

# THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE FOR DISTRICT TEAMS



This guide can be used as a fillable pdf and/or a printable pdf.

## NEED HELP LOGGING IN?

If you or your colleagues have questions about logging in with your district membership to access the articles, call **800-727-7288** or email [christy.colclasure@learningforward.org](mailto:christy.colclasure@learningforward.org).

**T**hank you for being a district member with Learning Forward. To help you spread the learning and engagement with your colleagues, we have designed this supplemental guide exclusively for district members.

This guide will help you take your teams through a deep dive into the latest issue of *The Learning Professional*. By reading the issue and using this guide, both of which are focused on navigating the challenges of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, teams will:

- Reflect on assumptions about teaching, learning, students, and families that have been called into question, and begin to revise them as needed;
- Develop strategies to build staff members' resilience to address whatever challenges next year brings; and
- Plan how to maintain your instructional vision despite the uncertainty of where and how school will

be conducted moving forward.

While many of you are working virtually, learning communities are more important than ever. We have designed the learning opportunities in this guide to facilitate discussion among your teams via videoconference or through asynchronous communication. You may wish to send this guide, or portions of it, to your team members to help everyone engage in the activities. Alternatively, you may wish to use it as a facilitation guide and walk your team through the activities yourself. We invite you to share the learning opportunities however they will work best for you. Be sure to give us feedback about whether you found this useful, and, if you post on social media, tag us [@LearnFwdTLP](https://twitter.com/LearnFwdTLP) [@LearningForward](https://twitter.com/LearningForward) so we can share your good work!

# GET STARTED

## Examine your assumptions

Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic has caused all of us to rethink some of our assumptions, including assumptions about where and how learning happens, the roles of families in learning, and whether all students have equitable access to learning opportunities.

Several articles in the June 2020 issue of *The Learning Professional* ask us to revisit those assumptions as a first step to making necessary changes to our practices. Begin by reading [“We will be different” by Sharron Helmke](#) and [“A new road map for schools” by Thomas Arnett and Chelsea Waite](#).



### ACTIONS

1. Helmke writes that trauma challenges a person’s “‘assumptive world’: her belief in how people behave, how the world works, and how her life will unfold.” All team members should reflect on these two questions before the team’s video meeting: How has the pandemic challenged your assumptions or beliefs about your work? What impact has that had — positive or negative — on your work?

During your team meeting, each person should write down at least one “I used to think... Now I think...” statement, and two changes or two new actions to take based on the statement. The team facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their statements and reflections or opt to keep them private.

## HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS CHALLENGED MY ASSUMPTIONS AND BELIEFS

I used to think	Now I think	2 things I will do differently
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## GET STARTED, continued

2. **Arnett and Waite point out** that our teaching and learning goals might be different now while we are navigating the pandemic. They recommend that educators analyze their assumptions about these goals to maximize the chances they will succeed.

Establish a group or groups for discussion during the video meeting. If you have a large group of participants, you may wish to use a breakout room feature in your videoconference platform to create smaller groups for this portion of the meeting. In the group(s), identify a primary goal for the coming academic year and a major strategy for achieving it.

The team facilitator should write these at the top of a document while screen sharing or in the shared writing space of the videoconference platform. Then brainstorm and list all the assumptions that must prove true for the goal to be achieved. Working as a team and following the process on p. 41 of the magazine, rank the risk and confidence levels and calculate the average score of each.

Make a plan to test the assumptions. Test those with the lowest scores first. Plan to report the results of your tests at the next meeting and discuss whether to proceed with the strategies as planned or make modifications based on your assumptions tests.

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### ANALYZE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING GOALS

A primary goal for the coming academic year.

A major strategy for achieving the goal.

All of the assumptions that must prove true for the goal to be achieved.

