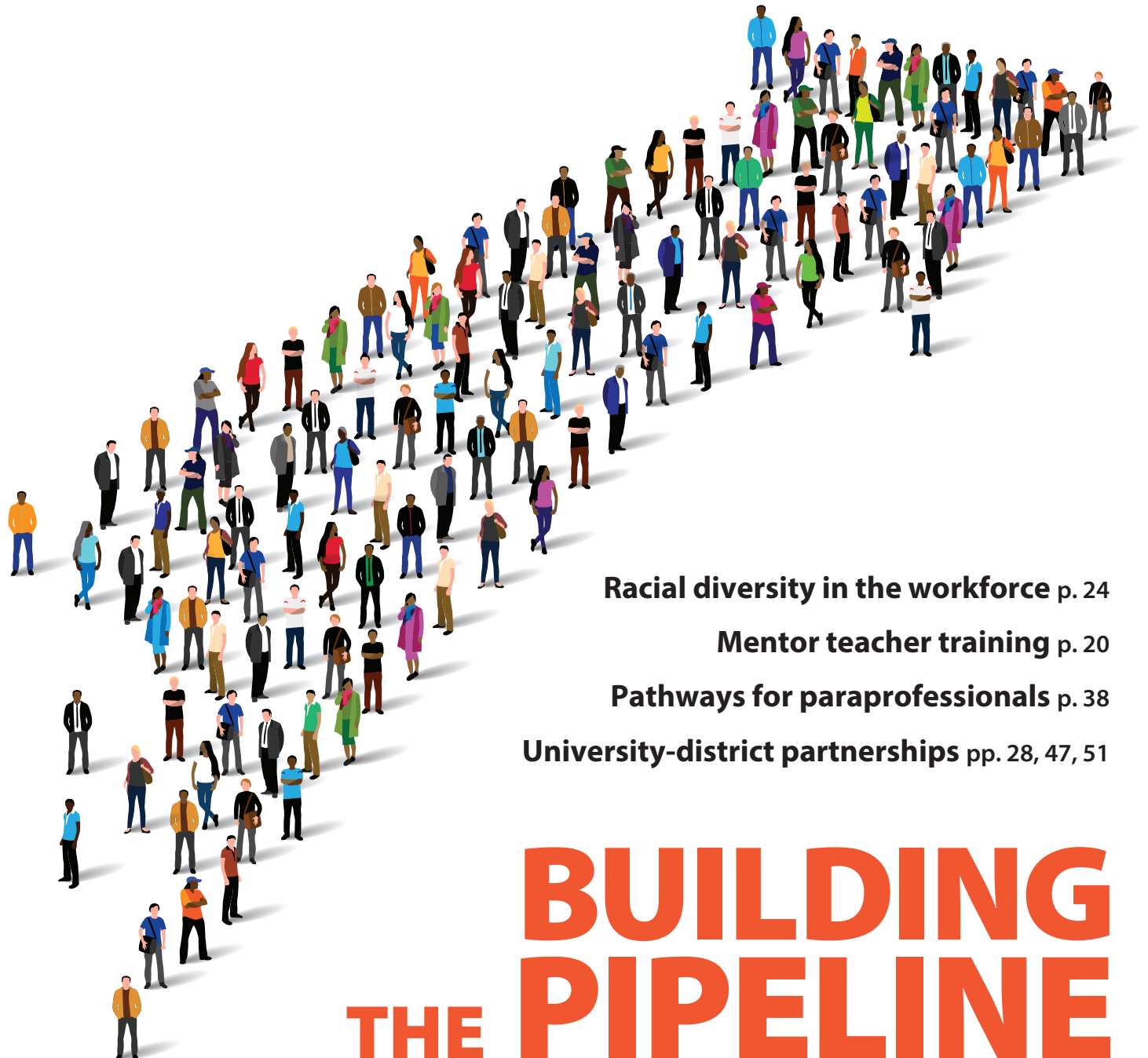


THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL



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THE BUILDING PIPELINE

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For more information, contact Tom Manning, senior vice president, professional services, at tom.manning@learningforward.org.
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Building
relationships



Presenting and
facilitating



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learning



Providing effective
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Coaching individuals
and teams



Selecting learning
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Cicely Woodard

Mathematics teacher
Kickapoo High School
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"Oftentimes, when people say leadership in education, we go automatically to the principalship. We assume that teachers who want to be leaders want to be principals. That is really not always the case. Every teacher who wants to lead doesn't necessarily want to be a principal. So I encourage you to explore ways that teachers can lead from the front of the classroom."

Source: "Investing in adult learners: Recruiting, supporting, and retaining educators of color in a virtual world," a Learning Forward webinar on Oct. 8, 2020. Recording available at learningforward.org/webinar/investing-in-adult-learners-recruiting-supporting-and-retaining-educators-of-color-in-a-virtual-world.

