



# Agents for Learning

## T O O L K I T

A Guide to  
Amplifying Teacher  
Voice and Stakeholder  
Engagement

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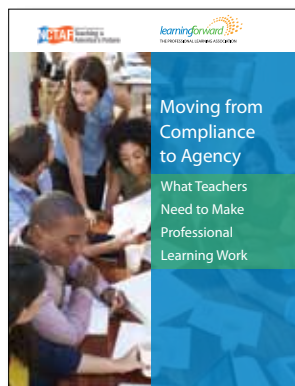
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## Introduction

Teachers want to work in systems that recognize them as professionals with valuable insights. Yet, almost any teacher you meet can tell you about the limited opportunity they've had providing input on policies, programs, or the implementation of any change that occurs in their school, district, state, or country. And, despite the number of teachers who are discouraged by, and in some cases disenfranchised by current systems, little attention is paid to the importance of teacher agency. Teacher expertise and insights are valuable resources untapped by most districts and states. State and district leaders who engage teachers in policy and decision making cultivate environments that promote growth and development for all.

Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) joined forces to address the untapped potential of teacher agency by publishing a report, *Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work*. To ensure the report would suggest ways in which teachers could use their voice, Learning Forward and NCTAF launched the Agents for Learning ESSA challenge to demonstrate the



importance of teacher agency in the implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA challenge gave teachers a substantive opportunity to exercise their agency by clarifying and sharing their views on federal and state policies and determining

steps they would take to promote action on their input.

Throughout the experience of sponsoring and producing the challenge, we gained great insights into the value that teachers place on having leaders listen to them and involve them meaningfully. Involvement increases teachers' understanding, ownership, and commitment to changes. When leaders and teachers work together in this way to advance improvement, they benefit everyone in the school community — they lead the way so the entire community benefits.

## Orientation to the toolkit

This toolkit suggests ways to cultivate teacher voice and agency in policy decisions and the implementation of professional development and other improvements to teacher practice differently than they have been in the past. It will guide states and districts in engaging a key stakeholder in the success of their systems while championing teacher agency.

The toolkit addresses lessons learned from the Agents for Learning ESSA Competition and other teacher agency initiatives to assist principals, education leaders, policymakers, and decision makers in amplifying teacher agency in policy decisions. The toolkit provides resources for leaders at the state, district, and school levels that can also be adapted for use by professional associations and other leadership organizations.



# Part I: Teacher agency in professional learning

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## An overview

Teacher agency in the context of professional learning is defined as “the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues”

(Moving from Compliance to Agency, p. 4).

Meaningful professional development is critical to identifying and expanding teaching practices that lead to student growth and achievement. By amplifying teacher voice and working together to find solutions, school systems have been able to design high quality professional development experiences that are timely and relevant. An Association of American Educators article reveals that although most professional development is provided from a top-down approach, professional development where teachers have empowerment and voice is the most powerful. Greater teacher involvement in decisions about their learning also holds promise for increasing teacher motivation and engagement in professional learning environments.

The degree to which a teacher acts with agency depends on factors such as a teacher’s internal traits (e.g. motivation to engage) and a school’s structural conditions, including the degree to which the system involves teachers in decisions about what and how they learn. In most cases, teacher agency is not a dichotomous proposition in which teachers are either fully engaged or completely disengaged. Rather, engagement runs along a continuum so that teachers have more or less agency within any given system.

We do not assume teacher agency and teacher voice are panaceas. We understand that most challenges in education are complex and difficult. Seeking to help address such complexity, this toolkit sheds light on the importance of teacher agency and offers school leaders and policymakers at all levels strategies they might adapt within their own contexts to create greater avenues for teacher agency.

To ensure the full potential of teacher agency, particularly with regard to their own professional learning, we recommend several steps that school, district, and state leaders may take to create the processes and culture that will benefit from teacher voice and expertise.

Steps that school, district, and state leaders may take	
<b>STEP 1</b>	Commit to making policy and program decisions in serious consultation with teachers and principals.
<b>STEP 2</b>	Involve and support educators in identifying challenges and analyzing data.
<b>STEP 3</b>	Establish a regular feedback cycle at every level for teachers to share their views, ideas, and recommendations regarding the impact of policies and programs on their practice.
<b>STEP 4</b>	Rethink organization of the school day so that educators have time to meet regularly to collaborate with colleagues. Support virtual collaboration with teachers from other schools, districts, or states.
<b>STEP 5</b>	Cultivate a culture of trust where teachers know their input is valued and will always be considered respectfully.

**Implementing teacher agency is not an overnight decision. It takes time and there will be challenges. All parties will benefit by considering the following observations offered by educators who have taken these important steps:**

- New approaches may take some time before they fit individual contexts and begin to make a difference.
- Teachers who have operated as solo fliers may be slow to embrace membership in collaborative communities.
- Teachers who have not been given much responsibility or agency in the past will have to learn to use them well.
- Schools, districts and states need to build capacity and offer support to increase the potential benefits from teacher agency.
- Schools, districts, and states will have to prepare to hear from teachers who develop competence and confidence in challenging the status quo and seeking change.
- Trust requires time to develop.
- Agency is not another program to be implemented, but a deep and meaningful shift in the responsibilities and roles that teachers play and in the relationships that teachers have with one other and education leaders.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Teachers

**Role of teachers:** Teachers need to seek and create opportunities to use their teacher agency in advocating for relevant and effective professional learning. They can choose to get involved in formal structures or exercise agency by building informal relationships with people charged with responsibilities for decision and policy making. Teachers can look for opportunities to serve in advisory capacities to decision makers who are making decisions that matter to them. Teacher agency begins with understanding issues fully. This requires that teachers do homework. In preparing to exercise agency around any issue, creating short documents that provide context and reasons for requests will always benefit teachers and the decision makers they seek to inform. Teachers should also seek the input and support of their colleagues. Policy and decision makers are often swayed by a person's ability to get consensus among their peers.

**Gaining support of peers has impact:** America Achieves, Educators 4 Excellence, Educators for High Standards, Hope Street Group, and the National Network for State Teachers of the Year wrote a letter to Secretary of Education John King in support of draft regulations for implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

#### Next actions for teachers:

- Determine the level of decision making where you are most interested in being involved.
- Study how decisions are currently made and identify how teacher engagement can improve the process.
- Plan for and meet with key decision makers with a rationale and proposal for increased teacher engagement in the process.

### Principals

**Role of principals:** School leaders are crucial for continually improving education. The role of principals and the way that schools are managed is changing, and research findings show that some of the most effective are the ones who disperse leadership between and among people in schools. These leaders of leaders strive to develop a relationship of trust with teachers and encourage leadership and autonomy throughout the school (OECD, 2016). Teachers will be attracted to, and stay in, the profession if they feel they belong and believe they are contributing to decisions that affect the conditions of teaching and learning in their schools.

#### Next actions for principals:

- Create a trusting and collaborative climate within in the school.
- In collaboration with teachers, develop a shared mission and vision.
- Distribute leadership throughout the school and give teachers voice in the design and selection of professional development.
- Encourage teacher agency and provide opportunities to exercise their agency.
- Keep teachers informed of opportunities for using their voice in policy decisions and implementation of changes.

### Districts and local school boards

#### Role of school districts and local school boards:

While the context may be different within each local school district, the reasons to find more opportunities for teachers to increase their agency does not vary. In fact, it matters most at this level. Teachers invested in the success of the school and system are teachers who will make the biggest differences in classrooms for students. Teachers invested in ensuring effective professional learning for teachers



will ensure that all teachers have the support and tools they need to increase student success. School districts and local school boards will benefit from studying teacher agency, places where it is being used, and considering its potential for them.

#### **Next action for school districts and local school boards:**

- Identify opportunities to exercise agency in current district structures including professional learning communities as well as the planning and evaluation of professional learning.
- Develop a program to build capacity of teachers to exercise agency and leadership.
- Clarify formal and informal structures for teachers to exercise voice.
- Engage teachers in the next cycle of review of all professional learning policies and regulations.

## Education agencies

**Role of state education agencies:** State education agencies (SEAs) recognize the value of teacher input and constantly seek ways to access it without placing additional burdens on teachers or asking them to be out of their classrooms. They struggle with asking one or a few teachers to represent the state's entire teacher workforce on a committee and know they don't always get input that represents the diversity of the state and the workforce. Emerging technologies and increasing demands from teachers to be involved in key decisions are providing motivation and opportunity to envision new pathways for teacher voice.

#### **Next actions for state education agencies:**

- Leverage technology, for example through polling, to allow for broader diversity and increase teacher input in key decision making points.
- Invite teachers to regularly address the chief state school officer and/or the cabinet.

- Create forums that provide substantive opportunities for teacher input and feedback.
- Establish more permanent structures with clear goals and mission for teacher leadership on issues related to professional learning.
- Create a chief's advisory board composed of teachers who meet periodically.

## State boards of education

**Role of state boards of education:** The situation for State Boards of Education is similar to that of legislatures. Unfortunately, few classroom teachers know what policies are being considered or when they have an opportunity to provide input. State Boards could take steps to give teachers more access to information about proposed policy changes and opportunities for input. State Boards, like legislators, will benefit from understanding all aspects of the issues they are required to address. Most State Boards require two readings on each proposed regulation. Finding ways to ensure that teacher views are considered in the process will ensure greater ownership and execution of their vision. New opportunities are always being identified for State Boards to increase opportunities for teacher agency.

#### **Next actions for state boards of education:**

- Establish standard operating processes to gather input from teachers on proposed rule changes.
- Request and receive a summary of the feedback received on any policy under consideration.
- Conduct open forums as well as establish more permanent structures for ensuring ongoing feedback and input from teachers.
- Visit schools and classrooms and listen to teachers describe their needs and their successes.

## State legislators

**Role of state legislators:** Most legislators recognize the valuable insights and expertise educators have to offer to their deliberations. Unfortunately, legislative bodies are typically in session during school hours which makes it difficult for teachers to testify or provide feedback. Legislators benefit from understanding all aspects of the issues they are required to address. They recognize that building support for hard decisions will ensure greater ownership and execution of their vision. New opportunities are always being identified for legislators to increase opportunities for teacher agency.

### Next actions for state legislators:

- Televisе legislative sessions and encourage emails and phone calls in response to discussions.
- Set up systems that accept virtual testimony from teachers.
- Visit schools and classrooms as often as possible.
- Conduct open forums as well as establish more permanent structures for ensuring ongoing feedback and input from teachers.

## Organizations

**Role of organizations:** Organizations that support teachers have a vested interest in ensuring that their members are represented and respected throughout the decision making process. They can contribute to members' understanding of key issues and processes for input. They can also provide the follow up support that individuals frequently do not have the resources to offer. Organizations often have the staff to provide support to individual teachers who have ideas or concerns and are seeking avenues for sharing them. Most importantly, organizations can amplify the positive outcomes of teacher agency and advocate for its continued support.

### Next actions for organizations:

- Strengthen connections among teacher agents — the work can be challenging and isolating — and networks provide motivation and support.
- Increase awareness among teachers about policies that are being considered and the best strategies to use to provide input.
- Provide professional learning for teachers that would help prepare them for using their agency and give them a safe environment where they can practice their skills.
- Host opportunities for teachers to exercise agency and where the results are shared with legislators, boards, and school leaders.

## Part II: Teacher agency in action

The previous section included next actions for teachers. This section offers more explanation and guidance to assist teachers who are serious about finding new ways to exercise their agency.

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### Ways for teachers to get involved

**Know your policymakers.** Invest time to discover intersections between your interests and your representatives. Read websites, talk to colleagues and fellow community members to learn what he or she cares about. Look for shared concerns and opportunities to benefit from collaboration.

**Know your “Ask.”** Know the outcome you want from the meeting or contact. Research your issue and understand what the policymaker can do to help. They don’t have time to figure out the solution to the problem. Spell out all of the options and the ramifications of each. If you don’t have a specific ask, let them know that the purpose of your visit is to cultivate a relationship in hopes of future collaboration and support of an important issue or program. Ask them to consider you as a resource when they need additional expertise or feedback on education-related issues.

**Have your laser talk ready.** A well-prepared two-minute laser talk or elevator speech is the tool to use during a chance or a planned encounter with a policymaker. Such short talks are intended to enable the speaker to deliver a compelling message in the time it would take to ride in an elevator from the bottom floor of a building to the top floor. A well-structured laser talk addresses a need, solution, and request (see [Resource #1: Raising Awareness — Delivering a laser talk](#)).

**Invite policymakers from all levels to your classroom, school, or system.** Policymakers like to tell stories and stay in touch with constituents. These visits give them real-life examples of the points you

make; this knowledge informs the future conversations they will need to have to meet your needs.

**Get involved in elections.** The majority of policymakers are concerned about re-election. They listen to those who get involved or help in their races. While they appreciate financial contributions, they appreciate just as much those who take on the daily chores of a campaign. If you help them get elected, you become a trusted voice; they will accept your calls and listen to your requests.

**Be visible at events where policymakers speak.** Just showing up gives you access to policymakers who want to be able to report on the public input they gather. Unfortunately for our political system, only a small proportion of the public takes time to share points of view. If you become a respected ally, your potential for influence increases. If you wait until you have a problem to contact a policymaker, your point of view will be recorded but will not get the attention it would if you had already established your credibility.

**Tell a relevant story.** The most compelling and memorable way to educate a policymaker on the true value of your work is to tell a brief story about a student or program that demonstrates the issue you are discussing. Keep the story simple, positive, and on point. Provide a few details about the individual or who the program serves. Whenever possible, tie the story to the policymaker’s interests. Policymakers are often swayed by personal stories so teachers should talk about whatever they’re most passionate about. Anecdotes drive policy making.

**Become an ally with a staff member.** If you are intimidated by the thought of trying to influence an elected official directly, then set your sights on someone you know who has influence on the policy-maker. Make an appointment to meet the education advisor to introduce yourself; let them know you want to share your views on education.

**Be respectful and appreciative of policymakers' service.** Very few people who call on legislators and their staff take time to thank them for their service. People remember those who recognized they are performing a public service and acknowledge that contribution. This courtesy makes your interactions memorable.

## Final thoughts

**Relationships matter.** Building relationships with both elected and non-elected policy and decision makers is key to influencing the decisions that will be made. Without trust and a relationship, policymakers are less likely to listen to the input of teachers and implement their recommendations. As the Chinese proverb says, "Don't wait until you're thirsty to dig a well." Unfortunately, the investment in building relationships is often undervalued or overlooked due to other responsibilities and demands on time. If you are an individual or an agency that takes the time to foster respectful relationships with policymakers, you will see the investment repay you in the form of public support of your efforts.

**Agency matters.** The potential impact of increased teacher agency has never before been so important. Educators continue to face unprecedented challenges and the voice and perspectives of teachers must be part of the solutions. With the recent passage of ESSA, Congress recognized the importance of returning authority and accountability for education to states. States and systems will benefit when all educators feel they are full partners in the development and execution of plans for ensuring all educators and students achieve.

## Part III: Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge

**The following case study provides one strategy for enlisting teacher voice in policy making. It can be adapted for a number of purposes; the tools and resources also can be used independent of the strategy. You are encouraged to use and adapt it for your context.**

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### Purpose

In conjunction with the release of *Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work* by Learning Forward and NCTAF, the Agents for Learning Challenge was announced. Both organizations recognized the importance of promoting through print and action the purpose of the report. The stakeholder engagement clause in the newly passed ESSA offered a perfect opportunity to promote teacher agency and elevate teacher voice. Learning Forward and NCTAF recognized it was a crucial time demanding teacher engagement as the federal government rolls out regulations and guidelines for implementing ESSA and state education agencies (SEAs) and local school systems interpret, regulate, guide, and implement the new law. The challenge invited 3–5 member teams of educators (composed of a majority of teachers) to provide their input on how federal dollars that are allocated to their states for professional development can support a system that better addresses their needs and desired outcomes.

This section of the toolkit includes practical examples, questions, resources and tools used during planning and presenting the Agents for Learning Challenge. You may use all or part of the section to replicate an event. The toolkit includes many opportunities for teachers to exercise their agency and for policymakers to hear input and feedback from those who work closest with students.

#### Tools include:

- A challenge announcement (see [Resource #2](#));
- Sample application (see [Resource #6](#));
- Application scoring rubric (see [Resource #7](#));
- Materials for team coaches (see [Resource #12](#));
- Guidance for challenge judges (see [Resource #13](#));
- Orientation strategies for the participants (see [Resource #14](#));
- Challenge event agenda (see [Resource #16](#));
- Materials for teams (see [Resource #16](#));

Times allotted for each phase of the work are approximate and may vary according to audience size, levels of interaction, and background knowledge. The toolkit also includes lessons learned to further assist those who choose to adapt or replicate the process.

