

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL



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**HIGH-QUALITY
VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING**

ENSURE EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING... VIRTUALLY!

As we prepare for the unique challenges of this new school year, we need to equip leaders at all levels with the tools to meet educator and student learning needs head-on.

We are now offering high-quality professional learning you've come to expect from Learning Forward in a virtual learning environment.

We are offering virtual professional learning opportunities that reflect best practices to support:

- School- and district-based coaches
- Mentor teachers
- Teacher-led learning teams
- School leaders
- Content-based coaches

Learning Forward is the leader in advancing professional learning that improves educator effectiveness and results for all students. We have adapted the support we provide to meet your needs through:

- Live, facilitated virtual sessions with expert coaches and facilitators;
- Asynchronous learning communities that provide ongoing collaboration, resource sharing, and best practices in virtual learning;
- Tools and strategies to support online team learning and collaboration.

Give your teachers, coaches, and leaders the professional learning they need to make this school year the best it can be for all students.

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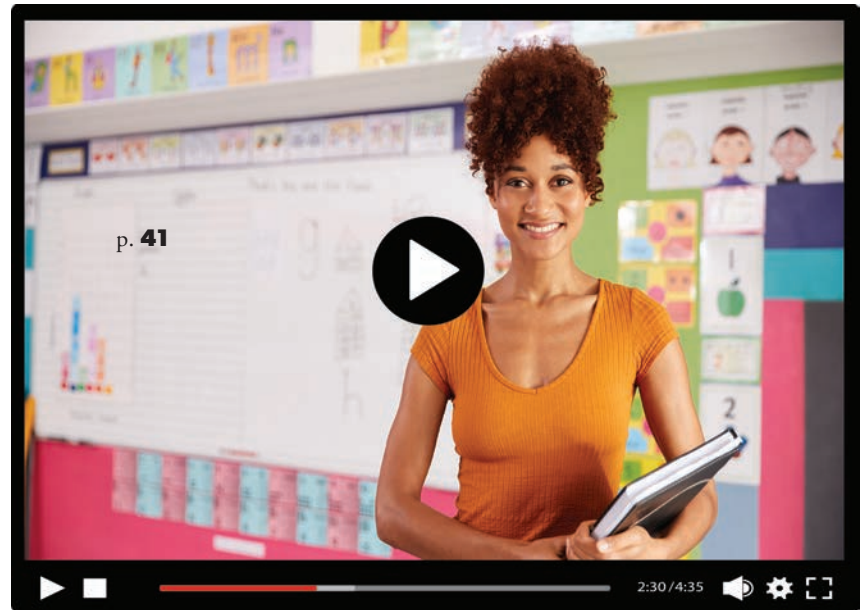
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Ron Walker

Executive director,
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“In order to be equitable, schools, districts, and classrooms have to go through healing. And right now, more than ever, we have to heal because we are a wounded nation. How do we heal ourselves? Going back to school — that may be the biggest question. ... Healing must come first for educators and then the same act and practice for our students.”

From “All means all: Equity challenges and opportunities during the COVID-19 crisis,” a Learning Forward webinar on May 28, 2020. Recording available at learningforward.org/webinar/all-means-all-equity-challenges-and-opportunities-during-the-covid-19-crisis.



Establish school-based communities of learners

Now offered virtually!



For more information, contact Tom Manning,
Vice President of Consulting Management &
Services at tom.manning@learningforward.org.

consulting.learningforward.org

Effective professional learning communities engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, promote collective responsibility for student learning, and support alignment of individual, team, school, and school system goals.

Learning Forward helps districts develop cultures of learning and implement PLCs with fidelity. We guide educators to employ a continuous improvement process where change, instructional improvement, and increased student learning are the goals, and learning is the intention of collaboration.

Teacher collaboration is more important than ever as teachers may be physically isolated from one another and need to design and implement, in real time, new models for learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools face new and changing conditions, educators are responsible for ensuring that student learning continues as they themselves adapt to online, remote or hybrid learning.

Establish teacher-led learning teams that engage in a five-step cycle of learning through live virtual sessions and ongoing, asynchronous learning opportunities.

Our virtual Becoming a Learning Team program supports district leaders, school leaders, professional learning facilitators, and school-based teams to:

- Identify the conditions necessary to sustain cultures that support teachers' continuous learning in community;
- Implement the five-stage learning team cycle of continuous improvement;
- Develop an action plan for implementing teacher-led learning teams in schools;
- Utilize protocols to effectively implement the learning team cycle of continuous improvement both face-to-face and virtually.

Help ensure that your teachers collaborate in ways that improve their practice and get results for their students.



HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

The pandemic has sped up tech-based efforts already underway to increase the breadth, depth, and accessibility of professional learning.

TECHNOLOGY MOVES FROM RESOURCE TO LIFELINE

When we started planning this issue on technology in 2019, none of us could have predicted how important technology would become in our schools and our lives. Tools that once seemed like a helpful supplemental resource have become a lifeline.

As we start a new school year, the potential and pitfalls of technology are on every educator's and parent's mind. No matter what teaching approaches we take — remote, hybrid, in-person — access to and facility with technology will play a huge role in how, and how much, students learn.

Children and adolescents aren't the only ones learning through technology, of course. Educator professional learning has largely shifted online, too. Every day, educators are using videoconferencing and webinars to gather information from colleagues, engaging in online tutorials to learn new content and skills, and using collaborative software and apps to work together.

The pandemic has sped up tech-based efforts already underway to increase the breadth, depth, and accessibility of professional learning. It has also inspired new, innovative approaches to meet the demands of the harrowing moment we are in.

This issue of *The Learning Professional* brings you information, tools, and resources from both of those intersecting trends. In the Focus section, professional learning leaders share what they are learning about educators' emerging needs and how technology helps meet them. They also offer advice on how to make the most of online learning when it can't be supplemented by in-person learning.

In the Ideas section, you'll find insights and analysis about the ongoing development of tech-supported approaches to coaching, mentoring, and other forms of professional support. Growing research on the benefits of these methods could not come at a better time.

This issue also includes a tool to help you plan video observations of remote teaching and learning. It is designed with a focus on new-teacher mentors but can be useful to any learning professional aiming to support others.

To realize the full potential of these tools and approaches, we must attend to urgent issues of equity. Equity is about far more than ensuring that everyone has access to a computer and high-speed internet (although that remains an essential and unmet need in many communities). Undoing the systemic inequity and racial bias in our schools will take self-reflection, difficult conversations, and deep changes in practice and policy.

On p. 61, you will find Learning Forward's pledge to fight racism and support demands for justice for Black and brown people. On p. 8, Learning Forward president and CEO Denise Glyn Borders expounds on the need for this work and the role that professional learning can play. We urge you to keep equity front and center, whether you're planning video observations, preparing for blended learning, analyzing research, or coaching for growth mindset.

We've faced enormous challenges and navigated multiple crises over the past few months. Although we've been on a steep learning curve, learning professionals are leaping out of their comfort zones to build skills none of us expected to need.

We're inspired by educators reaching out to share their knowledge, offering resources and support, and finding expertise in new places and new people. Our collective knowledge is far greater than it was when the pandemic began, yet there is still so much to learn. ■



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THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

The Learning Professional is published six times a year to promote improvement in the quality of professional learning as a means to improve student learning in K-12 schools. Contributions from members and nonmembers of Learning Forward are welcome.

Manuscripts: Manuscripts and editorial mail should be sent to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org). Learning Forward prefers to receive manuscripts by email. Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are provided at learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us. Themes for upcoming issues of *The Learning Professional* are available at learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us.

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Telephone: 800-727-7288.

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THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
ISSN 2476-194X

The Learning Professional is a benefit of membership in Learning Forward. \$89 of annual membership covers a year's subscription to *The Learning Professional*. *The Learning Professional* is published bimonthly at the known office of publication at Learning Forward, 800 E. Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, TX 75081. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, TX 75260 and additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Learning Professional*, 800 E. Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, TX 75081.

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Equity and excellence in teaching and learning.

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INSPIRE. EXPRESS. ADVOCATE.

VOICES

ACT FOR EQUITY

“Be an accomplice, not an ally, to your students and fellow teachers. ... You can’t just sit on the sidelines and cheer them on. ... You have to use your privilege and your standing to help them out. Equity means understanding that some students and some teachers have heavier burdens. It’s your job as an educator to help alleviate that burden.”

— Rodney Robinson,
2019 National Teacher
of the Year

From “All means all: Equity challenges and opportunities during the COVID-19 crisis,” a Learning Forward webinar on May 28, 2020. Recording available at learningforward.org/webinar/all-means-all-equity-challenges-and-opportunities-during-the-covid-19-crisis.





TELL YOUR DISTRICT'S STORY

Learning Forward is gathering information from districts on how you're addressing inequity at every level. Email me at denise.borders@learningforward.org to let me know about your successes, your challenges, and your questions.

Denise Glyn Borders is president and CEO at Learning Forward.

CALL TO ACTION

Denise Glyn Borders

WE CAN STRUCTURE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TO FIGHT RACISM

From their earliest days in schooling, Black students' experiences in schools are dramatically different from those of white students. For example, Black preschool children are 3.6 times as likely to receive out-of-school suspensions as white preschool children (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The disciplinary disparities continue in K-12: 6% of all K-12 students received one or more suspensions, but look at the breakdown: 18% for Black boys, 10% for Black girls, 5% for white boys, and 2% for white girls (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Inequities for Black students extend well beyond discipline. Black students' access to advanced coursework, for example, is disproportionately lower than their white peers, beginning at an early age and continuing through high school (The Education Trust, 2020).

I don't accept that these disparities reflect intellectual or behavioral differences connected to students' race. They reflect differences in how we as a society approach the overall care of students of color from the time they are born, encompassing health care, socioeconomic conditions, education, and societal expectations of their potential.

There are countless examples of racial inequities in schools that paint a larger picture of entrenched structural racism affecting children of color. Such structural factors include how schools are funded, how — and which — educators are hired, leadership development and pipelines, biases in education research, and the quality and content of curriculum and instructional materials in schools.

Look into any facet of society in the U.S. and there are parallels, from health care to employment and labor practices to housing to policing and incarceration practices. Right now in the U.S., the numbers in COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths within communities of color are shockingly disproportionate, yet aligned to trends that disadvantage Black and brown lives throughout society.

While the structural and operational inequities that pulse through schools are built into our education systems, they can be overturned. Learning Forward believes that professional learning, created with intention around standards defining high-quality and demanding equity, is one essential lever to dismantle entrenched biases in schools and districts.

The work to tear down centuries of racist policies, practices, and beliefs is certainly not simple, as we see in the nationwide debates about reforming policing at the heart of current protests across the country.

However, I firmly believe that embracing the following first actions will advance our journey to create equitable teaching and learning in schools.

WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STEPS?

While an entire professional learning system will ideally focus intently on ensuring all



students have access to excellent learning, I'd suggest that education leaders emphasize these steps to start.

Assess culture and vision. Very likely, most districts already have a vision statement that shares educators' best intentions to teach all students. But when educators in your district dig deep into each aspect of that vision, do they share definitions of key words like "all" or "each" student? Can they articulate what the implications are for reaching "each" student?

Does the culture in your district and in each school building create space for difficult conversations that address implicit bias, white privilege, and the need to address beliefs along with instructional practices and aspirations for students? Are your leaders committed and knowledgeable champions for equity?

Embrace all forms of data. Understanding deeply what students' experiences are, based on any aspect of their identity, is essential to building more equitable practices, classrooms, and systems. Read more reports or studies like those cited here.

More importantly, understand data in your own context at the system level and also the classroom level. What do the Black students experience in your schools? How have trends changed over time, and what led to changes? Use data to identify priorities to address, and help your peers and teams use data in ways that move them rather than stymie them.

Prioritize what matters now. As the last several months demonstrate, school systems in general were not prepared to transition rapidly to an all-virtual teaching and learning environment. As we enter a new school

year, prioritize the professional learning that will best empower educators to accelerate student learning in changing circumstances.

For teachers and coaches, this means ensuring they have the resources, technology tools, and learning to effectively teach online. And learning can't stop with technology training. Instructional, engagement, and social-emotional strategies are more important than ever.

Significant numbers of students — sometimes up to 20% of the student body — never logged in to their schools' remote learning platforms this spring, for example (Toness, 2020). This often means leaders need to serve as community advocates to connect with families and support a range of needs, including facilitating access to broadband and technology tools.

At the same time, educators' need for professional learning in the content areas remains crucial. With learning loss as a real concern, aligned priorities around literacy, mathematics, and science will rise to the top.

Identify the expertise required to change. While your leaders and culture may be ready for change today, it's also possible you'll need to locate additional expertise to overturn long-held beliefs and build new practices. This transformation requires sustained effort, effort that must be aligned with other learning in your district. As you identify expertise, focus on knowledge, skills, and dispositions and think long-term.

Track progress. As you set and clarify your vision, concrete goals will help you monitor progress along the way. From the very beginning, create a plan to measure your impact. What will progress look like? What are

short- and long-term indicators that systemic barriers are crumbling and that practices at the individual, team, school, and district level are shifting?

Are you using myriad methods of formative assessment to know if students are benefiting from the shifts educators are undertaking? Consider how you'll document and discuss progress, celebrating wins and adjusting your course of action when necessary.

I'm confident that educators have tremendous commitment and will to transform what all students experience in schools. Let's give them every tool to tackle the inequities they see and sustain the support they deserve to serve all students.

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This moment of understanding, embracing, and learning about each other's experiences is an opportunity for professional learning around the conditions that shape the lives of our students.

Ash Vasudeva is a member of the Learning Forward board of trustees.

BEING FORWARD

Ash Vasudeva

'THERE'S AN OPENNESS TO LEARNING AND CHANGING RIGHT NOW'

Ash Vasudeva is vice president of strategic initiatives at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He joined the Learning Forward board of trustees in December 2019.

Why has professional learning been important in your work?

Ultimately, everything we do in education comes down to high-quality teaching. When I was at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we called it effective teaching. No matter what you call it, it's at the core. Even though political and social forces may shift the focus sometimes, the pendulum will always swing back to high-quality teaching.

For example, when I was [co-executive director] at the School Redesign Network at Stanford University, it was around the time that the No Child Left Behind Act heightened the importance of test-based accountability measures in literacy and mathematics. But the critique of that approach was also emerging.

The work of our team was to figure out how to align and support systems, including central office, to take a systemic view of excellence in the classroom so they would be ready to support high-quality teaching when the pendulum did swing back.

To get to excellent teaching, you have to have a mindset about how to create richer, stronger professional learning environments for teachers. When I was at the School Redesign Network, NSDC [which later became Learning Forward] commissioned my colleague Linda Darling-Hammond to review effective teaching supports from an international perspective. One of the big takeaways was the importance of professional learning in developing high-quality systems.

In that review, we saw how well many other nations in the world were doing versus the U.S. I saw a major mismatch in our aspirations and our conditions for teachers. What was so compelling from that review of other countries' systems was the role of *ongoing* support and collaborative environments in getting to excellent teaching.

What are some of the readings that have influenced your thinking?

Early in my career, I was heavily influenced by *Horace's Compromise*, by Ted Sizer of the Coalition of Essential Schools. It guided my thinking about what schools could be, and I continue to think about that.

I also appreciate books that characterize teachers and teaching in high-quality systems. For example, [Amanda Ripley's] *The Smartest Kids in the World* drew a comparison among different countries' ways of getting to outcomes. You can drill students and test prep them and they get a good score, but they lose a richness of understanding and critical thinking and engaging with one another.

Or you can have rich classrooms led by highly skilled teachers where students gain expertise through peer collaboration, and you can get to the same place on a test score but with so much more.

In [U.S.] education, we're always bouncing between "show me the test score" and "show me the educated child." We have to always push for "show me the educated child" — and for supporting the qualified professional who got him or her there. Teachers have so much more to offer [than test prep] and we need to do more to support what they have to offer.

What is your assessment of the state of research on professional learning?

In education research, it has been challenging to sort out effects, that is, to figure out what factors contribute to what outcomes. In traditional research, when you study an individual



intervention, you are looking at how one factor affects another factor, generally in highly controlled settings. But educational settings are often more complicated than that.

I'm heartened by work that recognizes that improving teaching is multifaceted steps and systemic. However, those complex approaches are more difficult to study. Even if you can isolate the factors in a controlled intervention, when you take any intervention designed to support teachers out into schools, all the conditions and factors that went into the positive effect may not be present.

The work I'm doing now at the Carnegie Foundation is about how to create systems that allow for evidence-based changes to be taken up in new settings. We call that adaptive integration. No two systems are exactly

alike, so how do we build a set of processes that are checking to see if you're making progress along the way, if you're making early gains that are predictive of future results?

You're making an educated guess that something will work, but then you're building in a set of processes to test that hypothesis and refine its use in a specific place. We believe this kind of continuous improvement research is what's been missing in education.

In this kind of approach, which we call improvement science, feedback and guidance from teachers and students is essential to refine and improve the science. The people doing the work of teaching have to be empowered and encouraged to improve the work of teaching. And without teachers playing an active, front-and-center role in shaping professional learning and

improvement efforts, we'll be far less effective than we could be.

Improvement science tries to bring in multiple types of expertise. There is some knowledge base that resides largely in the education research literature that says, basically, "here's what we think we know."

But then you need the knowledge of the local context and conditions: "What do the challenges and problems look like here?" Nobody knows the local context and conditions like teachers. In improvement science, there's a merging and an interaction of those two types of expertise.

Traditionally, in our field, we haven't valued the process of understanding the problem from the perspective of the users — teachers and students. Improvement science is trying to change that.

With so much going on in the world, what are the implications for professional learning?

We're in a unique cultural moment. There is a pandemic going on, but there is also a social and cultural crisis about race in America. I think there's an openness to learning and changing right now. This moment of understanding, embracing, and learning about each other's experiences is an opportunity for professional learning around the conditions that shape the lives of our students.