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Michelle Bowman, Vice President, Networks & Content Design,
michelle.bowman@learningforward.org

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1

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.....

2

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.....

3

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HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

STRENGTHENING THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE TAKES SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Shared responsibility means more than each of us doing our own part; it means that I'm invested in your part, too.

As I read through the articles in this issue about building the educator pipeline, the theme that stands out is shared responsibility. Many of the authors go beyond the concept of collaboration — an important and ever-present theme in professional learning — to a deeper notion of collective commitment. Shared responsibility means more than each of us doing our own part; it means that I'm invested in your part, too.

The need for shared responsibility has been on my mind a lot lately. In the current historical moment, our only real hope of surviving and thriving is caring about one another and for one another, and not just in an abstract way.

The coronavirus pandemic requires us to assume responsibility for each other's well-being to an unusual degree, even as we must distance ourselves physically. To decrease transmission of the virus, we have to make daily sacrifices for each another, sacrifices that contradict our most basic human instincts to gather, express affection, give comfort, and experience joy together.

The other pandemic — systemic racism — requires each of us to invest meaningfully in the health and success of people of color. White people, in particular, have to confront our roles in the systems of oppression that cause harm and violence and take active steps to dismantle those systems. This, too, requires sacrifices and hard truths.

As both of these realities make clear, assuming shared responsibility is difficult and sometimes painful work. That's why I am so inspired by this issue's authors, who are building the pipeline of high-quality teachers and leaders, going beyond their own individual contexts to weld the sections together and reinforce them when needed. They are overcoming institutional barriers, logistical hurdles, and entrenched beliefs to create continuity and quality from preservice, to the challenging first years of teaching, to teacher leadership, to school and system leadership.

As authors in these pages show, the educator pipeline has multiple branches that must be strong on their own and also fit together. For example, there are multiple pathways for recruiting and supporting new teachers, such as mentoring initiatives (p. 20), teacher residency programs (p. 33), and the paraprofessional workforce (p. 38). There are also multiple successful career pathways. For example, teacher leadership takes many forms and need not lead to the principalship (p. 43). But when it does, collaboration among universities and districts can play a key role (p. 51). In all of these pathways, it is imperative to make a shared investment in diversifying the educator workforce to include and elevate people of color (p. 24).

Across all of these pathways, shared responsibility takes partnership, and that takes trust, especially when the work requires discomfort, sacrifice, or uncertainty. As we look around at our world in 2020, trust is eroding in many arenas — in politics, in the media, even in science — at the very time when we need it most. But educators have been and will continue to be models of trust and collective care — and we've never needed that leadership more than we do now. ■



Suzanne Bouffard
(suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org) is editor of *The Learning Professional*.

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

STAFF

Executive editor: Tracy Crow
Editor: Suzanne Bouffard
Managing editor: Sue Chevalier
Designer: Kitty Black
At a Glance designer: David McCoy

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LEARNING FORWARD'S VISION:

Equity and excellence in teaching and learning.

BUSINESS OFFICE

504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
513-523-6029, 800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638
office@learningforward.org
www.learningforward.org

LEARNING FORWARD STAFF

Denise Glyn Borders

President/CEO
denise.borders@learningforward.org

Frederick Brown

Chief learning officer/deputy
frederick.brown@learningforward.org

Anthony Armstrong

Senior vice president, marketing, membership, communications
anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org

Suzanne Bouffard

Vice president, publications
suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org

Michelle Bowman

Vice president, networks & content design
michelle.bowman@learningforward.org

Tracy Crow

Chief strategy officer
tracy.crow@learningforward.org

Paul Fleming

Senior vice president, states and standards
paul.fleming@learningforward.org

Elizabeth Foster

Vice president, research & standards
elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org

Carrie Freundlich

Vice president, conference operations, program management
carrie.freundlich@learningforward.org

Melinda George

Chief policy officer
melinda.george@learningforward.org

Michael Lanham

COO/CFO
michael.lanham@learningforward.org

Tom Manning

Senior vice president, professional services
tom.manning@learningforward.org

Renee Taylor-Johnson

Vice president, business services
renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org

Joellen Killion

Senior advisor
joellen.killion@learningforward.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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VOICES

4 PRIORITIES FOR POLICYMAKERS

As we move into a new year with a new president, now is the time to come together around our shared commitment to K-12 education. Learning Forward is launching a petition that calls on policymakers to commit resources to four priorities:

1. Emergency COVID relief funding for schools and school districts;
2. High-quality, job-embedded, and ongoing professional learning facilitated through technology tools to prevent student learning losses;
3. Social and emotional supports for educators and students; and
4. Home broadband connectivity and appropriate learning devices for all educators and students.

Please join us in calling for support for all educators and students. Sign the petition at learningforward.org/advocacy



We recognized that we needed a stronger, bolder statement that articulates how professional learning is a critical lever for changing educator practices and achieving equity for all.

