

# Advancing equity through professional learning

Learning Forward hosted a Capitol Hill briefing on advancing equity through professional learning in October. Panelists from across the United States shared their powerful Title II stories and data.

Denise Glyn Borders, Learning Forward president/CEO, kicked off the event by framing the equity problem facing states and districts: Teacher shortages are rampant, with a national attrition level of 9% to 10% annually. Teachers leave the profession because they do not feel supported. And, not surprisingly, teacher shortages disproportionately impact schools with high percentages of students living in poverty.

Principal retention is also at issue, especially in the highest-need schools. Research has shown that professional learning makes a positive impact on principal retention. Principal effectiveness has a multiplying effect: Schools that lack strong leadership have high rates of teacher attrition.

Schools, districts, and states across the country are using Title II funds to address this inequitable access to professional learning and making great progress as a result.

Panelists reported that:

- **Norman Public Schools in Oklahoma** is using Title II funding, in part, to tackle high rates of teacher attrition. The district is focused on new teacher retention and has hired new teacher specialists to observe and coach new teachers. The result has been a 25% drop in the number of new teachers that need to be hired in this most recent year.
- **South Brunswick, New Jersey**, is spending its Title II funds to provide specialized professional learning to middle school math teachers to prepare them for a new cohort of students who would otherwise not have taken



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Leigh Wall, president of the Learning Forward board of trustees, meets with Jon Bernstein, president of Bernstein Strategy Group, at a Capitol Hill event on advancing equity.

algebra 1 before the 9th grade, at which point the pass rate is very low. The result of this Title II investment was that 90% of the students in the first cohort met or exceeded expectations on the PARRC Assessment.

- **The state of Missouri** focused its state allocation on leader professional learning known as the Missouri Leadership Development System. Already the state is seeing 10% higher retention rates amongst participating principals.
- **Suffolk Public Schools in Virginia** invested Title II dollars in coaches and class

size reduction teachers for the district's five highest-need schools. For the first time since 2005, all of Suffolk's schools are fully accredited.

- **In Santa Fe Independent School District in Texas**, where 10 people were killed in a school shooting in May 2018, teachers and principals received coaching to help students who face trauma, resulting in increased math and reading scores, particularly among students from traditionally underserved areas.

Learning Forward encourages all educators to be advocates. Watch the video of the Capitol Hill briefing, use our new data compilation tool to capture and begin to shape your story, and share your data summary with Learning Forward so we can herald your high-quality professional learning story as well.

Video, slides, and data summaries from the briefing are available at [learningforward.org/advocacy](https://learningforward.org/advocacy).