Our professional learning agenda will be richer for these conversations that are happening now. It should challenge all of us to ask ourselves what the world looks like from the perspective of our students and families and how we can better support them. ■



COACHES NOTEBOOK

Sharron Helmke

ENCOURAGE A GROWTH MINDSET IN TEACHERS

Simply reminding people to keep a growth mindset isn't enough to establish it as ongoing practice or to initiate a culture shift toward it.

Growth mindset, a concept that has been influential throughout education and beyond, is core to successful instructional coaching. Coaches not only embody a growth mindset toward teaching and learning, but the very purpose of our work is helping that mindset come alive in the professional growth of teachers. We support teachers in seeing student learning needs as opportunities to improve teaching excellence, and we recognize that each experience, regardless of outcome, has a place in the learning journey.

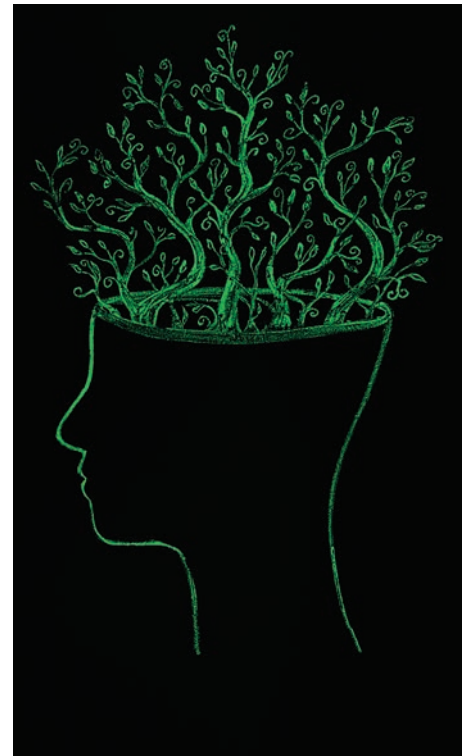
Challenges to growth mindset typically occur not with the concept, but in living *within* it. That's especially true when engaging in professional learning inquiry requires us to rethink our familiar, comfortable teaching plans. When I was a coach, I sometimes found it difficult to promote an ongoing growth mindset in teachers for this reason. But I found that focusing on growth mindset early in the school year — promoting, practicing, and reflecting on it — could help establish it within a coaching partnership or a team of teachers.

Simply reminding people to keep a growth mindset isn't enough to establish it as ongoing practice or to initiate a culture shift toward it. Instead, coaches need a repertoire of strategies and techniques to continuously promote it. Here are some of the tips I found most useful early in the school year.

Ask teachers to define what it means for them to have a growth mindset. Then, ask them to explain what that would look and sound like in various situations, such as during a planning conversation, data analysis, or a team meeting. List and post these examples on chart paper as visible reminders. Note: Facilitate teachers staying focused on their own professional growth rather than talking about promoting growth mindset in their students.

Celebrate moments when things didn't go exactly as planned. Share "A Celebration of Almost" or start "Fortuitous Fridays," where the most promising mistakes of the week are celebrated. The criteria for inclusion are thoughtful reflection and productive learning that resulted from the misstep and led to understanding next steps. Remember: Follow up to learn how this impacts teacher practice and student outcomes.

Establish a "growth mindset champion." This person's role is to call attention to evidence of growth mindset among team or department colleagues when it's seen or heard. You might choose to ask for a volunteer, designate someone, or assume that role yourself.



Sharron Helmke is a Gestalt awareness coach and a senior consultant for Learning Forward.

Continued on p. 14



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Melinda George

One of the strengths of these webinars is the depth of expertise they offer, not just among the panelists but also among participants sharing in the chat box.

WEBINARS TEACH US AND BRING US TOGETHER

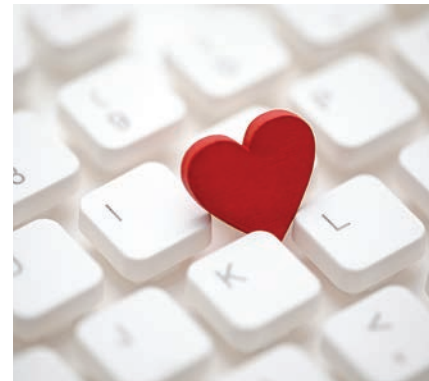
When the world moved online in mid-March, Learning Forward launched a series of weekly webinars to help educators navigate the new COVID-19 environment. With an emphasis on practitioners helping practitioners, the webinars are built around two goals: learning from one another's experiences and building community. We have had a tremendous response with educators from across the world and at all levels of education systems tuning in and learning together.

As the pandemic lingers on, evolving into what one of our panelists described as the "now normal" (rather than the new normal), professional learning has taken on a different look. At Learning Forward, we've learned a lot about online professional learning, including how to design and implement it in a way that engages educators. In the spirit of shared learning, here are a few lessons from our webinars that may be useful to others as you engage in online professional learning.

Create a space for honest and vulnerable communication.

Our webinars are informal, and presenters' remarks are not considered official statements. Although they are recorded and available on our website, we refer to them as off the record because we want to establish these webinars as a place of trust where we can give panelists the room to take risks in what they are sharing without fear of repercussions.

This allows them to share their positive experiences that have gone as planned, as well as the instances where they have learned hard but important lessons and had to pivot. We are careful to present our panelists as experts who are on a journey and willing to share their findings, without having all the "right" or "only" answers.



Emphasize learning by doing.

Throughout the course of our webinar series, educators have described a sense of urgency about learning new skills. Many were thrown into a teaching and learning environment in which they had no experience. Most have been trying new technologies and new modes of communication to help their students learn. What better way to develop those skills than to learn by doing?

Panelists for each webinar have shared specific tools and examples to allow webinar participants to see their work in action, borrow their great ideas, and try them out in their own classrooms. This emphasis on concrete strategies has been a boon to participants.

Recognize that expertise resides in the community.

One of the strengths of these webinars is the depth of expertise they offer, not just among the panelists but also among participants sharing in the chat box. Participants provide valuable ideas, strategies, and resources, often following up on presenters' ideas and providing links to additional resources.

This engagement has reminded us that educators want to contribute to the learning as well

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Continued from p. 12

Foster growth mindset by prioritizing reflection with your coachees. Ensure that there is always time for a reflection conversation after working with a teacher. It is through reflection that learning and excellence develop — the doing alone is not enough.

Encourage a teacher’s growth mindset by using some of these questions in your coaching. Note: You can adapt these to your own coaching style.

- What would need to change for this to be an opportunity rather than a challenge for you?
- What would it take for you to feel 50% more confident trying this?
- What part of this challenge do you feel is within your control? What’s outside of it?
- What would happen for students if you tried this and it was successful? What would that change for you?
- Having tried that, what are you most proud of? Most surprised by?
- If you could do that all over again, what would be the first thing you would do differently?
- What does this new learning inspire you to do next?
- How should I support you in the next step?

It’s important to note that even if the individuals within a team have a growth mindset, the team may still struggle to stay in a growth mindset when working together. As a coach, you can support the group’s mindset by using the same tips and questions to support the whole team and help the collaboration grow proactively and productively. ■

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED / Melinda George

as benefit from it. We are convinced the chat box feature and the ongoing dialogue it inspires should become a regular component of professional learning. It gives voice to all who want it, when they want it, and it can help to provide real time answers, suggestions, ideas, and resources.

Give grace and space in professional learning.

If we want educators to try new things and take risks, we need to give grace and space. We and presenters have used this expression on almost every webinar to acknowledge the power of positive intentions and respecting where each person is at in a given moment.

This means respecting others’ perspectives and needs, both during the webinar and in their journey overall. It means welcoming a crying infant in the background, encouraging a flustered presenter, considering a perspective you don’t initially agree with, and learning from others’ missteps instead of judging them.

As we educators often tell students, some of the greatest learning comes through efforts that didn’t work as

expected or didn’t work at all. There is power and learning in sharing those difficult experiences. It is time to make it a priority to create safe spaces for educator learning.

Acknowledge the power of relationships.

The pandemic has left all of us feeling isolated or even completely alone. Part of the power of the webinars is the way they connect us and show us that we are not alone. At the end of each webinar, we heard from participants that they felt rejuvenated, supported, and inspired to try new ideas in their own settings.

This is a little about the content and a lot about the people who shared, supported, motivated, and participated in community. It again supports what we know is foundational to high-quality professional learning — a strong collaborative environment. This has been a great reminder that, whether through learning communities within your school or district or in a chat box with 900 strangers, relationships are powerful and should be at the center of any professional learning experience.

Learning Forward’s webinar

series has been a small step in helping educators navigate the pandemic. The learning coming from the webinars, however, should serve as a large step in reimagining what professional learning looks like in a virtual world. All of the components of quality outlined in the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) are as important as ever in an online world and can, in fact, be vibrant and exemplary.

Districts and schools need to consider the characteristics of effective professional leaning — collaborative, ongoing, job-embedded — and apply them in new designs. This should include virtual coaching, virtual mentoring, virtual office hours, and online, facilitated professional learning communities. When educators have access to these new learning designs, they will feel more ready and connected to use them with their students.

REFERENCE

Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning.* Author. ■

EXAMINE. STUDY. UNDERSTAND.

RESEARCH

NEW ROUTES FOR LEARNING

"My greatest hope with this database is that we provide an easy road map for educators to find districts they can learn something from," says Robin Lake, director of the Center for Reinventing Public Education. "No one has got it all figured out, but we can't afford to reinvent the wheel when it comes to distance learning. I hope our data, and the blog posts we've been writing, will inspire conversations about whether schools and districts can learn and adapt quickly throughout this difficult time."

— *"What's happening with distance learning?"*

p. **19**



RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

STUDY EXPLORES WAYS TO SUPPORT MEANINGFUL INCLUSION

► THE STUDY

Stelitano, L., Russell, J.L., & Bray, L.E.

(2020). Organizing for meaningful inclusion: Exploring the routines that shape student supports in secondary schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 57(2), 535-575. doi.org/10.3102/0002831219859307

Elizabeth Foster (elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org) is vice president, research & standards at Learning Forward. In each issue of *The Learning Professional*, Foster explores recent research to help practitioners understand the impact of particular learning practices on student outcomes.

Learning Forward has hosted a series of webinars focused on teaching and learning during the COVID-19 realities of school building closures and remote classes. Throughout the series, no matter what the topic, participants have asked presenters how they are addressing the needs of students with disabilities and special needs.

This repeated question about services and inclusion has been partly about how schools and districts are moving their in-school practices to an online or remote environment. However, the consistent nature of the question also raises the issue of which structures and practices intended to support students with disabilities are successful and which are not. A recent small qualitative study looks into this question and offers some insights and implications for professional learning.

In an effort to get a close look at how schools implement their commitments to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms, the researchers undertook a case study of inclusion practices at two Pennsylvania high schools.

The authors and the research base they cite make a distinction between meaningful inclusion and more surface forms of inclusion, noting that it is not sufficient or appropriate to simply include students with disabilities in general education classes, but that changes must be made to daily practice and routines to provide accessible learning opportunities and experiences for each student.

The authors also acknowledge the complexities of teaching demands and supports as well as the impact constraints of time and resources can have on achieving a collective goal such as meaningful inclusive education.

The study highlights ways in which educators' goals, relationships, interactions, workarounds, and daily routines impact meaningful inclusion and student learning. They compared two schools with different inclusion models, examining the organizational structures, practices, and day-to-day routines that impact the learning of students with disabilities.

Routines and expectations about routines serve as a lens on school organization in this study. Routines can represent the goals and commitments of the school by organizing practices and structures to meet student needs.

Stelitano and colleagues looked at both intended, expected routines (called ostensive routines) and the routines actually enacted (called performative routines). They also looked at the impact of school resources, collaboration, and interactions among general education and special education teachers on routines, inclusion, and achievement.

The findings have implications for all educators because 14% of students in U.S. public



schools qualify for special education services, and many of them receive these services in general education classrooms (NCES, 2020).

RESEARCH GOALS AND QUESTIONS

The research team compared two approaches to implementing inclusion in two high schools in different school districts: consultation and co-teaching.

Willow High School, with 1,500 students (50% of them qualified for free and reduced lunch) had been recognized as an example of positive inclusion practices via a consultation model.

Elm High School, with 555 students (41% of them qualified for free and reduced lunch) was recognized for its co-teaching model. Willow enrolled students with behavioral and emotional challenges, whereas Elm did not. Both school names are pseudonyms.

Both schools had persistent achievement gaps between students with disabilities and those in general education and had been identified by the state as not having made Adequate Yearly Progress on state accountability assessments.

Yet both schools were committed to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms as much as possible and had been recognized by the state for their inclusion practices. Both schools also had programs for students who could not, for one reason or another, be included in the general education settings.

Three research questions structured the study:

- How are Willow and Elm high schools formally organized (i.e. the ostensive or expected

Routines and expectations about routines serve as a lens on school organization in this study. Routines can represent the goals and commitments of the school by organizing practices and structures to meet student needs.

aspect of routines) to support the inclusion of students with disabilities?

- What routines are actually practiced (i.e. the performative aspect of routines) to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in Willow and Elm high schools?
- What are the implications of Willow and Elm's organizational routines for student support?

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected over two years as part of a broader exploratory study about implementation of special education policies. Researchers interviewed the special education teachers in each school as well as a sample of general education teachers and district leaders. They conducted daylong observations of special educators who supported students in general education settings (not in self-contained classrooms) and analyzed artifacts.

The researchers also used a social network analysis survey to tap into informal interactions among educators. Social network research methodologies, with a systematic measuring of structures, resources, and expertise activated through educator interactions and routines, are a way to see collaboration.

For instance, analyzing a network can reveal to whom educators go for particular expertise or whom they trust

with sensitive information. Denser networks with more connections are associated with a higher level of collective efficacy but a lower rate of information exchange. Centralized networks are generally associated with an ability to share information effectively but a lower level of adaptability in changing contexts.

Researchers designed this survey to measure patterns of daily staff interactions with students with disabilities, asking teachers to indicate with whom they discussed special education students or issues and to rate the frequency of those conversations.

The researchers analyzed multiple data sources in three phases aligned to their research questions, triangulating the data where possible and identifying practices that met an established definition of routines: multiple actors engaging in work that is repeated and predictable over time.

As the study progressed, the focus became the special education teachers, who emerged as the linchpins of the inclusion practices at both schools.

FINDINGS

At Willow, the intent was for special educators to serve as expert consultants for general education content-area teachers on student learning needs, specific instructional strategies, and specialized supports. But the realities of schedules and resources made this challenging.

Given staffing arrangements and

schedules that required the five special education teachers to meet with 18 general education teachers in addition to monitoring student progress, observing classrooms, and occasionally providing direct student support, the depth and quality of consultations suffered. Special education teachers were unable to spend meaningful time in classrooms or with students.

The researchers noted, “We found no evidence of special educators consulting with teachers about issues related to instruction and student learning or sharing specialized knowledge of students with disabilities.”

Instead, the most prominent routine was administering tests. Although general education teachers cited this as an inclusive practice, research suggests it is not a meaningful one, and it was not the intent of the consultation model.

The consultation design also resulted in students with disabilities grouped into lower-level classes (a term used by the teachers), with the schedule arranged to ensure coverage of all students by a limited number of special education experts and instructional aides who could work in classrooms.

This meant that students with a range of disabilities were grouped into classes that “may not have afforded them the best opportunities to access rigorous general education curriculum.”

While Elm also grouped its students so that special educators could support them, teachers did not indicate that these were low-level assignments. At Elm, special education teachers were scheduled to co-teach the same classes daily and work with their students in a daily study hall.

The co-teaching model design facilitated productive educator collaboration. The caseload of students for each special education teacher was less than that at Willow, and the school provided substitute teachers to cover classes during monthly co-planning sessions.

The researchers observed that teachers implemented inclusion

The study found that educators’ daily routines were often at odds with the intent of the inclusion models. As educators sought to balance the expectations of inclusion with the realities of limited resources, including workload and teacher time, they were unable to engage students in meaningful learning interactions.

routines mostly in the study halls, providing support to students in completing assignments and organizational skills. One special education teacher reported that teachers didn’t meet to “come up with this cool, creative lesson together,” but rather to communicate about their students’ progress and needs. She said they spent time asking, “What do my kids owe? What are their grades?” and then committed “to make those kids make up all that work.”

Teachers felt pressure to make sure students passed classes, either due to accountability concerns or a lack of understanding about modifications, which again took priority over ensuring rigorous or meaningful learning.

The social network analysis found that both schools had high-density networks, meaning that norms and information could spread easily among staff. However, the density related to special education matters was spread unevenly among staff. The interactions were by far concentrated with the special educators.

This indicated a breadth but not a depth of interactions. General education teachers weren’t learning about special education, leaving the special education teachers in both settings essentially solely responsible for students’ learning.

Part of the reason for this limited

dispersal of information was that, given limited time and, in some cases, interest, educators looked to make their routines and interactions efficient. This meant limiting professional conversations about student needs, modifications, adapted learning goals, and instructional strategies.

In both schools, special education teachers’ roles were to help students in ways that did not constitute meaningful inclusion or learning, such as helping students pass tests or meet course requirements.

IMPLICATIONS

While the study is small and the researchers acknowledge that the generalizability of results from two high schools is limited, this case study provides a lens through which we can view what it means to be inclusive as well as some harsh realities related to implementation.

The study found that educators’ daily routines were often at odds with the intent of the inclusion models. As educators sought to balance the expectations of inclusion with the realities of limited resources, including workload and teacher time, they were unable to engage students in meaningful learning interactions.

As the authors caution, “Inclusion in name only, without appropriate supports for students to access general education content, is not likely to disrupt inequitable student achievement outcomes.”

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Beyond the informal social networks, which constitute a form of shared learning, the formal professional learning aspect of these two models is mentioned only briefly. Nonetheless, the researchers acknowledge that the finding of educators’ suboptimal practices indicate a need for improved and ongoing professional learning on inclusive practices, regardless of the model.