Frederick Brown, top, is chief learning officer/deputy and Paul Fleming is senior vice president, standards, states, & equity at Learning Forward.

CALL TO ACTION

Frederick Brown and Paul Fleming

LEARNING FORWARD PUTS EQUITY FRONT AND CENTER

In the October 2018 issue of *The Learning Professional*, Courageous Conversation founder Glenn Singleton reminded us not to engage in “random acts of equity.” Consistent with that message, Learning Forward aspires to develop a comprehensive approach to equity. In recent months, Learning Forward has developed an equity position statement to guide that approach and our specific work within it.

At the heart of the position statement is our definition of equity: Equity is the outcome of educator practices that respect and nurture all aspects of student identity rather than treat them as barriers to learning. But a stand-alone definition of equity is insufficient to advocate for and make change. We recognized that we needed a stronger, bolder statement that articulates how professional learning is a critical lever for changing educator practices and achieving equity for all.

We believe the equity position statement provides a powerful opportunity for us to learn as well as lead. We recognize that we, as an organization, have much to learn. We will work to embody this statement with openness and humility as we summon the collective courage to make equity a reality in our nation and world and work to ensure each student experiences relevant, culturally responsive, rigorous learning.

EQUITY IN THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

For decades, the Standards for Professional Learning have been the backbone of our work at Learning Forward and a guiding force in the field. Equity has always been a priority in the standards, but it has been framed differently at different points in our organization’s history.

In 2001, the second edition of the standards included a specific equity standard. In the next edition of the standards, which has been in place since 2011, we made the decision that equity should not be separated from other elements of professional learning and rather should be integrated throughout the standards.

Our understanding is evolving. Learning Forward is now working with a team of education leaders from around the world to revise the standards. Together, we have realized the need to once again make equity explicit, this time not in one stand-alone standard, but in multiple standards. These new standards will urge professional learning leaders to dismantle structural inequities, engage in inclusive practices for the support and development of diverse staff, consider bias and privilege, and understand how race, gender, ability, language, and other factors impact teaching and learning.

OTHER EQUITY-FOCUSED EFFORTS

Equity is also taking center stage in other Learning Forward work, including:

- Publications: We are placing an increased emphasis on content about culturally sustaining practices and dismantling racism, including but not limited to an upcoming issue of *The Learning Professional* on actions for equity.
- Networks and learning experiences: The learning communities we facilitate and support are an important platform for conversations about structural racism and for co-developing strategies to scale equitable instruction and access.
- Virtual conference: Nine concurrent sessions, a thought leader lecture, and a keynote presentation have a focus on bias, race, or culturally responsive practices.
- Professional services to school districts: We are building awareness that it is each leader’s responsibility to advocate for and build systems that dismantle institutional racism and remove barriers to equitable student learning.

Equity position statement

Learning Forward believes schools **achieve their utmost potential** when:

- **Each student** experiences relevant, culturally responsive, rigorous learning and benefits from the collective guidance and care of exceptional teachers and leaders;
- Each educator has access to **high-quality professional learning** to cultivate the strengths and address the needs of each student; and
- Each leader **advocates for and builds an education system that dismantles institutional racism** and removes other barriers to students' equitable access to learning.

This vision for equity in schools requires transformation at every level of the education system.

Learning Forward defines **equity as the outcome of educator practices that respect and nurture all aspects of student identity** rather than treat them as barriers to learning. Professional learning is a critical lever to achieve equity.

Educators experience and drive change when they address their own biases and reflect on how their beliefs impact students. They build equitable schools when they increase their capacity to differentiate instruction and assessment to meet students' needs. They contribute to an equitable system when they denounce injustices and inequitable practices. Educators cultivate equity when they leverage the cultural and linguistic assets that students bring and ensure that each learner engages in rigorous learning. This requires the use of high-quality and culturally responsive curriculum and instructional materials.

Professional learning aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning **disrupts and dismantles causal inequities by:**

- Eliminating gaps in access and opportunities by ensuring high-quality teaching, leading, and learning;
- Equipping educators with knowledge and strategies specifically designed to recognize and eliminate bias in the classroom and in their own instructional practices;
- Strengthening self-examination practices and collective responsibility of all educators in the system;
- Providing evidence and data about strategies or designs that support equitable learning;
- Prioritizing coherent and aligned systems that provide academic rigor, high-quality curriculum and culturally relevant instructional materials, educator quality, and resources to support each student; and
- Transforming policies at all levels that shape anti-racist learning systems for adults and students alike.

Effective professional learning removes inequities in students' access to meaningful learning, ensuring a pathway to success for each student. When all educators engage in high-quality professional learning, **all students experience equity and excellence in teaching and learning.**

THE WORK WE NEED TO DO

We hope that the equity position statement will also help us tackle one of the most significant challenges we see today: Many educators don't recognize that the teaching and learning problems in their schools are driven and sustained by inequitable policies and practices and therefore don't recognize the need to address these problems with equity-centered professional learning.