## Partnerships and funding

### Guiding questions

How will you engage partners?

Will your challenge benefit from involvement/support of other organizations?

How much will your challenge cost and how will you pay for it?

We recommend that you consider, early on, whether or not you are going to collaborate with partners who will assist you with the challenge. Learning Forward and NCTAF determined that they would co-sponsor the challenge and invited like-minded partners to assist with some of the tasks required by the challenge. More importantly, we wanted to give partners input into the decisions we made. They were tremendously helpful in recruiting teams of teachers and other educators to participate, assisted with the webinars, served as raters of the applications, served as coaches at the event, and helped with all aspects of the planning.

We also encourage you to consider how you will fund the challenge or other opportunities to engage teachers in decision making. The budget required for this work will vary widely depending on whether it is a local challenge, statewide or at the national level. Some of the biggest costs we incurred were for travel and lodging to bring teams from around the country to a central location. Because the scope of the challenge was nationwide and required more resources, Learning Forward and NCTAF were very fortunate to receive funding from two national foundations, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.

### See Resources for these additional tools:

- [Resource #3](#): Planning — Example budget for a national challenge
- [Resource #4](#): Communicating with partners/sponsors

## Recruitment

### Guiding questions

Who are you trying to recruit?

How will they apply?

How will you promote the challenge?

What is the marketing plan?

In collaboration with sponsoring partners, Learning Forward and NCTAF raised awareness about the Agents for Learning challenge and recruited teams of teachers and other educators to participate. The partners publicized the challenge to their stakeholders through their print, digital, and social media channels as well as personal contacts. In addition, Learning Forward and NCTAF released a joint press release announcing the competition and encouraging teachers to apply.

[Links to Learning Forward website pages.](#)

### See Resources for these additional tools:

- Marketing materials (see [Resource #5](#): Launching and marketing the challenge);
- Challenge application (see [Resource #6](#): Providing the application).



## Support

Guiding questions
What will your participants need to know to prepare for the challenge?
How can you ensure your applicants are well prepared for the challenge?
How will you handle questions from the applicants?

Using webinars, web chats, and publications, Learning Forward and NCTAF educated potential applicants about (1) the challenge, (2) the components of ESSA, (3) where teacher input is encouraged and required, and (4) Learning Forward’s Redesign PD Principles and other evidence-based practices. The webinars provided information about the opportunities for professional development in ESSA and the role of teacher involvement. A web chat was held for teams to get feedback and to ask questions about their application; the rubric for evaluating the applications was also introduced to the applicants during the web chat. The Agents for Learning website included FAQs and access to a contact person who would answer questions of individual team members.

[Link to Orientation webinars.](#)

**See Resources for these additional tools:**

- [Resource #2:](#) Raising awareness — Web-based outreach and orientation
- [Resource #7:](#) Providing a scoring rubric.

## Selection

Guiding questions
Who will score applicants and how will they be prepared?
How are the scoring data analyzed and winners chosen?
How are applicants notified of their status?

With input and guidance from their partners, Learning Forward and NCTAF reviewed the applications and scored the responses using the rubric provided to potential applicants. Once the applications had been read by a minimum of three people, we met face to face to come to consensus on our top applicants. We began the process for asking each rater to share the application that they scored the highest. We looked at the average score for each application and compared it with the applications that the raters indicated had the highest scores of the applications they reviewed. Each of those applications was discussed and the group came to consensus on the teams that we would invite to participate in the final round of the challenge. Each team that applied received a letter notifying them of their status. In addition, the applications that were not selected as finalists received notification.

[Link to scoring data orientation/process PowerPoint presentation.](#)

**See Resources for these additional tools:**

- [Resource #9:](#) Communicating with scorers
- [Resource #10:](#) Communicating with applicants
- [Resource #17:](#) Planning for judges and scorers

## Challenge preparation

### Guiding questions

How were coaches and judges selected and prepared?

How were partners/sponsors engaged?

What did teams do to prepare for the challenge?

Onsite, each team had a coach to work with them and to give them feedback on their presentation, answer questions and encourage them to use their voice. The coaches were selected from a pool of people, many of whom were sponsors, who had excellent facilitation skills, experience making presentations, an understanding of the key components of effective professional development, and knowledge of ESSA. Prior to the event, judges participated in a conference call where the process for serving as a coach was discussed. They also arrived onsite before the event started to participate in an orientation session where they were able to ask questions and go over the agenda in detail. Protocols for each coaching session were developed and reviewed with the coaches.

In preparation for team presentations that were made in front of a panel of judges and were live streamed from the event, team members received four frames that were titled with the key content teams were to include in their presentations. They were also given the time limit for their presentation of four minutes. During the event, teams discussed their presentations with their coaches and practiced their presentations in front of their peers. They incorporated feedback received into their presentation. They had one final rehearsal that was timed and helped teams make decisions about what had to be eliminated, if anything. One of the goals of the preparation was to help teams determine the most important things to share and incorporate those points into a four-minute presentation.

### See Resources for these additional tools:

- Pre-event marketing (see [Resource #5: Launching and marketing the challenge](#));
- Team Correspondence (see [Resource #10: Communicating with applicants](#));
- Coaches' Correspondence (see [Resource #12: Communicating with coaches](#));
- Judges' Correspondence (see [Resource #13: Communicating with judges](#)).

# Implementation

Guiding questions
What was the staff agenda for the challenge?
What was the participant agenda for the challenge?
How were winners selected? Were there prizes?

The Learning Forward and NCTAF staff participated in weekly planning meetings for several months prior to the final challenge held in Chicago, Illinois. In July, there were two meetings where the staff participated in a “run-of-show” so they would understand the “big picture” of what would be occurring as well as understanding their roles and responsibilities for the event. Room set-up, equipment, and other logistics were discussed as well as the content of each of the coaching sessions. The run-of-show also included a discussion of the presentations, the live streaming, and the judging.

After teams were selected and invited to attend the final competition, they received information about the logistics of the event: where, when, how to make travel arrangements, how to prepare, slide frames for their presentation, and information about the livestreaming of the presentations and judging.

During the two days that the team members were present at the event, they participated in sessions where they received feedback on their recommendations and presentations, interacted with team members from other states, received coaching, and received feedback from a distinguished panel of judges.

When the presentations were completed, a celebration was held during which each team was given a certificate with their award. The awards (e.g. Most Innovative) were matched to songs that had similar themes that were played once the announcement was made. No monetary awards were made, but all teams were awarded sponsored prizes, which included books, pens, notepads, chargers, gift certificates, etc. A decision had been made during the planning of the challenge not to have one winner but to celebrate the success of all finalist teams.

As we reflected on the evaluations and the event itself, we realized this was a professional learning experience for everyone involved.

The team presentations and their applications were archived and posted on the Agents for Learning website for other policymakers to review and use in the preparation of the ESSA consolidated plans and to gain ideas on how to provide opportunities for teachers to use their voice in decision making.

Each participant was asked to complete an online evaluation that provided valuable feedback to challenge sponsors and hosts. Some of the answers on the evaluations contributed to the lessons learned below.

## See Resources for these additional tools:

- PowerPoint frames for planning presentations (see [Resource #14](#): Planning for ESSA Agents for Learning Challenge presentations);
- Judges’ resources (see [Resource #13](#): Communicating with judges; [Resource #17](#): Planning for judges and scorers);
- List of “prizes” (see [Resource #15](#): Getting prizes for the challenge);
- Team agenda and list of materials in their packets (see [Resource #16](#): Creating meeting materials for staff and team members);
- Post-challenge evaluation survey (see [Resource #19](#): Providing an evaluation of the challenge experience).

## Amplifying the results

### Guiding questions

What steps were taken to amplify the outcomes?

What follow up was conducted with participants?

What did you do with the results?

Learning Forward, NCTAF, and their partners looked for various opportunities to amplify the use of teacher voice through different forms of media. Websites, twitter, blogs, articles, newsletters, press releases, letters to chief state school officers of participating teams, and live streaming of the presentations were all strategies used. During the national convening, participating team members also had the opportunity to brainstorm other possible opportunities to meet with policymakers and share their recommendations. Participants developed an action plan for next steps while participating in the national convening and several have provided feedback on the results of those meetings.

### See Resources for these additional tools:

- Post-event marketing materials (see [Resource #20: Wrapping up after the challenge](#));
- Letters of recognition and appreciation (see [Resource #20: Wrapping up after the challenge](#));

## Timelines

The timeline for the Agents for Learning was compressed by the end of one school year and the beginning of the next school year.

March	The announcement was released about the Agents for Learning challenge
April	Applications made available to potential participants
April-May	Webinars and web chats occurred
June	Applications were due, scored; finalist teams were selected
June-July	Final preparations were made by the participants and the conveners of the presentations
Late July	Meeting held for finalists where presentations were made and livestreamed
August	Contacts made with local and state policymakers

## Lessons learned

For those most interested in implementing the event, we offer these reflections:

- Plan early for funding.
- Invest more deeply in helping participants understand how to translate priorities into policy.
- Provide time for reflection following the competitive phase.
- Prepare for the unexpected.

**Plan early for funding.** To launch an event that simulates a real-life experience for teachers to use their voice, you need a budget and a plan for allocating current funds or raising the resources needed. The budget will depend on the number of people involved, the amount of travel involved, the capacity of the staff to take on additional duties or the need to use consultants or other temporary personnel, the amount of publicity sought, and the audio-visual and other equipment required to execute the event. There may be no need to raise funds if events don't require travel or additional human capacity.

The main point of including the budget used for the Agents for Learning Competition is to show both the categories of expenditures and the costs for a national event that requires travel, a communications plan, and additional people to execute the event. The budget may also help you determine whether you want partners to help sponsor the event. These opportunities often develop quickly and have a limited time frame in which to raise funding. It also is a good lesson to remember that relationships with possible funders do not occur overnight and that these relationships should be built and maintained over time.

**Help applicants understand how to translate priorities into policy.** In writing their Agents for Learning proposals, team members were challenged to be succinct and determine what they wanted policymakers to do with their recommendations. For example, some teams exceeded the word limits on the application, had time called on them during their presentations, and were not clear about their “ask” for their targeted audience. Team members might be helped with proposal creation if they could develop a better understanding of the roles of decision makers and the process for changing policy at different levels of the system. If Learning Forward and NCTAF were offering this opportunity again, we would provide more guidance and coaching to applicants and participants on these points.

### **Provide time for reflection and debriefing.**

Another challenge was that participants had no time to debrief after they received judges' critiques on their presentations. Some of the participants were uncomfortable with the feedback they received and would have benefited from a guided conversation about what they learned and how it could help them in the future. During the event, the presentation was foremost on the minds of the participants and many did not benefit from the session planned to help them transfer what they had learned into other situations where they could use their voice. If Learning Forward and NCTAF were developing the agenda for the event today, we would provide time for reflection and processing after the presentations.

**Prepare for the unexpected.** Finally, it almost goes without saying, that you should prepare for the unexpected. In almost any event, there will be people who may have to miss the event due to emergencies, travel difficulties, sickness, or urgent matters. Having a back-up plan is always helpful and making the time to think through the ramifications of any changes that you are considering is important. It's almost always better to collaborate on these decisions to get different perspectives and assistance in problem solving.

## References

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## Part IV: Resources to support teacher agency and replicate an ESSA challenge

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

# Resources

## Raising awareness — Delivering a laser talk

### EPIC

**Results** created a simple acronym, EPIC, to help remember the basics of creating a laser talk. The letters in EPIC stand for:

- **Engage**
- State the **problem**
- **Inform** about the solution
- Give the **call** to action

### EPIC

<b>E</b>	<b>Engage your audience</b> Get your listener's attention with a dramatic fact or short statement. Keep this opening statement to one sentence if possible. For instance, you could say: "I know you share my concern about improving the quality of teaching for all students."
<b>P</b>	<b>State the problem</b> Present causes of the problem you introduced in the first section. How widespread or serious is the problem? "Too few students experience great teaching every day, too few educators experience professional learning that has a powerful impact on teaching and student performance, and too few schools prioritize high levels of learning every day for both adults and students."
<b>I</b>	<b>Inform about solutions</b> Inform the listener about a solution to the problem you just presented. "We need to ensure that every teacher has access to high-quality professional learning every day so every student achieves. That can happen if you support implementation of the Standards for Professional Learning. This would help ensure that teachers have time to work and learn with colleagues every day, that their learning is aligned with standards, and that their learning is built on a continuous cycle of improvement."
<b>C</b>	<b>Call to action</b> Once you've engaged your listener, presented the problem, and told them about a solution, be specific about what you want them to do. This enables you to follow up to learn if they've taken this action. Present this action in the form of a yes or no question. "Will you support the implementation of the Standards for Professional Learning?"

Any good musician or actor knows you would never go on stage without rehearsing first, and it's no different with public speaking. It's important to speak to the other person instead of reading the information word for word. You can, however, refer to notes at first. And you'll want to strive to keep the talks

short — no more than two minutes. As you speak the information, you'll discover where you need more practice or where you may want to change a part of it. These talks will develop and change as you learn new information over time, so be flexible and stay alert for interesting facts to update your talks.

Tips for delivering a laser talk
Practice your laser talk several times before practicing in front of another person.
Memorize as many of the details as possible.
Choose a member in your group that you feel safe practicing with.
Identify your audience — for example a member of Congress or a state legislator.
Deliver your talk without stopping, even if you have a few stumbles along the way. The more you practice, the better you will get.
Once finished, critique yourself. Pick two things that you liked about the talk and one thing you want to improve.
Listen with an open mind and ear for learning how to make your talk better when your partner gives you feedback on your delivery.

Tips for listening to a laser talk
Ask the speaker to identify the target of this laser talk.
Listen intently to the talk, trying to pick out different sections of the EPIC format.
Did the speaker engage you up front?
Did the speaker describe the problem and its solutions?
Were you inspired by a clear call to action?
Ask the speaker to critique his or her own talk.
Tell the speaker two things that you really liked about the talk and one thing that you think he or she could improve upon.

Source: Used with permission of RESULTS. [www.results.org](http://www.results.org)

## Raising awareness — Web-based outreach and orientation

### Agents for Learning Webinar #1

Learning Forward and NCTAF and our sponsors are also offering two webinars to help educators and competition applicants learn more about ESSA and its implications for professional learning.

The first webinar from April 27, “ESSA 101 for Educators,” is now [online here](#). You can also [download a PDF](#) of the slides used in the webinar.

### Agents for Learning Webinar #2

The second of two free webinars focused on professional learning and its role in ESSA.

Available from the webinar is a summary of key elements of an effective professional learning system with related opportunities and next steps in ESSA. [Download a PDF](#) of the document *Leveraging the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to Build Professional Learning Systems*.

### Agents for Learning Webchat

Competition sponsors hosted a question and answer webchat on May 25 to answer questions about the competition and the application process. View this [webchat](#).

## Planning — Example budget of a national challenge

### Budget for a national Agents for Learning Challenge

Item	Unit	Total unit	Total
Team Sponsorship	\$5000	10	\$50,000
Meals (two lunches; two morning breaks; one breakfast; one dinner reception; one ending celebration)	\$400	50 team members 10 coaches 5 staff member = 65	\$26,000
Hotel (2 nights)	\$550	10 coaches 5 staff	\$8,250
Travel/Flight & ground trans	\$600	10 coaches 5 staff 5 judges	\$12,000
Meeting supplies	\$25	50	\$1,250
Room and AV set up	\$2000	2 rooms; 2 days	\$8,000
Webcast	\$7500	1	\$7,500
Consultant support	\$800/day	25 days	\$20,000
Subcontract for coordination	\$800/day	25 days	\$20,000
Post event communication support	Press releases Presentations Tool Kits	\$1,500 (2) \$2,500 (4) \$9,500 (1)	\$22,500
Administrative support	\$25/hr	100 hours	\$2,500
Learning Forward staff leadership	In-kind		
Overhead	5%		\$9,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$187,000</b>

## Communicating with partners/sponsors

### Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge Partnership/Sponsorship Agreement

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge as a sponsor. Below please find some requests as well as opportunities for you as a sponsoring organization for the Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge.

For your information, **[your name and any partners]** will be hosting other learning opportunities at the same time and location as the competition. As a result, there will be 200+ educators present at the **[hotel and date of your challenge]**. Some of the opportunities are based on our view that all 200+ educators could benefit from learning about your organization.

