the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award. Presented by Learning Forward and Corwin Press, this award is given to a team of teachers that demonstrates Learning Forward's definition of professional development in action.

Two schools, Quil Ceda and Tulalip Elementary School, Marysville, Wash., and Haslet Elementary School, Haslet, Texas, were named runners-up.

"These teachers recognize that they can accomplish more together than individually and so they meet throughout the week to plan, reflect, read, and problem solve issues related to instructional practice," said McWhirter Elementary principal Michael Marquez.

Thanks to the team's efforts to increase reading levels and maximize small-group and one-to-one instruction in math, 72% of students schoolwide are reading at or above grade level, compared to 43% in the fall. Using collabora-

To learn more about the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award, visit the website at [www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/hordaward.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/hordaward.cfm).

tion in professional learning teams, data analysis, student learning goals, analyzing student work, and the support of a literacy and math coach, the number of students meeting grade-level standards improved 79% in 2nd-grade math.

"This award honors the research Shirley Hord has conducted on the attributes and effects of successful professional learning communities," said Jacqueline Kennedy, associate director of strategic initiatives at Learning Forward. "The 2nd-grade team at McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School is a strong example of a learning team in action."

Learning Forward's annual awards program recognizes individuals for their commitment to improving student achievement through effective professional learning. Learning Forward and Corwin will present the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award at the Learning Forward 2012 Summer Conference July 24 in Denver.

Corwin sponsored the award, which includes funds to support three representatives of the winning 2nd-grade team from McWhirter Elementary to participate in Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference. The winning school will also receive \$2,500 to support collaborative professional learning and a gift of Corwin books for the school's professional library.

### Watch learning teams in action

McWhirter Elementary's 2nd-grade team was one of 14 teams from schools across the U.S. that submitted nominations, which included a video and documentation as evidence of the team's professional learning work. The videos are available on Learning Forward's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD1280A1ED58D58BE](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD1280A1ED58D58BE).



## Learning community practices from other professions offer lessons for educators

The concept of learning communities is at the core of effective professional learning. Learning communities provide the structure for ongoing collaboration, set the stage for deep inquiry and problem solving, and promote collective responsibility and goal alignment among educators. Learning Forward promotes the Learning Communities standard as one of the essential conditions for increasing educator effectiveness and results for all students. As I reflected on the importance of learning communities in supporting continuous improvement and system change, I thought about how these same principles and beliefs are embedded in the work of other professions and in other sectors.

Lee Shulman — best known for research and insights on pedagogical content knowledge — has written about “signature pedagogies” and how they have developed across different professions (Shulman, 2005). Students in medicine, law, engineering, and business experience learning in distinct and recognizable models: engaging in clinical rounds in medical school, experimenting and iterating in engineering design studios, responding to Socratic questioning in law school, and delving into a variety of case studies in business school. But beyond

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

### on board KENNETH SALIM

this professional preparation, these professionals engage in practices and learning that reflect core elements of learning communities.

The medical rounds process includes attending physicians, residents, interns, and medical students. Laura Snyderman, a physician at Tufts Medical Center, describes a daily work rounds process that models communication and exam skills for medical students and enables all participants to engage in clinical reasoning, problem solve together, and discuss how and why certain decisions were made based on available patient data (personal communication, 2012).

In the design world, teams work together to brainstorm and generate new ideas for products, but also use a process to make sure that new ideas are aligned with the project’s overall goals. Producer Julie Kim describes a collaborative planning process where goals and principles are prioritized at the beginning of a project and used as benchmarks throughout the often-ambiguous design process. By creating ample time to discuss and propose new ideas, team members are less likely to succumb to groupthink and are held accountable to the project’s overall goals and principles (personal communication, 2012).

What is the significance of having shared principles and practices for professional learning across sectors? The strategies employed in other sectors might have lessons for educators and vice versa.