The current global COVID pandemic lays bare the long-standing structural and societal inequities that are barriers to high-quality teaching and learning for all children. Simultaneously, the racial justice movement is shining a brighter spotlight on these issues than ever before. There has never been a time when the work has felt more urgent.

Are we as an organization where we

want to be with regard to equity? Not quite. We recognize we still have much work to do to avoid Glenn Singleton's warning about random acts of equity. As we continue to grapple with these very important issues, we invite you to continue to share with us your equity challenges and solutions. Together, we can ensure that each and every child experiences equity and excellence in teaching and learning. ■



Professional learning “has evolved from a very technical approach to training teachers for an explicit set of tasks to co-leading learning systems in ways that teachers can own.”

Segun Eubanks is a member of the Learning Forward board of trustees.

BEING FORWARD

Segun Eubanks

TO PROFESSIONALIZE TEACHING, PRIORITIZE LEARNING

Segun Eubanks is director of the Center for Education Innovation and Improvement and professor of practice at the University of Maryland, College Park. He joined the Learning Forward board of trustees in December 2019.

What role has Learning Forward played in your career?

I first got involved with Learning Forward in the early 1990s while I was working on teacher recruitment and retention. When I became director of teacher quality at the National Education Association (NEA) in 2002, I worked closely with Learning Forward on developing standards and promoting them through policy, advocating for professional learning through Title II, coauthoring reports on collective bargaining, and more.

I then had the great joy of being part of the Redesign PD Network, one of my favorite projects. Because of Learning Forward’s high regard in the education community, we were able to bring together a dynamic, smart, and ambitious group of people to think about how to impact change at a very practical level. We helped superintendents and other leaders reimagine how to structure their professional learning experiences. I think that project’s impact is still being felt in the field today.

How did your work at the National Education Association shape your thinking about professional learning?

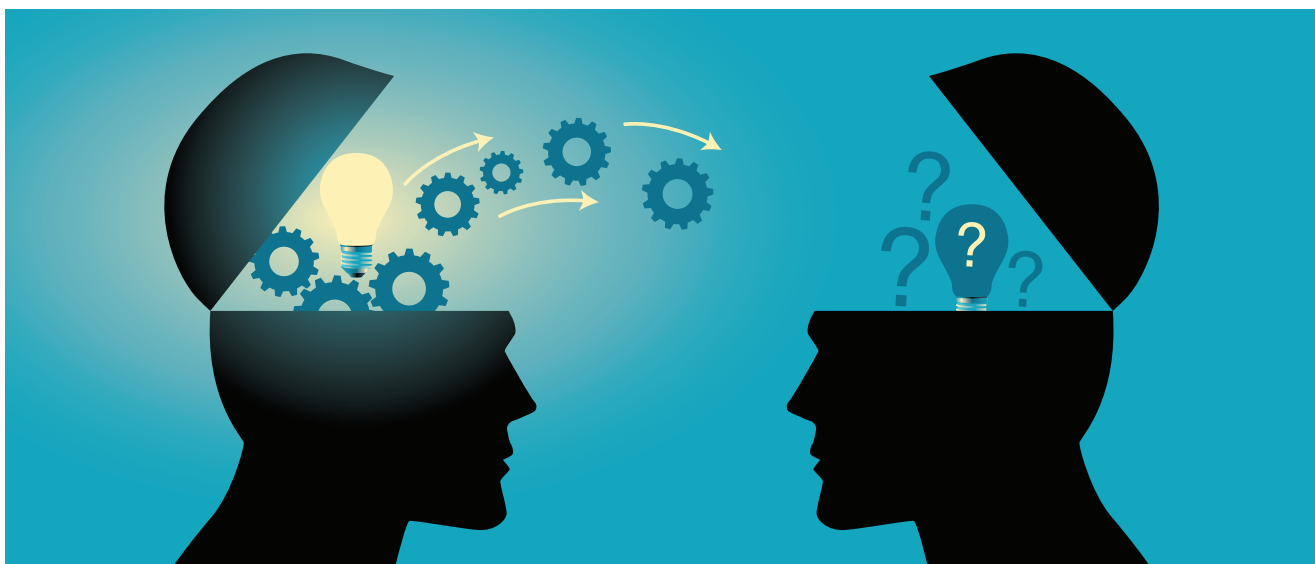
Our struggle, along with a lot of other people and organizations, was about making teaching recognized as a real profession. In fact, there probably isn’t a single NGO [nongovernmental organization] that has done more than NEA to build the profession. It cofounded the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (which later became the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation), and the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. We also were an essential partner in the founding of the National Staff Development Council, Learning Forward’s predecessor.