**Please return this survey to [name of your challenge coordinator] ASAP.**

#### Information Required

1. Please reconfirm key contact for your sponsorship and the way you want your organization's name to be listed in the competition materials and on the website.

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#### Optional Activities (Please respond NO if your organization is not interested in the opportunity)

2. Please identify the person(s) from your organization who will help score the applications between June 11–June 15 (there will be an orientation to rating the week of June 6).

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3. Please identify the person(s) from your organization who will participate in the meeting on the afternoon of Thursday, June 16 in Arlington, VA at the offices of NCTAF to determine the 10 finalists.

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4. Please identify the person(s) from your organization who will serve as a coach to a team at the Chicago convening.

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5. Would you like to have display space on a table to share information about your organization?

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6. We will not be awarding cash prizes for the competition. However, we are collecting prizes to award to the finalists (10 teams X 5 members = 50 individual prizes or 10 team prizes). Would you like to contribute prizes (e.g., books, attendance at a conference, memberships, other)? If so, what prizes and how many?

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7. Do you have materials you would like to have included in participants' bags?

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8. Are you interested in making 3-5 minute remarks during one of the general sessions at the convening?

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9. Are you interested in taking or joining a dinner group on Thursday, July 21? \_\_\_\_\_



Thank you for your tremendous support for the ESSA challenge! Remember to send this survey to **[email address for your challenge coordinator]** ASAP.

Also included with this mailing is your invoice for sponsorship. Please submit that form and payment to **[mailing address for your business representative]**.

## Launching and marketing the challenge

### Release announcing the challenge

[Link to web page.](#)

**For Immediate Release**

**Media Contact for Learning Forward:**  
Tracy Crow, 972-421-0900  
[tracy.crow@learningforward.org](mailto:tracy.crow@learningforward.org)

**Media Contact for NCTAF:**  
Karen Cheeks, 240-233-4110  
[karen@cheekscommunications.com](mailto:karen@cheekscommunications.com)

***Learning Forward and NCTAF sponsor competition to spur teacher engagement in ESSA implementation***

**WASHINGTON** – March 10, 2016 – Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) announced a competition yesterday that will invite teachers to submit written proposals for the best use of federal funding for professional learning under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As part of their effort to highlight the critical role of teacher agency in professional learning, Learning Forward and NCTAF will use the competition to amplify and support teachers in understanding the provisions of ESSA aligning the allowable uses of funds under the law with their learning needs.

Through the Agents for Learning competition, teams of educators will be invited to submit written proposals for best uses of Title II and other federal funds under ESSA. The proposals will include:

1. Analysis of teachers' primary professional learning needs;
2. An educator-informed theory of action around how to leverage professional learning to advance teaching and learning, and
3. Specific recommendations for states, districts, and schools to consider as guides to their Consolidated State Plans and/or state and district Title II plans, a requirement of ESSA, and the design of effective professional learning in their systems.

Teams interested in participating will be invited to a series of webinars helping them to understand the new law, including the rights and responsibilities of states regarding use of federal funds for professional development, as well as how those funds can support a systematic vision for continuous improvement in schools.

Teachers will then submit written plans that will be reviewed by an independent panel. The finalists will travel to Chicago for two days in July to participate in further training and feedback and then present their proposals to a panel of judges, who will comment on each of the proposals.

The finalists' proposals will be available online, as will the presentations and feedback and can be used as a planning tool for states, districts, and schools as they work toward ESSA implementation. Supporting partners will disseminate the plans to advocate for effective professional learning with their stakeholders.

"Teacher voice in implementing ESSA is critical," said Melinda George, president of NCTAF. "This competition provides a platform for educators to lead the way, not only for themselves, but their colleagues around the country. Redesigning professional learning is a major step toward great teaching for all students."

Several educator advocacy organizations, including AFT, America Achieves, Hope Street Group, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Educators 4 Excellence, and Teach Plus among others, will support Learning Forward and NCTAF in the Agents for Learning competition. These organizations will support educator teams participation in the competition and deepen their engagement in advocating for the meaningful implementation of ESSA.

"We are delighted to collaborate with a great group of education leaders through this competition. The more we can involve teachers, the better it will be for states and districts in making ESSA work and building stronger professional learning systems," said Alice Johnson Cain, executive vice president, policy & partnerships at Teach Plus.

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"The National Board is excited to partner with Learning Forward and NCTAF on the Agents for Learning initiative. This initiative capitalizes on ESSA's emphasis on stakeholder involvement and will provide National Board Certified Teachers with an opportunity to take charge of teacher quality efforts in their states and districts. National Board Certified Teachers are instructional experts who have proven their teaching meets the highest standards in the profession and will be able to provide great insight as to how to design and implement teacher quality initiatives that will build a continuum of teaching excellence," said Peggy Brookins, National Board Certified Teacher and president & CEO of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers said, "This contest offers a terrific opportunity for teachers to use their voice to press for what they need and want to support better teaching and learning. But let's be clear. This isn't a test-and-sanction competition—we're more than done with excessive, punitive testing driven by federal mandates. This is about sharing good ideas for what states can do to help lift teachers' instructional practice."

"America Achieves is excited to partner with Learning Forward and NCTAF to tap into the expertise of teachers and principals to get their best ideas on how we can better use public money to train educators and enable them to grow professionally," said Charlie Cummings, program director, state educator voice fellowships of America Achieves.

The Agents for Learning competition follows upon Learning Forward and NCTAF's March 7<sup>th</sup> release of the white paper, "**Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work.**" The white paper defines teacher agency as "the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues." The competition is intended to provide an avenue for teachers to exercise their agency in ways that influence the learning they experience along with federal, state, and local policy related to that learning.

The paper's author, Laurie Calvert, education policy advisor for Learning Forward and NCTAF, interviewed teachers and school administrators to understand the disconnect between the professional learning that teachers need and want and what they actually experience on the job. Teacher agency emerged as a factor that needs to be elevated in the discourse about professional learning. Download the white paper at [\*Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work.\*](#)

Tabitha Grossman, national director of policy and partnerships at Hope Street Group, noted that, "We see this competition as another opportunity to put teacher voice front and center on a matter of incredible importance to teachers—their own professional learning." She continued, "Teachers are eager to share what they think, and more importantly what they know works as a means to ensure all teachers have access to professional learning that improves their practices and outcomes for students."

"Many teachers are already learning in effective and innovative ways alongside their colleagues in schools," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "Our goal with this effort is to raise the visibility of the learning that helps teachers improve in service to their students, and to influence policymakers at all levels as they implement ESSA," said Hirsh.

Learning Forward and NCTAF will offer more details and invitations to participate in the coming weeks.

###

*Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K–12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Information about membership, services, and products is available from [www.learningforward.org](http://www.learningforward.org).*



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION



*The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1994 as a bipartisan effort to engage education policymakers and practitioners to address the entrenched national challenge of recruiting, developing, and retaining great teachers in order to ensure that all students have access to quality teaching in schools organized for success. For 20 years, NCTAF has worked to drive and inform the national dialogue about the importance of great teaching, especially in hard-to-staff schools. NCTAF's research and recommendations inform innovations and improvements in teaching quality nationwide, focus attention on the importance of equitable distribution and retention of teachers, and promote promising practices for the development of teachers' skills and career pathways. For more information, visit [www.nctaf.org](http://www.nctaf.org). Follow NCTAF on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and subscribe to NCTAF's [News Digest](#).*

## Release announcing finalists

[Link to web page.](#)



### For Immediate Release

**Media Contact for Learning Forward:**  
Tracy Crow, 972-421-0900  
tracy.crow@learningforward.org

**Media Contact for NCTAF:**  
Karen Cheeks, 240-233-4110  
karen@cheekscommunications.com

### Learning Forward and NCTAF Name 12 Finalist Teams in Agents for Learning Challenge

*Twelve states represented; finalists to convene in Chicago to present plans detailing ESSA-ready professional learning strategies to panel of educators and experts*

**WASHINGTON** – June 23, 2016 – Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) today announced 12 finalists in its [Agents for Learning](#) challenge, a nationwide call to action designed to engage educator teams in advocating for the best use of federal funding for professional learning under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The 12 teams — representing 56 teachers, administrators, and learning leaders from 12 different states — proposed plans that described a comprehensive vision for effective professional learning for their states, identified needs that exist and strategies to address them, and outlined roles and responsibilities for states, districts, and individual educators to achieve their visions. In addition, the plans discussed how educators would advise states and districts to use Title II funding to address critical needs of teachers and directly impact student learning outcomes.

The finalists will travel to Chicago July 21-22, where each team will present its plan to a panel of judges and a moderator:

- **Virginia Edwards**, Editor-in-Chief and CEO of *Education Week* (moderator);
- **Stephanie Banchemo**, Program Director for the Education Program, Joyce Foundation;
- **Jahana Hayes**, 2016 National Teacher of the Year;
- **Chris Minnich**, Executive Director, CCSSO;
- **Rachel Wise**, Chair, Nebraska Board of Education, NASBE.

"We're so grateful to all of the educators who participated in the challenge. We were proud to offer an opportunity to amplify teachers' voices in advocating for the professional learning that will make a difference for educators and students," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "States tell us they are looking for ways to capture stakeholder input, and the creative and bold ideas in the applications show how much these engaged educators have to offer as we enter the implementation phase of ESSA. I can't wait to learn more from them during our time in Chicago," continued Hirsh.

Before presenting their plans, teams will have time to engage in learning and coaching to refine their plans and build skills in advocating with policymakers. Learning Forward and NCTAF will webcast the presentations and disseminate the finalists' plans on the Learning Forward website to serve as models for educators around the country. Prizes and recognitions will be awarded to finalists by [sponsors](#) of the challenge.



As states and districts work to develop comprehensive plans to implement ESSA, Learning Forward and NCTAF believe it is critical that teachers' expertise, experiences, and input are heard. "As one of our finalist teams noted, 'teachers are an untapped resource to reform professional development,' and through this challenge we are incorporating the expertise of our nation's educators into the broader policy conversation," said Melinda George, president of NCTAF. "The plans submitted by these teachers make it crystal clear that great teaching for all students will only happen when teacher voice is included at every level – school, district, state and national. Including their insight into what works for students, themselves and their colleagues makes the difference in successfully transforming teaching and learning."

Visit [Agents for Learning](#) for more information on the challenge. For additional information or questions, or to request interviews or credentials to cover the event in Chicago, please reach out to the media contacts listed or send an email to [teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org](mailto:teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org).

For team member names, school affiliations, and city/state of school, see chart beginning next page.

###

#### About Learning Forward

Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K–12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Learning Forward supports its members and the field through services, learning opportunities, networks, and publications focused exclusively on what it takes to meaningfully build the capacity of K-12 educators to meet the needs of all students. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, adopted in more than 35 states, define the essential elements of professional learning that leads to changed educator practices and improved outcomes for students. Information about membership, services, and products is available from <http://learningforward.org>.

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The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1994 as a bipartisan effort to engage education policymakers and practitioners to address the entrenched national challenge of recruiting, developing, and retaining great teachers in order to ensure that all students have access to quality teaching in schools organized for success. For 20 years, NCTAF has worked to drive and inform the national dialogue about the importance of great teaching, especially in hard-to-staff schools. NCTAF's research and recommendations inform innovations and improvements in teaching quality nationwide, focus attention on the importance of equitable distribution and retention of teachers, and promote promising practices for the development of teachers' skills and career pathways. For more information, visit [www.nctaf.org](http://www.nctaf.org). Follow NCTAF on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and subscribe to NCTAF's [News Digest](#).





TEAM MEMBERS	SCHOOL/AFFILIATION	CITY, STATE
Trey Ferguson Cassie Reding Carly Baldwin Natalie Coleman Debbie Hickerson	Leesville Road High School Stevenson Elementary Boyd County High School Shafer Middle School Cason Lane Academy	Raleigh, NC Russellville, KY Ashland, KY Gallatin, TN Murfreesboro, TN
Kelley Cusmano Sarah Giddings Heather Gauck Matt McCullough	Rochester High School Washtenaw Alliance for Virtual Education Grand Rapids Public Schools Schoolcraft Community Schools	Rochester, MI Ypsilanti, MI Grand Rapids, MI Schoolcraft, MI
Clara Carroll Nancy Fancyboy Lori Martin Leslie Sharp Deb Walter	Harding University Beebe School District Otter Creek Elementary Carnall Elementary School Rogers New Tech High School	Searcy, AR Beebe, AR Little Rock, AR Fort Smith, AR Rogers, AR
Rebecca Wattleworth Jennifer Smith Jacob Carlson Virginia Valdez Joseph Fatheree	Warrensburg-Latham High School Monticello Middle School Civic Memorial High School Minnie Mars Jamieson Elementary School Effingham High School	Warrensburg, IL Monticello, IL Bethalto, IL Chicago, IL Effingham, IL
Christina Jusino Jennifer Langdon Desiree Darling Emily Banta Tuyet Dinh Michael Macchi Alicia Serafin	Spark Academy Hurley K-8 School Spark Academy Lawrence Family Development Charter School Mather Elementary Phineas Bates Elementary Whittier Elementary School	Lawrence, MA Boston, MA Lawrence, MA Lawrence, MA Dorchester, MA Roslindale, MA Everett, MA
Cheryl Corpus Gina Wilson Tina Harma Carrie Mattern	Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning Early College Alliance @ EMU Kent Lake Elementary Carman-Ainsworth High School	Mount Pleasant, MI Ypsilanti, MI South Lyon, MI Flint, MI
Steven Fouts Lani Luo Gabrielle Pike Lynn Osborne-Simmons DeJernet Farder	Douglass Academy Howe School of Excellence Burr Elementary Curie Metropolitan High School Morton School of Excellence	Chicago, IL Chicago, IL Chicago, IL Chicago, IL Chicago, IL



Ashley Karlsson Amy Fettig Susan Boen	Washburn High School Ubah Medical Academy Washburn High School	Minneapolis, MN Hopkins, MN Minneapolis, MN
Maureen Torrez Laura Burns Kimberly Chavkin Moreno Andrea Quintana	La Mesa Elementary School Kirtland Elementary School George I Sánchez Collaborative Community School George I Sánchez Collaborative Community School	Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque, NM
Stephen Rountree Sonia Matthew Kisha Dorch Rodney Lewis II Julie Hughey	Frederick Douglas High School High Bridge Elementary School Frederick Douglas High School Barack Obama Elementary School Prince George's County Public Schools	Upper Marlboro, MD Bowie, MD Upper Marlboro, MD Upper Marlboro, MD Upper Marlboro, MD
Daniel Chu Christopher Nielsen Michael Lubing Miyilyn Parra-Innocent	Murray Hill Academy Murray Hill Academy Murray Hill Academy Murray Hill Academy	New York, NY New York, NY New York, NY New York, NY
Shelly Moore Krajacic Amy Mizialko Ingrid Walker-Henry Chauna Perry Finch Heather Sattler	National Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association	Madison, WI Milwaukee, WI Milwaukee, WI Milwaukee, WI Milwaukee, WI

## Article promoting the challenge

[Link to the April 2016 issue of JSD.](#)

## @ learning forward

NEWS AND NOTES

### Agents for Learning competition spurs teacher engagement in ESSA

**L**earning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) are hosting a competition that invites teachers to submit written proposals for the best use of federal funding for professional learning under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

As part of their effort to highlight the critical role of teacher agency in professional learning, Learning Forward and NCTAF will use the competition to amplify and support teachers in understanding the provisions of ESSA aligning the allowable uses of funds under the law with their learning needs.

Through the Agents for Learning competition, teams of educators will be invited to submit proposals for best uses of Title II and other federal funds under ESSA. The proposals will include:

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3. Specific recommendations for states, districts, and schools to consider as guides to their Consolidated State Plans and/or state and district Title II plans, a requirement of ESSA, and the design of effective professional learning in their systems.

Teams interested in participating

#### AGENTS FOR LEARNING SPONSORS AS OF APRIL 15

- America Achieves
- American Federation of Teachers
- Center for American Progress
- Corwin
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Educators 4 Excellence
- Hope Street Group
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- National Education Association
- National Network of State Teachers of the Year
- Scholastic Corporation
- Teach Plus

will be invited to a series of webinars helping them to understand the new law, including the rights and responsibilities of states regarding use of federal funds for professional development, as well as how those funds can support a systematic vision for continuous improvement in schools.

Teams will then respond to several questions that will be reviewed by an independent panel. The finalists will travel to Chicago in July to participate in further training and feedback to develop their plans, then present their proposals to a panel of judges.

