



HERE WE GO

Tracy Crow

They do the right thing for students

When we consider how to launch high-quality professional learning effectively, Learning Forward has plenty of advice for logical steps to take, and you'll find just that in Stephanie Hirsh's column on p. 8. We know the importance of considering change management processes and assessing educators' readiness for change. We're convinced that it is critical to have a vision for what professional learning is intended to accomplish and who will be responsible for planning, supporting, implementing, and evaluating the learning. And we also know that sometimes educators don't kick off professional learning in a prescribed fashion, and yet it still helps teachers grow and improve.

In this issue of *The Learning Professional*, we're excited to feature several practitioners who shared their "great starts": the launch of promising professional learning tailored to meet specific student and educator learning needs. The examples we highlight launched their work through a range of pathways: a spark of inspiration in a standardized testing workshop (see p. 40), a desire to leverage powerful collaboration to address stagnant math performance (see p. 34), or a grant-funded opportunity to support far-flung schools (see p. 28).

The educators in these examples do follow many of the steps Learning Forward would recommend and are certainly well-versed in how to support

professional learning meaningfully. The element that stands out as common across all of these examples, however, is something else entirely: their commitment to do the right thing for students. This commitment isn't unique to these educators by any means. Doing the right thing for students and being an educator go hand in hand.

In the articles in this issue, we get a close-up view of educators doing the right thing for students by crafting new ways of learning, shaping innovative means of connecting with new information and their peers, and deciding they can come up with solutions to the problems they're seeing in their schools. In "Middle school flips the script" (p. 24), for example, enthusiastic educators dove into a near-frenzy of learning to integrate technology, with coaches using "every professional development method at our disposal to prepare teachers in these practices." Despite their passion to dive into this work, the educators weren't satisfied with their results, so they took the difficult step of reconfiguring their entire approach.

They embody, as so many education professionals do, one of Learning Forward's beliefs: "All educators have an obligation to improve their practice." Of all of our beliefs, this is the one most likely to raise eyebrows: Obligation is a strong word, and very few of us appreciate such a mandate. Yet we're convinced it's the right word, because improving practice so that



more students learn — and ultimately so all students learn — is the right thing to do. When all educators shoulder that obligation, we come closer to our aspirations that all students will experience great teaching and learning.

We hope you find inspiration from the educators featured here. We'd love to hear what sparks your desire to do more and what moments have led you to do the right thing. The educators actively engaged in creating learning that results in ongoing improvements in what they do and what their colleagues do are the superheroes we need in every school.

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Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@learningforward.org) is director of communications at Learning Forward. ■