Professional learning has been one of the key elements of the movement to professionalize teaching. The professional learning field has impacted how we think about teacher growth structures, compensation, and teacher leadership. It has shifted the thinking about career development to focus on what skills, knowledge, and capacity teachers need to keep learning and developing.

You were chair of the board of education for Prince George’s County Public Schools (Maryland) from 2013 to 2018. How has that role informed your work in professional learning?

The work I did on the board of education was the hardest and most rewarding work I’ve done in education. I took on that role because I wanted to be connected to the everyday hard work of making change happen in school districts and seeing ideas transformed into action.

School board members are not traditionally asked to solve teaching and learning problems, even though ultimately the work is about improving student learning. But when the district got interested in National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, I got involved because I had a lot of knowledge about the program from my time working at NEA when the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was being developed. We also did a lot of work to support new teachers, like a peer assistance and review program because our district had relatively high teacher turnover and attrition.



[Looking outside of that district], I get a sense that the value of professional learning is not nearly as high as it needs to be on most school boards' agendas. School board members have a tremendous respect for teachers, and everyone wants to be able to increase teacher salaries — even if reality keeps them from voting for that. But I don't think they know enough about other ways of supporting teachers. And, of course, school boards have a huge slate of responsibilities, from setting policies to choosing contractors for food services and buses.

How have you seen the field of professional learning change over time?

Almost everything has changed! When I started, it was called staff development and then professional development, and now we call it professional learning. It has evolved from a very technical approach to training teachers for an explicit set of

tasks to co-leading learning systems in ways that teachers can own.

[For example], we've seen almost a full circle of the professional learning communities (PLC) process. After Shirley Hord and Rebecca DuFour and Richard DuFour began developing this work, PLCs took hold everywhere. Then they began to falter and became PLCs in name only. Now they're starting to turn the corner and become teacher-owned and job-embedded, as intended.

What are you excited about or inspired by in Learning Forward's current work?

I'm excited about the redesign of the Standards for Professional Learning, but especially what we do once we have the new standards in place — that is the most important part of the work. [In the past], we have been successful in getting states to embrace the standards and understand what high-quality professional learning is.

But unlike a lot of the other

educational standards, they don't tend to have the same level of urgency as, say, principal standards, around which university departments shape administrator certification programs. Education leaders live and breathe inside those standards, and that's the level we need to get to with professional learning standards. Now, states tell the districts that they believe in the standards and districts commit to adopting them, but there's not enough structure [to carry them out].

I also see a lot of potential in the partnership and engagement work Learning Forward is doing with districts and schools and states. The most exciting thing is going to be sharing these as exemplar experiences that can spread and go to scale.

I'm honored to be serving on the Learning Forward board. My job is to be a voice of many accomplished people who are doing great work in professional learning. ■



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Sanders

‘THE WORK IS ALWAYS CHANGING AND CHALLENGING FOR ME’

Current role: Supervisor, Professional Learning & Title IIA, Cobb County School District, Georgia

Previous roles: English language arts teacher, literacy/instructional coach, district lead, program manager at Georgia Department of Education

Learning Forward member since: 2016

Why she’s passionate about professional learning: Although I enjoyed working with young people [as an English language arts teacher], I discovered my love for professional learning when I became a literacy coach in a middle school. It was rewarding to work with adults who focused on their own learning. I enjoy sharing my own experiences and learning from the teachers’ experiences. The work is always changing and challenging for me.

Why she reads *The Learning Professional*: I remember reading the article “Delicate layers of learning” [from the April 2016 issue], which shared ideas of leveraging existing expertise and building cycles of inquiry. The article highlighted many elements that our team was incorporating in a series on building teachers’ capacity for writing instruction. The ideas shared in the article reassured me that we were on the right path. As a result, I subscribed to the journal, and I have come to really rely on *The Learning Professional* for ideas and motivation. Recently, in the August 2020 issue, I really appreciated the tool for planning virtual lesson observations, “Making mentoring work online.” The article inspired me to create a new virtual mentoring initiative for our district, which we are planning now to implement for next year’s new teachers.

How she uses the Standards for Professional Learning: When I was a program manager at the state level, I began learning about the standards. Our professional learning work was shaped by the Standards for Professional Learning. From there, our team began a journey of being intentional about effective professional learning designs so that we could leverage our resources and support for as many teachers as possible. The standards helped us make sure we were moving in the right direction.

How she uses data: I conducted a survey of teachers after our summer districtwide professional learning, and we had a very high response rate this year. The feedback fell into four buckets: social and emotional learning, digital learning, instructional strategies, and guidance on remote instruction in performing and visual arts. This data will help us meet teachers’ needs. I also hope to do more on measuring the impact of our professional learning to ensure it is as effective as possible.



“It was rewarding to work with adults who focused on their own learning.”

