



Whether it's Carnegie Hall or classroom excellence, the route is the same

You know the joke — “Hey, can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?” The answer in the joke, of course, is, “Practice.” Recent research indicates that this answer is right: Deliberate practice of any new skill or habit will take us far in the direction of our goals.

But that isn't the whole answer to the question. The musician in the joke may toil for years and become quite gifted on the violin, but she doesn't do it alone, outside of a context, and without other people who recognize where she wants to go and what she'll encounter along the way to that famed concert hall. She needs support for the long term, not just opportunities to learn about music, her instrument, and the music business. She needs teachers who offer feedback in ways that motivate her to push harder. She needs leaders who understand what people go through when they attempt to grow and change.

The same is true of educators working to sustain their learning efforts and changes in practice over the long term to achieve improved results for students. As my understanding of the Standards for Professional Learning grows, I see the human needs aspect of improvement efforts most clearly in the Implementation and Learning Designs standards. The Learning Designs

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standard requires understanding how adults learn and what strategies support learners in different contexts for different purposes. The Implementation standard asks us to look at how people undertake any improvement effort and to consider the supports and structures they need as they try to understand the rationale for reaching a stretch goal as well as ways to change their habits and skills for the long term. And the chance to practice — with feedback — is certainly one of them.

As Ellen Holmes and Staci Maiers write in their article, “The implementation stage is the *most difficult* of all, and it is the stage where the majority of serious improvement efforts fail” (see p. 40). And yet, as they demonstrate in their article, there are many examples of schools and systems that have succeeded in sustaining improvements by attending to the very elements the Implementation standard outlines.

Explore other articles in this issue of *JSD* to understand:

- Why early wins in a change effort help all participants continue to work toward a challenging goal (see p. 10).
- How seeing themselves teach on videotape offers a new kind of feedback and support to teacher-learners (see p. 18).
- What school structures support ongoing learning for educators (see p. 24).



- How feedback from coaches and learning team members help sustain long-term change (see p. 28).
- What a learning community can do to deepen learning and achieve results (see p. 36).

Just as the young musician working toward her goal needs more than a stack of great music to try and recordings of virtuosos to emulate, educators need more than a lineup of relevant learning opportunities. I hope this issue of *JSD*, and everything Learning Forward offers on the standards, can make this difficult part of the improvement process more transparent. ■