The finalists' proposals will

#### COMPETITION TIMELINE

**April 27, May 11:** Informational webinars.

**May 25:** Live Q&A for support on team applications.

**June 10:** Applications due by 8 p.m. Eastern time.

**June 21:** Finalist teams announced.

**July 21-22:** Finalists present proposals in Chicago, Illinois.

be available online, as will the presentations and feedback to be used as a planning tool for states, districts, and schools as they work toward ESSA implementation. Supporting partners will disseminate the plans to advocate for effective professional learning with their stakeholders.

A number of educator advocacy organizations (see box above) will support educator teams' participation in the competition and deepen their engagement in advocating for the meaningful implementation of ESSA.

"Many teachers are already learning in effective and innovative ways alongside their colleagues in schools," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "Our goal with this effort is to raise the visibility of the learning that helps teachers improve in service to their students, and to influence policymakers at all levels as they implement ESSA."

#### GET STARTED

**G**ather your colleagues and your insights. Through the application process, you'll share a vision for effective professional learning and identify your highest needs. You'll also provide input on particular aspects of ESSA and how its implementation can most meaningfully support schools. See the tool on pp. 64-65 to begin the application process.

The deadline for applications is June 10. Learn more at [www.learningforward.org/get-involved/agents-for-learning-competition](http://www.learningforward.org/get-involved/agents-for-learning-competition).

## Article reporting on the challenge

[Link to the August 2016 issue of JSD.](#)

### @ learning forward



Team Impact from Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland, left, and Massachusetts Teacher Policy Fellows present their proposals at the Agents for Learning Competition in Chicago.

Photos by ANTHONY ARMSTRONG

## TEAMS OUTLINE PLANS FOR ESSA FUNDS

**L**earning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) hosted Agents for Learning Competition finalists July 21-22 in Chicago. The 12 finalist teams presented their plans for the best use of federal funding for professional learning under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to a panel of judges.

Finalist teams included 55 educators representing 12 states. Teams had four minutes to present their plans to the judges panel, then received four minutes of feedback from the judges. Competition judges included Stephanie Banchemo, program director for the Education Program at the Joyce Foundation; Jahana Hayes, 2016 National Teacher of the Year; Chris Minnich, executive director of Council of Chief

State School Officers; and Rachel Wise, chair of the Nebraska Board of Education.

Finalists' presentations included an educator-informed theory of action around how to leverage professional learning to advance teaching and learning and specific recommendations for states, districts, and schools to consider as guides to their Consolidated State Plans and/or state and district Title II plans, a requirement of ESSA, and the design of effective professional learning in their systems.

"We're so grateful to all of the educators who participated in the challenge," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "We were proud to offer an opportunity to amplify teachers' voices in advocating for the professional learning that will make a difference for educators and students."

- Full list of the finalist teams, **p. 69**
- 4 themes in proposals, **p. 70**
- Individual team presentations at [www.learningforward.org/get-involved/agents-for-learning-competition/essa-videos](http://www.learningforward.org/get-involved/agents-for-learning-competition/essa-videos)



## NEWS AND NOTES

## FINALISTS IN THE AGENTS FOR LEARNING COMPETITION

.....

**Trey Ferguson**, Leesville Road High School, Raleigh, NC

**Cassie Reding**, Stevenson Elementary, Russellville, KY

**Carly Baldwin**, Boyd County High School, Ashland, KY

**Natalie Coleman**, Shafer Middle School, Gallatin, TN

**Debbie Hickerson**, Cason Lane Academy, Murfreesboro, TN

.....

**Kelley Cusmano**, Rochester High School, Rochester, MI

**Sarah Giddings**, Washtenaw Alliance for Virtual Education, Ypsilanti, MI

**Heather Gauck**, Grand Rapids Public Schools, Grand Rapids, MI

**Matt McCullough**, Schoolcraft Community Schools, Schoolcraft, MI

.....

**Clara Carroll**, Harding University, Searcy, AR

**Nancy Fancyboy**, Beebe School District, Beebe, AR

**Lori Martin**, Otter Creek Elementary, Little Rock, AR

**Leslie Sharp**, Carnall Elementary School, Fort Smith, AR

**Deb Walter**, Rogers New Tech High School, Rogers, AR

.....

**Rebecca Wattleworth**, Warrensburg-Latham High School, Warrensburg, IL

**Jennifer Smith**, Monticello Middle School, Monticello, IL

**Jacob Carlson**, Civic Memorial High School, Bethalto, IL

**Virginia Valdez**, Minnie Mars Jamieson Elementary School, Chicago, IL

**Joseph Fatheree**, Effingham High School, Effingham, IL

.....

**Christina Jusino**, Spark Academy, Lawrence, MA

**Jennifer Langdon**, Hurley K-8 School, Boston, MA

**Desiree Darling**, Spark Academy, Lawrence, MA

**Emily Banta**, Lawrence Family Development Charter School, Lawrence, MA

**Tuyet Dinh**, Mather Elementary, Dorchester, MA

**Michael Macchi**, Phineas Bates Elementary, Roslindale, MA

**Alicia Serafin**, Whittier Elementary School, Everett, MA

.....

**Cheryl Corpus**, Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Mount Pleasant, MI

**Gina Wilson**, Early College Alliance @ EMU, Ypsilanti, MI

**Tina Harma**, Kent Lake Elementary, South Lyon, MI

**Carrie Mattern**, Carman-Ainsworth High School, Flint, MI

.....

**Steven Fouts**, Douglass Academy, Chicago, IL

**Lani Luo**, Howe School of Excellence, Chicago, IL

**Gabrielle Pike**, Burr Elementary, Chicago, IL

**Lynn Osborne-Simmons**, Curie Metropolitan High School, Chicago, IL

**DeJernet Farder**, Morton School of Excellence, Chicago, IL

.....

**Ashley Karlsson**, Washburn High School, Minneapolis, MN

**Amy Fettig**, Ubah Medical Academy, Hopkins, MN

**Susan Boen**, Washburn High School, Minneapolis, MN

.....

**Maureen Torrez**, La Mesa Elementary School, Albuquerque, NM

**Laura Burns**, Kirtland Elementary School, Albuquerque, NM

**Kimberly Chavkin Moreno**, George I. Sánchez Collaborative Community School, Albuquerque, NM

**Andrea Quintana**, George I. Sánchez Collaborative Community School, Albuquerque, NM

.....

**Stephen Rountree**, Frederick Douglass High School, Upper Marlboro, MD

**Sonia Matthew**, High Bridge Elementary School, Bowie, MD

**Kisha Dorch**, Frederick Douglass High School, Upper Marlboro, MD

**Rodney Lewis II**, Barack Obama Elementary School, Upper Marlboro, MD

**Julie Hughey**, Prince George's County Public Schools, Upper Marlboro, MD

.....

**Daniel Chu**, Murray Hill Academy, New York, NY

**Christopher Nielsen**, Murray Hill Academy, New York, NY

**Michael Lubing**, Murray Hill Academy, New York, NY

**Miyilyn Parra-Innocent**, Murray Hill Academy, New York, NY

.....

**Shelly Moore Krajacic**, National Education Association, Madison, WI

**Amy Mizialko**, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, Milwaukee, WI

**Ingrid Walker-Henry**, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, Milwaukee, WI

**Chauna Perry Finch**, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, Milwaukee, WI

**Heather Sattler**, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, Milwaukee, WI



Matt McCullough is a member of the Michigan Catalysts for Teacher Leadership team.

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## 4 THEMES EMERGE IN ESSA PROPOSALS

Applications for the Agents for Learning Competition (p. 68) revealed several themes that place teachers in leading roles in schools, professional learning leadership and advocacy. Here are a few trends identified across finalist team applications.

### 1. Teachers as leaders:

Many teams advocate for states and districts to develop career ladders or lattices to support increased teacher recruitment, retention,

and satisfaction and a transformation of the profession. Teams suggest hybrid roles that allow teachers to serve both within and beyond the classroom.

### 2. Teachers as inquirers:

Many teams position teachers as researchers or inquirers, collaboratively and intentionally identifying and addressing their most pressing student needs. Several teams describe the importance

of cycles of continuous improvement led by teachers at the school level as the primary means of making professional learning authentic, teacher-driven, data-oriented, and job-embedded.

### 3. Teachers as experts:

Within the roles and structures that teams describe, teachers are typically recognized for their expertise and called upon to share that knowledge with their

colleagues. Schools will benefit when they create opportunities for teachers to observe each other teaching and reflect on and discuss what they see.

### 4. Amplify teacher voice:

Many teams stress the importance of consulting teachers on many aspects of school improvement and professional learning. Teachers have the best understanding of their own and students' learning needs.

## Nebraska affiliate empowers change agents statewide

This year's winner of the Learning Forward Foundation's Affiliate Grant is Learning Forward Nebraska, under the direction of Chad Dumas.

The affiliate's three-year plan for professional learning proposes to expand Learning Forward's Executive Leadership Program to multiple sites

throughout Nebraska as a means to support education leaders who lack a critical understanding of change processes as well as effective facilitation skills for leading change.

To help bridge the implementation gap, the affiliate will develop a website to support "rigorous education designs of professional learning." In addition, the Learning Forward Nebraska board will build its capacity for advocating and supporting high-quality professional learning in order to empower

Nebraska educators to be change agents in their contexts.

As part of the grant, Learning Forward Nebraska will gather quantitative and qualitative data on participation in and implementation of learning from the Executive Leadership Program.

### Learning Forward Foundation scholarships

The Learning Forward Foundation scholarship contest encourages educators to put their good ideas into action and apply their research and creativity to impact education's most profound challenges. For more information: [www.learningforward.org/foundation](http://www.learningforward.org/foundation).

## APPLY FOR THE SHIRLEY HORD TEACHER LEARNING TEAM AWARD

Learning Forward is accepting applications for the 2016 Shirley Hord Teacher Learning Team Award.

The award honors a team of teachers that demonstrates excellence in professional learning. This annual award recognizes a school-based learning team that exhibits evidence of successful implementation of a cycle of continuous improvement that results in increased teaching effectiveness.

As part of the award process, applicants are asked to:

- Produce and submit a 10- to 12-minute video that shows evidence of the team implementing a cycle of continuous improvement.
- Include a letter of recommendation from the school principal that also describes how the principal supports the work of the learning team.
- Complete a brief, two-part essay describing the results the team hopes to achieve from its professional learning, the learning activities that help the team achieve these results, and evidence that the team is achieving results.

The winning team will receive a cash gift for its school to support collaborative professional learning, complimentary 2016 Annual Conference registrations to support team attendance at the conference, and a profile in *JSD* and on Learning Forward's website. In addition, the winning team will be honored at an Annual Conference general session.

Complete details on the application process, including the application form, are available at [www.learningforward.org/get-involved/awards/hord-award](http://www.learningforward.org/get-involved/awards/hord-award).

The submission deadline is **Oct. 7, 2016**.

## One-pager promoting the challenge



### Agents for Learning ESSA Competition

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and a report titled [Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work](#) published earlier this year by Learning Forward and the National Center for Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) were the impetus for the launch of the Agents for Learning ESSA Competition. Learning Forward and NCTAF saw the potential for teachers to exercise their agency during this very crucial time as the federal government and SEAs interpret, regulate, guide, and implement the new law. The competition invites teams of teachers to provide their input on how federal dollars for professional development can support a system that better addresses their needs and desired outcomes. The competition concept was spurred by The Fordham Institute competition addressing alternative assessment systems.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the competition is to amplify teacher agency by offering teams of educators the opportunity to articulate their professional learning needs and visions for effective professional learning. The proposals will include:

1. Analysis of teachers' primary professional learning needs;
2. An educator-informed theory of action around how to leverage professional learning to advance teaching and learning; and
3. Specific recommendations for states, districts, and schools to consider as guides to their Consolidated State Plans and/or state and district Title II plans.

**Communication:** Learning Forward and NCTAF in collaboration with sponsoring partners will create awareness about the competition and recruit teams of teachers and other educators to participate in the competition. The partners will publicize the competition to their stakeholders through their print, digital, and social media channels.

**Professional Learning:** Learning Forward and NCTAF will educate potential participants through



webinars, web chats, and publications about the competition, the components of ESSA, where teacher input is encouraged and required, and the redesign PD principles and other evidence-based practices. Webinars are being held to educate participants on ESSA and the role of teacher involvement and professional learning on April 27 and May 11. A web chat will be held on May 25 for teams to get feedback and to ask questions about their application.

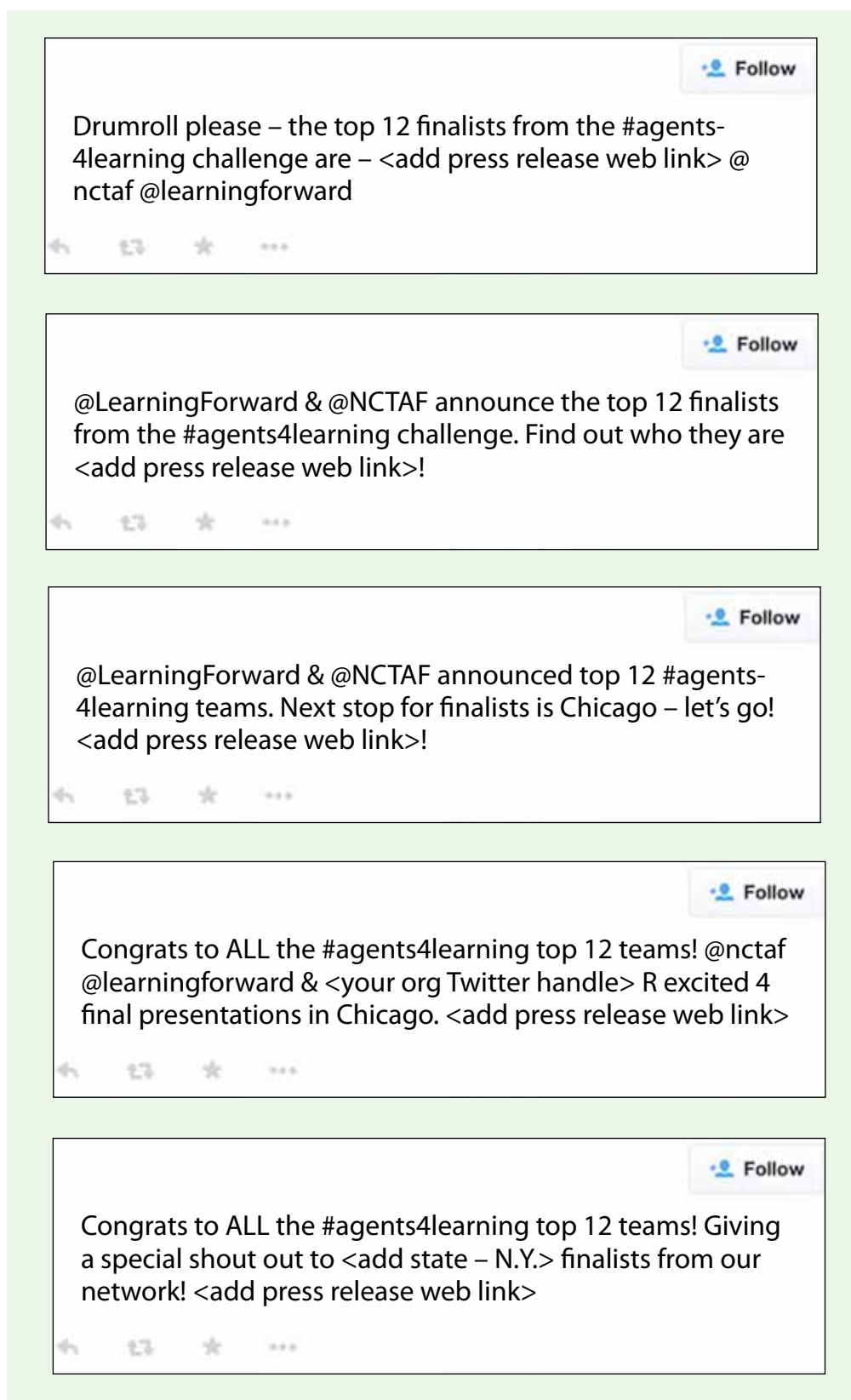
**Selection Process:** Applications are due on Friday, June 10, 2016 at 8:00 p.m. ET. Once the applications are received and peer-reviewed, the finalists will be notified on June 21. The finalists will refine their plans and travel to the competition convening in Chicago where they will meet with a coach who will help them finalize their plan and their presentation. The presentations will be livestreamed on Friday, July 22 at the Chicago Loews Hotel. Teams will receive feedback from a distinguished panel of expert judges. The plans and the recording of the presentations will be archived and housed on the Learning Forward website. All finalists will receive a year's membership in Learning Forward and additional prizes.