Continued on p.21

IN MARCH 2020, the Center on Reinventing Public Education began tracking U.S. districts' plans for navigating school closures and distance learning. The database, which is available on CRPE's website (www.crpe.org), draws on publicly available plans from the 30 largest districts in the country, members of the Council of the Great City Schools, smaller districts that participate in CRPE's rural studies, and at least one district from otherwise unrepresented states. Since March, the center has been analyzing the plans and presenting the trends in a series of research papers and commentaries.

The Learning Professional spoke with CRPE director Robin Lake about how the database took shape, what she and her colleagues have learned from it, and the implications for professional learning.



Robin Lake is director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education. "My greatest hope with this database is that we provide an easy road map for educators to find districts they can learn something from," she says.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH DISTANCE LEARNING?

DATABASE TRACKS DISTRICT PLANS

Q&A with Robin Lake

Q: Why and how did you create the database as soon as schools started closing their doors?

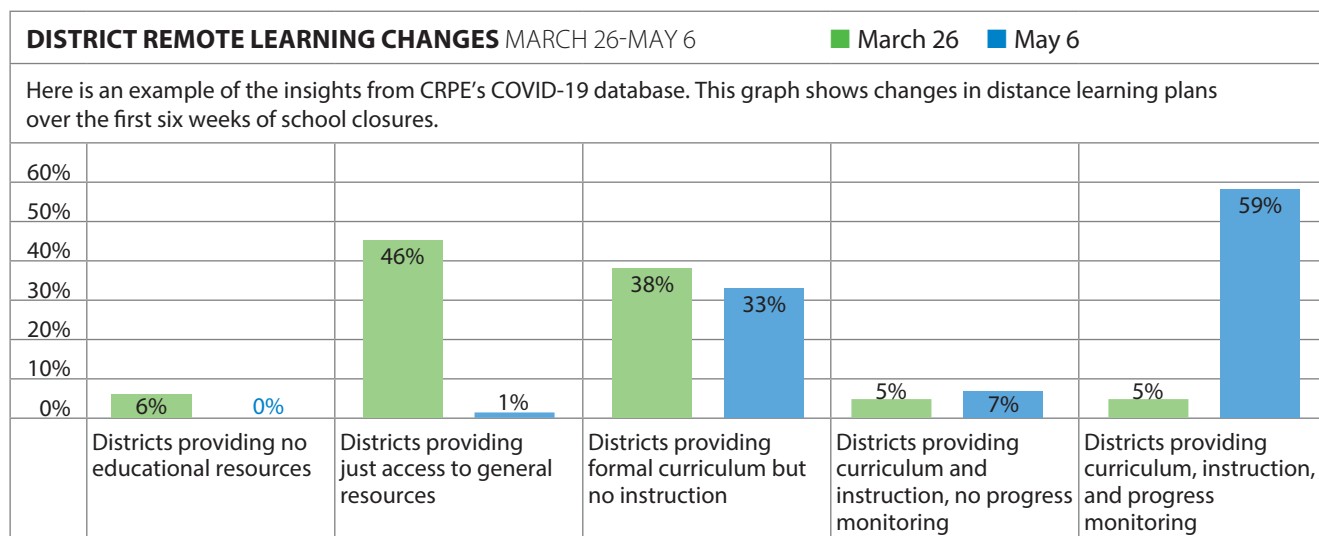
A: CRPE is located in Seattle, where the pandemic first hit hard in the U.S. We could see that what our state's districts were struggling with, and figuring out, were the things all districts would soon be dealing with. We like to be useful to the field, and we pride ourselves on being able to see around the corner to

issues no one else is yet thinking about, so we got the project going quickly.

Q: How did you decide which aspects of districts' plans to include in the database?

A: We have a couple of former school system leaders working with us, and I asked them to tell me what they thought were the most critical data points to track. They zeroed in on the

RESEARCH



things that would likely matter most for continued student learning: whether the district was providing a comprehensive instructional program and whether they were reinforcing that with supports and check-ins, their approach to grading, attendance etc. We always like to start our research with the question, “What do we know about effective teaching and learning?” and go from there.

Over time, however, we’ve added to our analysis based on feedback and questions we get from educators, parents, media, and policymakers. We’ve benefited from presenting our work — virtually, of course — and hearing what people are worrying about or learning.

Q: What have you learned about professional development plans and needs during distance learning?

A: We’ve been tracking info on district websites, and most districts haven’t announced much publicly about professional development. What we can see from reviewing the many teacher surveys out there, however, is that teachers are really struggling, especially with strategies to keep students engaged from a distance.

It’s clear they also need help with lesson planning and specialized support for students with unique needs. Most

My greatest hope with this database is that we provide an easy road map for educators to find districts they can learn something from. No one has got it all figured out, but we can’t afford to reinvent the wheel when it comes to distance learning.

teachers are not doing a lot of live, or synchronous, online instruction. I think that’s largely because it’s so difficult to pull off. At the same time, teachers and students alike say live instruction is what they think is most effective.

I really hope we’ll see more districts provide professional development over the summer, and maybe some specialized certification for distance instruction, to get ready for fall. It’s pretty likely that distance learning will continue in some form next year.

Q: How do you hope educators will use the database?

A: My greatest hope with this database is that we provide an easy road map for educators to find districts they can learn something from. No one has got it all figured out, but we can’t afford to reinvent the wheel when it comes to distance learning. I hope our data, and the blog posts we’ve been writing, will inspire conversations about whether schools and districts can learn and adapt quickly throughout this difficult time.

Educators are exhausted. We want to ease their load by showing what else is possible that they may not have tried yet.

Q: Based on your reviews of the database, what trends do you find encouraging?

A: I’m glad districts took food delivery and other basics so seriously in the early days. People were creative and committed and got the job done for students who would have otherwise gone hungry. I’ve been encouraged that over time, the majority of districts are now providing an array of instructional materials, from paper packets to television broadcasts, to ensure parents could keep their kids engaged at home even if they didn’t have the ability to connect online.

Q: What trends do you find most concerning?

A: Some districts just finally got their distance learning up and running in May and some still have not. At this

point, only one of every three districts in the country is requiring teachers to provide online instruction. Even fewer are ensuring there is regular progress monitoring and attendance-taking.

Too many kids have never heard from their teacher during this pandemic. Too few students are getting live instruction where they can see their teachers and friends. I know from teacher survey results that educators are already very concerned about emotional challenges and missed learning. We need to find a way to learn from the things that worked well and the things that didn't so we can get ready for next year and the next possible pandemic.

Q: What are the most common challenges?

A: In some cases, union negotiations took a long time. In others, it took an especially long time to make sure every

TO LEARN MORE

CRPE's COVID-19 work includes a database of state and school district responses, impact, analysis, and The Evidence Project, a network of researchers working to narrow the gap between research and policy. Visit crpe.org for more information and resources.

student had a device and Wi-Fi access. Special education was a hang-up in a lot of places, as districts wanted to be sure they were in compliance with federal laws. Every district had a challenge of some kind, and some certainly had more challenges than most, but a number of districts really exhibited a can-do attitude and moved forward despite not having every piece in place.

Q: How will the database evolve to track schools' reopening plans?

A: We are watching closely. We'll be reporting on the content and organizing

an expert review panel to weigh in on the most promising ones. Watch our website and Twitter feed for news.

We've also launched The Evidence Project, a network of more than 100 researchers who will be organizing to study critical questions unique to schools during this pandemic. We'll track and share new research across our network as soon as it's available.

We want to be helpful, so educators and system leaders: Please let us know how the research community can help you do your work better. We're so thankful for your efforts in this very trying time. ■

RESEARCH REVIEW / Elizabeth Foster

Continued from p. 18

Applying Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning could help educators reflect on how to improve professional learning for inclusive practices. It is clear from the findings that the intent of the inclusion efforts was not realized, in part because of a lack of attention to **Implementation**.

Focusing on the **Outcomes standard** could result in a clearer understanding of the learning goals and performance expectations for all students, which could lead to better fidelity and more successful teaching and learning.

The structures of both inclusion models provide opportunities for collaborative discussions in which general education teachers could learn more about successful practices of special education teachers, specific instructional strategies such as

reteaching, or co-taught lessons.

However, given the strained **Resources** of both schools — especially time and workload capacity — teachers couldn't meet these goals. This resource challenge is of utmost importance. If the educators at Willow had additional time and ongoing professional learning, what outcomes might they have realized for their students with disabilities?

The researchers' theme that inclusion needs to be embedded in and implemented as part of schoolwide frameworks aligns with the **Learning Communities standard** that describes the importance of a collective commitment and a collaborative endeavor to support all students' learning.

In addition, there was no ongoing continuous improvement process to adapt the collaboration time or routines over the two years of the study. Cycles of improvement in which educators

build their own knowledge and skills — with resources to support them — could realize the promise of either inclusion model.

To realize a commitment to inclusion, an understanding of what meaningful inclusion means and entails must be part of the culture of the school and inform design of teaching and learning experiences, supports, and resource allocations.

If the goal is to move beyond exposing students with disabilities to the general education curriculum to providing access to meaningful learning opportunities in general settings, this commitment must permeate the day-to-day practices of all educators.

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DATA POINTS

87% OF EDUCATORS MORE CONFIDENT WITH TECHNOLOGY

In spring 2020, 87% of educators reported that their facility with technology rose, according to nationally representative surveys by the EdWeek Research Center. Perhaps not surprisingly, 87% of educators also reported that they spent more time than usual troubleshooting technology issues.

But the high ratings of teachers' improved efficacy with technology offer some hope that that number may go down. And the new normal of working online is underscored by the fact that 94% of teachers and district leaders reported attending a virtual professional learning or networking event during the month of April alone.

It is likely that educators' needs for technology-based professional learning will continue to grow, but these findings also raise the possibility that a steep learning curve this spring may pay off in the long run for educators and students. bit.ly/2Bv5aRd

20% OF TEACHERS MORE LIKELY TO QUIT

In another EdWeek survey, developed in partnership with Teach for America, about 20% of teachers reported that they are now "somewhat more" or "much more" likely to leave classroom teaching at the end of the 2019-20 school year because of the novel coronavirus. And 44% believed their colleagues were "somewhat more" or "much more" likely to do the same. Furthermore, 67% said they are concerned about the health risks of going back into the classroom. The implications for teacher hiring and training are not yet clear.

bit.ly/2NmZMIH



70% OF TEENS MISS GOING TO SCHOOL

Results of a nationwide survey of Canadian 12- to 17-year-olds about the social and emotional impacts of the pandemic suggest that students' well-being is an important topic for educators to prepare for.

The majority of respondents miss attending school, with about 40% of those saying they miss it "a lot," but 40% to 50% said they did schoolwork less often during distance learning. More than a quarter say COVID-19 has had "a lot" of negative impact on their school year and academic success, and that number is higher among immigrant youth.

The Association for Canadian Studies' COVID-19 Social Impacts Network, in partnership with Experiences Canada and the Vanier Institute of the Family, conducted the study.

bit.ly/3euu3e7

75% OF PRINCIPALS LACK TIME FOR LEARNING

A research project reports that 42% of principals are considering leaving their positions, with lack of time for professional learning a factor for 75% of principals.

Principals cited heavy workload, insufficient compensation, lack of useful evaluation and feedback, limited decision-making authority, and inadequate access to professional learning. Among the

barriers to professional learning were lack of time (75%), lack of funding for in-service professional learning (36%), and the high cost of preservice preparation (25%).

"Nearly all indicated a desire for additional professional development to meet their students' needs," the report says.

In the final installment of a four-part research project about the causes and consequences of principal turnover, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Learning Policy Institute recommend programs and policies to underwrite principal preparation programs, fund in-service professional learning, and remove barriers to participation. bit.ly/3dqKh6P

2 TYPES OF LEADERSHIP PREDICT PARTNERSHIPS

Now that many students are attending school from home, school-family partnerships are even more important. A study in *School Community Journal* suggests that principals play an important role in the development of family partnerships.

It found that principals influence school-family partnerships and teacher outreach to families in multiple ways. Teachers engaged with families more when principals' actions created an inclusive and supportive school climate and they shared a vision for strong school-family partnerships with the rest of the school community.

Also, the quality of the partnership was higher when principals empowered, supported, and facilitated others in the school through leadership teams. Professional learning on family partnerships may be a valuable investment for school leaders.

bit.ly/2ATwFnB

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

FOCUS

TURNING TO TECHNOLOGY

2023

2022

2021

2020

THE ROAD AHEAD

“When school resumes for the 2020-21 school year, teachers will have new support needs and the old playbook for professional learning likely won’t suffice. They’ll be facing a set of challenges that likely existed to some degree in the past, but that are now underscored by the learning disruptions due to COVID-19.”

— “What teachers need now,” p. **24**

IN THEIR WORDS



“How do I keep in touch with students to provide encouragement, praise, and assistance without overwhelming parents with messages?”



“How can I effectively teach my students the remaining content and standards when we are only allowed 2.5 hours a day of work and only four new content lessons per week as per my district leadership?”



“How can I engage the students who can't join my online classes but who still try to complete the quizzes and tests I assign virtually? The students who haven't attended my online classes often fail.”



“Are my students actually learning?”



WHAT TEACHERS NEED NOW

AS TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS CHANGE, LET PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRINCIPLES GUIDE THE WAY

BY CLAIRE RIVERO

With educators facing conditions we've never seen before, Student Achievement Partners wanted to better understand what was happening on the ground — the triumphs, needs, opportunities, and concerns of teachers trying to navigate instruction during the pandemic. A sample of more than 400 survey responses we received in March and

April 2020, which include the comments you see on this page, tells the story.

Looking at the survey results, educators' realities varied dramatically, ranging from districts that were able to get all students online and switch to online learning models within just a few weeks to others that gave almost no guidance to their teachers. As a teacher in one such district wrote, “What am I supposed to be doing? Am I doing enough for my



students? I need to be given direction.”

Yet there were many commonalities among the educators we surveyed. Some of the trends included:

- **Educators were primarily responsible for designing lessons.** Initially, many educators were unsure what their district plans would be for instruction, but by April, 63% of teachers indicated that they themselves were in charge of designing lessons and selecting instructional content for students.
- **Most educators stopped using existing curricular programs.** Only 21% of educators reported being able to continue using the digital version of their existing curriculum. The rest had to seek out new online resources or create paper packets.
- **Student internet access was inconsistent.** 66% of teachers reported that they either knew for certain that not all students had internet access or were unsure about the internet or online capacity of all their students. Even among teachers who were

instructed to use the digital version of their existing curriculum, 67% lacked clarity about their students’ internet access.

- **Districts were divided over whether to continue with new instruction.** 60% of teachers reported that their districts continued to teach new material to some degree, while 40% of teachers reported only being able to go over previously taught content.
- **Professional learning capacity grew.** 80% of educators indicated that they had interest and capacity to pursue professional learning opportunities virtually. Of these teachers, 37% indicated that their capacity for professional learning was actually higher than it would normally be at this time of year.

As we reviewed the findings, we were surprised that, with all of the added responsibility and challenges of switching to remote learning models, most educators shared an appetite, even an increased appetite, for professional learning. But as we read the concerns and specific questions

ABOUT THE SURVEY DESIGN

Goal: Understand what remote learning looked like across the country in spring 2020.

Method: Google Form surveys sent in March and April 2020. (Goal with multiple surveys was to determine if educator needs or situations changed as the semester progressed.)

Audience: Shared with Student Achievement Partners’ followers and email subscribers via Facebook (28,000), LinkedIn (1,000), Twitter (34,000), email (70,000), and webinar (500 sent after a webinar related to remote learning strategies).

Total respondents: 453.

INFORMATION ON RESPONDENTS:

- 60% directly teach students, 22% directly support teachers, 11% support schools or districts, 7% performed another education role, such as school psychologist or both taught and supported teachers.
- Respondents taught or supported a range of subjects: English language arts/literacy, mathematics, social studies/history, science.
- Respondents represented all grades K-12.
- Respondents represented nearly all 50 U.S. states, with the highest number of respondents from California, Florida, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Ohio.

educators voiced, it quickly became clear why there was so much interest in professional learning: Teachers had new learning needs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

When school resumes for the 2020-21 school year, teachers will have new support needs, and the old playbook for professional learning likely won't suffice. They'll be facing a set of challenges that likely existed to some degree in the past, but that are now underscored by the learning disruptions due to COVID-19.

So how can those who design professional learning ensure it addresses the needs voiced by educators this spring? Now more than ever, we recommend that professional learning follow the principles we laid out in *Principles for High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Professional Learning* (Student Achievement Partners, 2020a).

Professional learning should be content-focused.

Professional learning must be tied to the grade-level content teachers will be expected to teach. This includes understanding how to scaffold instruction and provide just-in-time remediation that helps address students' unfinished learning from the previous year.

Without action-focused, practical

Professional learning must also support teachers in creating student-centered learning experiences regardless of whether students experience learning in person, digitally, or with pencil and paper.

guidance on how to scaffold grade-level content and provide access to all students, teachers may resort to teaching months of off-grade content (which would leave students off-track in terms of a college- and career-ready trajectory), or keep certain students from grade-level content based on assessment data.

The latter has serious equity implications and will lead to wider achievement gaps.

There is also the question of what content to prioritize given new time constraints. Many teachers will have limited face-to-face or synchronous learning time with students this fall as districts switch to alternate-day schedules or hybrids of synchronous and asynchronous virtual instruction. Student Achievement Partners (2020b) has outlined priority instructional content for 2020-21 to help decision-makers leverage existing efficiencies in the standards to address unfinished learning while keeping students on-

track with grade-level college- and career-ready learning.

Professional learning should be teacher- and student-centered.

A teacher-centered model of instruction is one in which teachers feel safe to name their own learning needs, take risks, and make mistakes and learn from them. In our surveys, respondents could remain anonymous if they chose, and that anonymity may have freed many to share candidly about how little they knew about remote learning platforms, how to engage students remotely (especially in light of uncertain internet access), and what content they were supposed to be teaching in the first place. This freedom needs to extend to professional learning settings, even when anonymity isn't an option, since it's the only way the learning can be responsive to teachers' real needs.

Professional learning must also support teachers in creating student-centered learning experiences regardless of whether students experience learning in person, digitally, or with pencil and paper. This spring has focused educators on their own biases, differing expectations for students, and the way their own actions may create inequitable learning environments.

