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Learning Forward Selects Kentucky to Develop Professional Development System to Support Teachers Implementing Common Core State Standards

Georgia, Illinois, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Utah, and Washington Selected as “Critical Friends” Who Will Review and Contribute to Development of Kentucky System

DALLAS—November 2, 2011— Kentucky will serve as the Demonstration State of a new initiative led by Learning Forward to create a statewide, comprehensive professional learning system to support educators as they implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and new student assessments. Georgia, Illinois, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Utah, and Washington will contribute to the development of the system’s tools and strategies as Critical Friend States and learn from Kentucky’s challenges and accomplishments.

With support from lead funder the Sandler Foundation, Learning Forward will provide coaching and technical assistance to Kentucky and host meetings of the seven states over the next two years of the initiative, *Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core*. The resources developed through the initiative will be made available to all states as they implement CCSS.

“Congratulations and deepest appreciation to all our partners and supporters, including the Council of Chief State School Officers, our lead Demonstration State and our Critical Friend States,” said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. “I am confident that this partnership will lead to identification of new practices that substantively advance professional learning that ensures effective Common Core instruction.”

Learning Forward and the states will work in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governors Association, National Association of State Boards of Education and American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education on the initiative.

“The potential of the Common Core State Standards and assessments can only be realized through a serious focus on professional learning,” said Susan Sandler of the Sandler Foundation. “The Sandler Foundation is committed to ensuring teachers have the tools and skills they need to prepare our increasingly diverse student to be critical thinkers with the skills needed to solve the pressing problems we face. Through the commitment of the lead and Critical Friend states, we will see new structures, policies and practices influence and spread improvement from classroom to classroom and school to school.”

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Kentucky was selected from among several states through a competitive process this fall. The Demonstration State and Critical Friends States had to show a commitment to equity, professional development and substantive change.

As the initiative's Demonstration State, Kentucky will serve as a learning laboratory within which Learning Forward, in partnership with state and district leaders, will create a multi-tier, multi-year comprehensive plan that stages professional development for the standards and assessments. The state will also support new school year and daily school schedules that provide substantive time for professional learning for educators and establish new systems for working with third-party providers and vendors who provide expertise.

"Kentucky's ambitious college and career readiness agenda depends on all of our students having access to effective learning experiences and assessments built around the Common Core Standards. In order to ensure that this happens, we must be sure that our teachers and administrators first have the very best opportunities for professional learning and growth," said Kentucky Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday. "Partnering with Learning Forward, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Sandler Foundation will provide us the very best technical assistance, guidance and access to national experts for making this happen throughout the state."

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About Learning Forward (formerly National Staff Development Council)

Learning Forward's purpose is ensuring that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international association of learning educators focused on increasing student achievement through more effective professional development. To learn more about the impact of high-quality professional learning, visit www.learningforward.org.

About Sandler Foundation

Sandler Foundation's mission is to be a catalyst to strengthen the progressive infrastructure, expose corruption and abuse, advocate for vulnerable and exploited people and environments, and advance scientific research in neglected areas. The foundation focuses on equitable educational policies that create systems for effectively reaching students who are currently least well-served by the school system. It seeks to promote education policy changes that support high-quality learning environments where learning is meaningful, substantive, and relevant to individual and societal needs and interests.