Follow @Cobb_PL to see the posts from Sanders’ office. And join us in January for our #LearnFwdTLP Twitter chat, where Sanders will be a featured guest.

Continued on p. 14



WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Erin Ashcraft

ACADEMY PROJECT STRENGTHENS TEACHER PIPELINE PROGRAMS

The Learning Forward Academy experience provided rich professional learning that helped me think about and navigate collaboration between organizations.

Erin Ashcraft (Erin.Ashcraft@education.ky.gov) is assistant director, Division of Educator Recruitment and Development, Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness at the Kentucky Department of Education. She is a graduate of the Learning Forward Academy Class of 2020.

Ensuring all students have access to effective educators is a critical part of equity. But teacher shortages and attrition are an ongoing problem, especially in the highest-needs, lowest-resourced schools. Through the Learning Forward Academy, I have spent 2½ years examining the issues of teacher recruitment and retention to understand how the Kentucky Department of Education, where I work, can support efforts to improve them.

My work has focused on grow-your-own programs for high school students, an innovative approach to bolstering the teacher pipeline. Kentucky high schools can establish a local teacher candidate pool from their own student body through programs like the Teaching and Learning Career and Technical Education pathway. These programs offer high school students dual-credit opportunities, including educator preparation coursework and co-curricular activities. This paves a clear path for entry to an educator preparation program and, ultimately, teacher certification.

Establishing these grow-your-own programs requires securing appropriate partnerships, especially among state and local education agencies and higher education institutions. Although most educators recognize the value of collaboration, too often in education we miss the critical step of clearly defining the roles of each partner. As a result, there is increased potential for redundancy, irrelevant or conflicting advice, and ultimately, a loss of confidence among partners and the schools they aim to support.



Each member of the Learning Forward Academy identifies a problem of practice and conducts a project to address it, informed and supported by the rich learning we engage in with Academy coaches, classmates, and resources. I focused my Academy project on clearly defining partnership roles in grow-your-own programs, to ensure the services each partner provides are relevant and helpful.

The Learning Forward Academy experience provided rich professional learning that helped me think about and navigate collaboration between organizations. I established a goal statement grounded in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) and a theory of change. With the support of my coaches, learning team, and Academy classmates, I then created and implemented a program and evaluation plan.

To help build role clarity and effective partnerships, I drew on the role-specific Innovation Configuration (IC) Maps for the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2014). During a weekend Academy session, I learned about these powerful tools, which allow for examining the specific ways various groups can be expected to contribute to district professional learning efforts and making distinct action steps for each group based on the strengths and limitations of each partner.

Continued on p. 14

Continued from p. 12

What she's working on now:

We've been modifying our professional learning because so much is remote now. We've been working on redesigning our learning walks to be virtual. We're also moving our teacher leader academy online and gamifying the professional learning experience, in partnership with iSchool. We have designed a honeycomb-shaped game

board online, and teacher leaders will have to click on each tile to engage in work.

The work includes content-area learning, 10 roles for school-based teacher and leaders based on [Learning Forward's book] *Taking the Lead*, and a culminating legacy project to work on throughout the school year. Our two-day districtwide professional learning is also moving online.

Why she uses social media for professional learning: I wanted to find a way to elevate the professional learning department and share effective practices. I also set a professional goal for myself of becoming more active on social media. Now, twice a week, I take some time to review new resources and tweet them out. It's always a good learning experience for me. ■

WHAT I'VE LEARNED / Erin Ashcraft

Continued from p. 13

While each provider can play a part in teacher recruitment and development structures and systems, each must work within its own space and means in order to be effective. Applying this knowledge has led to the development of clearly articulated guidance for local education agencies and higher education institutions and to stronger cross-agency collaboration.

Going forward, I hope to continue seeing more grow-your-own

partnerships established, filling local pipelines of effective educators being prepared as early as high school to be a future Kentucky teacher. We are continuing to expand state-level educator recruitment and development efforts in a number of innovative and exciting ways, like GoTeachKY (goteachky.com), striving toward equitable access to effective educators for students across the Commonwealth.

The learning, resources, and network of support I gained through

the Learning Forward Academy will be instrumental in this work, as well as in my professional and personal growth. Their influence will continue to be felt in grow-your-own programs and beyond.