Reflecting on these realities and strategies to create more inclusive learning environments must be a part of



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professional learning. We recommend following the *Equity Matters!* newsletters produced by Montgomery County Public Schools as an example of the kinds of topics to integrate into professional learning (Montgomery County Public Schools, 2020).

Professional learning should be instructionally relevant and actionable.

Teachers need professional learning that goes beyond sit-and-get to actually allowing them to practice and reflect on new strategies and learning. To do this, consider building in time to:

- Allow teachers to practice with new tools (this will be especially important for teachers developing new skills with remote learning platforms), resources, or strategies, as well as time to receive feedback;
- Organize sessions and

collaborative work time by content focus and grade so teachers can target specific learning goals and challenges; and

- Include regular, collaborative work sessions where teachers can continue to design, rehearse, and refine instructional practice strategies to respond to classroom (including the virtual classroom) needs.

THE ROAD AHEAD

This past spring has brought its fair share of challenges, but it has also opened up new opportunities for reflecting and improving the way we support teachers.

It is important that we seize this opportunity to rethink how professional learning looks and feels. Teachers have shared what they need. Now designers must listen and act.

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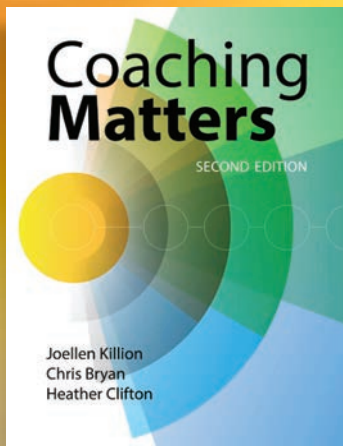
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Coaching Matters, Second Edition

JOELLEN KILLION, CHRIS BRYAN, & HEATHER CLIFTON

Built on ongoing research and work with school systems to design coaching programs that improve learning, *Coaching Matters, Second Edition*, clarifies the complex issues and operational details of effective systemwide coaching programs.

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— **Jim Knight**, senior partner
Instructional Coaching Group





DO YOUR MATERIALS MEASURE UP?

REMOTE LEARNING UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR QUALITY CURRICULUM

BY ERIC HIRSCH AND COURTNEY ALLISON

Districts and states have worked around the clock for the past several months to put new structures in place for students to learn safely during an unprecedented crisis. We now know that the challenges of the pandemic are unlikely to vanish anytime soon, and schools will need to stay nimble about how and where they educate students.

This moment highlights the importance of curriculum adoptions supported by strong professional learning — a long-term investment that will have an impact in the fall and for many years to come.

Instructional materials matter for student success. They mattered before

the COVID-19 crisis, and they will matter even more as schools transition into new teaching formats this fall.

As educators prepare for an uncertain return to school, many may feel pressure to throw out what they know about curriculum and rush toward buying materials that are high-tech and digital. We believe this approach circumvents the real challenge at hand: ensuring students have the *content* they need to become college- and career-ready.

Since 2015, EdReports has worked with educator reviewers from across the country to publish reports for more than 700 math, English language arts, and science grade-level materials.

Our reports not only provide

educators with independent information to conduct a smart adoption process but also professional learning around the standards and instructional shifts. The end goal of our reports is to empower educators to better analyze what's quality and what's not so they can select materials that are standards-aligned and meet local needs.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, EdReports has held conversations with dozens of state and district leaders, classroom teachers, and instructional coaches to identify how best to support immediate and long-term needs to accelerate learning.

Based on what we heard, we offer five recommendations to educators on how to identify, build capacity for,



Conversations about technology tend to get at the *how* and *where* of instruction, but *what* is taught remains paramount.

and leverage high-quality instructional materials to support students, whether they are learning in the classroom, at home, or in a hybrid setting this fall.

1. When it comes to curriculum, make content the top priority.

Conversations about technology tend to get at the *how* and *where* of instruction, but *what* is taught remains paramount. Research shows that quality curriculum influences classroom practice and ultimately student outcomes.

For example, a 2018 study illustrated that teachers using standards-aligned materials engaged students in mathematical practices at a significantly higher rate than teachers who did not use an aligned curriculum (Opfer et al., 2018).

Another study showed using a top-ranked program in 4th- or 5th-grade math would translate to student achievement gains of 3.6 percentile points — larger than the improvement of a typical teacher’s effectiveness in his or her first three years on the job (Kane et al., 2016).

Educators know how much materials matter, but they do not always have access to the quality content that their students deserve. The good news is that more high-quality curricula are available than was the case five years ago.

When EdReports first began evaluating curricula in 2015, we only found one math program that met expectations for standards alignment. Fast-forward five years, and today nearly half of English language arts materials and a third of math materials are standards-aligned (LaVenía, 2020). More than 30 publishers have updated

and improved their products using our reviews.

Although districts now have dozens of quality options to consider, we know that aligned materials are not being widely used. Only 16% of English language arts materials and 26% of math materials used in classrooms are aligned to the standards, according to our latest *State of the Instructional Materials Market* report (LaVenía, 2020).

A lack of professional learning and commitment to smart adoption practices likely contribute to these low rates of aligned materials use. This is a problem in the best of times, but it is even more troubling these days, when students must overcome a multitude of challenges to schooling, including remote learning.

2. Leverage quality curriculum to accelerate learning.

Preliminary estimates of the “COVID-19 slide” from the Northwest Evaluation Association (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020) suggest students will return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year. In math, students are likely to lose even more ground, returning with less than 50% of typical learning gains.

In some grades, students may be nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions. This data becomes less surprising when you learn that just 1 in 3 districts (Gross et al., 2020) required teachers to deliver instruction in the final 12 weeks of school.

Making sure all students and families have access to grade-level,

appropriate, engaging materials, instruction, and support is one important way we can prevent opportunity gaps from growing. When students have a foundation of quality content, teachers can then focus on accelerating learning instead of falling back on remediation tactics (Steiner & Weisberg, 2020) that research clearly shows do not work.

Addressing unfinished learning begins with understanding the demands of grade-level materials and content. Districts should begin by investing in professional learning in which educators study the standards alongside year-long scopes and sequences.

This approach allows educators to better understand what standards and topics will be covered and when, how students will apply their knowledge of the standards, and how they will show that knowledge. This will require looking closely at the standards, the topics, and the tasks within a unit and across the year.

Focusing on getting students to grade level does not mean ignoring social and emotional or other nonacademic needs. Addressing those is critical to setting students up for success. Educators should prioritize accelerating students’ learning by ensuring their exposure to grade-appropriate content — so that every student can get back to grade level. Results may not be evident in a single year, but without the goal and a strategy for it, it will not happen at all.

3. Take time to analyze your remote learning options.

Giving all students access to high-quality instructional materials is more

important than ever, and technology plays an essential role in that access. Understandably, districts are seeking more precise guidance about the extent to which instructional materials align to remote learning needs.

To support the field, EdReports has requested information from publishers to help consumers better understand the digital design and capabilities of their instructional materials. On our website, we have posted enhanced reports with key technology information (see edreports.org/resources/enhanced-reports-with-key-technology-information) for more than 200 existing grade-level materials that meet expectations for alignment to the grade-level standards.

The collection of questions sent to publishers are based on an audit of our current technology indicators and interviews with educators and district leaders who told us what additional information would be the most helpful. The final technology reports are composed of self-reported information from publishers. The enhanced reviews will help address usability questions such as:

- Are the materials designed so that students are able to access and complete work online?
- In what ways do the materials support learning in hybrid settings (both in-person and remote learning) concurrently?

And technical questions such as:

- Are the materials designed to be used with both digital and print components?
- Are the materials configured to work with one or more learning management systems such as Blackboard and Google Classroom?
- Can students who move between teachers or schools using the same materials be reassigned without losing their work or progress?
- Do districts receive technical support during initial set-up and ongoing?

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE SELECTION OF HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS

This fall and beyond, student access to standards-aligned, coherent, grade-level curricula will be a key component to accelerating learning and supporting teachers, students, and parents to know what will be taught two, four, and even eight months down the line.

To support educators in their planning during the COVID-19 pandemic, EdReports has created a collection of resources to advocate for and guide decision-making around the use of high-quality instructional materials.

Visit [EdReports.org](https://edreports.org) to explore free COVID-19 resources (edreports.org/resources/covid-19) and educator-created reviews for more than 700 grade-level reports of English language arts, math, and science materials (edreports.org/reports).

Districts can start now by unpacking their definition of digital — a common word when discussing remote learning. Digital, however, can apply to many different types of materials. For example, materials could be lessons available for free online, commercial supplemental programs, or year-long comprehensive core materials.

For year-long comprehensive materials, the term encompasses a broad range of products, ranging from online PDFs or e-book versions of textbooks to materials designed for full-time remote teaching and learning.

In addition, we encourage school districts to align their remote learning plans with their technological capabilities and provide teachers with training and professional learning to support the transition.

Districts with a high student-to-device ratio will have much different priorities, approaches, and needs compared to districts where every student has an internet-enabled device.

4. Beware of marketing hype and sales spin.

School closures across the country, and an uncertain return to school, have sent educators and parents scrambling to find online resources that will keep kids learning. We are already seeing instances of companies exaggerating the effectiveness of their ed tech products (Butrymowicz & Garcia Mathewson, 2020) with little quality evidence.

The creation of EdReports was in response to similar practices from publishers soon after the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2012. Back then, there was almost no independent information about the quality of K-12 instructional materials that educators could easily access. When districts chose new programs, educators often had to rely on sales pitches from publishers or standards-alignment claims from stickers on the covers of textbooks to make decisions.

Alas, most digital resources used this spring fell far short of what students need. For example, a RAND survey (Kaufman & Tosh, 2020) found: Most digital materials are not curricula. They typically do not include lessons that build on one another over time and are not necessarily clearly tied to academic content standards for particular grades and subject areas. Many materials were no more than practice worksheets.

Technology is an important factor in supporting teachers and students during and after the pandemic. And it can be tempting to consider a product based on all the things it can do online.

But if those attributes don't reflect the specific needs of your students or exceed the technological capabilities of your school or district, then what's the point? Ultimately, the quality of the content is what will make a difference for student outcomes.

5. High-quality professional learning will be key.

Digital curriculum does not teach itself. As with any type of curriculum, teachers deserve professional learning and opportunities to collaborate and learn from peers as they use the new materials.

That doesn't mean turning professional development staff into IT troubleshooters so they can show teachers how to master Zoom or log in to student information systems from home. It does mean creating and protecting time — online or in person — for professional learning rooted in content and curricular materials for every teacher.

While we know both quality curriculum and professional learning can contribute to teacher and student success, numerous studies show that they have a greater effect together than alone (Jackson & Makarin, 2016).

A recent meta-analysis (Lynch et al., 2019) by Heather Hill and her colleagues looking at 95 research studies on STEM programs found that implementing curriculum with professional development — specifically with support for learning how to use materials and improving teachers' content knowledge and knowledge of student learning — led to stronger student outcomes.

These findings echo research and promising practices documented by the Aspen Institute that call for fully integrating chosen curriculum into ongoing, job-embedded professional learning and development (Wiener & Pimintel, 2017).

Implementation can be complicated under normal circumstances, but the ambiguity of what school will be like in the fall compounds the challenge. That's why it's imperative that districts tailor professional learning to the curriculum, so teachers are prepared to deliver the content regardless of the learning environment.

LOOKING AHEAD

This crisis has already exposed gaps

in the instructional materials many districts are using. Conversely, we have also seen the benefits of having an aligned, quality curriculum in place that clearly articulates what students should be learning all year long.

As the fall approaches, let's ensure that every student has access to high-quality materials and that all teachers can engage in the professional learning they need.

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THE RIGHT BLEND

SEL SKILLS SUPPORT
TEACHER LEARNING
IN PERSON AND ONLINE

BY LAURA L. SUMMERS

The COVID-19 pandemic required that nearly all P-20 teaching and learning move quickly to virtual formats.

In many cases, educators were teaching exclusively online for the first time in their careers. Schools suddenly needed to train and support all educators on how to teach, engage students, and support families from a distance. This created an urgent need to provide meaningful professional learning in a virtual learning community.

The sudden move to remote learning exposed longstanding educational inequities in teaching and learning practices. One important goal that has emerged is to find ways to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Although technology access is one part of the equation, building equity is about far more than providing laptops and internet hotspots to students



who don't have them. It is also about creating "learning environments that welcome and support all students" (CASEL, n.d., p. 4). It is about recognizing each student's individual needs, interests, and worth, and ensuring that everyone gets what he or she needs to succeed, wherever the learning occurs.

Yet, in the rush to prepare educators for virtual environments, today's professional learning does not always model or embody the responsiveness and relational focus necessary for equity. A common flaw with virtual professional learning has been to take content that was facilitated in person and simply move it to an online lecture, even though research has shown that the sit-and-get mode of professional learning is the least effective way to impact teacher practice.

Professional learning that is relationship-based, empowering, and grounded in social and emotional learning (SEL) will prepare educators to build equity and self-efficacy for re-engaging learners in the coming school year, whether teaching online or in person.

LEARNING GROUNDED IN SEL

All professional learning, including virtual professional learning, should be grounded in an understanding of social and emotional learning. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as "the process through

which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, n.d.).

Decades of research have shown that SEL is critical for the success of all learners from childhood to adulthood (Durlak et al., 2011; Markowitz et al., 2018; Yoder et al., 2020). SEL matters regardless of whether teaching and learning occur in a face-to-face, virtual, or blended environment.

In fact, SEL may be more important now than ever because it helps educators, families, and students manage stress, develop resilience, and maintain a sense of optimism during challenging times (Markowitz et al., 2018; Wanless & Winters, 2018; Yoder et al., 2020).

Educators can lead with SEL and foster it in students if and when they engage in professional learning that is grounded in SEL skills. Educators need to feel psychologically safe to learn new skills just as much as students do. And they need to understand SEL skills in a deep way to model, teach, and support those skills in students. This was highlighted in the SEL-focused August 2018 issue of *The Learning Professional*.

For example, in that issue, the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child shared a framework for developing educators' social, emotional, and cultural competence so that they can support students' competence

SEL-SUPPORTED ONLINE TECH POINTERS

● **Keep it simple.** Learning online is a new experience for many teachers. Use a minimum number of tools and use them consistently. Provide a guided demonstration of each tool that can be recorded for later review. Many vendors have online videos already available.

● **Check in with teachers.** Create time to check in synchronously with each teacher to gauge comfort levels and determine stress points. This can happen in a scheduled one-on-one or in consistently scheduled virtual office hours.

Teachers have varying levels of comfort using technology or even learning from home, where home responsibilities may be competing for their attention. During COVID-19, I have used a brief, weekly check-in survey asking teachers to let me know how they are doing emotionally and physically with the shift to working and learning new skills while also helping their own families and significant others at home.

● **Ask experts to help.** If online professional learning is new to your school, reach out to a faculty member of an online learning design program at a university to design an effective online professional learning structure template.

Graduate students often need to complete unpaid or low-cost internship hours to show their mastery of instructional design. Programs such as the Learning Design and Technology program at the University of Colorado Denver employ student concierges, who earn internship credits or work-study hours by supporting instructors and organizations new to online teaching and learning.

(Markowitz et al., 2018; Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child, 2020).

The Anchor Competencies Framework consists of seven competencies that can be used in any learning setting, including a virtual learning environment, along with examples of moves educators can use to embody these SEL competencies. The competencies are:

- Build trusting relationships;
- Foster self-reflection;
- Foster growth mindset;
- Cultivate perseverance;
- Create community;
- Promote collaborative learning; and
- Respond constructively across differences.

These competencies are important for leaders as well as teachers. Leaders can model this approach through

professional learning with teachers, who in turn can share this approach with students.

Indeed, a critical component of virtual professional learning is to have instructional leaders model how they would like teachers to engage with students. Penuel (2015) explains that professional learning needs to anticipate and address how students will think when learning a new concept.

This same strategy should be used in teacher professional learning. By using this proactive, student-focused strategy, teachers can learn just as effectively online (Fishman et al., 2013) as in person.

FOSTER SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capacities to be successful. My interviews with educators have shown that their level of self-efficacy influences

their motivation and behavior to make changes within their teaching practice.

Self-efficacy builds for teachers and students when their voices are affirmed, and when they feel included in establishing how the learning community operates. Professional learning with in-person coaching support fosters self-efficacy (Summers, 2010), but virtual professional learning can do the same.

Professional learning leaders can empower educators and build self-efficacy by offering choices of virtual learning approaches. Just as there are often multiple ways to teach to state standards in an evidence-based curriculum for students, there are multiple ways to structure and facilitate professional learning, especially online.

Collective resources are available to help educators adapt to the current environment, such as *Teaching,*

Give your new teachers the support they need from a highly qualified mentor.

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Technology, and Teacher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stories From the Field (Ferdig et al., 2020) and *From Response to Reopening: State Efforts to Elevate Social and Emotional Learning During the Pandemic* (Yoder et al., 2020).

A virtual professional community of inquiry supports collaborative construction of knowledge, which can build teachers' self-efficacy and their use of continuous improvement of practices within their classrooms. Face-to-face learning labs or lesson studies can be valuable, but the need to be out of one's classroom for a period of time can be a barrier to participation.

A virtual learning community allows participants to learn new concepts at convenient times and at their own pace. They can view filmed examples of best practices, with exemplars available through professional associations and school districts. They can observe and discuss best practices and ask questions of their peers who are also trying new strategies.

In addition, teachers may film their own practices and get coaching feedback through a virtual coaching protocol, which can increase self-efficacy as coaches give feedback from cycles of inquiry verified using evidence of student learning.

VIRTUAL LEARNING CHALLENGES

Follow best practices for structuring professional learning in an online setting. Asking a teacher to attend a synchronous, virtual session for more than 45 minutes at a time is not conducive to learning. It's important to allow for breaks from sitting at the computer if the professional learning takes place over hours or days.

Ideally, schedule 15-minute segments for activities. For example, a common practice for a webinar is to present a topic for no more than 15 minutes, then pause to allow participants to ask questions, share examples, or engage in small-group discussion in breakout rooms.

