



What graduates say about the Learning Forward Academy



- ▶ What benefits did you see from Learning Forward's Academy?
- ▶ How does the Academy move educators from professional development to professional learning?
- ▶ How will the Academy provide a new perspective on professional development?
- ▶ How do the professional connections benefit me and my work?
- ▶ What other skills will the Academy help me develop?

What benefits did you see from Learning Forward's Academy?



MICHELLE
KING



I grew in my knowledge, skill and application in three areas.

"First, I have increased my capability to facilitate others leaders' capacity to understand the Standards for Professional Learning and move the Standards into practice.

"Second, I have revisited my notes and used the content from our sessions on change management and implementation of change in a many learning activities.

"Third, my greatest growth has been in the area of assessing the impact of professional learning. Revisiting this topic in multiple sessions during the Academy allowed me to sharpen my skills and deepen understanding. The inquiry-based learning model served me well.

What benefits did you see from Learning Forward's Academy?



KATHRYN
MEYERS

Our first task within LF Academy was to articulate a problem of practice within my educational community. As a high school teacher, I knew that the impact I could have on this problem was in a different capacity than most Learning Forward Academy members due to the fact that I was the only teacher in this graduating class. This was entirely daunting in the early sessions of the experience. However through learning about institutional change and professional learning practices, I realized that my position as a 'teacher-leader' truly placed me in the 'front-line' of implementing change.

"My problem of practice was largely revolving around creating vertically aligned assessment for my Physical Welfare Division. The challenge was to gather data, evidence, and research change in order to build and implement a vertically aligned curriculum. The evolution of my problem of practice was heavily influenced by the learning I took part of in the Academy. Marcia Tate's Principles of Adult Learning and the theories of change and implementation were areas of great influence to my problem of practice. Eventually my work evolved from something vague to a clear and established purpose for change.

How does the Academy move educators from professional development to professional learning?



MATT
SCHIEBEL



The concepts of professional learning and problems of practice align closely to my own beliefs as a former science teacher and current principal. Unlike professional development, professional learning is not an “event”. Professional learning is an ongoing process of learning by practice, observation, and refinement...much like addressing a scientific hypothesis over time. No longer do I advocate sending my staff to professional development conferences to find a “one size fits all” approach to an instructional dilemma: been there, done that, it doesn’t work.

“I now tell my staff that the answers to improving student achievement exist right within the walls of our own school. While we may research techniques available online or in educational journals, the solutions only begin to take place when we learn and experiment together as colleagues.

“In addition, we now use norms, protocols, and a professional learning plan to monitor our progress toward our student and adult learning goals. More importantly, our professional learning takes place over time so that genuine adult learning can take place...no more ‘one and done’ professional development. By ‘going slow to go fast’, our faculty is beginning to embrace the concept of professional learning; they are beginning to envision the process as ongoing and not simply a checklist.

“Fort Wayne Community Schools has embraced the concept of professional learning and has a very active partnership with Learning Forward. I have witnessed the transformation over the past several years. Our leadership meetings are no longer a lengthy “sit and get” PowerPoint presentation. During leadership meetings, administrators are now regularly provided time to collaborate around a common problem of practice. Administrators and instructional coaches are encouraged to coach teachers as they implement the school improvement plan. By helping principals and teachers clarify and reflect upon their practices, genuine strategies that can improve student learning are beginning to show.

“Professional learning and coaching can result in discomfort. For years, teachers and principals have expected supervisors to simply tell them the ‘correct’ method or strategy; consequently, the amount of learning that has taken place has been inconsequential, as educators have expected a ‘one size fits all’ professional development to address. I have often believed that the first sign of lasting change is when the vocabulary of the district changes. Administrators and teachers no longer talk of professional development. For me personally, I knew I was actively embracing the change when I changed the name of my ‘professional development’ folder to ‘professional learning’.

How will the Academy provide a new perspective on professional development?



LEANN
MYERS



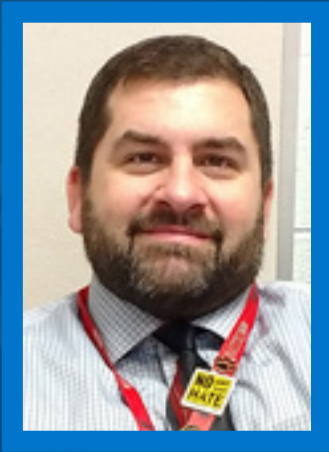
Through the work of the Academy, I have developed a strong belief that professional learning is central to any type of improvement plan for a school or district. Everything from the time spent on purposeful, student results-driven, job-embedded professional learning to the importance of funding for professional learning has come from my work with the Learning Forward Academy.

“Prior to my work in the Academy, I saw good professional learning as multiple offerings with topics that would meet the needs of those in many different subject areas. Now I realize that the best professional learning is not just about one-time offerings, no matter how many diverse topics are offered.

“Effective professional learning is about ongoing opportunities within the work that focuses on student outcomes. As a school leader, I continue to work with teachers to develop individual professional learning plans to address areas of need. I believe that the difference following the work in the Academy is that I have been very intentional with teachers to paint a picture of professional learning as everything from book studies, to classroom observations, to collaborative planning, to evaluation post conferences as opportunities for professional learning.

“Over the past two and a half years, I believe that I have grown as an individual and as a leader. The work with the Academy has helped to develop a level of knowledge about professional learning that I can only hope to continue to develop long after the Academy experience is finished.

How do the professional connections benefit me and my work?



ANDREW
MAOURY

Due to my LFA teammates, as well as other academy members and conference attendees, I have made connections and communicated with folks with whom I would have otherwise never made association. I have had phone calls, emails, and Skype sessions with others who have made an immediate impact on my day to day operations. Being able to work with a curriculum director from New York, professional developers from Arizona and Illinois, as well as well as an Asst. Super from Oregon has provided me both a depth and breadth of perspective that has been unparalleled.

We have been able to idea share, be critical listeners, and work off of each other's successes and failures. It has been this networking that has been the most valuable and has increased my proverbial "toolbox" of resources in my day to day job and overall growth and development.

What other skills will the Academy help me develop?



LEANN
MYERS



As a leader, I have developed confidence in my ability to lead professional learning and advocate for professional learning, not only with my faculty, but also within our district and state. I have become much more intentional with my communication and my actions around professional learning. I also believe that I have developed skills as a strategic planner for professional learning and understand how to examine the change we hope to accomplish and plan for steps to move toward the desired change.

“Finally, when I began this process, I had a very limited understanding of how to formatively assess professional learning. Not only have I developed skills that can allow me to assess the structures and content of professional learning, but also the teacher concern and level of use around their professional learning and what to do with the results to move teachers into a place where their professional learning is positively impacting the students in their classrooms.

“These are all things that I can very easily share with my district as well as with members of our state department of education as I work to become a more influential advocate for professional learning as the best path for improving education.

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A group of people, likely students or participants in a workshop, are seated at tables in a room. Some individuals are holding up signs or papers. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, orange-toned overlay across the entire image. The background shows a room with tables and chairs, suggesting a classroom or meeting environment.