



Learning Forward is developing resources relevant to supporting educators in new teaching and learning environments. See p. 62 for more information. We would love to hear from you about your evolving needs and your creative solutions to maintain a culture of continuous improvement.

Denise Glyn Borders is president and CEO at Learning Forward.

CALL TO ACTION

Denise Glyn Borders

TODAY'S CHALLENGES CALL FOR A COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

As we publish this magazine, our world is in uncertain times with the COVID-19 pandemic. We know you are navigating a new reality, with school systems closed and many questions about what lies ahead. Learning Forward's board of trustees and staff are ready to support all of you navigating this unprecedented situation.

Learning Forward's greatest strength is its community — members, affiliates, and allies. We know that your collective expertise, creativity, determination, and commitment to serving all students and communities will result in amazing solutions to unforeseen challenges such as those we face today. The notion of collective impact is core to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, and it has never been more important than it is now.

We recognize that school and system leaders must address urgent, fundamental issues to ensure their students and communities are safe and fed. We know that often those day-to-day questions will overwhelm systems and educators.

Yet supporting leaders, teachers, and staff remains a top priority as well, so they can address their most pressing needs — needs that are evolving on a daily basis. While improvement efforts as defined in the pre-COVID-19 days may take a back seat for now, a mindset for continuous improvement will be more important than ever. Educators are preparing rigorous lessons still, and many are doing it in unfamiliar digital environments.

With so much going on, we offer a few foundational reminders:

Attend to the basics of change. Whether you are supporting teachers to use new technologies, shifting schedules, or confronting other demands, some of the educators you support are leaping into the unknown. Others are pausing to ask loads of questions. Your whole team requires your support. As our Standards for Professional Learning emphasize, recognizing that each educator responds to change differently is essential to offering support and advancing a shared cause. This is particularly true when change is coming from every direction — at home, at work, and in society at large.

Keep teams connected. While many educator networks already operate virtually, some school- and district-based teams are accustomed to face-to-face interactions. Your teams are likely already connected by text. Consider how to leverage those connections with intentional conversations, and look for video platforms to enhance personal connections. Many vendors are offering free or lower cost services for school systems right now. As you leverage these tools, remember that strategic facilitation is just as important online — and not identical to what is effective for in-person meetings.

Prioritize reflection. The enormous stresses of our current reality leave all of us feeling panicky at times. Encourage reflection to assess how your adjusted practices are serving students and your collaborative efforts are serving you. Whether that takes the form of journaling, small-group conversations, or social media posts, reflecting on recent actions and monitoring mindsets can help educators and teams make shifts to refocus or pause for a breath.

Don't ignore your own needs for support. As learning leaders, you already prioritize your own learning, and now is not the time to deny yourself the support of colleagues. Find your team. Ask for help, whether from colleagues, your Learning Forward network, your online communities, or your local communities. As with any critical need in schools, choosing collaboration will lead to better results. ■