To engage teachers in virtual or

HOW TO SUPPORT SEL IN A VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

BUILD COLLABORATION ONLINE.

Give teachers opportunities for small-group discussions in breakout rooms where they can share their own experiences. This practice demonstrates the anchor competency of creating a classroom community that ignites engagement and an opportunity to practice cooperative learning skills through active listening.

OFFER A MIX OF SYNCHRONOUS PLC SESSIONS AND OFF-LINE ACTIVITIES.

Teachers can meet together in a video conferencing platform paired with off-line activities that can be completed between synchronous sessions.

An off-line cycle of activities may include reading additional text or watching video examples to support how to implement the new skills in one's classroom, followed by practicing with coaching and feedback support, then returning to the next virtual session to provide reflective self-feedback with examples and student evidence from the in-class practice sessions.

An effective PLC fosters self-reflection and growth mindset and cultivates perseverance by monitoring goals and providing formative feedback among its members (Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child, 2020).

BUILD TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY.

Foster authentic, informal learning conversations with the use of a third-party message app (e.g. Slack, Google Messenger, What's Up, Microsoft Teams) where conversations can occur in real time with an app that is accessible by phone, tablet, or computer.

The Learning Design and Technology program at the University of Colorado Denver uses a free version of Slack to foster relationships between faculty and students and among students. Students feel more connected to us and each other even though they live worldwide. Slack has become a virtual hub for discussions because of its easy access using the phone app.

INSPIRE AND ENABLE LONG-TERM COMMITMENT.

Make the logistics work for participants. A virtual PLC can cultivate the SEL competency of perseverance when the community members make a long-term, focused commitment.

This commitment allows community members to hold each other accountable to established data-driven goals that aim for continuous improvement in their practices. But to make this commitment appealing and feasible, PLC leaders must make it accessible.

When PLCs operate within a virtual environment, learners can come together at times that are more conducive for their schedules and energy levels. Record sessions for those who cannot attend live.

I use a Doodle poll to ask participants for the times that are conducive for meeting. Then, if possible, I facilitate the PLC session at two different times or days of the week to meet the majority of schedules within a large school community.

blended learning, they need time to talk, collaborate (Wolpert-Gawron, 2020), and practice what they are learning. Miller and colleagues (2013) note that technology such as polling and backchannel communication increases learners' participation in lectures, promotes connection to the content, and provides immediate feedback to the facilitator.

These same practices should apply to our students. It's a good reminder that if a teacher is disengaged during a virtual learning session, it is likely that their students will also be disengaged.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Leadership expert Margaret Wheatley (2003) writes, "It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we trust and know each other."

This is vital for professional learning and high-quality virtual teaching and learning. As the school year begins, we need to prepare for the unknown. We have the opportunity to shift practices, even with limited background in online teaching, if our professional learning approaches prioritize social and emotional learning, empower educators through self-efficacy, and pay attention to adult learners' needs.

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IDEAS

THE COACH IN YOUR EAR

“What’s fascinating is how receptive to the bug-in-ear coaching teachers are even when they don’t have previous relationships with us ...

“What has emerged from our research is that the driving factor [in whether the coaching succeeds] is the will to grow. Does the teacher want to be better? If they do, our studies suggest that it doesn’t matter how young or old they are, how experienced, or how well you know them.”

— *“A different kind of distance learning,”*

p. **38**

“One of the major benefits is the immediacy of the impact of the coach’s feedback on the teacher and students,” says Marcia Rock, an expert on bug-in-ear coaching.

MARCIA ROCK is one of the preeminent researchers on bug-in-ear coaching. In this method, an instructional coach watches a live video feed of a teacher’s classroom and provides in-the-moment feedback via a wireless earpiece. The process, which is sometimes compared to a football coach communicating with a quarterback, is become increasingly feasible and popular thanks to ubiquitous videoconferencing and mobile technology. Rock spoke with *The Learning Professional* to share insights and advice based on her research.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF DISTANCE LEARNING

WITH BUG-IN-EAR TECHNOLOGY, COACHING IS ON THE SPOT, EVEN IF THE COACH ISN'T

Q&A with Marcia Rock

BY SUZANNE BOUFFARD

Q: How did you start researching bug-in-ear coaching?

A: It came from a real-world need. When I was [a professor] at the University of Alabama, I was working on a grant to help general education teachers become special education teachers. I was scouring the literature

looking for how to create a program that would have a real impact on teachers, students, and families.

In particular, I was thinking about how to support teachers to facilitate the transfer of their knowledge into practice. Western Alabama is very rural and spread out — some districts only have one building for all of K-12 —

so I knew it would be challenging to provide all the support the teachers needed.

I came across Mary Catherine Scheeler's work at Penn State. She's the person who brought bug-in-ear coaching, which had been around for over five decades, into the 21st century. Her focus was on special education. I thought, "How do we do this in a way that bridges with general education? And how do we leverage the technology that we're using in our daily lives?"

This was around 2007, and we didn't really have iPhones yet, but I knew there had to be a way to take on-site coaching and do it online so that the coach and the teacher wouldn't need to be in the same place. I started talking to undergraduates who were gamers about how to do this. They suggested using Skype, which was [relatively new and] not a household name yet. I started testing out the technology with my son, who was in middle school.

Then when I began using it with teachers, I loved it immediately. Using Skype, I could see more than I do when I'm in the classroom. I'm such a teacher at heart that, when I'm in the classroom, it's hard for me to disconnect myself and be a neutral observer. I have to sit on my hands or it becomes co-teaching [instead of coaching].

But on Skype, I had both an insider's and an outsider's view at the same time. I see what's happening in

the moment, but I also see what came before and what might come ahead. It's a different kind of companionship.

Q: What are the other benefits of bug-in-ear coaching?

A: One of the major benefits is the immediacy of the impact of the coach's feedback on the teacher and students. I have seen this in my own experience and in the literature. When the teacher tries a strategy in the moment and sees it making a difference, the immediacy of the impact creates positive momentum for the teacher to use the practice again.

When you give feedback after the lesson [for example, while watching video with the teacher] and the teacher sets the intention to use the practice in the next lesson, you lose some of that momentum.

But I still advocate for video analysis as part of a continuum of technology-enabled coaching. Sometimes you do need to have space and time in between the feedback and the next lesson to reflect about what the right move was in that situation. Using video strategically and intentionally can be very beneficial.

Neither method should be used alone. Using video on a regular basis is too costly and time-intensive. But it's also not feasible or sustainable to rely on bug-in-ear as your sole method of coaching. For example, we use 20 to 30 minutes for a video session, rather

than the 45 minutes or an hour that is standard with a traditional coaching session.

Q: How do you deal with the discomfort teachers might feel about receiving feedback this way?

A: We always say that we are not big brother and we're not nagging mother. We are the supportive other. But we know from the literature that anxiety is a major barrier to using this approach. It takes about three sessions for people to become comfortable [with getting feedback from a disembodied voice].

We have found that it's most helpful in those initial sessions to use a mixture of quietly observing and providing positive feedback. Teachers can get overwhelmed with too much feedback right away, but they also didn't like it when we tried staying silent in those early sessions.

People often ask if it will be stressful or confusing for teachers to process the coaching and classroom interactions at the same time. But it only takes about five minutes for people to adjust to processing multiple sources of incoming auditory stimuli. You can actually see that moment of adjustment in almost every video we took of teachers using the technology.

But it's also important to remember that different people grow and develop in different ways. Some people don't take to it right away. We often found that those people need to find an

opportunity to make it their own before using a new strategy. And some of them respond better to other components included in the coaching continuum, like peer feedback.

Q: What should coaches keep in mind when using bug-in-ear coaching?

A: The kind of feedback you provide is important. The rule of thumb is to provide four positive statements to one instructive or corrective one. I also use a lot of “we” language to show we are working together and so it doesn’t sound like I’m saying, “You’re doing it wrong.”

As far as the content of the coaching, the coach and the teacher co-construct the goals. As with in-person coaching, we do a pre- and post-session on either end of the lesson. We consider questions like: What are your strengths and problems of practice? What data are you looking at that’s driving your desire to do things differently? These become the focus areas.

But we also comment on other things we see going on. It’s like when you eat. You don’t just want one thing on your plate at a time, because that’s not nourishing. I don’t suggest things that would be too big of a cognitive load in the moment — for example, asking the teacher to completely change gears to a different type of instruction.

But I do comment on things like lesson structure. I might say, “Wow, you really capitalized on prior knowledge there.” Or I might suggest a tactic, like, “Hmm, we don’t have anyone responding. Let’s try a think-pair-share here.” I address whatever is most needed and will make the biggest difference for students, and that’s often real-world connections and strategies for student engagement.

This is different than some approaches. For example, some bug-in-ear coaching, especially those used for highly prescriptive special education approaches, focuses on very specific pedagogical practices. Coaches using

that approach give very specific codes to remind teachers about practices they have learned about previously.

The context in which I have done my research is different. [In the general education classrooms where I have worked], I have used a running commentary approach. We don’t know from the literature whether codes or running commentary is more effective, but they might each be effective in different contexts.

Q: How popular is bug-in-ear coaching?

A: It has grown a lot. It’s being used by at least 12 states in different capacities — for example, in universities, state departments of education, and district alternative certification programs.

We have found it to be very popular with the teachers in our research studies. In interviews we conducted, teachers — who all had previous experience with traditional forms of coaching — told us they wanted everyone to have this experience. They didn’t even mind the fact that many of them encountered bumps with using the technology.

What’s fascinating is how receptive to the bug-in-ear coaching teachers are even when they don’t have previous relationships with us. When I started working with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, I was coaching teachers from across the state whom I had never met.

What has emerged from our research is that the driving factor [in whether the coaching succeeds] is the will to grow. Does the teacher want to be better? If they do, our studies suggest that it doesn’t matter how young or old they are, how experienced, or how well you know them.

Q: Are you using bug-in-ear coaching during distance learning?

A: We have not been doing this in real-time online classrooms because we didn’t want to add to everyone’s stress

and cognitive load, which is already so high right now [due to the COVID-19 pandemic]. I’m conflicted because I know people need time and space to make adjustments to this situation we’re in. But they also need support, and giving them too much space could make them feel unsupported and anxious.

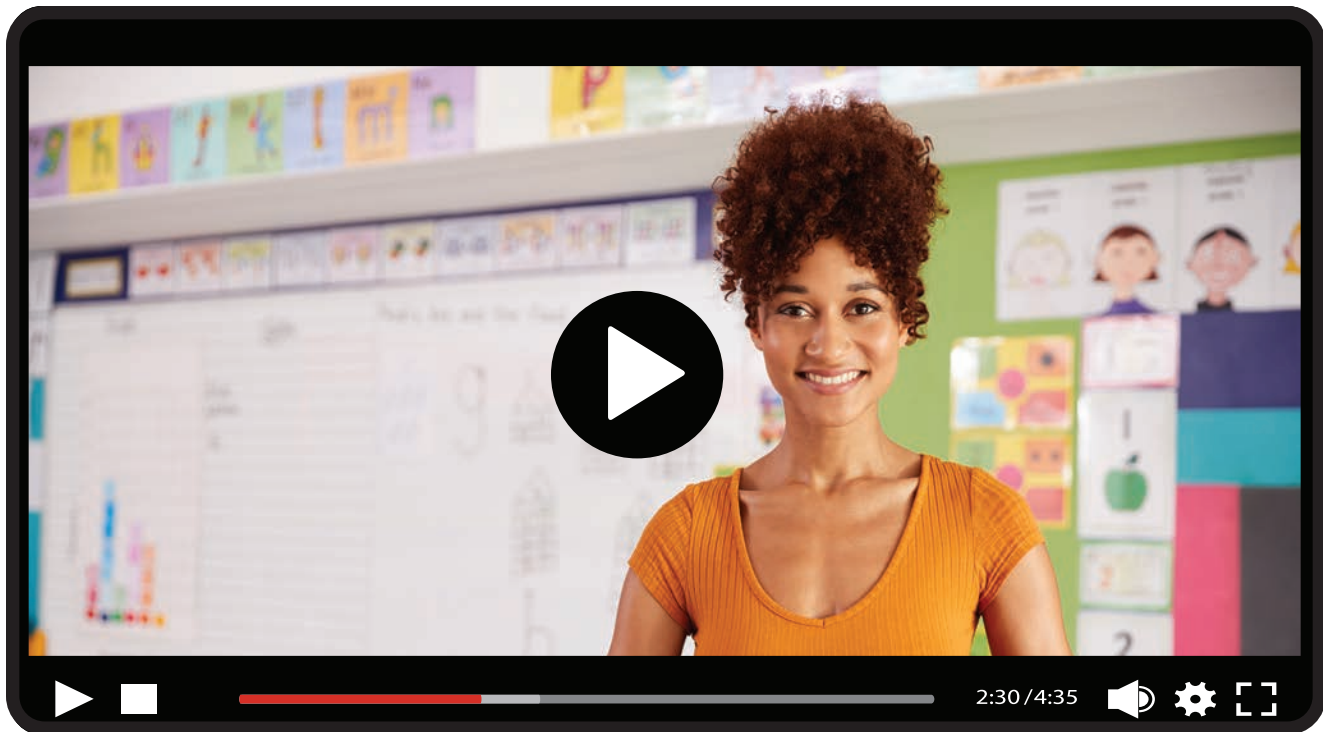
I think it absolutely could be added as another level of support if you are intentional about it. The key is that you have to think about how the instruction is designed. How are kids engaged in ways that are different than in a physical classroom? How do you do this so it reduces anxiety rather than making it worse?

I’m continuing work with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and also working this summer with the North Carolina new teacher support program on implementing bug-in-ear coaching, along with the other three components included in the technology-enabled continuum, next year, whether it’s in classrooms or in online lessons. So we are considering these questions about what this should look like in online classrooms.

Q: What do you recommend as a first step for educators who want to try bug-in-ear coaching?

A: I recommend finding and connecting with others who are interested in it, either those who are already doing it or who want to start. This way, you’ll have support and someone to help you keep the momentum going when things get tough. Those people don’t have to be in your building. They can be anywhere. They just have to be ready and willing to companion with you on that journey.

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RECORD, REPLAY, REFLECT

VIDEO PROVIDES THE PERFECT VEHICLE
FOR LESSON ANALYSIS

BY JODY BINTZ AND NICOLE I.Z. WICKLER

One of the challenges leaders face is how to help teachers examine their classroom practice. The use of video technology as a tool for teacher self-reflection, peer collaboration, and coaching has been gaining in popularity for just this purpose.

Video can bring teachers together to look in on classroom moments and study interactions. This approach makes

classroom interactions more visible and supports teachers in deepening their understanding of teaching and learning (Knight, 2014).

In addition to technological and logistical resources, tools to support successful video coaching ensure the conversations it sparks are focused and productive. Discussion protocols are a well-established way to focus on problems of practice and student work (McDonald et al., 2007), and they are

useful when combined with video.

In this article, we share how teachers benefit from using a Lesson Analysis Protocol to analyze video clips of classroom interactions anchored in a professional learning program.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Science Teachers Learning from Lesson Analysis (STeLLA) is an intensive one-year video-based program composed of classroom, professional

learning, and leadership development curricula that use a framework of strategies for science teaching and learning.

Guided by the Next Generation Science Standards, design teams of curriculum experts, content experts, and K-12 teacher specialists developed the classroom materials by identifying science ideas that are challenging for students and teachers, useful in explaining a variety of phenomena in teachers' and students' experiences, and linked to important crosscutting concepts and science practices.

The curriculum serves as a set of educative lesson plans that scaffold teachers' use of the strategies, provide anticipated student responses to questions and activities, and highlight how students develop the science content storyline over time.

The program combines high-leverage teaching strategies with video-based lesson analysis, in which teachers study videos of other science teachers as they implement the strategies through a model unit of instruction.

The combination helps teachers examine ideas related to their science content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and teaching strategies. The program has been tested in multiple contexts and grade levels with positive impact on student learning (Taylor et al., 2017; Wickler et al., 2018).

COLLABORATIVE AND RIGOROUS ANALYSIS

Collaboration is key to effective professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011). For STeLLA, this means developing small learning communities in which teachers analyze science teaching and learning using classroom video clips with transcripts and related student work.

The classroom artifacts are initially part of a prepared video case that includes video clips of experienced STeLLA teachers engaged in model lessons in their classrooms with their students. Later, teachers in study groups analyze classroom video clips of

themselves engaged in the same model unit in their own classrooms with their own students.

Analysis tools and processes led by a skilled leader scaffold teacher learning and promote analysis of classroom artifacts. One such tool, the Lesson Analysis Protocol, structures three phases of analysis.

In the first phase, teachers watch a three- to seven-minute video clip and use a transcript to identify instances of the use of one or more specified strategies. The leader encourages teachers to cite time stamps and justify their identification by referring to text from a strategies booklet.

In the second part of the protocol, teachers analyze the video clip with a particular analysis question in mind.

In the third phase, teachers reflect on and apply what they learned from lesson analysis. This reflective dialogue allows teachers time to enrich their understanding and develop as a community of learners.

Let's look at an example of a study group of 4th- and 5th-grade teachers. The clip they watch is from a unit about the sun's effect on climate and seasons. In the unit, students identify temperature patterns at different places on Earth at different times of the year to figure out that the combination of the curvature of Earth's surface, nearly circular orbit around the sun, and Earth's tilt explain the pattern.

During the lesson, students model Earth's orbit around the sun using a light bulb (the sun), a Styrofoam ball (Earth), and a Hula Hoop (the orbit of the Earth around the sun), and consider strengths and limitations of the physical model. Early in the lesson, students discuss their initial ideas for the focus question: Why are places closer to Earth's equator hotter than places farther away from the equator?

IDENTIFY PHASE

The following excerpt is an example of teachers working through the first (identify) phase of the Lesson Analysis Protocol using a video clip of one

of the teachers in the study group. The leader asked teachers to identify instances of asking questions that probe and challenge student thinking and instances of developing and using models.