# GET STARTED, continued

## RANKING ASSUMPTIONS IN TERMS OF RISK AND CONFIDENCE

Assumption	Risk	Confidence	Average score
Example: Parents will be on board.	1	1	1

### KEY

#### RISK:

- 1 = Being wrong will be catastrophic to the project.
- 2 = Being wrong would be a medium-sized problem.
- 3 = It's not a big deal if we're wrong.

#### CONFIDENCE:

- 1 = No confidence that the assumption is correct.
- 2 = Medium level of confidence.
- 3 = High level of confidence.

# NEXT STEPS

## Foster resilience

**R**esilience is something individuals develop and deploy personally, but it is fostered by environmental conditions and supports. Helmke writes about three conditions that foster resilience: Safety, satisfaction, and stability.

1. If possible, assign participants to three groups that can either connect using the breakout room feature of your videoconferencing platform or separate meeting rooms. Randomly assign the groups to safety, satisfaction, or stability. In small groups, facilitate a discussion using the following reflection questions. If this is not feasible, discuss one or more of the following categories together as a whole group.

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

#### SAFETY

How can you promote teacher choice?

How can you help people feel comfortable to take risks?

What else are you doing, or could you do, to maintain stability and predictability for your team despite all the uncertainty?

#### SATISFACTION

How are you encouraging teams to express gratitude for one another?

What opportunities are there for teachers to reflect on and celebrate progress?

What else are you doing, or could you do, to boost satisfaction?

#### CONNECTIONS

How will you build and reinforce community if teaching online?

How about if teaching is in person but with social distancing measures in place?

What are your community's core values? How can you reinforce them to staff, students, and families, regardless of where and how teaching occurs?

2. If you have split into groups, come back together as a full group and have each small group share three to five strategies they came up with for promoting resilience.
3. As a large group, make a plan for implementing the strategies that make the most sense in your context. You might choose three to five strategies to tackle together, or invite volunteers to be responsible for leading next steps on the strategies that resonate with them, or take another approach that makes sense for your context.
4. Set a specific timeline and process for checking in on your progress toward fostering these conditions of resilience. Will you survey teachers on a regular basis? Start staff meetings with a resilience check-in? Another approach?