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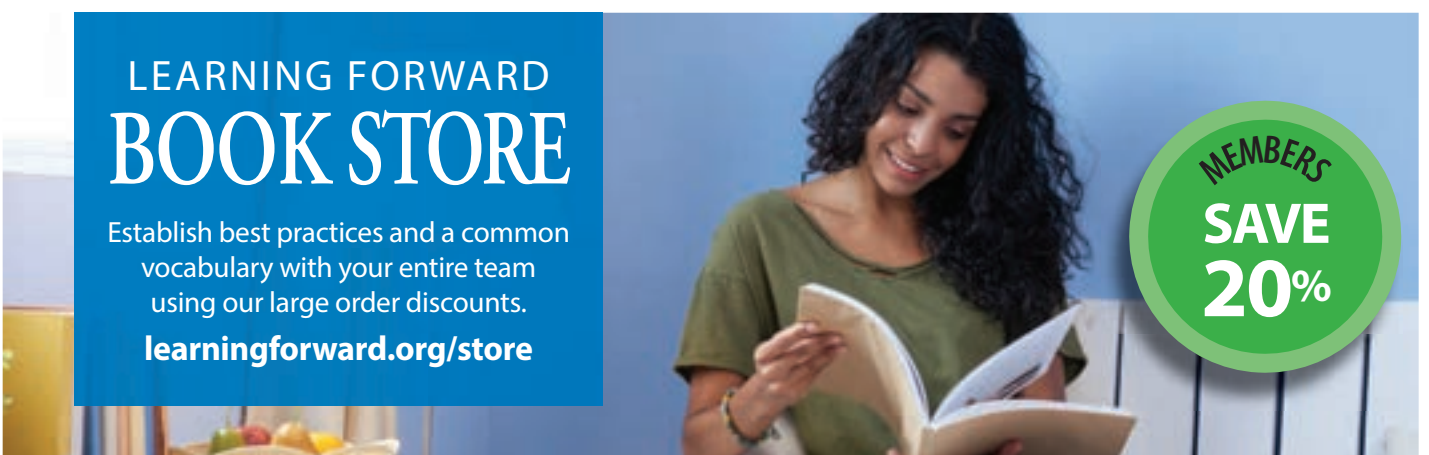
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RESEARCH

THE IMPACT OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

A research study asks: Does working with a more effective mentor during preservice training improve mentees' later effectiveness in their own classrooms?

The fact that high-quality mentoring in preservice training was associated with future teachers' impact on student outcomes reinforces a growing belief that mentoring is a lever for improvement and potentially a high-impact investment.

The key words, though, are "high-quality."

— "High-quality mentoring increases teacher effectiveness,"

p. **16**



RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

HIGH-QUALITY MENTORING INCREASES TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

► **THE STUDY**
Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J., & Theobald, R. (2018, November). *Effective like me? Does having a more productive mentor improve the productivity of mentees?* (Working Paper No. 208-1118-1). CALDER. caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/CALDER%20WP%20208-1118-1.pdf

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.

Mentoring is a popular strategy for building the capacity of new teachers, as evident in articles throughout this issue. Qualitative research describes how mentors serve as models of good instruction, provide feedback, and offer support for new teachers as they learn and grow in the profession. There is also evidence that mentors in the teacher preparation setting help orient prospective teachers to the realities of teaching in ways that coursework cannot.

But what about quantitative evidence about the impact mentors have on their mentees and the mentees' students in the long-term? Researchers Dan Goldhaber, John Krieg, and Roddy Theobald addressed the lack of empirical data on this question. Their findings have valuable implications for whether and how to design mentoring initiatives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

At the heart of the study is this question: Does working with a more effective mentor during preservice training improve mentees' later effectiveness in their own classrooms?

To address this question, the researchers undertook a complex analysis that combined data from two datasets. One was from the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction on in-service public school teachers and their students' achievement. The other contained nine years of longitudinal data on student teaching apprenticeships from 15 teacher education programs in Washington. The researchers used unique teacher IDs to link mentors and mentees and examine the achievement of their students over time.

To measure both mentor and mentees' effectiveness, the study used value-added models, which estimate the extent to which a student's academic growth can be attributed to a specific teacher. The researchers calculated mentors' effectiveness using student data from the years before the mentee assignment to account for the possibility that the mentor-mentee relationship could affect student outcomes. They calculated mentees' effectiveness for the years after entering the workforce. The researchers used a number of controls to eliminate bias.

FINDINGS

The study found a strong, positive relationship between the effectiveness of a student teacher's mentor and the student teacher's later effectiveness, especially in math and, to a lesser extent, in English language arts. In fact, in math, "the value added associated with a one standard deviation increase in mentor quality is roughly equivalent to the difference in average value added between a second-year and novice teacher" (p. 2).

Furthermore, teachers who had student taught with a highly effective mentor could be predicted to be as effective in their first year in the workforce as a third-year teacher who had worked with an average mentor.

This relationship was strongest early in a teacher's career but declined significantly over time.

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

One challenge that the researchers did not fully untangle was the fact that teachers in some locations are more likely to be assigned to an effective mentor and more likely to be assigned to a classroom with high-performing students than teachers in other districts or locations, which would complicate the measure of effectiveness.

Furthermore, the authors acknowledge that mentees may not be assigned randomly to mentors. Student teachers who have already demonstrated effective teaching practices (for



example, during a teaching practicum course) could be assigned to certain schools and mentors because of their demonstrated effectiveness.