**Dissemination:** Learning Forward, NCTAF and their partners will aggressively disseminate the top plans, identifying ways to expose the leadership of at least 30 states to the top 10 proposals. CCSSO and NASBE will assist teams in sharing their recommendations with state education leaders and state board of education members. Learning Forward will prepare a toolkit to guide state leaders who are interested in running a similar competition with their state's teachers as a way to build capacity and raise teacher voice within those states.

**Sponsors/Partners:** Competition sponsors/partners include many teacher, professional, leadership, and voice organizations including AFT, America Achieves, Center for American Progress, Corwin, CCSSO, Educators 4 Excellence, Hope Street, NEA, NNSTOY, NBPTS, Scholastic, and Teach Plus. These sponsors will contribute to the review of team applications, selection of finalists, on-site coaching, dissemination of the finalists' plans as well as support travel expense for one finalist team. Learning Forward and NCTAF invite other partners to join in offering this opportunity to their educator networks.

**Additional Information:** Additional information regarding the competition can be found at <http://learningforward.org/get-involved/agents-for-learning-competition>. You may also contact Janice Poda at [Janice.poda@learningforward.org](mailto:Janice.poda@learningforward.org).

## Sample Tweets



## Providing the application

### Agents for Learning Challenge

#### TEAM APPLICATION

##### Introduction

This is an important time in American education as states and districts are working to develop a comprehensive plan for the implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) know that as educators, you have critical input to provide to the planning, and we look forward to offering this competition as a vehicle to ensure that your stakeholder voice is heard.

The Agents for Learning Challenge will amplify teachers' voices, supporting them in advocating for approaches to ESSA that build and strengthen professional learning systems aligned to teachers' learning needs.

ESSA's new definition of professional learning and its requirements for evidence along with the allowable uses of funds under Title II (see Appendix at <http://learningforward.org/docs/default-source/getinvolved/appendix-a---agents-for-learning-competition.pdf>) have great potential for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Learning Forward and NCTAF believe if professional learning is going to be effectively implemented under ESSA, it should be influenced by teachers. Through this competition, we invite you and your colleagues to contribute your expertise and ideas to this vital process and, importantly, to exercise your teacher agency in having a voice in this process.

Our theory of action is that if states and districts engage teachers who understand their learning needs, the needs of their students, and effective professional learning, then they can co-create learning systems that substantially improve teaching and learning. We will use this competition to support teachers in understanding the provisions of ESSA and designing effective comprehensive professional learning systems that address their priorities and are allowed under the use of funds provisions of the law. In so doing, teachers will contribute recommendations for the best use of federal funding for professional learning, the successful implementation of ESSA, and the improvement of student learning.

We invite your team to complete this application to enter the Agents for Learning Competition. Finalists will be eligible for prizes, professional development awards, and recognition along with the opportunity to influence the implementation of ESSA to improve learning for all of your peers and the students you teach. We believe this competition will be a powerful professional learning experience and a valuable resource to state and district leaders who are charged with writing consolidated and/or Title plans and submitting them to their states and the U.S. Department of Education. Thank you!

**Challenge Timeline**

<b>April 11</b>	<b>Application Released</b>
	The application process includes a written response to the questions below as well as the identification of three to five teachers who will serve on the applicant team.
<b>April 27 &amp; May 11</b>	<b>Informational Webinars in Partnership with the Center for American Progress and Teach Plus</b>
	Team members are encouraged to participate in two live webinars on April 27 and May 11 (or watch the recording of the webinars). The purpose of the webinars is to help team members understand ESSA, including the rights and responsibilities of states and districts in the use of federal funds for professional learning, as well as how those funds can support a systemic vision for continuous improvement in schools.
<b>May 25</b>	<b>Live Q&amp;A for support on team applications</b>
<b>June 10</b>	<b>Applications Due by 8 pm ET</b>
<b>June 21</b>	<b>Finalist Teams Announced</b>
<b>July 21-22</b>	<b>Finalists Prepare and Present Proposals in conjunction with Learning Forward summer convenings, Chicago, IL</b>
	Teams selected as finalists will agree to travel to Chicago, IL, on July 21-22 for further coaching, feedback, and a presentation of their proposals to a panel of education policymakers and leaders, who will comment on each of the proposals. Finalist teams will receive travel support to come to Chicago. The presentation of the proposals will be streamed live, and the written proposals will be available online following the competition for states and districts to use as tools in writing their comprehensive ESSA implementation plans.

**Application Directions:**

**Please download and fill in this Word document with your responses and team member information. Submit the completed document to [teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org](mailto:teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org) by the application deadline (June 10, 8 pm ET).**

**Applicants are not expected to have a completed proposal or plan for using ESSA to support effective professional learning systems.** Application reviewers will use the responses to the questions below to determine if the team has a coherent vision and meaningful insights to build a complete proposal if the team is selected as a finalist. Finalist teams will then receive coaching and support onsite in Chicago to create a proposal and presentation.

**Required Responses:**

1. Please write a comprehensive vision for effective professional learning for your state and, if appropriate, district context. Identify the needs/gaps that exist. Identify the professional learning investments and activities most important to closing the gaps. Finally, discuss the roles and responsibilities for states, districts, and individual educators in achieving this vision. (Limit 1000 words.)
2. Title II of ESSA provides a list of allowable activities for states and districts to invest in teacher development and support, including a new definition for professional development that ensures that professional development activities are “**sustained** (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), **intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven**, and **classroom-focused**.” How would you advise states and districts to use their Title II funding to address the most critical needs of teachers? (See the definition and the allowable uses of Title II funds at <http://learningforward.org/docs/default-source/getinvolved/appendix-a---agents-for-learning-competition.pdf> to learn more about the law.) (Limit 500 words.)

**Additional Questions: Please provide responses to three of the following five questions (your choice), keeping in mind that this feedback could be used by your state or as guidance for any state.**

1. The great majority of ESSA/federal funding for professional learning will now go directly to school districts. We are aware that teachers and other educators often find their professional development unhelpful and unproductive. What can states, districts, and individuals do to ensure that ESSA funds learning that meets the needs of students and teachers and produces its intended outcomes? (Limit 200 words.)
2. Under ESSA, districts must report publicly how they are using their federal funds to improve educator effectiveness. States have authority to shift this process from a compliance to a growth orientation. How would you advise your state and district to make the shift to a process that inspires continuous improvement? What data would you encourage states and districts to report to document their support for teacher development and impact of their efforts? (Limit 200 words.)
3. Under ESSA, each state can choose to reserve a portion of their federal funds to focus exclusively on improving school leadership. If a state chooses this option, how do you think it should structure this support and on what should it focus? (Limit 200 words.)
4. Under ESSA, states may apply for competitive grants to support success for every student. What leadership roles for teachers can best ensure they can help every student succeed? What do they need to do to prepare for those roles? (Limit 200 words.)
5. ESSA requires states and districts to consult with teachers, school leaders, and community members as Title and/or consolidated plans are developed. How should states and districts ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning and implementation? (Limit 200 words.)

## Team Members

**Please complete the following demographic information for the members of your team. A team consists of three to five current teachers. Team members may be from different schools, different districts, or different states. Items marked with an asterisk (\*) are required. The first listed team member will be the team contact.**

### Applicant Demographic Information

**Name #1\***

Current position\*

School / Organization name\*

Preferred mailing address\*

City\*

State\*

Zip\*

Work phone\*

Cell phone\*

Work email\*

Personal email\*

Please check all relevant organizational affiliations: \*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AFT                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Forward member          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> America Achieves             | <input type="checkbox"/> National Board Certified Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center for American Progress | <input type="checkbox"/> NEA                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators 4 Excellence       | <input type="checkbox"/> NNSTOY                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Street Fellow           | <input type="checkbox"/> TeachPlus                        |

**Name #2\***

Current position\*

School / Organization name\*

Preferred mailing address\*

City\*

State\*

Zip\*

Work phone\*

Cell phone\*

Work email\*

Personal email\*

Please check all relevant organizational affiliations: \*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AFT                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Forward member          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> America Achieves             | <input type="checkbox"/> National Board Certified Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center for American Progress | <input type="checkbox"/> NEA                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators 4 Excellence       | <input type="checkbox"/> NNSTOY                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Street Fellow           | <input type="checkbox"/> TeachPlus                        |

**Name #3\***

Current position\*

School / Organization name\*

Preferred mailing address\*

City\*

State\*

Zip\*

Work phone\*

Cell phone\*

Work email\*

Personal email\*

Please check all relevant organizational affiliations: \*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AFT                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Forward member          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> America Achieves             | <input type="checkbox"/> National Board Certified Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center for American Progress | <input type="checkbox"/> NEA                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators 4 Excellence       | <input type="checkbox"/> NNSTOY                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Street Fellow           | <input type="checkbox"/> TeachPlus                        |

**Name #4\***

Current position\*

School / Organization name\*

Preferred mailing address\*

City\*

State\*

Zip\*

Work phone\*

Cell phone\*

Work email\*

Personal email\*

Please check all relevant organizational affiliations: \*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AFT                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Forward member          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> America Achieves             | <input type="checkbox"/> National Board Certified Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center for American Progress | <input type="checkbox"/> NEA                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators 4 Excellence       | <input type="checkbox"/> NNSTOY                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Street Fellow           | <input type="checkbox"/> TeachPlus                        |



<b>Name #5*</b>		
Current position*		
School / Organization name*		
Preferred mailing address*		
City*	State*	Zip*
Work phone*	Cell phone*	
Work email*	Personal email*	
Please check all relevant organizational affiliations: *		
<input type="checkbox"/> AFT	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Forward member	
<input type="checkbox"/> America Achieves	<input type="checkbox"/> National Board Certified Teacher	
<input type="checkbox"/> Center for American Progress	<input type="checkbox"/> NEA	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educators 4 Excellence	<input type="checkbox"/> NNSTOY	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hope Street Fellow	<input type="checkbox"/> TeachPlus	

**Submit the completed document to [INSERT email address] by the application deadline (June 10, 8 pm ET).**

For additional information or questions, please send an email to [INSERT email address]. Emails will be answered in the order they are received and within 48 hours.

## Providing a scoring rubric

Absolute priorities				
Required question	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<p><b>Please write a comprehensive vision for effective professional learning for your state and, if appropriate, district context. Identify the needs/gaps that exist. Identify the professional learning investments and activities most important to closing the gaps. Finally, discuss the roles and responsibilities for states, districts, and individual educators in achieving this vision.</b></p> <p><b>(Limit 1000 words.)</b> <b>35 points maximum</b></p>	Vision	Conveys a comprehensive and compelling vision for effective professional learning for states and districts.	Provides understandable vision for professional learning for states and/or districts.	Fails to identify vision for effective professional learning for states and /or districts or does so ambiguously.
	Gap analysis	Identifies, analyzes, and prioritizes thoroughly needs/gaps in order to strengthen professional practice and professional growth appropriate to the state and district context identified.	Provides description of needs/gaps that exist in professional practice/professional growth.	Provides an incomplete list of needs/gaps that exist in professional practice/professional growth.
	Goals	Identifies goals that are realistic, research based, and innovative for professional learning funded by ESSA funds as well as integrated with other professional development funding.	Identifies goals for professional learning funded only by ESSA funds.	Identifies minimal goals that are not likely to achieve the desired results.
	Investments	Provides a thorough description of what investments and activities are most important to addressing the needs and closing the gaps in professional learning.	Provides a modest description of what investments and activities are important to addressing the needs and closing the gaps in professional learning.	Provides few, if any, recommendations for Investments and activities needed to address the needs and close the gaps in professional learning.
	Roles and responsibilities	Defines and distinguishes thoroughly roles and responsibilities of states, districts, and individuals in achieving the vision.	Provides limited discussion of roles and responsibilities of states, districts, and/or individuals.	Provides few examples of roles for states, districts, or individuals.
	Examples	Includes multiple, relevant examples for each answer.	Includes minimal examples of limited applicability for each answer.	Includes few or no specific examples for each answer.
	Evidence	Includes relevant and reliable evidence supporting statements and recommendations.	Includes minimal evidence supporting statements or recommendations.	Includes insufficient evidence to support statements or recommendations.

Absolute priorities				
Required question	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<p><b>Title II of ESSA provides a list of allowable activities for states and districts to invest in teacher development and support, including a new definition for professional development that ensures that professional development activities are “sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom- focused.” How would you advise states and districts to use their Title II funding to address the most critical needs of teachers?</b></p> <p>(See the definition and the allowable uses of Title II funds at <a href="http://learning-forward.org/docs/default-source/getinvolved/appendix-a---agents-for-learning-competition.pdf">http://learning-forward.org/docs/default-source/getinvolved/appendix-a---agents-for-learning-competition.pdf</a> to learn more about the law.)</p> <p>(Limit 500 words.) 20 points maximum</p>	Funds	Demonstrates deep understanding of the intent of the PD language in the law and provides a thorough and compelling explanation for how Title II funds should be used to meet the intent of the law.	Provides an acceptable explanation for how Title II funds should be used aligned with acceptable uses but it is not well connected to the definition of professional development in ESSA.	Lacks explanation for how Title II funds should be used to meet the definition of professional development activities in ESSA.
	Impact	Explains how and why it is important for states and districts to invest in teacher development and support.	Provides a limited rationale for how and why it is important for states or districts to invest in teacher development and support.	Lacks explanation for why allocation of state or district funds is important to teacher development and support.
	Example	Includes multiple, relevant examples for each answer.	Includes minimal examples of limited applicability for each answer.	Includes few or no specific examples for each answer.
	Evidence	Includes relevant and reliable evidence supporting statements and recommendations.	Includes minimal evidence supporting statements or recommendations.	Includes insufficient evidence to support statements or recommendations.

Answer 3 of the following 5 questions: (15 points each)				
Questions	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<b>Optional Question #1:</b>  <b>The great majority of ESSA/federal funding for professional learning will now go directly to school districts. We are aware that teachers and other educators often find their professional development unhelpful and unproductive. What can states, districts, and individuals do to ensure that ESSA funds learning that meets the needs of students and teachers and produces its intended outcomes?</b>  <b>(Limit 200 words.)</b> <b>15 points maximum</b>	Student and Teacher Needs	Provides a compelling vision for professional development at the district level and how it meets the needs of teachers and students. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Describes professional development at the district level and how it meets the needs of teachers and students. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Does not provide a vision for professional development at the district level or how it meets the needs of teachers and students. Does not include examples or evidence to support case.
	State's Role	Provides thorough and compelling guidance on how states can help districts achieve the vision and meet the needs of teachers and students. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides some guidance on how states can help districts achieve the vision and meet the needs of teachers and students. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides limited or no guidance on how states can help districts achieve the vision and/or meet the needs of teachers and students. Does not include examples or evidence to support case.
	Impact	Provides thorough explanation of how districts will demonstrate the impact of professional development. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides some explanation with examples or evidence of how districts will demonstrate the impact of professional development.	Provides limited or no explanation or evidence of how districts will demonstrate the impact of professional development.

Answer 3 of the following 5 questions: (15 points each)				
Questions	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<b>Optional Question #2:</b>  <b>Under ESSA, districts must report publicly how they are using their federal funds to improve educator effectiveness. States have authority to shift this process from a compliance to a growth orientation. How would you advise your state and district to make the shift to a process that inspires continuous improvement? What data would you encourage states and districts to report to document their support for teacher development and impact of their efforts?</b>  <b>(Limit 200 words.)</b> <b>15 points maximum</b>	Educator Effectiveness	Provides clear and thorough definition of educator effectiveness and includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support it.	Provides definition of educator effectiveness and includes examples or evidence to support it.	Fails to provide or provides limited definition of educator effectiveness in the answer.
	Continuous Improvement	Provides a compelling description of how states and districts can shift the use of federal funds to improve educator effectiveness from a compliance activity to a growth process that inspires continuous improvement. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides an acceptable description of how states and districts can shift reporting how using federal funds to improve educator effectiveness from a compliance activity to a growth process that inspires continuous improvement. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Fails to provide a description of how states and districts can shift the use of federal funds to improve educator effectiveness from a compliance activity to a growth process that inspires continuous improvement. Does not include examples or evidence to support case.
	Use of Data	Identifies data that could be used to document state and school district support for teacher development and the impact of the efforts.	Identifies data that could be used to document state or school district support for teacher development or the impact of the efforts.	Fails to identify data that could be used to document state or school district support for teacher development or the impact of the efforts.