For example, knowledge management strategies used in the private sector could inform how information about student learning could be shared among teachers, specialists, and administrators. These shared beliefs about teams and learning present an opportunity to garner support for effective professional learning from the broader public. If we expect educators to improve their practice, we must provide the same time, resources, and opportunities for deep learning that we have come to expect in other professions. Only then can we expect to improve performance and produce results for all students.

#### REFERENCE

**Shulman, L.S. (2005, Summer).** Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52-59. ■



# Learning Forward Foundation announces winners

The Learning Forward Foundation has announced its 2012 grant winners. These awards provide recipients opportunities to develop their expertise in leading professional learning within their schools and districts and to engage them in the broader Learning Forward community for ongoing professional collaboration and support.

Learning Forward 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. Funds raised by the foundation provide grant opportunities and scholarships for individuals, schools or teams, principals, and superintendents to further Learning Forward's purpose.



## LEARN MORE AND DONATE

Learning Forward Foundation's work in advancing the organization's purpose is made possible through donations and the commitment of the teams, organizations, and individuals supported by grants and scholarships.

- Learn more about the grants and scholarships at [www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/scholarships\\_grants.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/scholarships_grants.cfm).
- To make a donation online, visit [www.learningforward.org/commerce/ifn.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/commerce/ifn.cfm).

## LEARNING FORWARD AFFILIATE GRANT

The Learning Forward Affiliate Grant is awarded to **Learning Forward New York**, under the leadership of, from left, **Richard Jones, Christine Lowden, and Robert Harris**. This grant provides funding to allow an affiliate to create or expand its outreach, enhancing the focus on professional learning that improves student achievement.



## LEARNING FORWARD TEAM GRANT



Hancock



Wilson

The Learning Forward Team Grant is awarded to the team at Kenosha Unified School District in Kenosha,

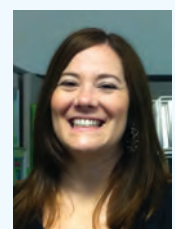
Wis., under the leadership of **Michele Hancock** and **Sonia James Wilson**. The grant supports teams (grade-level, school, and district) to advance Learning Forward's purpose.

## CHIDLEY FUND ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIPS

This year's winners are **Tonio Verzone**, lead facilitator for the Avant-Garde Learning Alliance in Anchorage, Alaska, and



Verzone



Tedesco

**Adrienne Tedesco**, instructional coach for the Gwinnett County (Ga.) Public Schools. The Chidley Scholarship provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.



### LEADING FOR LEARNING: SYBIL YASTROW SUPERINTENDENT'S GRANT

Leading for Learning: Sybil Yastrow Superintendent's Grant is awarded to **Kenneth Hamilton**, superintendent of Monroe Township District in Monroe Township, N.J. The grant is a three-year district/foundation partnership grant to support a superintendent working to develop a culture of high-performing professional learning communities.

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

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### PATSY HOCHMAN ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP

**Susan Jones**, professional development coordinator for the Clarksville-Montgomery County (Tenn.) School System, is the first recipient of this scholarship. The scholarship is in honor of Patsy Hochman, who was killed by a drunk driver in 2008. Hochman's husband established the scholarship to continue her legacy. The scholarship provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.



### THANKS TO PARTICIPANTS

The Learning Forward Foundation board of directors thanks those who participated in the scholarship and grant review process: Denny Berry, Kathy Bocchino, Vicky Butler, Sonia Caus Gleason, Charles Clemmons, Lenore Cohen, Tiffany Coleman, Vicky Duff, Lois Easton, Gaye Hawks, Karen Hayes, Audrey Hobbs-Johnson, Sharon Ladner, Linda Munger, Susan Patterson, Kay Psencik, Sharon Roberts, Ronni Reed, Janice Shelby, Bill Sommers, Dennis Sparks, Jody Wood, Sybil Yastrow, and Susan Zook.

### LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- July 22-25:** Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference in Denver, Colo.
- September:** Members vote in Board of Trustees election.
- Sept. 19:** Proposal deadline for 2013 Summer Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.
- 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.