Leader: Now that you've had a few minutes with the transcript, let's share some clear examples. Let's start with a clear probe question.

Teacher 1: At 56.7 when Amy [the teacher in the video] says, "OK, so Christina, are you saying that the sun is hitting more in the Northern Hemisphere or on the equator?"

Leader: And what makes you say that's a clear example [of a probe question]?

Teacher 1: Amy is trying to clarify what Christina said earlier by asking the question.

Leader: What do others think?

Teacher 2: We said it was more of a challenge question.

Leader: OK. So we don't all agree on the nature of the question. Do you agree with [Teacher 1's] justification?

Several teachers: Yes. That's a probe.

Leader: And how do you know?

Teacher 3: Here, in the text. [pointing to the transcript]

Leader: OK, let's see if we can find a clear example [of a probe question].

Teacher 2: We said 1:55.0 "Can you say more about that?" That's an easy one.

Leader: What makes you say it's an easy one?

Teacher 2: It's in the strategies booklet.

Leader: Did everyone identify that as a clear example? [Teachers nod.]

Leader: OK. What about a clear example of a challenge question?

Teacher 1: At 2:34.3 through 2:38.8 when Amy says Maris has one idea and Christina has another and she asks what others think.

Leader: Do we agree?

Teachers: Yep. We agree.

Leader: Let's go back to [Teacher 1] and [Teacher 3's] first example and see

LESSON ANALYSIS PROTOCOL FOR THE LESSON ON THE SUN'S EFFECT ON CLIMATE		
<p>1. Identify the lens and strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What instances of asking questions that probe and challenge student thinking do you observe? • What instances of developing and using models do you observe? 		
<p>2. Analyze the video using the analysis question(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do students seem to understand (or not) about the sun's effect on climate and seasons? • How did the use of the identified strategies make student thinking more visible? 		
LESSON ANALYSIS STEP	TO DO	YOUR ANALYSIS
Claim	Turn an observation, question, or judgment into a specific claim that responds to the focus question.	My claim: Using the model, students reason the amount of light hitting different hemispheres at different positions in Earth's orbit influences the seasons in those hemispheres. They seem to have the beginnings of scientifically accurate understanding of patterns in temperature at different times of the year.
Evidence and reasoning	Point to a specific place in the video transcript, lesson plan, or student work that supports your claim. Connect your claim and evidence with reasoning based on STeLLA strategies, research on learning, your teaching experience, or scientific principles. Also look for evidence that challenges your claim.	<p>My evidence: After the teacher's probe question at 35.1 and challenge question to use vocabulary at 50.2, students talk about the equator and Northern Hemisphere getting more light than the Southern Hemisphere when the Earth is at position 1 (summer). Christina says "more on the equator" and "it's also more bright on the Northern Hemisphere" at 1:10.2-1:06.2. A boy says, "It's [sunlight's] not as much [in the Southern Hemisphere]" at 1:18.0. Another boy agrees that "it's not as much" at 1:20.6. And at 1:22.1, another student says, "There's not as much sunlight, so, um, it's winter."</p> <p>From 1:25.8 to 3:13.0, students discuss position 3 and agree that this is winter in Northern Hemisphere (1:57). And that it's warmer in the Southern Hemisphere because it's getting more light (2:18). Students use the words "more bright" and "not as much" rather than talking about direct or indirect light.</p> <p>My reasoning: Next Generation Science Standards talk about reasoning with physical and mental models. In this clip, students reason with a visual model of the Earth and sun throughout the year. Students use the word "because" to link their observations of the diagram to a pattern they identified before, that places near the equator are warmer because they get more sunlight and the Northern Hemisphere is in summer when the North Pole is pointing toward the sun and the Southern Hemisphere is in winter.</p>
Alternatives	Consider an alternative interpretation or explanation. Consider new questions this might raise. Consider alternative question(s), activity(s), or strategies.	<p>Since the students were previously introduced to the terms "direct" and "indirect" light in the lesson with the trays, the teacher could have challenged them to use this language. For example, "How is your idea related to the idea of direct and indirect light?"</p> <p>I think students need a chance to write about their ideas and tentative explanations. I wonder how she'll help students use this model to get at the influence of day length on average temperatures at different times of year.</p>
<p>3. Reflect on and apply lessons learned from the process. <i>Teachers reflect on the experience.</i></p>		

if we can figure out if 56.7 is more of a probe question or a challenge question.

ANALYSIS PHASE

In the analysis phase, teachers revisit

the video clip and transcript to develop and justify a claim that answers one of the protocol's analysis questions. After teachers have individual time to develop their claim, evidence, and reasoning,

they share their analysis with the group. See example above.

During the analysis, teachers dig into student thinking, make explicit links between the use of the strategies

IDEAS

and student development of the science content storyline, identify strengths and limitations in the lesson plans, including the activities and content representations or models, and deepen their own understanding of the science content and lessons.

They also propose alternate interpretations of the responses to the analysis question, identify missed opportunities, and suggest different teaching approaches.

The following excerpt follows this same study group as its members move into the second part of the Lesson Analysis Protocol and discuss their analyses.

Leader: Now that you and your partner have had a chance to respond to one of the analysis questions, let's hear your thinking. Who took the first question?

Teacher 2: I'll go. Our claim is that this one group of students seems to understand that direct sunlight hits Earth near the equator — well, just a little above or below the equator at some times during the year, and they make the link to seasons.

Leader: Could you say what you mean by “they make the link to seasons”?

Teacher 2: That the hemisphere that is receiving more direct sunlight is experiencing summer and the one with less direct sunlight is winter.

Leader: Did others make a similar claim or agree with the claim?

Teacher 1: We did.

Leader: Does anyone disagree with the claim?

Teacher 5: We mentioned early on, the girl holding the bulb didn't seem to get it, but later we think she probably did.

Leader: Do you have a time stamp for that?

Teacher 5: No, we weren't sure. She pointed when she said it, but we couldn't find where in the transcript.

Leader: OK. [Teacher 1], could you pick up your analysis?

Teacher 1: Our evidence for that is from 19.5 through 1:09.8. Students

STeLLA FRAMEWORK: STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SCIENCE TEACHING	
Student thinking lens: Strategies to reveal, support, and challenge student thinking	Science content storyline lens: Strategies to create a coherent science content storyline
1. Ask questions to elicit student ideas and predictions.	A. Identify one main learning goal.
2. Ask questions to probe student ideas and predictions.	B. Set the purpose with a focus question.
3. Ask questions to challenge student thinking.	C. Select activities that are matched to the learning goal.
4. Engage students in communicating in scientific ways.	D. Select content representations and models matched to the learning goal.
5. Engage students in analyzing and interpreting data and observations.	E. Sequence key science ideas and activities appropriately.
6. Engage students in using content representations and models.	F. Make explicit links between science ideas and activities.
7. Engage students in constructing explanations and arguments.	G. Link science ideas to other science ideas.
8. Engage students in using and applying new science ideas in a variety of ways and contexts.	H. Highlight key science ideas and focus question throughout.
9. Engage students in making connections by synthesizing and summarizing key science ideas.	I. Summarize key science ideas.

point to areas of “more light” just above the equator. And then at 40.2, one student says, “It's going more here by the equator.” The teacher asks them to use their vocabulary words, and the one girl says Northern Hemisphere. That was at 56.7. She says, “More on the equator, but it's also a lot of bright light on the Northern Hemisphere, just to give enough light.” Then a new student says, “It's summer.”

Teacher 4: We didn't get it all down, but we said that the ideas from lesson 2 worked out. They got the idea that the hemisphere with direct light is summer and less direct light is winter. They didn't say temperature. Which was a missed opportunity. I mean, the teacher could have asked them that question as a challenge question.

Leader: Where do you think the teacher could have asked the question? And then what question would have

made sense?

Using video, teachers can analyze selected classroom moments by slowing down normally fast-paced interactions. Study group members also frequently identify key questions asked by the teacher in the video clip and add those questions to their teacher's guide as a reminder when they later teach the lesson.

In this example, the leader uses a probe question to ask the teachers what they meant by the link between direct light and seasons to uncover teachers' science content knowledge. The last question she posed is intended to uncover teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and abilities to use the STeLLA strategies intentionally.

REFLECT AND APPLY PHASE

Teachers may adapt and strengthen the model lessons based on what

they learn with the Lesson Analysis Protocol. For example, toward the end of the study group above, teachers revised the instructions for setting up the model of the Earth-sun system to improve students' use of the model and their abilities to make consistent observations.

Through the study groups, the teachers begin using common language and developing classroom cultures that value student thinking and students' development of a coherent science content storyline. These instructional practices help students make connections between the classroom experiences and the science ideas and practices they are intended to learn.

Too often, students miss these connections, even when teachers engage their students in the kinds of experiments and hands-on activities that experts recommend. If used well,

analysis of classroom artifacts, including video, can help improve teacher practice, elicit student thinking, and boost student learning.

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HOW TECH CAN BUILD TEAMS

WHEN LEARNING MOVES ONLINE, THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF TOOLS CAN BUILD COLLABORATION

BY CYNTHIA H. CALLARD, EUGENIE S. FOSTER, AND JENNIFER S. KRUGER

Technology is rapidly enhancing and extending opportunities for professional learning,” Learning Forward wrote in 2011 (p. 41). As educators grapple with a global pandemic nearly 10 years later, those

words have never been truer or more relevant.

Online professional learning can accommodate social distancing protocols as well as the ongoing benefits of accommodating teachers’ busy schedules, connecting educators to expert resources, providing job-embedded support, and

increasing access by reducing barriers of location (Dede et al., 2009, Francis & Jacobsen, 2013).

Although online professional learning is becoming more widespread due to technological accessibility improvements, it is often conducted in ways that are not consistent with

From 2016 to 2020, a team of K-12 and higher education mathematics educators worked to address the need for high-quality online learning by creating a multisession, fully online professional learning course.

essential elements of high-quality professional learning as described in the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

For example, many massive open online courses (MOOCs) and webinars offer teachers little to no opportunity for active engagement, even though such engagement is what promotes changes in practice and student learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Historically, online professional learning has often been designed for participants to “learn in isolation rather than as a member of a team where participants learn from colleagues’ expertise, experience, and insights” (Mizell, 2010, p. 9). That is changing, but best practices are not universal — and they are needed now more than ever.

From 2016 to 2020, a team of K-12 and higher education mathematics educators worked to address the need for high-quality online learning by creating a multisession, fully online professional learning course as part of a larger National Science Foundation-funded research project.

As our team worked to design and facilitate online professional learning, our goal was to maintain the core aspects and guiding principles of high-quality in-person professional learning, as articulated in research and in the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). In particular, we worked to design online professional learning that established collaborative learning communities

and was grounded in research and models of human learning — common practices of in-person learning that are challenging to maintain online.

Through this project, our team learned valuable lessons about how to make the technology work in service of the learning. These lessons are highly applicable to the widespread use of distance teaching and learning in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

GOING DIGITAL

The project involved redesigning for an online setting a course that had been designed and previously implemented in an in-person setting.

The original in-person professional learning course consisted of multiple two-hour sessions occurring over several months. It was designed to engage K-12 mathematics teachers in sustained and ongoing professional learning connected to their practice, with a goal of increased student learning.

It aimed to deepen both mathematics content and pedagogical knowledge by supporting teachers in reflecting on and making changes in their instructional practices with a focus on student discourse.

To deepen content knowledge, facilitators modeled the phases of implementation of a mathematics task, while participating teachers engaged as learners in an environment that allowed for productive struggle, communication, and collaboration. Thus, participants faced the same

challenges their students might encounter during task implementations in their classrooms.

To deepen pedagogical knowledge, participants analyzed aspects of teaching practice, such as questioning and formative assessment, and learned to gauge the impact of teacher moves on student learning. In addition, we required activities to be completed between sessions that incorporated reading, writing, and reflecting to extend and enhance the learning during the sessions.

As we transitioned in-person professional learning to an online space, we designed a mostly synchronous online course consisting of six two-hour sessions over several months to create a collaborative community of learners and an active learning environment. In addition, we included asynchronous activities for participants to engage in between weekly sessions, outside the constraints of time and place (Mayadas, 1997).

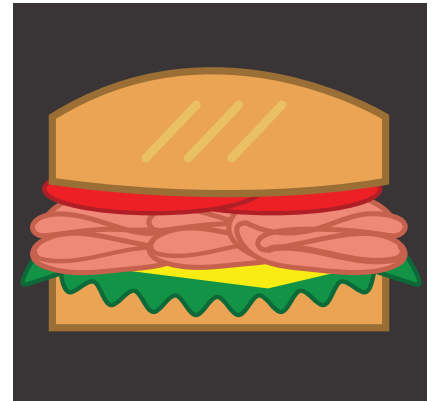
The combination of synchronous and asynchronous components complemented each other by providing several ways for participants and facilitators to exchange information, collaborate on work, and get to know each other (Hrastinski, 2008).

We began by selecting an online learning platform and a collaborative online space, then we built in time to familiarize participants with the technology to minimize loss of instructional time as participants

IDEAS

THE TURKEY SLICE TASK

A man decides to go on a diet in the new year. He goes into a deli shop to buy some turkey slices. He is given 3 slices which together weigh $\frac{1}{3}$ of a pound, but his diet allows only $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pound. How much of the 3 slices can he eat while staying true to his diet? Be prepared to justify your answer with numbers, words, and/or pictures.

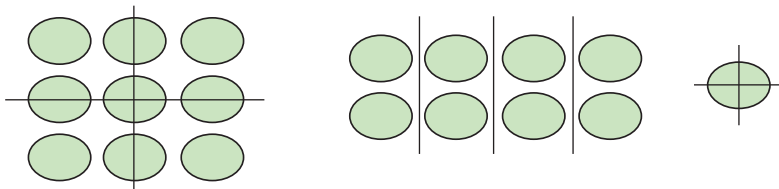


ANSWER 1

Assuming all three slices weigh the same amount!
 $\frac{1}{3}$ lb. divided by 3 = $\frac{1}{9}$ lb. (weight of each slice)
 2 slices = $\frac{2}{9}$ lb. $\times \frac{4}{4} = \frac{8}{36}$ lb.
 $\frac{1}{4} = \frac{9}{36}$ lb.
 $\frac{9}{36}$ lb. (allowed) - $\frac{8}{36}$ lb. (2 slices) = $\frac{1}{36}$ lb. more allowed by diet
 $\frac{1}{36} = \frac{1}{4}$ of $\frac{1}{9}$; the man can eat 2 and $\frac{1}{4}$ slices of turkey

ANSWER 2

Need to find out how much each slice weighs
 Each slice weighs $\frac{1}{9}$
 If each slice is $\frac{1}{9}$ we need to find how many times does $\frac{1}{9}$ go into $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.
 $\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{9}{1} = 2\frac{1}{4}$



ANSWER 3

3 slices = $\frac{1}{3}$ lb. 9 slices/1 lb.
 Diet allows $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.
 $\frac{1}{4} \times 9 = \frac{9}{4}$ slices
 $2\frac{1}{4}$ slices for diet

1 lb. = 9 slices

3	3	3
—		
3		

9 slices

--	--	--	--

$\frac{1}{4}$
 4 units = 9
 1 unit = $\frac{9}{4}$

Participants recorded various strategies in a shared Google Doc or Google Draw files by creating tables, drawing figures, and writing text. Notes and diagrams are re-created here.

navigated the new tools. We held a one-hour practice session before the course began to introduce the technology and tools and provide the opportunity to practice using the features.

Still, we anticipated that some participants might continue to need technology assistance during online sessions because we realized that participants would have varying levels of experience and comfort with the technology.

To address individual technology needs during course sessions without disrupting the content, we used two facilitators to teach each session —

one to manage technology issues and the other to facilitate the learning experiences.

MAXIMIZING TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

In our online course design, we determined how to best use technology tools in ways that would build a community of learners while encouraging active engagement through interaction, collaboration, and inquiry-based experiences.

Connecting via Zoom

We chose the video-conferencing

software Zoom as our technology platform because it allowed for seeing all participants' faces during synchronous whole-group discussions as well as small-group interactions.

One of the most advantageous features for building community was the ability to create breakout rooms for small groups. We used these rooms to engage participants in small groups for a variety of experiences, as we would in an in-person setting.

For example, in breakout rooms, groups of three to four participants discussed prompts related to readings, collaboratively engaged in mathematics

tasks, reflected on implications for their practice, and shared classroom experiences.

Facilitators were able to move between breakout rooms to monitor discussions, ask questions, and note various mathematics strategies being used. This allowed the facilitators to then structure and support large-group conversations in meaningful ways when participants were brought back to the main room, simulating what would happen in an in-person setting.

The Zoom chat window, in which facilitators and participants can write comments or questions to the whole group or privately, was also highly useful. We found that the use of the chat window supported engagement and participation in ways that a large-group discussion didn't. Some participants were reluctant to share verbally, but through strategic use of the chat window, we attained nearly 100% participation for most whole-group activities, thus increasing active engagement with the course content.

For example, we used the chat window to survey initial thinking when introducing a new topic (similar to an in-person turn-and-talk), gather reflections at the end of a learning experience (a stop-and-jot), and capture thinking after a reading (similar to a say something protocol).

Over time, participants began using the chat window without prompting to ask a question during a whole-group discussion, make a connection, or share a thought while others were talking. The chat window therefore provided efficient avenues of synchronous participation that went beyond what was possible in an in-person setting.

Engaging in shared work via Google tools

We used Google Docs and Google Draw for creating shared work spaces and Google folders for shared storage space to support active engagement and the development of a learning community.

Before each session, facilitators

created Google folders for participants to access. A folder could include a mathematics task, a note catcher with prompts to respond to, or handouts that were needed during the session.

While engaging in mathematics tasks, such as the Turkey Slice task shown on p. 48, participants recorded their strategies in a shared Google Doc or Google Draw file by creating tables, drawing figures, and writing text. Additionally, some participants uploaded pictures of work they had done by hand to the Google file to share their thinking.

Because facilitators had access to these folders, they could observe and monitor participants' thinking without actually being present in a breakout room. This feature was essential as facilitators planned the orchestration of whole-group discussions. Facilitators were able to select particular documents created in breakout rooms to be shared via the share screen feature in Zoom.