Answer 3 of the following 5 questions: (15 points each)				
Questions	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<b>Optional Question #3:</b>  <b>Under ESSA, each state can choose to reserve a portion of their federal funds to focus exclusively on improving school leadership. If a state chooses this option, how do you think it should structure this support and on what should it focus?</b>  <b>(Limit 200 words.)</b> <b>15 points maximum</b>	School Leadership	Provides a compelling and thorough description of how states that choose to reserve a portion of their federal funds for improving school leadership may structure the support. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides acceptable description of how states that choose to reserve a portion of their federal funds for improving school leadership may structure the support. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides limited description of how states that choose to reserve a portion of their federal funds for improving school leadership may structure the support. Does not include examples or evidence to support case.
	Focus Areas	Identifies concrete and compelling areas of focus for improving school leadership. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Identifies some areas of focus for improving school leadership. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides few areas of focus for improving school leadership. Does not include examples or evidence to support case.
	Impact	Provides thorough explanation of how states will report the impact of professional development on improving school leadership. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides some explanation with examples or evidence of how states will report the impact of professional development on improving school leadership.	Provides limited or no explanation or evidence of how states will report the impact of professional development on improving school leadership.

Answer 3 of the following 5 questions: (15 points each)				
Questions	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<b>Optional Question #4:</b>  <b>Under ESSA, states may apply for competitive grants to support success for every student. What leadership roles for teachers can best ensure they can help every student succeed? What do they need to prepare for those roles?</b>  <b>(Limit 200 words.)</b> <b>15 points maximum</b>	Vision	Provides a compelling and thorough description of the leadership roles for teachers that can help every student succeed. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides an acceptable description of the leadership roles for teachers that can help every student succeed. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides limited or no description of the leadership roles for teachers that can help every student succeed. Fails to include examples or evidence to support case.
	Support	Provides thorough description of preparation needed for teacher leadership roles. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Identifies acceptable information on the preparation needed for teacher leadership roles. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides limited or no information on the preparation needed for teacher leadership roles. Fails to include examples or evidence to support case.
	Impact	Provides thorough explanation of how states will report the impact of this investment. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides acceptable explanation with examples or evidence of how states will report the impact of this investment.	Provides limited or no explanation or evidence of how states will report the impact of this investment.



Answer 3 of the following 5 questions: (15 points each)				
Questions	Category	Point values		
		4–5	2–3	0–1
<b>Optional Question #5:</b>  <b>ESSA requires states and districts to consult with teachers, school leaders, and community members as Title and/or consolidated plans are developed. How should states and districts ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning and implementation?</b>  <b>(Limit 200 words.)</b> <b>15 points maximum</b>	Planning	Provides a compelling and thorough description of how states and districts may ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides acceptable description of how states and districts may ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides a limited description of how states or districts may ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning. Fails to include examples or evidence to support case.
	Implementation	Provides a compelling and thorough description of how states and districts may ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support case.	Provides acceptable description of how states and districts may ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning. Includes some examples or evidence to support case.	Provides a limited description of how states or districts may ensure that teachers and other educators are provided the opportunity to share their professional expertise on ESSA planning. Fails to include examples or evidence to support case.
	Stakeholder Engagement	Provides specific plan for states and districts to identify and solicit effective stakeholder engagement. Includes relevant and authentic examples as well as evidence to support it.	Provides ideas for stakeholder engagement for states and districts. Includes examples or evidence to support ideas.	Proposes limited ideas for stakeholder engagement. Fails to include examples or evidence to support ideas.

Overall categories			
	Point values		
	4–5	2–3	0–1
<b>Overall Quality of Responses</b>  <b>5 points maximum</b>	Answers are original, with appropriate references to research and best practices, and offer clear and compelling pathway to implementation. Answers are applicable to schools with diverse needs and students (geographic, SES, K-12, and more).	Answers are appropriate with limited references to research or best practices, and address pathway to implementation. Answers are applicable to some schools with diverse needs (geographic, SES, K-12, and more).	Answers are limited and do not include references to research or best practices, and do not address pathway to implementation. Answers are applicable to few schools.

## Providing web access to information

### FAQs: Agents for Learning Challenge

**Below are several FAQs about the Agents for Learning Challenge.**

If you have additional questions, please email [teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org](mailto:teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org)

<b>Q</b>	<b>Do all members of the team have to be classroom teachers?</b>
<b>A</b>	<p>All members of the team do not have to be classroom teachers in the strictest sense. We believe a team that includes learning leaders with a range of titles will be well positioned to respond to the application and provide insights informed by diverse expertise.</p> <p>Providing opportunities for teachers (broadly defined) to have agency in their learning is one goal of the competition. We know such agency is more likely in schools and districts where all educators prioritize educator learning that leads to student outcomes.</p>

<b>Q</b>	<b>What do the winners of the competition receive?</b>
<b>A</b>	<p>The finalist teams will be supported in their travel to Chicago on July 21-22. Finalist teams will also have targeted coaching support onsite in Chicago to prepare presentations for the panel of judges. Finalist teams will all receive ongoing support beyond the competition from their state-level leaders affiliated with CCSSO. All finalist teams will receive a year's free membership in Learning Forward.</p> <p>Sponsors Corwin Press and Scholastic will offer classroom and professional learning resources from their libraries to winners. Additional sponsor prizes will be added in the coming weeks.</p>

<b>Q</b>	<b>How many awards will be made?</b>
<b>A</b>	Ten teams will be selected as finalists. Being a finalist is synonymous with being selected as a winner.

<b>Q</b>	<b>What is the guidance for public charter schools for this competition?</b>
<b>A</b>	Teachers working in any school that is eligible for federal funding are invited to participate.

<b>Q</b>	<b>What resources are available to help teams complete their applications?</b>
<b>A</b>	See a growing list of resources about ESSA on our Resources page.

Learning Forward and NCTAF and our sponsors are also offering two webinars to help educators and competition applicants learn more about ESSA and its implications for professional learning.	
April 27, 6 pm ET	ESSA 101 for educators
May 11, 6 pm ET	Professional Learning and ESSA
May 25, 6 pm ET	Live Q & A about the competition

## Communicating with scorers

### Directions to scorers

Dear A4L Partners:

Thanks so much to all of you for being on the call today. We are writing to provide an amended process around the rating of the applications and to ask for your help making the final decisions (rankings) on Thursday.

First, we are still having the calibration/ranking meeting on **[Insert date and location]** If you aren't able to participate in person, you may call 860-840-2406.

Second, we have divided the applications among the raters and each team has three or four applications to read. We attempted to not assign anyone to read an application from their constituents. We would appreciate any help that you are able to provide reading the applications. If you have already changed your schedule and are unable to read, we understand. The deadline for reading the applications has been extended to noon on Thursday. In case you have misplaced the link to your team's file that was sent on June 8, a separate email will be sent to you later today with that information. For these specific applications, please upload your ratings into the Google spreadsheet at **[Insert link to online access for spreadsheet for managing rating of applications]**.

Once you have read the applications assigned to your team, please feel free to read as many of the others as you would like. The link to all the applications is **[Insert link to online access for applications]**.

As you review additional applications you may want to make notes about why it should be included or excluded from the top ten. Ultimately, we will all need to agree on the ten finalists.

We look forward to having everyone participate in the process.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie, Melinda, and Janice

PS: If you weren't on today's call and have questions, please feel free to reach out to Stephanie, Melinda or Janice.

## Communicating with applicants

### Letter of notification — Congratulations

Dear Agent for Learning:

Congratulations! We are delighted to inform you that your team was selected as one of the Agents for Learning finalists. We are pleased that you and your colleagues accepted the challenge to use your voice to provide input to states and districts on how to leverage professional learning for excellence and equity for all students.

The national announcement of the finalists will be made later this week so we ask that you keep this information confidential until the announcement is made. If there is anyone who you would like to receive an official announcement of the selection, please send the name and email address to **[Insert email address for your organization's communications/media specialist] no later than [Insert date]**.

The Challenge “finals” will be held at the Chicago Loews Hotel from July 21-22, 2016. Please use the link [Team Members](#) to register your team. Each team is invited to bring up to five members with the majority composed of teachers. If some of the original members of your team are not able to attend, you may substitute with other colleagues who will contribute to your presentation. Learning Forward will pay for your travel and hotel and will reimburse you for ground transportation (mileage, parking, taxis, Uber, etc). **We will automatically book and pay for a hotel room for you the night of Thursday, July 21 unless you tell us you do not need one.** If you need additional nights, please call and book directly with the Loews Hotel, <https://www.loewshotels.com/chicago-downtown> or 877-868-8232. Meals will be provided at the event.

We are working with a number of strict deadlines. Please complete the [Team Members](#) form **no later than [Insert date]**. Also, please contact our travel agent to book your flight to Chicago. If you are driving to Chicago, please indicate that on your form in lieu of your preferred departure airport. You should plan to arrive at the hotel in Chicago no later than **[Insert date]**. Kay Steck will also give you information on ground transportation from the airport to the hotel.

We will be back in touch with information about preparations for the Challenge in Chicago in a few days.

Please email Renee Taylor-Johnson at [renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org](mailto:renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org) if you have any questions. Congratulations again on your selection as a finalist! We look forward to meeting you and working with you in Chicago.

Sincerely,

## Letter of notification — Teams not selected

Dear Agent for Learning Applicant:

The Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge selection committee has completed its review of applications. Thank you for undertaking the challenge to use your voice to provide input to states and districts on how to leverage professional learning for excellence and equity for all students.

We received many outstanding applications with a variety of great suggestions. Unfortunately, your application was not selected as one of the finalists. We recognize and appreciate the incredible time and attention each team invested in its application. We hope that you will find other avenues for sharing your ideas. We hope that you will use this experience to look for other ways to provide input on state and district plans for the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and other opportunities where you may use your teacher agency to advance excellence and equity for all students.

Because of the number of great ideas submitted, we hope to highlight many of them in a toolkit that we will publish following the July event to help states and other organizations to replicate this experience.

If you would like feedback on your application, please feel free to contact Janice Poda at **[insert email address of your organization's Challenge coordinator]**.

Again, thank you for participating in the challenge and for your efforts to address the needs of students.

Sincerely,

## Letter of preparation to team members

Dear Agents for Learning:

We are looking forward to all of you joining us for the Agents for Learning ESSA Competition in a couple of weeks. Thank for your making your travel arrangements. We encourage you to share taxis or use Uber or Lyft to get to the hotel. We will start the event with lunch at 12:00 noon on **[Insert date]**. A copy of an agenda for both days is attached.

Each team will make a presentation to a panel of judges, the members of the other teams, the media, guests, and a virtual audience. Four minutes have been allocated for each team's presentation so that the judges will have an opportunity to give each team feedback on their plan and presentation. Each team will also be limited to four PowerPoint slides. Attached is a copy of the slides to help guide you in the development of a draft of your presentation. You will see on the agenda that we have built in time for you to receive feedback and finalize your presentations during the time that you're in Chicago. Attached also are three frames that you should choose from when designing your presentation. We will go into more detail about the frames in our first session. You are encouraged to bring a draft of your slides with you when you come to the competition.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Renee Taylor-Johnson at [renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org](mailto:renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org) or 513-523-6029 x222. Congratulations again on your selection as a finalist! We look forward to meeting you and working with you in Chicago.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hirsh  
Executive Director  
Learning Forward

Melinda George  
President  
NCTAF



## Frames for planning applicants' Agents for Learning presentations

### Three Frames

Please select from one of the following three frames for your presentation:

#### **1. State & District Plan Guidance**

- Define the 3-5 key issues the state and district should address in the portion of the consolidated plan dedicated to Professional Learning.
- Why are these issues your priority?
- How could states/districts build a comprehensive plan around these issues?

#### **2. Use of Funds for School Leadership**

- Many of you chose to answer the question on how you would advise the state to spend a potential 3% set aside to advance school leadership.
- How can your ideas for advancing school leadership be scaled?
- What impacts should states expect from it?

#### **3. Improvements to Professional Learning**

- How do we substantively improve the professional learning for teachers in your state?
- How does your proposal align with the definition of Professional Development included in ESSA?
- What Title or regulatory responsibilities are needed to achieve your recommendations?

## Communicating with partners

### Correspondence with partners/sponsors

Dear A4L Partners:

This has been an exciting week! We had a great meeting on Thursday that included six of our partnering organizations. As a group, we were able to review the A4L applications and select the finalists. We were so impressed by the quality of the applications that we received and, at the end of the day, we selected 12 teams to join us in Chicago. Attached is a spreadsheet with information about the winners – including the names, locations and partner organization affiliations of the team members. Also attached is a press release that we will send out tomorrow, Thursday, announcing the winners.

A couple of follow-up items for each of you:

#### Press

We hope that each partner will help us to promote the winners – particularly offering congratulations to teams that are part of each of your networks. Attached is a sample press announcement that we encourage you to use to help spread the word. Please feel free to use, edit or remove any of the suggested language as is appropriate for your organization. Also, please find below some sample tweets that we hope will also be helpful in spreading the word (we will share the press release link once it is live tomorrow morning). Please let Eric Celeste **[insert email address of your organization's communications/media specialist]** know if you have any questions about communications.

#### Coaching

The Agents for Learning team will cover the travel costs of one coach from each partner organization. However, the time for confirming your reservation at the hotel in Chicago is very tight. **We need the following information from each organization by 2 pm ET on Friday:**

- Who from your organization will attend as a coach?
- Do you have a preference as to the finalist team your organization would like to coach?
- Please visit **[insert travel agent here]** to make your travel reservations by 2 pm ET on Friday, June 24.

#### Additional Participants

Some partner organizations have expressed interest in having more than one person attend the meeting in Chicago. We are happy to have additional partner representatives join the meeting, but they need to make their own travel arrangements. The event will be held at Chicago Loews Hotel and reservations can be made at **[insert hotel contact information]**. Please let us know who else will be joining us in Chicago and if they are willing/interested in being a coach.

#### Partnership Agreements

Please return your partnership agreements by the end of this week. At this time, only CAP, CCSSO, E4E, Hope Street and NEA have returned their completed agreements. If you have questions about the agreement, please contact Janice Poda at **[insert email address of your organization's challenge coordinator]**.

Many thanks and looking forward to seeing many of you in Chicago,  
Melinda

## Communicating with coaches

### Correspondence with coaches

Dear **Name of Coach**:

Thanks for agreeing to be [TEAM NAME]'s coach for our upcoming Agents for Learning Challenge. Please read this email carefully and let me know ASAP if there are any needed changes or additions.

#### Agenda and Location

Attached is an agenda for the meeting in Chicago on July 21-22. The meeting will be held at: Loews Chicago Hotel, 455 North Park Drive, Chicago, IL 60611, (312) 840-6600

#### Finalist Applications

Twelve teams were chosen to be finalists. We wanted to provide you with access to all of their applications available at: **[Insert link or email address for access to applications](#)**. The coach for each team will want to become familiar with the application of the team they are coaching.

#### Coaching

As many of our coaches are new to the A4L competition, we would like to have you join us for a **brief introduction to A4L call on Thursday, July 14 at 3 pm ET**.

We recommend that ALL coaches **review the two A4L webinars** in advance of arriving in Chicago. The first webinar from April 27, "ESSA 101 for Educators," is now [online here](#). You can also [download a PDF](#) of the slides used in the webinar. The second of two free webinars focused on professional learning and its role in ESSA. [Download a PDF](#) of the slides used in the webinar. The link to the webinar recording [is here](#). This will be critical information as you work with your teams to hone their plans and organize their presentations.

All coaches are asked to attend the in-person **coaches' orientation session in Chicago on July 21 from 10:30-11:45 am**. At this time, we will provide detailed protocols for helping to prepare your team for the final presentations. After the orientation, team members will arrive and we will have a getting to know you lunch from noon -1 pm. All coaches are asked to sit at tables with their teams. We will have signs on the tables so that you can find each other.

You will be working with team #7 from XX.

Name	Position	Work site	
			rwattles@yahoo.com
			jennfer18@hotmail.com
			jayccarl01@live.com
			virginia_valdez@hotmail.com
			josephfatheree@gmail.com

You can review (again) their application using the link above.

**We would appreciate your sending a short note of introduction and congratulations to all of your team members. Also, if you could please collect their twitter and Instagram handles and send them to me, we would be most appreciative. Please include your own twitter and Instagram handles as well.**

Thanks so much for your help!

Melinda George

President

1525 Wilson Boulevard, Ste 705 Arlington, VA 22209 | 202.429.2570 | [www.nctaf.org](http://www.nctaf.org)

## Communicating with judges

### Correspondence with judges

Dear **Name of Judge**:

Thank you for agreeing to be a judge at the Agents for Learning competition hosted by Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF). On behalf of both organizations, it is my pleasure to welcome you as part of this exciting program.

