

TRANSFORM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

January 2014

Develop effective vendor relationships in professional learning

While effective professional learning necessitates identifying and leveraging the expertise that exists in schools already, external vendors and technical assistance providers also have an important role to play in building educators' capacity. Expectations for these third-party vendors are shifting and may now include reframing their roles so they act as collaborative partners, critical friends, coaches, and experts who bring new perspectives and help manage change. Given the spectrum of possibilities for engaging in external partnerships, educators will need to carefully align their needs, goals, processes, and expectations to achieve the best results for students.

Collaborative relationships: Educators may consider today's external assistance providers as extended members of their learning teams, working in collaboration toward mutual goals and benefits, ultimately for the purpose of student success. Transparency, trust, strong communication, and the ability to honestly assess results are key to these types of partnerships.

Careful planning: While it may be tempting to forgo a complicated planning process and jump into implementation, especially when a provider has a ready-to-go system at hand, a thorough planning process builds a strong foundation for a productive, sustainable relationship. There are many important questions for educators to answer in the initial phases of selecting and working with an external partner.

Ongoing review: Just as any effective professional learning system operates within a cycle of continuous improvement, so, too, do effective external assistance partnerships. From the beginning, measures of success and reflective touch points are helpful to guide and monitor the relationship, content, delivery, and results of partnerships.

FOR FURTHER READING AND RELATED TOOLS

This document is a summary of Learning Forward's new bimonthly action brief, *Transform Professional Learning*.

Learning Forward members receive the full text of each issue, with suggested actions to take, concerns, related articles, and tools for implementation at www.learningforward.org/transform.

Learning Forward is the only association devoted exclusively to advancing professional learning for student success.

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Practitioner perspectives



TEACHER LEADER
Corrie Freiwaldt, an instructional facilitator in Washington, explains three important steps she took to successfully

integrate high-quality and freely available resources into her district's professional learning system.



PRINCIPAL
Dwayne Young, a principal in Virginia, shares how he and his leadership teams manage the process

for vetting, initiating, and nurturing relationships with multiple external assistance providers.



SYSTEM LEADER
Vicki Kirk, a superintendent of schools in a rural Tennessee system, provides

a comprehensive look at how she manages her relationship with a consultant to build sustainability.


THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION
Learning Forward's new digital publications are supported in part by MetLife Foundation.

TOOL TRANSFORM PROFESSIONAL LEARNING January 2014

What I know

ABOUT EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

When you think about your professional life, you have most likely been a partner in a partnership in some different context. The underlying theme of *Transform Professional Learning* is that there are many opportunities and ways to create successful partnerships. Consider the questions below and think about your own experiences. Be sure to provide your own perspective on these questions.

1	What are the challenges you face in your current partnerships?
2	What partnerships have helped you the most in your professional life?
3	What partnerships give you the most satisfaction? What could have happened differently to achieve greater success?

FEATURED TOOL: What I know about effective partnerships

Use this tool to think about your own partnerships, remember past experiences, examine assumptions, and consider new possibilities.

Available for members at www.learningforward.org/transform.