We often found that the online implementation of these structures was more efficient than the analogous in-person structure. A gallery walk, for example (where participants interact and respond to various groups' work on large poster paper), took place online by participants viewing the Google files created by other groups and using the comment tool to respond. This generated robust conversations that actually took less time online than in an in-person gallery walk.

The use of Google folders also allowed participants and facilitators to engage in asynchronous work through the use of an online reflection journal. We created a Google folder containing weekly journal prompts for each participant. Between synchronous sessions, participants responded to the prompts, which were designed to encourage them to reflect more deeply about their experiences with the course content.

The online reflection journal allowed facilitators to gain a sense of participants' thinking before the synchronous session. Facilitators then designed meaningful

activities for participants to engage with these shared online reflections in nonthreatening ways.

During synchronous sessions, facilitators asked participants to read a selection of responses from other participants and discuss similarities or differences to their own reflection. At other times, facilitators created a summary of the reflection journal responses and asked participants to read and reflect on the summary. Facilitators and participants also had opportunities to provide feedback to individual reflections using the comment feature in Google Docs.

ENHANCING LEARNING

Although convenient and accessible, online professional learning experiences must also maintain aspects of high-quality professional learning consistent with research and models of human learning. Despite the challenges, we were able to use technological tools to not only create collaborative experiences similar to our in-person professional learning, but also strengthen and augment these experiences.

Participants' course evaluations reflect the value of these learning experiences. One found the breakout rooms "very effective." Another noted the value of being able to see and speak with other participants: "Just as in an in-person class, it was great to have transitions between teacher presentation and discussions among my colleagues."

Another participant said, "I loved that it was a discussion-based course even though it was online. Other online classes I have taken have been 'discussion' but only in reading and responding to prompts. That is not a conversation, and I have not found it to be collaborative or worth my time in the end. This was a pleasant surprise and a great way to collaborate with other math teachers and experts in the field."

While we designed and implemented this online professional learning before the COVID-19

Continued on p. 54



DOUBLE THE LEARNING POTENTIAL

VIDEO OF NOVICE TEACHERS CAN BOOST MENTORS' DEVELOPMENT, TOO

BY TIMOTHY BOERST, MEGHAN SHAUGHNESSY, AND MERI TENNEY-MUIRHEAD

School-based mentors are essential partners with teacher preparation programs in preparing novice teachers to have the knowledge, skills, and professional commitments they need to be strong teachers from day one. Research and experience have taught us that supporting the learning of a novice can also be pivotal to a mentor's professional learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lawson & Wood-Griffiths, 2019).

In many ways, the demands of mentoring, such as critical conversations with colleagues and reflecting, mirror the kinds of engagement that are at the heart of practice-based approaches to professional learning (e.g. Silver, 2009). Mentoring involves consideration of someone else's teaching at the same time that it demands opening up one's own teaching.

This requires deprivatizing and unpacking teaching practices that are

personal and familiar, but often not subject to scrutiny, and it also requires contemplation of aspects of someone else's teaching that include practices or content that are unfamiliar to the mentor or may not be transparent.

However, the nature of teaching often complicates and sometimes prohibits mentors' opportunities to learn through the experience. Support or mediation from outside the classroom is often useful in addressing common challenges

with communication, focus, and determination of next steps. In our experience, video of novices' teaching can serve as a pivotal resource in supporting the learning of both mentors and novices.

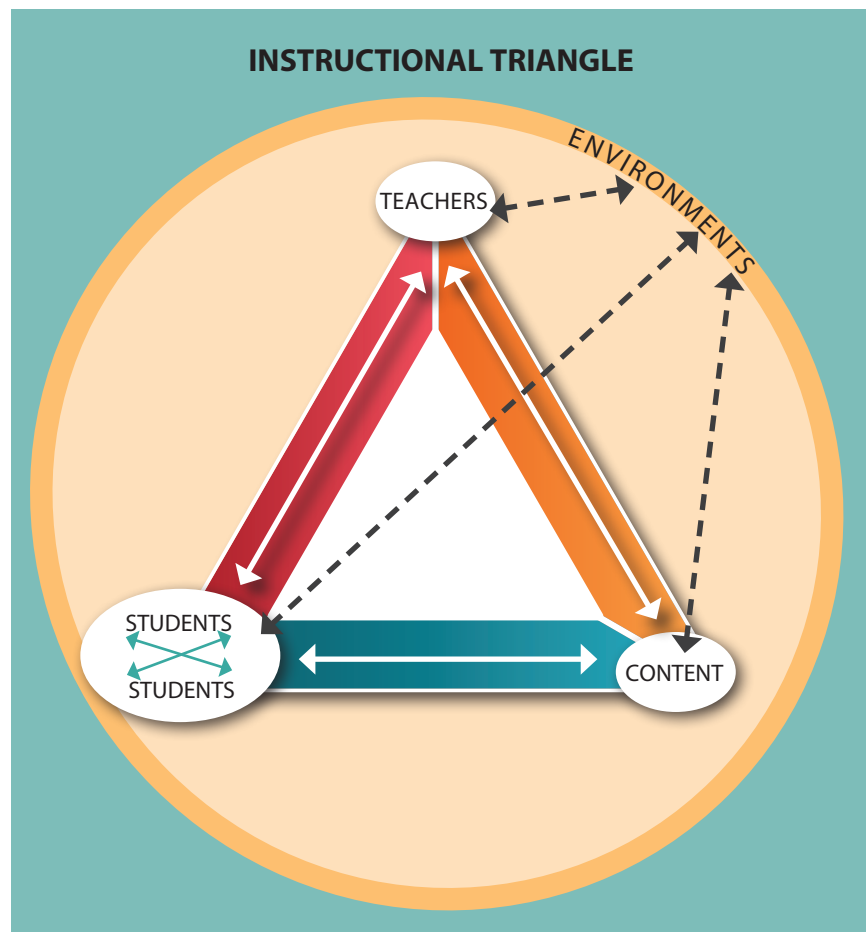
THE ROLE OF MENTORING

Mentoring centers on improving the classroom interactions of the novice teacher, students, and the content to be learned. These interactions occur within broader environments, such as the school, the community, and even the teacher education program of which the novice and mentor are a part.

Importantly, mentoring can also be thought of as structuring the environments in which novice teaching and the teaching of the mentor occur. These environments shape what happens inside of a classroom — and are in turn shaped by it. The relationship among these elements has been represented by the instructional triangle pictured in the diagram at right (Cohen et al., 2003; Lampert, 2001). The work of teaching occurs in the dynamic relationships depicted by the arrows to and from teachers.

Day-to-day teaching interactions, shown in the triangle, and priorities and policies, represented by the surrounding environments circle, impact not only the learning and teaching, but also the opportunities that the novice and mentor have to learn from teaching.

Like an apprenticeship model used in many crafts and trades, having two adults (mentor and novice) working



full days together does not by itself ensure that the novice and mentor perform better or learn from each other. The classroom is a complex and busy place that often requires mentors and novices to be simultaneously engaged in supporting different students with different tasks or in different learning structures.

Prioritizing the learning needs of

students in the moment of teaching and the ways that classrooms are structured can sometimes pause or sideline professional learning aspirations. Because it can be difficult for both parties to consistently observe each other's teaching or readily find the opportunity to interact about teaching, mediation from outside the classroom, in the form of tools or

IDEAS

professional consultation, can enhance the situational potential for learning for both the novice and mentor.

THE BENEFITS OF VIDEO

Video helps to address some of the situational complexity of learning from teaching (Brouwer, 2011; Sherin, 2000; Lampert & Ball, 1998). Video of novices' teaching can serve as a pivotal resource in supporting the learning of both mentors and novices.

It allows for access to teaching moments that were not witnessed firsthand and for later replaying and reviewing instances of teaching that are of interest. It provides a rich representation of the work that can be used to support dialog and description, as well as look for improvement over time.

To enable the use of video for these purposes, we have found it indispensable to have a platform that provides access, assures security, and provides the features and flexibility necessary for learning from video.

For the past eight years, we have used the Edthema platform to facilitate the learning of mentors and novices about the interactive work of teaching. Here are three examples of how specific functions within the video platform support professional learning for mentors and novices.

1. Model instructional explanations through video-enhanced lesson plans.

Videos of a novice teacher engaging in an instructional practice can spur mentors to consider and articulate the characteristics of effective teaching practices. This is especially true with respect to practices that tend to be challenging for novices.

Professional developers and researchers have noted that the “bumps and bruises” of novice practice make visible aspects of the work of teaching that might “go unnoticed in the smoother practice of more experienced teachers” (Heaton, 2000, p. 16). Thus, mentors' engagement with video of

Mentors find themselves responsible for providing opportunities for novices to explain content while also ensuring that students gain understanding.

novice teaching practice can serve as an opportunity for reflection on the work of teaching at the same time that their feedback on the video will contribute to the development of the novices' practice.

For example, one core teaching skill that is often challenging for novices is explaining content. The specific challenges include knowing how to represent ideas in ways that have integrity from a content area perspective (Leinhardt, 2010; Leinhardt et al., 1991); gearing explanations to the students' levels and life experiences; and delivering explanations in ways that draw attention to core ideas.

Mentors find themselves responsible for providing opportunities for novices to explain content while also ensuring that students gain understanding. In other words, they are simultaneously responsible for the learning of the novices and the students.

Many teacher preparation programs and mentor teachers rely on lesson plans to drive novices' instruction. However, written lesson plans rarely include specific explanations of content that novices intend to use.

Video-enhanced lesson plans are one means to fill this gap. A video-enhanced lesson plan includes a video of a novice rehearsing an explanation that is likely to be needed during a lesson. This video is easier for the novice to produce than fully scripting an explanation in a lesson plan, and it integrates talk and representation in ways that better approximate what the novice will actually do in their teaching.

Through Edthema, mentors can easily access and provide feedback on these videos, including comments tied

to specific moments in the intended teaching, with respect to how accurately the explanation reflects disciplinary ideas, how well the explanation is geared toward the students in the class, and how well the explanation emphasizes key aspects of content.

The commenting interface enables mentors to indicate the nature of the comment as a question, suggestion, strength, or note. Question comments are used to signal the need for a response from the novice, either in person or through a reply in the platform. Suggestion comments are used as pointers for enhancing the explanation. Strength comments signal aspects of the work that seem particularly useful or likely to be effective. Note comments convey information to a novice, including supporting the novice's developing content knowledge for teaching.

This process supports the mentor's learning as well as the novice's. It allows the mentor to dig more deeply into a particular instructional practice (e.g. what makes a good explanation) and content (what are the big ideas that need to be explicit, what resources do students bring that can be built upon during an explanation). It therefore enables mentors to take a step back and reflect on their own teaching practice in ways that require them to justify and question their own instructional approaches.

Further, the Edthema platform provides access to statistics that mentors can use to analyze the frequency with which they are using different types of comments and reflect on how to improve their mentoring.

2. Provide collective feedback via video commenting.

Mentors are not always able to directly observe the work that a novice is doing with students. While moment-to-moment observation is not necessary, there are times when the novice would benefit from sharing teaching that was not initially seen by the mentor.

Because novices in our teacher

preparation program routinely record their teaching, they often have video from these instances that can be shared. Novices can easily share the video through customizable groups that can be made within Edthena so that the triad comprised of the novice, mentor, and university field instructor have a protected space in which to view and interact around these videos.

The platform supports conversations about teaching in the video, using the time-stamped commenting feature described previously, where participants can raise questions, offer multiple perspectives on teaching, frame problems of practice, and share potential routes of addressing them. Having three people in the conversation enriches the opportunities to talk about the complexities of teaching practice. The mentor brings expertise crucial for this conversation about the students, the school curriculum, and other facets of the environment in which teaching occurs.

These conversations serve as robust learning opportunities for mentors in several ways. First, comments by novices and university field instructors often raise different facets of the work of teaching, such as those represented by the components of the instructional triangle, and different views on instructional options and decision-making (e.g. I would have done X, but the novice is doing Y. What are the affordances and constraints of each of these approaches?).

The university field instructor, who is less familiar with the specific children in the classroom, can ask questions that prompt the mentor to connect instructional decision-making to the reproduction of patterns of inequities in classrooms or the disruption of them.

Second, mentors have access to the questions, notes, strengths, and suggestions a university field instructor provides to the novice. This means that they have access to an image of mentoring that could provide new ways of thinking or new moves to try. They can see what it might look like

Videos provide fodder for mentors to debate what the elements of teaching could look like or sound like and the composite parts of larger teaching practices.

to tell a novice that a particular move is problematic (and why) or that a particular move was productive (and why). They can see how to support novices in considering alternatives without telling them what to do.

A third, but related, point is that these conversations require mentors to simultaneously communicate with someone who has less expertise than they do (the novice) and someone who may have more (or at least different) expertise with respect to some aspects of teaching (the university field instructor).

This requires mentors to analyze and describe teaching for different audiences, which promotes a kind of flexibility that could prove useful when communicating about teaching with other audiences and for varied purposes.

3. Apply a teaching framework to video(s).

Novice teachers are a part of a teacher education program, and the staff of that program are responsible for monitoring the progress of novices in light of program goals. This includes providing ongoing formative feedback with periodic summative appraisals.

Because mentors play a vital role in providing feedback, it is crucial to engage in collective work with them that establishes common lenses through which to view teaching and shared language for describing teaching. Edthena enables a program to select and upload frameworks into the platform that can be used to tag aspects of the work of teaching.

This capacity is coupled with the ability to curate collections of videos, nominated by Edthena users within an

organization, that are likely to surface elements of teaching for discussion.

Bringing mentors and university instructors and leaders together to apply the framework to example videos provides a rich context for sensemaking about teaching, as well as describing and appraising teaching. For instance, viewing videos of novices supporting small groups often sparks discussion about how to engage students in ways that respect students' agency in their own learning while at the same time scaffolding interactions to support the meaningful engagement of all students in the group.

On the surface, this activity appears to be centered on honing skills that will position mentors to support the learning of novices and provide the teacher education program with reliable data. While it does serve these functions, there are multiple aspects of the activity that constitute professional development opportunities for the mentor.

Videos provide fodder for mentors to debate what the elements of teaching could look like or sound like and the composite parts of larger teaching practices. While the videos are of novices, conversations often extend into the mentor teachers' own teaching and the connection of framework elements to that teaching.

These experiences help mentors develop more nuanced ways of seeing and describing teaching — their own teaching as well as the teaching of novices. This is more than a reflective exercise. Mentors can think together about the next steps that could be taken to enhance teaching. This not only prepares mentors to use the commitments function within the Edthena interface that connects framework elements to future goals, but also encourages ways of thinking about destinations and routes for instructional improvement that could also apply to their own teaching.

INTENTIONALITY

Like any other resource used to

support professional learning, the productivity of a video platform depends on the norms and routines used and continuously renewed by the collaborators who interact around and through it. To get the most out of it, mentors, novices, and university faculty should be intentional and transparent about why and how they use video.

It is also important to recognize that, just as teaching is shaped by and shapes the environments in which it happens, video platforms can shape the focus of professional dialogue (through frameworks available in the platform) and the tone (the comment type options that are available) of interactions. It can also provide metadata that support reflection and improvement of its use.

The examples shared here show that the video platform can bring tools, structures, and norms supporting professional learning together. There is much that teachers can learn from engagement as mentors, and well-designed video platforms provide a way of harnessing that potential.

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How tech can build teams

Continued from p.49
pandemic, we leveraged technology that has since become commonplace. We hope that our work can serve as an illustration of how to maintain high-quality professional learning in an online space.

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DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

TOOLS

NEW ROLES FOR MENTORS

Teaching in the COVID-19 era is challenging for everyone, but especially for new teachers building their toolboxes during an unprecedented and uncertain situation. Mentors can play a valuable role, but they're also facing challenges. What does effective online mentoring look like? How do you conduct observations and give feedback?

See p. **56** for *Learning Forward's* new tool on conducting virtual observations.

With much teaching now occurring online, mentoring is also moving online, and setting expectations and building trust should be built into that process.



MAKING MENTORING WORK ONLINE

BY TOM MANNING, KATHLEEN SHEEHY, AND LESLIE CEBALLOS

Effective mentors set clear expectations for their work with the teachers they support. This is a critical step in the process of building trust between mentor and mentee, and it is never more important than when mentors conduct observations of teachers as they engage in classroom instruction. With much teaching now occurring online, mentoring is also moving online, and setting expectations and building trust should be built into that process.

Recall times when you, as a new teacher, were observed while teaching. What did the observer do in your classroom? How effective were those practices? How did they make you feel? Now think about being observed in an unfamiliar learning environment, such as leading an online lesson or designing a virtual learning experience for students to complete at their own pace.

With so many teachers redefining

their expectations for instruction to accommodate social distancing due to COVID-19, it is critical that mentor teachers recognize the unique challenges their mentees are facing; take steps to ensure that their observation of instruction considers new, unfamiliar learning designs; and provide the learning-focused feedback teachers need to improve their practice in designing and engaging in virtual learning.

When conducting a virtual classroom observation, coming to consensus on the details of observation goes a long way toward establishing trust between mentor and mentee. Particularly when there is unfamiliarity with both facilitating and observing virtual student learning, both parties may be nervous about conducting an observation. Guidelines can alleviate that anxiety.

The following tool can facilitate conversation, set expectations for

observing a virtual lesson, and help both parties feel prepared for what's to come.

It is important during this observation planning process to be clear that the goal of classroom observation, particularly in a virtual environment, is to help the teacher improve his or her practice in particular areas of focus.

As teachers continue to grow in their familiarity with designing and engaging in virtual learning with their students, a strong mentor whose areas of support are clear and established collaboratively with mentees will facilitate that continued teacher growth.

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MENTORING REMOTELY: PLAN A VIRTUAL LESSON OBSERVATION

GETTING STARTED

First, agree to what will be observed. Is it a live, synchronous online lesson, or a lesson that the mentee has designed in advance within a learning management system like Google Classroom or Edgenuity? If it is a live lesson, confirm the day and time of the observation, as well as how the mentor will log into whatever technology platform is being used. Also establish what role the mentor will play in the classroom — interacting with the teacher and students or silently observing?