What a busy and exciting time this has been. We are now in the home stretch to the in-person meeting and presentations in Chicago and we wanted to be in touch with some important information.

#### Agenda and Location

Attached is an agenda for the meeting in Chicago on July 21-22. The meeting will be held at:

Loews Chicago Hotel  
455 North Park Drive  
Chicago, IL 60611  
(312) 840-6600

All judges are asked to attend the in-person **judges' orientation session in Chicago on July 22 from 11:00-11:45 am in Meeting Planner Room 1. Registration is located in the Wright Ballroom Foyer.** At this time, we will provide detailed instructions and timing for the presentation panel, ways in which to provide feedback and the roles of the lead judge for each application.

The presentations and celebration of the competition will be held in the afternoon of Friday, July 22. The presentations will occur between 1:00-3:15 pm and the celebration will occur between 3:15-4:00 pm. We also invite you to participate in any of the sessions leading up to the final presentations. It should be an exciting couple of days.

#### Judging Process

We will discuss all of the judging procedures in detail during the judges' orientation when we are together in Chicago. A few important things to know:

- Twelve teams were chosen to be finalists. **All of the finalists are the winners.** While we will be awarding some fun certificates at the end of the competition during the celebration, **there will not be one winner.**
- Each of the 4 judges will be asked to lead the feedback for three of the applications. You are asked to be the lead for the following applications: XXX.
- We want to provide you with access to all of their applications available at: <https://www.dropbox.com>. Again, it would be very helpful if you could be familiar with the applications of the teams for which you are leading the feedback.

Thank you again for your support of this exciting competition. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Janice Poda **[Insert email address of your organization's challenge coordinator]**.

Many thanks and see you in Chicago,  
Melinda

## Planning for ESSA Agents for Learning Challenge presentations

### Frames for planning applicant's Agents for Learning Presentations

#### Three Frames

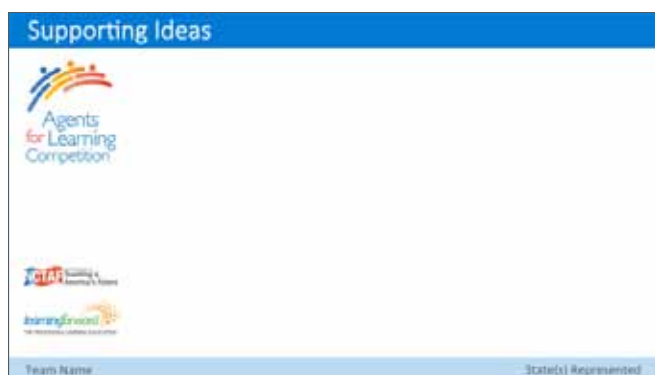
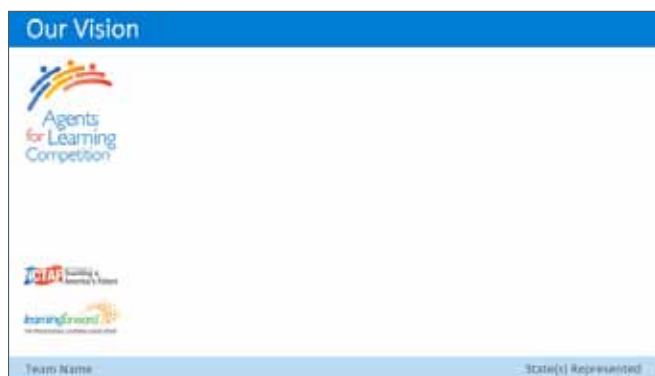
Please select from one of the following three frames for your presentation:

<b>1</b>	<b>State &amp; District Plan Guidance</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the 3-5 key issues the state and district should address in the portion of the consolidated plan dedicated to Professional Learning.</li> <li>• Why are these issues your priority?</li> <li>• How could states/districts build a comprehensive plan around these issues?</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Use of Funds for School Leadership</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of you chose to answer the question on how you would advise the state to spend a potential 3% set aside to advance school leadership.</li> <li>• How can your ideas for advancing school leadership be scaled?</li> <li>• What impacts should states expect from it?</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Improvements to Professional Learning</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we substantively improve the professional learning for teachers in your state?</li> <li>• How does your proposal align with the definition of Professional Development included in ESSA?</li> <li>• What Title or regulatory responsibilities are needed to achieve your recommendations?</li> </ul>

## Planning for applicants' ESSA Challenge presentations

### Slide templates for team presentations

[Download Powerpoint templates here.](#)



## Agents for Learning (A4L) background talking points for coaches and judges

- In early March, Learning Forward and NCTAF released a joint paper about the critical need for teacher agency in teaching and learning.
- Our organizations didn't want this to be a report that sits on a shelf; instead, we wanted it to spur action. We decided to take the lead and created the Agents for Learning competition (which we announced in early April).
- The competition encouraged teams of between 3–5 educators — the majority of which are teachers — to learn about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to reflect on ways in which the law could be enacted in states so that teacher agency was encouraged and leveraged and then to devise strategies as part of their applications that provide concrete ideas and principals for states to consider as they build their implementation plans.
- The competition was supported by many education networks and organizations that have advised on everything from the creation of the application and scoring rubric, to the webinars, to the actual evaluation and scoring of the applications. We want to thank all of you for now being a part of the coaching/judging process.
- Agents for Learning provided professional development for educators as part of this process. We provided a series of three webinars that were open to all educators. The first focused on ESSA — really providing a 101 for educators in understanding the law, including the different titles, the places where professional learning is required and encouraged and the timeline for implementation.
- The second webinar focused specifically on professional learning in ESSA; including the definition of professional learning that is included in the law and some ideas for places within the law and the implementation plans where a new kind of professional learning could be encouraged and strengthened.
- The final webinar was a Q&A for educators who were applying to the competition and an overview of the scoring rubric.
- The first and second webinars are available online and their URLs were included in the letter that was sent to coaches on July 1. We strongly encourage all coaches to review these webinars. They provide critical information that will help you to advise your teams on their presentations.
- Applications were due June 10 and we got many terrific applications. We were so impressed with the ways in which the teams interpreted the law and thought of visionary ways in which teachers could and should be included in the design and implementation of PD with the new flexibility and emphases.
- All of the finalists are the winners. While we will be awarding some fun certificates at the end of the competition, there will not be one winner. All of the 12 finalists are actually the winners.
- It is important to note that the applications range from very broad, visionary ideas to very specific, district-oriented plans. There is no right answer. What we are hoping for, however, is the development of presentations that present useable, tactical strategies that states/districts could incorporate into their ESSA comprehensive plans and then into their professional development implementation.



- Following the competition, we are looking forward to our partners help in continuing to promote and raise awareness around these good ideas. We expect the presentations to have a much longer life than the day of the competition itself. Again, this is something important to keep in mind as you work with your team to develop their presentations.
- Before we get into the nuts and bolts of our time in Chicago and the presentations themselves, do you all have any questions about how we got to this point?

### **Logistics and Things to Know for Coaches**

- Walk through Chicago agenda – essentially boils down to five intensive sessions where teams will work collaboratively to turn their applications into succinct, compelling strategies for presentation and ways to exercise their agency after the competition is over.
- Describe in broad terms the protocols that have been developed to help coaches move their teams toward effective presentations and continue their efforts to exercise their agency.
- Presentations are strictly limited to FOUR MINUTES. Teams can decide whether one team member will present or several.
- All teams will be limited to four slides with the following content:
  - Our Vision
  - The Big Idea
  - Supporting Ideas
  - SEA/LEA
- We encourage creativity. With 12 4-minute presentations, judges will be looking for new ideas and effective delivery. We are also pushing for these to be shared at the state level after the competition so the more realistic they are in terms of being implementable, the better. All presentations and feedback will be live streamed and available on the A4L website.
- There will be four judges:
  - Chris Minnich, ED, CCSSO
  - Jahana Hayes, 2016 NTOY
  - Rachel Wise, Chair of the Nebraska State Board of Education
  - Stephanie Banchemo, Program Officer for the Joyce Foundation
- The presentation program will be moderated by Ginny Edwards of Ed Week.
- Judges will have five cards that they will use to rate the presentation: IKR ("I Know, Right? – meaning this was spot on), HMU (Hit Me Up – meaning get me in on that!), IDK (I Don't Know – meaning they have a specific question), YOLO (You Only Live Once – meaning it's a great idea but not sustainable), SMH (Shaking My Head – meaning not realistic)
- Judges will have 4 ½ minutes to provide oral feedback on the presentation.

## Planning for the ESSA challenge

### Notes for judges and moderator

Judges Orientation	11:00–11:45 a.m.	Meeting Planner 1 (Green Room)
Lunch	11:45–12:45 p.m.	Sullivan C
Presentation	1:00–3:15 p.m.	Sullivan B

1:00-1:06: Melinda George welcomes everyone to the Live Stream and provides an overview of the competition and the process:

### Overview

- In early March, Learning Forward and NCTAF released a joint paper about the critical need for teacher agency in teaching and learning.
- Our organizations didn’t want this to be a report that sits on a shelf; instead, we wanted it to spur action. We decided to take the lead and created the Agents for Learning competition (which we announced in early April).
- The competition was designed to engage educator teams in advocating for the best use of federal funding for professional learning under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- The competition was supported by many education networks and organizations that have advised on everything from the creation of the application and scoring rubric, to the webinars, to the actual evaluation and scoring of the applications.
- Applications were due June 10 and we got many terrific applications. We were so impressed with the ways in which the teams interpreted the law and thought of visionary ways in which the law could be used to improve professional learning and support for educators.
- The purpose of the competition is to elevate this great advice as well as to spur continued agency and advocacy among all its participants. As a result, the sponsors determined that all finalists would be declared the winners. There would be no final ranking. Each set of recommendations has merit and may be the best recommendation for a particular context.
- During the closing celebration, we invite you to help us award some certificates of recognition to the participants. We have provided you a list and ask you to identify 1-2 teams that merit a particular certificate and let us know who you would be willing to recognize.
- It is important to note that the applications range from very broad, visionary ideas to very specific, district and school focused plans. There is no right answer. We believe the variety of suggestions will offer policy-makers new perspectives and strategies to incorporate into their ESSA comprehensive plans and then into their professional development implementation.
- Following the competition, we are looking forward to our partners help in continuing to promote and raise awareness around these good ideas. We expect the presentations to have a much longer life than the day of the competition itself. We invite your suggestions as to additional ways to continue to elevate and amplify this excellent work.
- For your information, another outcome of this competition is a tool kit that we will share with all our partners, their affiliates, and others who are interested in potentially replicating this competition and/or seeking other ways to advance teacher agency to improve professional learning.

## Process

Each team drew a number to determine the order that the presentations would be given.

Each team has been allocated 4 minutes to make their presentation. Time will be called at 4 minutes. We have a tight schedule so time limits will be enforced.

- During the presentation we ask that you pay attention to three things:
  - Feedback you wish to provide immediately (if you are assigned to this team)
  - Record comments that can be given to the team with their certificates to help them with their efforts in the future.
  - Assign a “best” category from the celebration sign selection to each team presentation. And note any that you would feel comfortable in presenting if you are able to stay.
- Judges will have “scoring” signs to choose from to hold up at the end of each presentation that provide some feedback to the team.
- Each judge has been assigned three teams to take the lead and give feedback. The moderator will call on you to provide up to 4 minutes of feedback. If you do not choose to use the entire 4 minutes; she may look for others to comment. Again, time limits will be enforced.
- A live twitter feed will capture tweets and pictures from the event.

1:06-1:07: Melinda turns mic over to Stephanie. Stephanie Hirsh introduces Ginny Edwards.

**Brief bio for Ginny Edwards:** Virginia B. Edwards has been the president of Editorial Projects in Education, the \$16 million-a-year nonprofit corporation that publishes *Education Week* and [edweek.org](http://edweek.org), since 1997. Ginny has been the editor-in-chief of Education Week – the nation’s premier “newspaper of record” for pre-K-12 education – since 1989. Before joining EPE, Ginny worked for two years for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and, for the nearly 10 years before that, was an editor and reporter at *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, KY.

**More detailed version:** Ginny Edwards, has served editor of Education Week since 1989 and president of its parent organization since 1997 where she led the transformation of a specialty newspaper into a force in web news, education research and events, and, most recently, video journalism. She worked tirelessly and effectively to evolve Edweek over the years from a print only publication to a 24/7 digital news operation. At a time when many news organizations have struggled to sustain their audiences, and even their businesses, Education Week is a success story. Education Week, published 37 times a year, is read by more than 100,000 subscribers and “pass-along” readers. The newspaper also publishes three annual reports: Quality Counts (on state education policy), Technology Counts (on education technology), and Leaders to Learn From (on exemplary school district leadership). Data for the reports are gathered and analyzed by the Education Week Research Center.

Edwards also oversaw the growth of [edweek.org](http://edweek.org), which has more than 1.6 million registered users, with hundreds of thousands of subscribers to email newsletters. And last year, EPE launched its Education Week Video unit to produce segments for the PBS NewsHour and other broadcast partners as well digital video and other multimedia content for [edweek.org](http://edweek.org) and other online platforms.

Before joining EPE, Edwards worked for two years for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and, for nearly 10 years before that, was an editor and reporter at The Courier-Journal newspaper in Louisville, Ky.

Edwards has served on the boards of several nonprofit organizations and has been a frequent speaker on education policy and media issues.

## Schedule

<b>1:07–1:10</b>	<b>Ginny adds her welcome and introduces judges</b>
<b>Schedule of presentations</b>	
1:10–1:14	Team 1 Presentation
1:14–1:18	Feedback from Judges
1:19–1:23	Team 2 Presentation
1:23–1:27	Feedback from Judges
1:28–1:32	Team 3 Presentation
1:32–1:36	Feedback from Judges
1:37–1:41	Team 4 Presentation
1:41–1:45	Feedback from Judges
1:46–1:50	Team 5 Presentation
1:50–1:54	Feedback from Judges
1:55–1:59	Team 6 Presentation
1:59–2:03	Feedback from Judges
2:04–2:08	Team 7 Presentation
2:08–2:12	Feedback from Judges
2:13–2:17	Team 8 Presentation
2:17–2:21	Feedback from Judges
2:22–2:26	Team 9 Presentation
2:26–2:30	Feedback from Judges
2:31–2:35	Team 10 Presentation
2:35–2:39	Feedback from Judges
2:40–2:44	Team 11 Presentation
2:44–2:48	Feedback from Judges
2:49–2:53	Team 12 Presentation
2:53–2:57	Feedback from Judges
2:57–3:00	Wrap-up: Ginny thanks team and thanks judges. Invites everyone to the Celebration in Wright Ballroom 1–3.
<b>3:15–4:00</b>	<b>Celebration in Wright 1–3</b>
3:15–3:30	Remarks from moderator, judges, hosts
3:30–3:45	Presentation of Certificates of Recognition
3:45–4:00	Twitter feed and networking
<b>4:00</b>	<b>Adjourn</b>

## Judges

### Stephanie Banchero

Stephanie Banchero, program director for the Education Program, Joyce Foundation, which works to ensure all students—especially those who are low-income and minority—are prepared for life success by improving the quality of teachers they encounter in school, enhancing early education policies, and supporting policies that ensure high school students have a seamless transition from high school to college and careers.

Before coming to Joyce, Stephanie was the national education reporter for the Wall Street Journal. While at the Journal, Stephanie wrote extensively about many of the issues the Joyce Foundation addresses, including teacher effectiveness and early education. Before that, she spent 13 years covering K-12 education for the Chicago Tribune.

Her nationally recognized reporting has received first place awards from the National Education Writers Association and the Missouri School of Journalism. She also received the Harry Chapin Media Award and an honorable mention from the Casey Journalism Center on Children and Families. She was awarded a prestigious one-year Knight Fellowship in journalism at Stanford University.

Stephanie holds a bachelor's of arts from the University of Utah in Communications and a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She is a past president of the National Education Writers Association. Stephanie is a member of the Spencer Education Journalism Fellowship Board.

### Jahana Hayes (Jahana was introduced as the speaker at lunch on Thursday)

Jahana's route to teaching began as a student. The first in her family to graduate from college, she was inspired by her teachers who urged her to dream bigger and who believed that she was college material, despite a challenging upbringing.

A veteran history teacher at John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury, Connecticut, Jahana also sees herself as an advisor, counselor, confidant and protector. She endeavors to fill the role her own teachers had in her life, guiding students to be their best selves and encouraging them to take ownership of their communities.