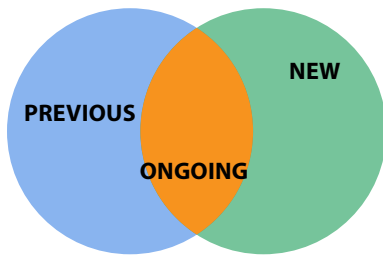
# DEEP DIVE

## Focus your vision

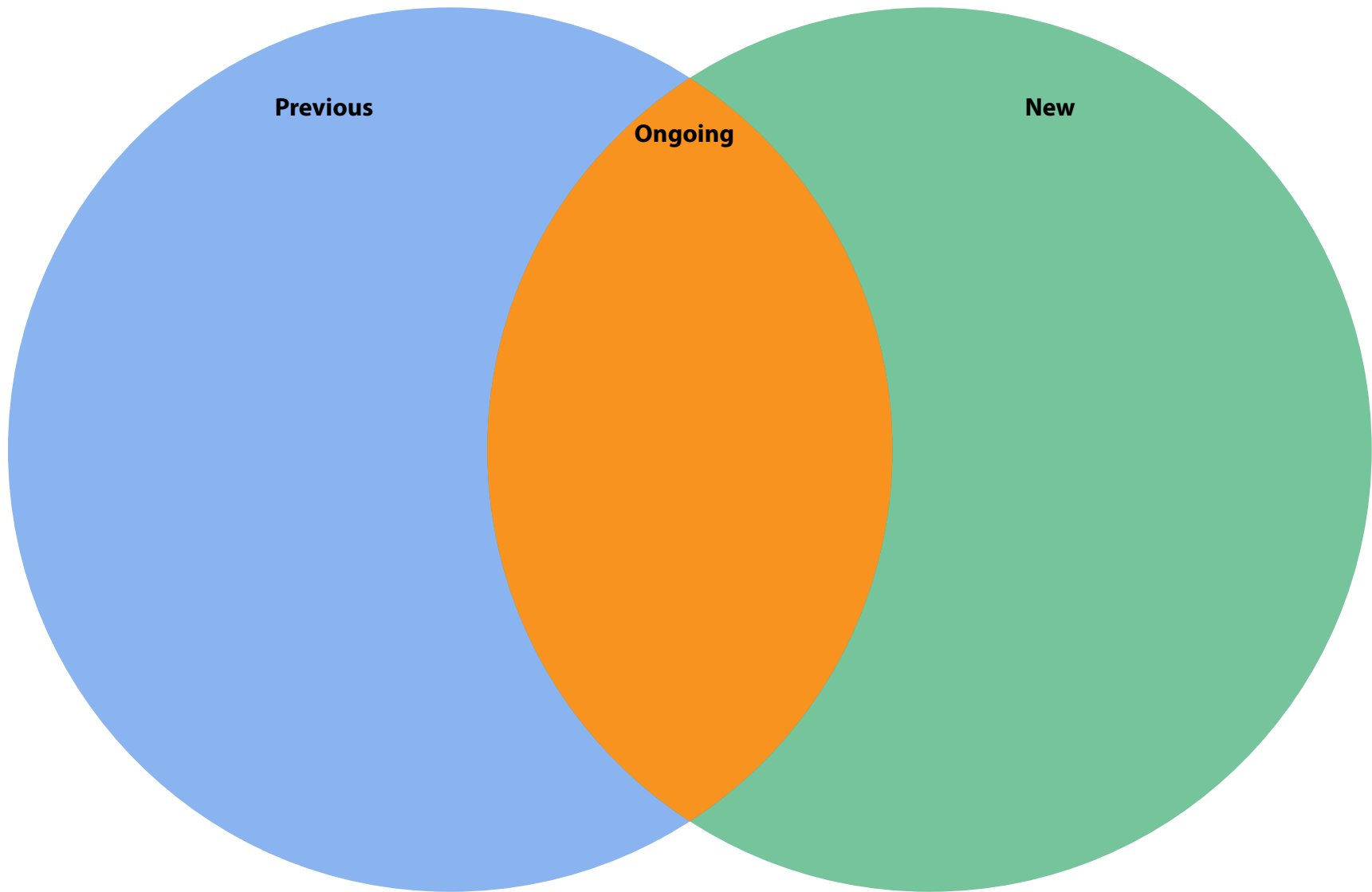
In the article [“Learning together when you’re apart,”](#) leaders from Newport-Mesa Unified School District write about how working together as a community of learners has helped them maintain their instructional vision during distance learning. Ask participants to read the article and then facilitate the following conversations.

### ACTIONS

- 1. Consider:** What were your primary instructional goals before the pandemic? What are they now? Fill in the Venn diagram on p. 7 of this guide, putting previous but now discontinued goals in the circle on the left, new goals in the circle on the right, and ongoing goals in the overlapping section.
- 2. Reflect:** As a group, discuss your reactions to the Venn diagram and its implications for your practice. Pay particular attention to the overlapping circle. Does it contain the right things?



GROUP REACTIONS TO THE VENN DIAGRAM ON P. 7 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR PRACTICE



## DEEP DIVE, continued

3. On p. 44 of the magazine, the authors recorded the results of group brainstorming about ideal online learning experiences based on their ongoing instructional goals. How would you answer the questions given the goals you identified in the overlapping section of the Venn diagram?

### DEVELOPING A VISION FOR LEARNING ACROSS PLATFORMS *Mixed grade-level team*

**SYNCHRONOUS.** What does an ideal synchronous experience look like for a child?

What do we need to learn more about to achieve this vision?

**ASYNCHRONOUS.** What does an ideal asynchronous experience look like for a child?

What do we need to learn more about to achieve this vision?

**INDEPENDENT.** What does ideal independent work look like for a child?

What do we need to learn more about to achieve this vision?