

## FOCUS GREAT STARTS

### **Middle school flips the script:**

With Inside-Out PD, professional learning starts in the classroom.

*By Niamh McQuillan*

The challenges of a learner-centered initiative at a Baltimore middle school led the school's leaders to reconfigure its professional development model. Two central ideas were key: Generate professional learning from inside the classroom, and streamline the demands placed on teachers. They established four inquiry teams, continuously improved the model, and made changes in the second year based on what they'd learned in the first. A positive school culture, effective use of technology, and growth in student math and reading scores are the result.

### **Remote possibilities:**

Rural teachers in Colorado hone their skills as they connect with peers.

*By Beth Melton*

The Northwest Colorado Board of Cooperative Educational Services used a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation grant to address the challenges of providing high-quality professional development to teachers in rural schools. To that end, the

board designed professional learning that leverages technology, aligns to the state teacher evaluation, and adapts Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning to a multidistrict setting. Feedback is positive, and teachers attribute increases in student engagement and test results to new practices they learned.

### **Math makeover:**

A school-university partnership transforms elementary math instruction.

*By Nicole Rigelman, Sarah Crane, Kellie Petrick, and Donna Shrier*

At Jackson Elementary School in Hillsboro, Oregon, collaboration between Portland State University and Hillsboro School District personnel helped create an instructional environment where kids thrive because teachers are working and learning together. They built a collaborative culture by engaging in lesson observation and making use of existing PLCs. The principal, the mathematics specialist, and the university supervisor offer their perspectives.

### **Filling the teacher's toolbox:**

Blended learning course turns supports and accommodations into daily practice.

*By Kelly Bikle*

A two-day standardized testing

workshop turned out to be the inspiration for building a blended learning course for educators in California's Palo Alto Unified School District. Using Schoology, a learning management system, a district team created a course that would help teachers learn a range of supports and accommodations as well as strategies they could use in real time and with real impact on the students they puzzled over each day. The experience provided lessons about the challenges of scaling, the need for ongoing support, and the importance of clarifying the design model.

### **Connect the heart and hands of literacy:**

Link curriculum renewal to professional learning for a solid improvement plan.

*By Sandi Novak and Bonnie Houck*

New Prague School District in Minnesota is finding success by linking a systematic professional learning process to the curriculum renewal cycle. As teachers implement the curriculum, they're reaping the benefits of a well-designed, carefully implemented plan for professional development and resource allocation. The three-year plan is still in progress, but already, when visitors enter the New Prague Schools, they see the value placed on literacy.

## **WRITE FOR THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL**

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**IDEAS**

**Principal evaluation as a tool for growth:**

How to help principals lead and learn.

*By Donna J. Micheaux and Jennifer L. Parvin*

Principal supervisors are typically, although not always, former principals who have been successful in moving a campus in a positive direction. However, the skills that enabled them to be successful as principals are not always commensurate with their job of leading the development of a diverse set of leaders across multiple schools. To use principal evaluation as a tool for growth, they must be able to coach and give powerful feedback, develop and deliver adult learning, facilitate group learning processes, and cultivate a culture of transparency and continuous learning. These seven strategies can help. *This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.*

**A better blend:**

Structure and strategy increase co-teaching’s impact in an inclusive classroom.

*By William C. Hunter, Jennifer Holbrook, Lisa A. Dieker, and Adrian Christopher-Allen*

Seven grades 7 and 8 math co-teaching teams in a rural Midsouthern school district engaged in professional development and virtual coaching to plan and implement team teaching

in an evidence-based practice called Numbered Heads Together. The cooperative learning strategy attempts to provide more equitable response opportunities to all students, especially those who don’t typically raise their hands to answer.

**VOICES**

**CALL TO ACTION**

**What it takes to make a great start.**

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

What are the essential conditions for launching a new initiative? First, decide who should be involved at the start. Once you’ve done that, gather your data and create a strong communication plan.

**BEING FORWARD**

**Lessons learned in the military apply to education, too.**

*By Alan Ingram*

A 22-year-career in the United States Air Force combined with experience as a federal programs director, superintendent, and deputy commissioner at a state agency offers unique insights into leadership development.

**WHAT WE’VE LEARNED**

**Awardees’ grant projects demonstrate foundation’s impact.**

*By Heather Lageman*

Centered around the Standards for Professional Learning and their power to transform educator practice and student learning, the Learning Forward Foundation’s impact has a ripple effect across individuals, teams, and organizations.

**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE**

**Want to create lasting change?**

**Listen first, design second.**

*By Nader Twal*

California’s Long Beach Unified School District is one of 22 U.S. school systems that participated in Learning Forward’s Redesign PD Community of Practice. Using a problem-solving process called design thinking, the group accelerated implementation by working with stakeholders to innovate, prototype, and test ideas before going to scale.

**RESEARCH**

**RESEARCH REVIEW**

**New report in Canada study series focuses on Alberta.**

*By Pamela Osmond-Johnson, Ken Zeichner, and Carol Campbell*

*The State of Educators’ Professional Learning in Alberta: Executive Summary* is the latest in a series of studies of professional learning in Canada commissioned and supported by Learning Forward. The study identifies key components and features of effective professional learning and highlights findings from educators.

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