"As a teacher, I strive to facilitate learning in a way that engages students by connecting on a personal level and stimulating academic growth, while simultaneously producing contentious and productive members of society," she says.

For Jahana, being a teacher is a privilege and an opportunity to transform lives and foster a sense of social responsibility in the next generation. As the 2016 National Teacher of the Year and a spokesperson for the teaching profession, Jahana hopes to motivate more people to become educators and continue to carry out this important work.

Jahana has taught for the past 12 years, 10 of which have been in her current role. She earned an Associate's degree from Naugatuck Valley Community College, a Bachelor of Science from Southern Connecticut State University, a Master of Arts from Saint Joseph University and a certification from the University of Bridgeport.

**Chris Minnich** (Chris will have been introduced as the speaker at lunch just prior to the presentations)  
Chris Minnich was appointed Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in December, 2012. As Executive Director, Chris has ushered in a new strategic plan in which CCSSO is committed making sure all students participating in our public education system – regardless of background – graduate prepared for college, careers, and life.

Since 2012, CCSSO has worked with states to raise the bar on standards, assessments and accountability, transform educator preparation programs, design new approaches to teaching and learning, and implement and sustain promising reforms across the country.

Chris first joined CCSSO in 2008. While at CCSSO, he facilitated the state-led Common Core State Standards Initiative and served as Senior Membership Director, serving as the lead contact for all 58 of CCSSO's members.

Chris has an extensive background in assessment and accountability work, working to improve assessments for educators in both the public and private sectors since 2003.

Please welcome Chris Minnich.

### **Rachel Wise**

Dr. Wise is currently the President of the Nebraska State Board of Education. When Rachel was a high school student in Kearney, Nebraska, she taught swimming lessons at the public pool. At the request of his parents, Rachel taught a special needs student how to swim. According to Rachel, "It took more repetition, more confidence-building, and different strategies, but we had fun and he learned to swim." That experience stayed with her, and she soon discovered that "working with special needs children is no different than working with any other children." Rachel said that "teachers celebrate growth and success, and special needs children experience growth and achieve milestones just like any other child."

While working on her Master's degree in Vocational Education and Special Education, she began her teaching career as a Family and Consumer Science teacher. For the next twelve years Rachel worked as a teacher and special education coordinator and as the Assistant Director of Special Education Services in. In 1996—while pursuing a Ph.D. in Community and Human Resources—Rachel accepted a position in the Omaha Public School District where she served as Director of Secondary Education and Career and Technical Education and was the Assistant Principal of Burke High School.

She resides on a farm east of Oakland, Nebraska, with her husband Gordon Nelson. Dr. Wise received her education in Nebraska public schools, including a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Nebraska Omaha and a Master's Degree in Education and a Doctorate Degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is a retired educator with teaching and administrative experience in Nebraska school districts and an Educational Service Unit. Dr. Wise is an active member of her church, Rotary, Delta Kappa Gamma and serves as a Team-Mates mentor.

### **Handouts for judges:**

- Note cards with Team Names for providing feedback
- List of names of awards so they can assign them during the transitions
- Slides from teams

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## Getting prizes for the challenge

### List of prizes

<b>Learning Forward</b>	Coffee mug, one-year membership, gift certificate for e-learning, gift card for bookstore
<b>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards</b>	pens, note pads
<b>Scholastic</b>	books
<b>Corwin</b>	Michael Fullan book
<b>NEA</b>	charger
<b>Hope Street Group</b>	pens, note pads
<b>Center for American Progress</b>	bumper stickers
<b>Frontline Research &amp; Learning Institute</b>	journal

Organization	Participant's bag	Prizes	Table display
<b>AFT*</b>	AFT swag	Registration to TEACH	
<b>CAP</b>	TeachStrong branded notepads		
<b>Corwin</b>		Books	
<b>CCSSO</b>			
<b>E4E*</b>	E4E pamphlets and buttons		Yes
<b>Hope Street</b>	Yes	4 micro-credential submission gift cards	Yes
<b>Learning Forward</b>		Registration to e-Learning course; Coupon to LF's bookstore	
<b>NBPTS</b>			
<b>NCTAF</b>			
<b>NEA</b>	Yes	Computer and cell phone chargers	Yes
<b>NNSTOY</b>		Working on some things	
<b>Scholastic</b>		Books	
<b>TeachPlus</b>			

\*= take team to dinner



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## Creating meeting materials for staff and team members

### Staff Agenda

This is a sample page of a 12 page document.

[Download Word document here.](#)

Agent for Change (A4L) ESSA Competition STAFF AGENDA					
Chicago Loews Hotel					
Thursday, July 21, 2016					
Time	Event	Speakers and Person(s) Responsible	Location	Equipment/Room Setup	Materials
Thursday & Friday	Arrival at hotel	Renee and Carrie  Renee  MK and JP	Entrance or lobby of hotel		Renee & Carrie sign welcoming team members that honors them and their work. "Congratulations Agents for Learning!"  Renee -- nametags. It would be helpful to have ones for the press and guests that we can distinguish from the team members. Ideally we would have ribbons or different colors for the following groups: <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Team members <input type="checkbox"/> Coaches <input type="checkbox"/> Judges/Moderator <input type="checkbox"/> Guests <input type="checkbox"/> Press Ribbons purchased  MK and JP: Some sponsors will be shipping materials to the hotel (will need to get these and separate prizes from materials to put in registration bags). Prizes will be packed in gift bags and given to the participants on Friday at Celebration.
7:00 – 8:00	Set up general session room	Carrie Renee	Wright Ballroom 1	Carrie: mic and podium for sponsor	Renee: <input type="checkbox"/> Stanchions for each

7/19/16

1

## Team Agenda

This is a sample page from a three-page document.

[Download the document here.](#)



**Agents for Learning (A4L) ESSA Competition**  
**Chicago Loews Hotel**  
455 N Park Dr., Chicago, IL 60611

### AGENDA

**Thursday, July 21, 2016**

**Registration** 8:00-2:00 p.m.

**Lunch** 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Recognition of Sponsors and Funders  
A word from our Sponsors (NBPTS and CCSSO)  
Keynote Speaker – Jahana Hayes, 2016 National Teacher of the Year

**Welcome and Orientation for A4L Finalists** 1:00-1:30 p.m.

Introduction of A4L Finalists  
Introduction of Coaches  
Introduction of Staff

Icebreaker

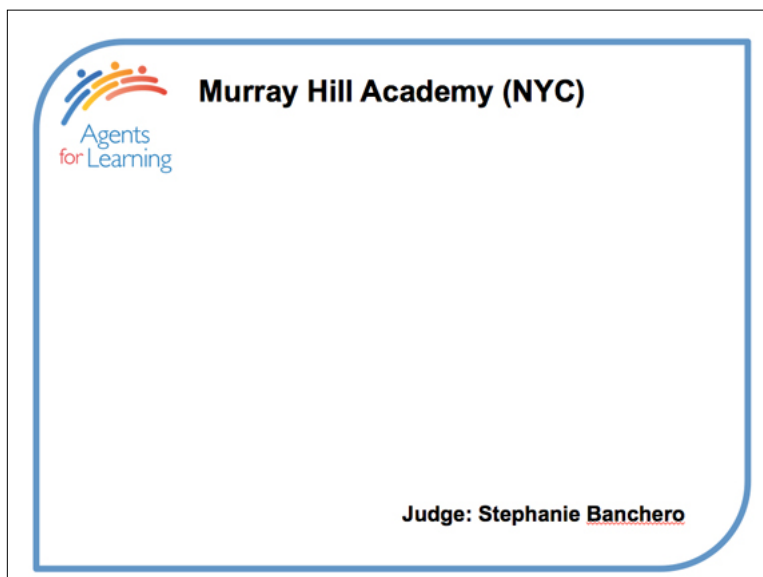
## List of packet materials for participants

- Agenda
- Handout 1: [Framing the Message](#)
- Handout 2: [Critical Friends Protocol](#)
- Handout 3: [Refining the Presentation](#)
- Handout 4a: [Scenarios](#)
- Handout 4b: [Action Planning](#)
- Handout 4c: [Additional Resources](#)
- Handout 5: [Pulling it All Together](#)
- Letters of Congratulations
- Participant Directory

## Planning for judges and scorers

### Judges' feedback cards

[Download PowerPoint feedback cards here.](#)



### Raters' orientation

[Download raters' orientation PowerPoint presentation here.](#)



## Creating signage for use at the hotel or venue

Use this format as an example for signs for “Welcome,” “Registration,” “Coaches,” “Judges” or whatever you need for signs to say.



## Providing an evaluation of the challenge experience

### Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge

#### EVALUATION

Your name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

I received the support needed to apply for the Agents for Learning ESSA Competition. \_\_\_\_\_

The webinars offered prior to the application deadline were informative and helpful. \_\_\_\_\_

The Agents for Learning website was informative and helpful and provided answers to questions that I had. \_\_\_\_\_

The publicity about the selection of the finalists raised awareness of teacher agency. \_\_\_\_\_

Arrangements for travel to the Chicago event were efficient. \_\_\_\_\_

Sessions at the Chicago event were informative and helpful. \_\_\_\_\_

Being part of the competition increased my ability to use my voice to advocate for education policy and meet with policy makers. \_\_\_\_\_

Making connections with Agents for Learning from other teams was helpful. \_\_\_\_\_

The most useful part of the competition was...

---

---

If I could change one thing about the competition, I would change...

---

---

If others choose to replicate the competition, I would encourage them to...

---

---

What else should the meeting conveners consider as we plan future work?

---

---

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation. Your input is critical to our shared success.

## Wrapping up after the challenge

### Follow-up letter to the Agents for Learning

Dear Agent for Learning:

Thank you so much for attending the exciting and informative Agents for Learning Event in Chicago. We hope you left better equipped to continue your agency once you returned home and that you are busy sharing your recommendations for how ESSA dollars for professional learning will be spent. We are most grateful to you for being leaders and for your thoughtful and helpful ideas. We also appreciate you spending part of your summer with us.

We have a few items we'd like to follow up on.

#### **Action Plans**

During the breakout sessions on Friday, one of the activities was to complete an action plan for continuing to be involved in the implementation of ESSA that you shared with another team. If you have not done so, please send a copy of the action plan to Renee Taylor-Johnson ([renee@learningforward.org](mailto:renee@learningforward.org)) so that we can continue to support you and learn from your efforts.

#### **Reimbursement of Expenses**

Attached is another copy of a form for reimbursement of expenses for the trip to Chicago. If you haven't already done so, please complete the form and attach your receipts. Reimbursements can be faxed, scanned, or mailed.

#### **Meeting Evaluation**

An online evaluation survey has been created in Survey Monkey and should take approximately 10 minutes for you to complete. Please complete the survey no later than August 8 so that we can continue to find ways to improve our services and the information that we share with educators. Instructions are included on the survey and the link is [A4L Survey](#).

#### **Pictures**

If you have any pictures you'd like to share please email them to [renee@learningforward.org](mailto:renee@learningforward.org).

#### **Complimentary Learning Forward Digital Membership**

[Click on the link Join](#) to sign up for your complimentary digital membership and use the code empower.

#### **Instructions for Using your Coupon for Free On-line Course**

Please click on the link [Standards for Professional Learning](#) to sign up for your complimentary online course. This link will expire on Friday, August 19, 2016. Please contact Renee Taylor-Johnson if you have any questions.



### Contact information for sponsors

Attached is a list of the sponsors, coaches, judges and funders who contributed to the Agents for Learning Competition. We are sharing this information in case you would like to express your appreciation.

### Gifts

The gifts you received were from the following organizations:

<b>Learning Forward</b>	Coffee mug, one-year membership, gift certificate for e-learning, gift card for bookstore
<b>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards</b>	pens, note pads
<b>Scholastic</b>	books
<b>Corwin</b>	Michael Fullan book
<b>NEA</b>	charger
<b>Hope Street Group</b>	pens, note pads
<b>Center for American Progress</b>	bumper stickers
<b>Frontline Research &amp; Learning Institute</b>	journal

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to meet you and work with you on this important project. We look forward to hearing more about the work that you're doing and to follow your impact on professional learning in this new era of education in our country.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hirsh  
Executive Director  
Learning Forward

Melinda George  
President  
NCTAF

## Wrapping up after the challenge

### Letter to Agents for Learning at start of school year

Dear Agents for Learning:

With school starting around the country, we are hopeful that you have continued to exercise your agency and are reaching out to school, district, state, and national policymakers to let your voice be heard. Thank you for all that you're doing to ensure that we use the opportunity of a new federal law to have more relevant and useful professional learning for teachers everywhere.

We will be contacting your team lead to make sure you have a copy of your presentation video including the judges' feedback on your presentation. In a few days, we will also be reposting the videos to the website but will be removing the judges' comments from what we post.

We will also be sending a letter to the chief state school officer (commissioner, superintendent) in your state congratulating you on the work that you've done to shape how professional development is offered and how funding for professional learning is used. We will include the names of the members of your team and contact information.

For those that have completed the online survey, thank you for your valuable feedback. We have been studying the responses you gave on how we can continue to support your agency, and we will be working on ways to continue to amplify and support your work. Please share your agency efforts going forward with us.

Thank you again for your outstanding work. We wish you and your students a great school year!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hirsh  
Executive Director  
Learning Forward

Melinda George  
President  
NCTAF

## Wrapping up after the Challenge

### Letter to chief state school officer in the home state of each team

Dear [NAME of Chief State School Officer]:

We are writing today to congratulate you because a dynamic team of educators from your state recently won the opportunity to participate in the Agents for Learning ESSA Challenge hosted by Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. The challenge offered teachers an opportunity to shape professional learning and suggest ways that federal dollars might be spent to address the needs of teachers and their students. Twelve finalist teams were selected through a very competitive application process. A list of the educators on your state's team is attached.

On July 22, the finalist teams presented their recommendations to a distinguished panel of judges that included Jahana Hayes, 2016 National Teacher of the Year; Chris Minnich, Executive Director of CCSSO; Stephanie Banchero, Program Director, The Joyce Foundation; and Dr. Rachel Wise, Chair, Nebraska Board of Education, NASBE. Videos of the presentations are available at <https://learningforward.org/get-involved/agents-for-learning-competition/essa-videos>.

The teams were encouraged to continue to use their agency when they returned home to help ensure that together we take advantage of this new era of professional learning in our country. The teams are eager to present their proposals to their state education officials, especially you! We hope that you will invite this team of educators to present their proposal to you and your colleagues and that you will enlist them as part of your stakeholder engagement strategy for the state's consolidated plan.

Supported by several sponsors, Agents for Learning was designed to amplify teacher voice in shaping professional learning. If you have any questions about the new definition of professional development included in ESSA or would like assistance in addressing professional development needs of educators throughout your consolidated plan, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

We look forward to hearing how your state's team continues to use their voice for continuous growth for teachers and their students that leads to an excellent and equitable education system.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hirsh  
Executive Director  
Learning Forward

Melinda George  
President  
NCTAF

## Accessing companion resources

### U.S. Department of Education

The [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA) in full  
FAQ [“Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act”](#) (Section D discusses Title II funds)  
Continuously updated list of official [ESSA resources, public notices, and guidance and regulatory information](#)

### Agents of Learning Sponsors

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) provides:  
[ESSA Implementation Considerations: Stakeholder Engagement](#) (pay special attention to information under the subsection titled “Title II — Teachers/School Leaders”)  
A full list of continually updated [ESSA resources](#)

Center for American Progress (CAP) provides:  
[“Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act: Toward a Coherent, Aligned Assessment System”](#)  
[“4 Strategies for Districts to Successfully Implement Evidence-Based Practices”](#)

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) provides:  
A [full resource page](#), including fact sheets and FAQs.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards provides an [ESSA resource page](#) including:

- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [recommendations for states](#) for developing Title II plans that support accomplished teaching.
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [recommendations for districts](#) for developing Title II plans that support accomplished teaching.

National Education Association (NEA) provides:  
[A full suite of resources](#), from one-pagers on important ESSA topics to tables that map out the changes in grant programs and funding levels from current law to ESSA

### More Context

Learning Forward’s PD Watch blog post, [“Use ESSA to Achieve Your Vision for Professional Learning”](#)

Center for Public Education 2013 report, [“Teaching the Teachers: Effective Professional Development in an Era of High Stakes Accountability”](#)

Learning Policy Institute provides two papers:  
[“Pathways to New Accountability Through the Every Student Succeeds Act”](#)  
[“Evidence-Based Interventions: A Guide for States”](#)