Once you determine the logistics of the observation, the mentor will want the mentee to share the lesson and the lesson’s instructional goal. One of the mentor’s primary jobs is to support mentees in teaching their curriculum well, so they need to know what lesson from the curriculum they are teaching and what the goal of the lesson is.

Mentor and mentee also need to confirm the focus

of the observation, including the specific skills or instructional practices that will serve as the focus of the mentor’s observation notes. During the lesson, what work will students be doing? Will students be providing oral responses during the lesson? Different lessons and focuses will lend themselves to different kinds of data to collect. Mentors will use this data during one-on-one debrief conversations.

It can help build trust with mentees to discuss questions of confidentiality. What needs to be kept confidential between the mentor and mentee to enable authentic growth?

Finally, come to consensus on conducting a one-on-one debrief following the observation. This should take place no more than 48 to 72 hours after the observation. The more time that passes between the observation and the debrief, the less impact the observation data have.

This tool was adapted from a mentor teacher program that Learning Forward designed and facilitated in support of 1,500 mentor teachers in Louisiana through a 2017-20 partnership with the Louisiana Department of Education.

Instructions: The mentor and mentee should set a time to discuss each of the key components in this tool. The mentor and mentee should come to an agreement about each item and each have copies of the completed form to ensure that it serves as a mutual agreement between them.

Key components to discuss	Guiding question(s)	Notes
Observation format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is being observed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A live virtual lesson? An asynchronous, recorded lesson? (Make sure you refer to your district’s student privacy rules before recording a lesson.) What virtual tools are needed to conduct this observation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live session link? Access to mentee’s virtual classroom? If the observation is of an asynchronous recorded lesson, will mentee be present for review of the lesson? 	

TOOLS

MENTORING REMOTELY: PLAN A VIRTUAL LESSON OBSERVATION CONTINUED

Key components to discuss	Guiding question(s)	Notes
Observation day and time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where and when will the observation take place? 	
Observation/virtual classroom logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long will the observation last? What is the best way for the mentor to observe? (e.g. camera on or off) If the lesson is a live virtual lesson, what kinds of interaction between mentor and students are acceptable? If the lesson is a live virtual lesson, what kinds of interaction between mentor and mentee are acceptable? Is there anything the mentor needs to know about the classroom, the technology, or students? 	
Instructional goal of lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the instructional goal of the lesson? What standard(s) does it align to? Why does the mentee want students to meet this goal? 	
Focus of observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the focus of the observation? (e.g. student management in a virtual environment, questioning, student discourse) What does the mentee hope to gain as a result of this lesson being observed? 	
Student work and data to collect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What will students be working on during the lesson? How will students turn in work in this remote learning situation? What work can be collected and discussed during the debrief? What, if any, data will be generated in the lesson? 	
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What needs to be kept confidential between the mentor and mentee to enable authentic growth? 	
Debrief conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the debrief be conducted? (e.g. on the phone, via a video call) 	

Assess and address gaps in student learning

As the new school year starts, one of educators' many challenges is assessing where students' skills stand and filling the gaps. Students may be behind where they would typically be at the beginning of their grade level as a result of missing out on instruction last spring.

With the unplanned transition to distance learning, many teachers focused on reviewing content and maintaining students' current skill levels rather than attempting to teach new content. That choice was driven by concerns about leaving behind students without internet access, teachers' lack of training in how to engage students online, and the urgency of tending to students' nutritional, safety, and social and emotional needs.

Even when teachers did teach new content, students may have experienced stress and trauma that hindered their



learning, struggled to adjust to online teaching, and experienced varying levels of family support for learning.

On top of those challenges, it was difficult to assess how much students were learning in the spring. Many typical methods of checking for understanding were impossible without in-person interactions, and formal assessment would have been stressful for, and perhaps unfair to, students.

When you add in all the uncertainty about what school will look like this year, it's clear that it will take creativity and collaboration to ensure students don't manifest skill gaps that carry forward for months or years. Educators at all levels and in all roles should be part of the solution, and cross-grade collaboration will be essential.

Use this tool to consider and plan strategies to create continuity of content and assess and address students' skill gaps.

CHECKLIST OF STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY STUDENT SKILL GAPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Review the professional learning strategies for identifying and addressing student skill gaps that are relevant to your role and setting. For each item, check the appropriate response based on whether you plan to use the strategy. After reviewing all the strategies, reflect on which you are prioritizing and not prioritizing.

STRATEGIES: TEACHING AND LEARNING	Currently doing	Planning to do	To consider	Not interested or not applicable
Employ looping so that teachers continue with students they know from last year.				
Use co-teaching among teachers of different subject areas to leverage project-based or multidisciplinary learning to emphasize critical concepts.				
Create opportunities for teacher leadership and peer-to-peer learning so that teachers can build one another's knowledge of content and pedagogy across grades.				
Hold regular cross-grade teacher meetings and collaboration, such as PLCs.				
Encourage informal collaboration among teachers of different grade levels (e.g. hold a weekly virtual lunch hangout).				
Leverage the skills and assets of paraprofessionals to facilitate information sharing among teachers about classes and students, work one-on-one or in small groups with struggling students, and communicate regularly with families.				
Conduct check-ins or focus groups with students to hear their perspective on skills and needs.				

TOOLS

CHECKLIST OF STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY STUDENT SKILL GAPS CONTINUED

STRATEGIES: COACHING	Currently doing	Planning to do	To consider	Not interested or not applicable
Engage teachers in conversation and reflection to help them assess students' needs and gaps as well as their own professional learning needs.				
Build teachers' knowledge of content normally covered in previous grade levels through modeling, training, and other strategies.				
Facilitate cross-grade teacher collaboration through PLCs.				
Serve as a liaison among teachers to facilitate information sharing about the skills and needs of classes and specific students.				

STRATEGIES: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP				
Create and protect time for teacher collaboration, including cross-grade collaboration.				
Participate in those teacher team conversations as a learner, colleague, and facilitator.				
Work with coaching staff to set schedules and responsibilities that maximize their effectiveness and efficiency.				
Establish a schoolwide expectation that all staff are responsible for all students' learning.				
Identify or create collaborative learning opportunities with other school leaders within or beyond your district to learn about promising practices and share ideas and challenges.				
Create and advocate for ongoing professional learning on remote assessment and instructional strategies.				
Establish guidelines for student assessment, and communicate them clearly and consistently.				

STRATEGIES: DISTRICT AND STATE LEADERSHIP				
Ensure time for school leaders to collaborate within and across schools to discuss common areas of student need and strategies for addressing them.				
Establish time for teachers to collaborate outside their own schools and share knowledge across the district about grade-level needs and strategies.				
Prioritize coaching capacity, especially in schools with high numbers of students at risk for learning gaps.				
Provide professional learning and ongoing support in the use of formative assessment.				
Fund and implement professional learning on remote assessment and instruction.				
Establish a district- or statewide vision for student assessment aligned with instructional goals for the year with clear expectations and consistent support for all educators.				
Communicate openly with families and the community about shifts in assessment and instructional goals for the year.				

UPDATES

LEARNING FORWARD SUPPORTS DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE

Learning Forward mourns George Floyd, who like so many other men and women of color, died senselessly, the result of violent policing and entrenched racism. We join individuals protesting across the globe in calling for justice and demanding respect for the humanity and value of African American men, women, and children. We commit to working actively against institutional and individual racism in collaboration with educators across the world. Learning Forward believes that Black Lives Matter.

Learning Forward believes that education will ultimately create the equitable society all students deserve. At the same time, there are systemic inequities within education itself, including how schools are funded, what resources are available to students, and lack of access to effective professional learning and teaching for some students.

Equity of opportunity for each student is a core principle of our work and as we strive for equity, Learning Forward serves as a champion for educators. We serve leaders of learning and change, who undertake the essential work of creating cultures and structures where all students and educators learn and grow daily. As educators, we must take responsibility for transforming the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that act as racist impediments to student learning, whether at the individual or systemic level.

As an organization, we invest in the collective efficacy of all educators and advocate for equity of opportunity for each student. As a staff, we commit to exploring and owning our beliefs and practices to more meaningfully contribute to a just, anti-racist education system. We must be vigilant in finding solutions for substantive change in the areas that we as educators can control. Learning Forward joins our partners within and beyond education to battle racism in all its forms.

UPDATES

LEARNING FORWARD LAUNCHES VIRTUAL DESIGN NETWORK

Learning Forward invites district and state leaders to join a new network designed to solve current challenges related to the design, implementation, and measurement of professional learning in virtual and digital models. Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World (DPLV) Network: A Redesign Professional Development Community of Practice will help educators adjust to and

thrive in online, remote, or hybrid learning.



Learning Forward networks are equity-centered and driven by the underlying principles of learning

teams: Learning is collaborative and continuous, solutions are data-driven, and educators are at the center of the work. Participants set goals specific to their context while learning from other districts and states and use continuous improvement processes to discover practical and scalable solutions.

Participation advances through three stages: supporting re-entry in the fall in virtual and hybrid learning environments; responding, recovering, and maximizing learning during the school year; and reinventing professional learning to acknowledge and embrace new learning models.

The network is forming now, with a virtual kickoff in September. For more information, visit learningforward.org/networks/virtual-design.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE UPDATE:

We're going virtual

Learning Forward will host a virtual conference Dec. 6-8, bringing educators together for shared learning and powerful networking.

After consultation with health officials, educators, and long-standing conference vendors, we've decided that the planned face-to-face gathering in Chicago is not feasible. Data from our stakeholders also informed this decision, with 74% of more than 1,000 respondents indicating their employers wouldn't support travel to such a face-to-face convening.

Learn more at [conference.learningforward.org](https://learningforward.org).

The theme of this year's event is Innovate for Impact. We'll address questions such as how to ensure all students have equitable access to high-quality teaching and how professional learning can solve the challenges we face in the year ahead.

We'll highlight leading voices in professional learning from all levels — policy, system, school, and classroom — and connect our community of peers to share solutions and inspiration.

Look for more information about this opportunity on our website and in your email. Those of you who have already registered may apply your registration to the virtual conference. We will reach out to registered participants shortly with more details.

DISTRICT MEMBERSHIPS

Greenwood Leflore Consolidated School District in Mississippi and St. Croix River Education District in Minnesota have joined Learning Forward's district membership, and Suffolk (Virginia) Public Schools has renewed its membership.

Learning Forward's district membership allows districts to offer all their educators access to research, best practices, resources — including an exclusive discussion guide for each

issue of *The Learning Professional* — and member discounts.

This special group membership can help districts establish a common language and expectations about professional learning, foster collaborative learning, and save money and time.

To learn more about our district membership, visit learningforward.org/membership.

NEW GRANTS SUPPORT LEARNING FORWARD'S MISSION

The Wallace Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York recently approved new philanthropic support for Learning Forward.

The Wallace Foundation's board approved a two-year grant to enable Learning Forward to continue in its ongoing role as a communications partner. Since 2010, Learning Forward (then NSDC) has helped the foundation share knowledge, research, and resources aligned to its educational leadership and social and emotional learning initiatives.



The grant will provide Learning Forward with resources to showcase Wallace research and knowledge via our Annual Conference, publications, social media, and various learning events. The foundation is also supporting Learning Forward's efforts to transition in-person learning experiences to a virtual format.

As part of the grant, Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's chief learning officer, will serve as a liaison to the foundation's various learning communities, including one linked to the Wallace University Principal Preparation Initiative. Elizabeth Foster, Learning Forward's vice president, research & standards, will serve as liaison to the foundation's various social emotional learning activities.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has committed two years of funding to support Learning Forward's revision of the Standards for Professional Learning. The multiyear undertaking to revise the standards will include planning with the input of advisors representing more than 40 partner organizations and districts, development of revised standards and associated implementation and assessment tools, and dissemination and policy outreach.

The Carnegie Corporation supports Learning Forward's efforts to build the capacity of educators through the What Matters Now Network, a learning network grounded in improvement science. State coalitions in Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island use learning cycles to test and improve learning innovations on implementing high-quality instructional materials.

The Carnegie Corporation also supports Learning Forward's work to develop content-based coaching programs.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Learning Forward is continuing our series of webinars on responding to the COVID crisis. We are now offering a reflection guide for each webinar to help you to build on and enhance the learning on your own or with your teams. Learn more about our webinars at learningforward.org/webinars-2.

- **Aug. 13:** Meeting the Needs of our Youngest Learners
- **Aug. 20:** Assessment Approaches for Today's Learning Environments
- **Aug. 27:** Attending to the Health and Wellness of Educators as the School Year Starts
- **Sept. 3:** Connecting With Families When It's More Important Than Ever
- **Sept. 10:** Plan C: Preparing for the Next Wave
- **Sept. 17:** Learning From Coaches: Supporting Teams and Individuals



Join Learning Forward Maryland and Learning Forward Virginia for a book club and synchronous virtual learning session on equity implementation. Participants will read the book *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity: The Keys to Successful Equity Implementation* and attend an online discussion with the authors, Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple.

For dates and times and to register, visit www.eventbrite.com/o/learning-forward-maryland-27387613631. For questions, contact Peter Carpenter at pcin2teaching@gmail.com.

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Follow us on social media. Share your insights and feedback about *The Learning Professional* by using #LearnFwdTLP.

Bruce 'B.C.' Preston
@_bcpreston

Stress cause: traumatic event that "Challenges a person's 'assumptive world'." Helpful article in a very helpful issue!
[@LearningForward](#)

We will be different
Build teachers' resilience to bounce back after crisis.
learningforward.org

10:56 AM · Jul 3, 2020 · [Twitter for Android](#)

AT A GLANCE

“The technology itself is not transformative. It’s the school, the pedagogy, that is transformative.”

— Tanya Byron,
Psychologist, author, media personality

THE HUMAN CONNECTION

As technology in education accelerates to meet the challenges of the pandemic, we recognize that the drivers of learning will always be the heart, mind, and skill of the educator.

Since March, Learning Forward has hosted weekly webinars about the pandemic’s impact on educators and students, offering resources, insights, and ideas for continuing the excellent teaching and learning happening every day.

Participants grapple with how best to support teachers and students, families, and communities.

We’re grateful to all those who are working diligently to serve the rapidly changing needs of educators in their schools and districts, and we salute their dedication and passion for excellence.

Here are some of the insights participants shared during the webinars. We hope you’ll find them as inspiring as we do.

“We must move through this time with compassion, understanding, and flexibility.”

“Having and giving grace is so important always.”

“Relationships always mattered, but now it’s crucial.”

“Lead by attitude and actions.”

“Reach out until you get them.”

“Listening can be very powerful.”

“Doing the best we can is everything!”

“Listen to your students and empower them.”

“We cannot become comfortable with inequitable access.”

“Going above and beyond is how we start to close the gaps.”

“We are all in the game and responsible for the growth and development of each student.”

“This could be a great time to think about how we do school differently, and, with luck, we’ll carry that learning back into schools when we go back.”

“There are times you really need to put yourself first, just so you can take care of others.”

THROUGH THE LENS

OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...

Learning Communities

... occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Leadership

... requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

Resources

... requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Data

... uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Learning Designs

... integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Implementation

... applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

Outcomes

... aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Many of the articles in this issue of *The Learning Professional* demonstrate Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning in action. Use this tool to deepen your understanding of the standards and strategies for implementing them.

Ways you might use this tool include:

- Discuss the questions in a professional learning community;
- Share one or more articles from the issue with your staff and facilitate a conversation; and
- Do a self-assessment of what you have learned from this issue.

<p>STANDARD: RESOURCES</p> <p>IN ACTION Technology has always been a valuable resource for professional learning, but in 2020, it has become essential. As articles in this issue show, video, learning management systems, live streaming, and conferencing apps are a lifeline for students and educators.</p>	<p>TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plethora of technology tools available can be overwhelming. Which platforms or systems have you found most valuable for professional learning over the past six months? How can you maximize their use and pare down the ones that are less useful? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology resources are most beneficial when coupled with human resources. Who are the people in your school, district, or organization with technological expertise? How can you leverage their knowledge to build everyone's capacity? (Think broadly and look beyond the technology department as well as within it.) <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>STANDARD: LEARNING DESIGNS</p> <p>IN ACTION Mentoring is a powerful method for supporting new teachers and can also build veteran educators' skills. Mentors face new challenges during the COVID-19 era, but creative thinking and technology tools can allow us to rise to those challenges. Timothy Boerst and colleagues (p. 50) write about how mentors can use video-enhanced lesson plans and video commenting. Tom Manning and other members of the Learning Forward consulting team share a tool (p. 56) for mentors to plan online observations.</p>	<p>TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you move into the new school year, what are your goals for mentors and the teachers they support? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the tools described here, or other tools at your disposal, help you accomplish those goals? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

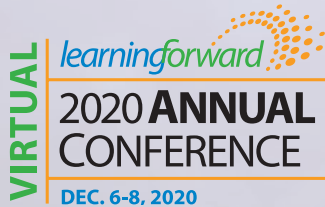
Learn more about Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning at www.learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning.



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

504 S. Locust Street
Oxford, OH 45056

We're going virtual!



Learning Forward's Annual Conference, known for more than 40 years as *THE Learning Conference*, is going virtual this year!

Learning Forward is concerned first and foremost about the safety and health of our colleagues, educators, students, and communities, so this year's attendees will come together virtually Dec. 6-8, 2020.

Ensuring students have equitable access to high-quality learning remains as important as ever. Learn about best practices, the latest research, and how other learning professionals are responding to challenges in their districts, but without the usual travel costs or restrictions!

conference.learningforward.org

INNOVATE FOR IMPACT

This year's theme is **Innovate for Impact**, addressing questions such as:

- ▶ How can professional learning solve the challenges we face in the upcoming school year?
- ▶ What innovative solutions do education leaders need to know for professional learning policies, systems, and practices?
- ▶ How can we measure the impact of professional learning so that your investments are leading to equity and excellence for all students?

VIRTUAL 2020