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Learning Forward Launches Free, Online Learning Guide to Enrich Principal Preparation Programs

“The Principal Story Learning Guide” – based on PBS documentary and more than a decade of research, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation

Dallas (May 6, 2014) – [Learning Forward](#), the nation’s largest professional learning membership association, today launched [The Principal Story Learning Guide](#), a free resource of web-based lessons and activities to advance the knowledge and skills of aspiring and current K-12 school leaders.

The online learning guide highlights excerpts from the critically-acclaimed PBS documentary film, [The Principal Story](#), and incorporates knowledge from 13 years of work with school districts and from research on education leadership funded by [The Wallace Foundation](#).

The *Learning Guide*’s five online units, including more than 25 activities, are intended for use by instructors and facilitators of principal preparation and professional development programs. They can also be used by individuals and teams focused on improving their own practice. These units – centered on five key practices of effective principals, described in Wallace’s [The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning](#) – can either be imported into existing lessons or become the basis for entire lessons or workshops to help aspiring and current principals and other school leaders probe these essential practices.

“Leadership is second only to teaching among school influences on student success, according to Wallace-commissioned research,” said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. “‘The Principal Story Learning Guide’ is designed specifically to help principals develop the knowledge, skills and practices they need to drive instructional improvement in their schools, especially those with the greatest needs. As a free online resource, it adds importantly to the professional learning resources available to universities, school districts, state agencies and associations.”

“Learning Forward has developed a flexible and widely accessible set of resources that can augment pre-service and in-service principal education,” said Jessica Schwartz, senior communications officer at

The Wallace Foundation. “The compelling use of film, along with research-grounded text and activities, has the potential to enliven instruction for experienced, novice and aspiring school leaders.”

Organized around five key actions effective principals carry out particularly well, each unit uses scenes from the film to explore and demonstrate these actions. They are:

1. **Shaping a vision of academic success for all students.** Any hope of closing the achievement gap between advantaged and less-advantaged students begins with the school principal setting clear and rigorous learning expectations across the board.
2. **Creating a climate hospitable to education.** Effective principals ensure that their schools allow adults and children to put learning at the center of their daily activities through basics such as safety and orderliness to a sense of community that is upbeat, welcoming, solution-oriented and professional.
3. **Cultivating leadership in others.** Effective school principals empower those around them. Research demonstrates that effective leadership is associated with better student performance on math and reading tests.
4. **Improving instruction.** Effective principals work to get the most out of the teaching staff by promoting high expectations, attacking teacher isolation and instituting research-based strategies to improve learning through professional development.
5. **Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.** Effective principals must be strong managers, able to support and nurture staff as well as make the tough decisions when teachers are not successful. They make decisions drawing from statistics and evidence.

Activities in each unit offer a range of learning experiences that allow aspiring and current leaders to examine their own beliefs, link research to practice, engage with other learners and reflect on what they’re learning. The web-enabled tools allow users to capture, save and share ideas.

[The Principal Story](#), produced by Tod Lending and David Mrazek of Nomadic Pictures, first aired on PBS in 2009. It captures a year in the lives of two dynamic public school principals in Illinois – one a veteran; the other a novice – who share a common determination amid a host of familiar challenges, including poverty, by seeking to make a difference in the lives of students.

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[Learning Forward](#) is the only association focused solely on the most critical lever in improving schools-- building the knowledge and skills of educators. Through the Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward leads the field in understanding what links professional learning to improved student achievement. We assist classroom, school, and system leaders in solving their toughest problems of practice. To learn more, visit www.learningforward.org.

[The Wallace Foundation](#) is an independent, national foundation dedicated to supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for children. The Foundation maintains an online library of lessons at www.wallacefoundation.org about what it has learned, including knowledge from its current efforts aimed at: strengthening educational leadership to improve student achievement; helping disadvantaged students gain more time for learning through summer learning and through the effective use of additional learning time during the school day and

year; enhancing out-of-school time opportunities; and building appreciation and demand for the arts. For more information on The Principal Story film project and ordering information for the full feature film, visit www.wallacefoundation.org/principalstory.