



Calandra Davis



Carolyn Anderson

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Calandra Davis and Carolyn Anderson

ACADEMY EXPERIENCE LEADS TO COLLABORATION AND FRIENDSHIP

Collaboration is at the heart of effective professional learning, as Learning Forward emphasizes in the Standards for Professional Learning. Educators who participate in the Learning Forward Academy and other networking experiences, such as the Redesign PD Community and the Student Success Learning Network, frequently report that the relationships they develop with other participants are among the most gratifying and beneficial experiences of their careers. Participants often maintain their relationships for many years.

As Academy members, Carolyn Anderson and Calandra Davis became not only professional collaborators but also close friends. Although they live in different states, they regularly support one another professionally and personally. In a recent conversation with Suzanne Bouffard, editor of *The Learning Professional*, they shared how their relationship makes them stronger leaders and stronger people.

Q: How did you become friends?

Calandra Davis: We were both in the Learning Forward Academy Class of 2017. We met at a reception while having pictures taken [of the class’s scholarship winners]. We realized we have a lot in common. We’re both elementary school principals [in neighboring states]. We’re both from South Carolina and went to Clemson University. But we never knew each other before we met through the Academy.

Carolyn Anderson: During breaks [at Academy meetings], we started having conversations about our problems of practice and things we were doing within our schools. Every time we went to an Academy meeting, we would hang out together, and then we started rooming together. We presented together at a conference on things we learned from the Academy.

We began talking outside of the Academy, and we’ve truly become friends. Now we text and call each other all the time, sometimes for personal reasons, sometimes professional. We’ve met each other’s families. My daughter and my mother ask about her all the time. Calandra is so outgoing and fun to be around. She’s authentic.

Davis: I feel the same way about you!

Q: What are some of the things you help each other with?

Anderson: We talk a lot about navigating the terrain as administrators — how to be strategic, build relationships, encourage each other when days are tough. We can be one another’s greatest cheerleader because we understand the complexities and nuances of the job, the unspoken rules, how to give strategic advice.

Davis: Being women of color in that position [as principals] has its own unique challenges,



“Now we text and call each other all the time, sometimes for personal reasons, sometimes professional.”

— Carolyn Anderson

When it comes to professional learning, we are both passionate about that and we can see the impact that it has on students.

and we really support each other in that. Also, because I'm from South Carolina but I live in North Carolina and my professional career has been there, I like being able to compare policies [across states]. It helps us know what's going on and stay afloat.

Anderson: When it comes to professional learning, we are both passionate about that and we can see the impact that it has on students. Sometimes when we are talking with other administrators who haven't had the [Academy and conference] experiences that we have, they don't have that bird's-eye view perspective. Some of the conversations you have with them don't go as deep.

I think it's because of the experiences we have shared that Calandra and I understand professional learning in a different way.

Davis: When I think about taking part in the Academy, once you have that learning experience, you think, "I need to consider the KASABs" [knowledge, attitude, skills, aspiration, and behavior targeted by well-designed professional learning]. Previously, when I would think about doing some type of professional development, I never thought about what's my "end" and how am I going to get to there, and then take the steps to actually plan it out. The Academy shifted my whole practice. Now, when I'm interacting with other administrators who haven't experienced that, it can be a little frustrating or daunting.

That's one of the beautiful things about Carolyn. She and I both understand that you need to go through this process [of thinking through professional learning goals and strategies].

WHO THEY ARE:

- Calandra Davis, principal of Jenkins Elementary School in Hickory, North Carolina
- Carolyn Anderson, principal of Barnwell Elementary School in Barnwell, South Carolina

HOW THEY MET:

Learning Forward Academy Class of 2017

SHARED HISTORY:

- Clemson University alumnae
- South Carolina natives
- Elementary school principals

NUMBER OF LEARNING FORWARD ANNUAL CONFERENCES THEY HAVE ATTENDED TOGETHER: 4

FOND MEMORY FROM A LEARNING FORWARD CONFERENCE:

Davis: "It was so funny being [at the 2017 conference] in Vancouver and we went out to dinner, and Clemson was playing in the [football] playoffs. So there we were in Canada cheering for our Tigers on TV!"

BENEFIT THEY VALUED ABOUT THE ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIPS THEY RECEIVED:

Quarterly touchpoint conversations with advisors from the Learning Forward Foundation. Davis says, "They helped get me on track. As with most people who do the Academy, I started out with one problem of practice, and then once you get in it, you realize it's probably not what you need to be doing. Once I shifted, they helped walk me through that process." Anderson adds that the conversations were full of "sage advice and great resources."

Q: What have you learned from each other?

Anderson: Calandra brings out the more playful side of me. I'm so serious. Sometimes I forget how to relax and breathe and enjoy the moment. She tempers me, and we balance each other.

Davis: I'm the risk-taker, always saying, "Let's try it, let's do it!" Carolyn helps me refine some of the things that I would say. She is very skillful at that.

Anderson: Any advice Calandra has ever given me, whether it is personal or professional, has been for my best

interest. She has no ulterior motive. I love her for that. She's a great person.

Davis: We both are very spiritual, and sometimes we remind each other of that to get each other back on track in times when we get frustrated with whatever is going on. If one of us is stressed out, the other one might say, "Where's your faith?" We center each other again.

Anderson: We support each other. When I became part of the Academy, I won a scholarship and a friend. ■