



## BEING FORWARD

# Leigh Wall

## Let's ensure that equity includes English learners

**L**earning Forward has always been committed to educational equity, and we recently affirmed and strengthened this commitment by prioritizing equity in our mission statement.

Making equity part of our mission means more than putting words on paper. It means weaving it into our daily work of consulting with districts, leading conferences and networks, producing field-shaping publications, and working with educators and students. It also means examining our personal and organizational beliefs about the concept of equity.

Because we are each shaped by our unique experiences as well as collective ones, it is not surprising that we do not all have identical definitions of equity. As educators, we have a shared understanding that equity relates to fairness and our moral and professional obligation to ensure that all students succeed, excel, and reach their fullest potential in education and life.

Equity must be specifically focused on eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps across racial groups, as well as for every student group that may be underserved in our schools, including students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners.

Our organization is focused on success, equity, and excellence for all students and teachers. We encourage all members of the Learning Forward staff and community — including you, our



readers — to explore the imperative for equity at a personal and professional level and in ways that are meaningful to you and the students you serve and represent.

Therefore, it is important to explore honestly and openly the opportunities that are accessible — or not — for specific populations of students and professionals. In this issue, we focus on English learners and the role of professional learning in ensuring that educators have the capacity to enable them to achieve at equally high levels.

As is often the case when examining equity in student performance, when English learners lag behind their peers, it generally has less to do with abilities and more to do with educational experiences and opportunities. The responsibility for their success belongs to all of us.

Our work with, and for, English learners must focus, fundamentally, on excellent teaching and learning, even as we are helping students develop their English language skills. Our goal in equitable achievement should not be centered on remediation, but rather high-quality, high-level teaching and learning.

Learning Forward board members and staff are deeply invested in the difficult but vital work of examining and discussing race, class, privilege, and opportunity. This includes but is not limited to engaging in the Courageous Conversation framework with the help of their expert facilitators. (See our equity-focused October 2018 issue of *The Learning Professional* for more on this approach.)

As you explore this issue's strategies, tools, and advice, we urge you to remember that this work requires resources and support, not just for students but also for the educators who can help them unlock their potential. Equity in education, including for English learners, should be part of our advocacy for professional learning funding and legislation. It should also be a key component in our strategic planning.

Ensuring equity and excellence must be part of our consciousness as we target broad goals to improve access, opportunity, and excellence for all students.

•  
**Leigh Wall is president of Learning Forward. ■**