The authors also acknowledged that value-added measures are controversial, but they believe they were able to eliminate most sources of bias with methodological and statistical controls.

IMPLICATIONS

The fact that high-quality mentoring in preservice training was associated with future teachers' impact on student outcomes reinforces a growing belief that mentoring is a lever for improvement and potentially a high-impact investment.

The key words, though, are "high-quality." This study suggests that selecting mentors should start with identifying teachers whose students are doing well because the researchers found that the teachers who have a positive impact on student learning also

appear to be more effective mentors to beginning teachers.

This research offers guidance for district and school leaders, as well as teacher preparation program leaders, about identifying and selecting mentors and offers questions to consider about where to assign high-impact mentors to have a broad impact on the system. Strategic assignment of student teachers to high-quality mentors appears to be worth the time and effort.

There may be additional benefits to mentoring that this study didn't examine. Although the authors did not extend their analysis past the impact of the mentoring relationship on an individual beginning teacher, given what we know about healthy **Learning Communities**, it is easy to see how individual learning and growth could positively impact a team or even a school.

In addition, support for beginning teachers is a well-documented and

promising retention strategy, meaning that attention to this aspect of a beginning teacher's experience could have long-term benefits for the field. Thinking about an effective system, the effects of strategic mentor-mentee could therefore have an exponential impact on both teacher and student outcomes.

Another implication to note is that quantitative and qualitative research can complement each other in important ways. The combination of an impact study like this one and a case study about what mentoring relationships look like in the ecosystem of a classroom and school would be the most compelling in making a case for supporting funding or resources for a mentoring program. This combination could be foundational in further bolstering the rationale for mentoring as a **Learning Design** that supports school and district capacity and goals. ■

DATA POINTS

6-10 HOURS PER WEEK IS NORM FOR ONLINE MEETINGS

With videoconferences the new norm in workplace meetings, the Goodman Center surveyed 4,405 nonprofit professionals — 43% of whom work in education — to learn what’s working and what’s not in online meetings. Sixty percent of respondents reported spending six to 10 hours per week in online meetings, and 17% spend more than 20 hours per week.

Respondents rated “engaging presentation” as the No. 1 factor in making an online experience positive. Yet “lack of engagement” was the second most commonly reported negative experience, and nearly half of respondents admitted to multitasking frequently during online meetings.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 48% of those who facilitate online meetings have had no training. The report includes trends and recommendations for making meetings better.

bit.ly/3pbtThv

23% OF PRINCIPALS HAVE A COACH OR MENTOR

In a national study of professional learning for principals, more than 80% of respondents had engaged in professional learning related to instructional leadership and change management, and 85% said their schools support their continuous development. The National Association of Elementary School Principals and the Learning Policy Institute study shows 95% had learned about helping teachers improve through cycles of observation and feedback, and 98% had learned about using student data for improvement.

However, far fewer had engaged in authentic, job-embedded learning opportunities that



research shows are associated with positive outcomes. Just over half had participated in a professional learning community, and 23% reported working with a coach or mentor in the past two years, with that percentage falling to 10% among principals in high-poverty schools.

Furthermore, 84% of principals faced barriers to professional learning, and most principals desired more. The topics they were most interested in were social and emotional/whole-child learning and leading equitable, diverse schools.

bit.ly/359uSHc

2.5 TIMES MORE PEOPLE OF COLOR IN ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREP

A study from the CALDER Center examined how two alternative teacher preparation programs are contributing to the teacher pipeline in and around Kansas City, Missouri. Teachers from Teach for America and Kansas City Teacher Residency were more likely to be racially and ethnically diverse than the overall local teaching workforce.

They were also more likely to work in schools with high concentrations of low-income, low-performing, and underrepresented students of color, as well as in charter schools. Kansas City Teacher Residency teachers had higher retention rates in local schools than

other local teachers. There was some evidence that teachers from both programs had a larger impact on student test scores than other teachers, but only for certain grade levels and subject areas.

bit.ly/3liVg76

13,000 NEW CALIFORNIA TEACHERS HAD ‘SUBSTANDARD’ CREDENTIALS

A report on California’s teaching workforce reveals that in 2017-18, the state issued more than 13,000 “substandard” teacher credentials, almost three times the number issued in 2012-13. Because these credentials are only granted when traditionally credentialed teachers are not available, they are an indicator of a shortage in the teacher pipeline.

The report also finds that teachers with substandard credentials are unequally distributed across the state: They represent more than half of new teachers in districts with 72% low-income students, while some districts at the other end of the spectrum did not hire any new teachers with substandard credentials.

One bright spot is that the 34% of California teachers who are people of color exceeds the national average of 20%. But 58% of districts had fewer than 20% teachers of color and 9% of districts had none.

bit.ly/3eNHIOX

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

FOCUS

BUILDING THE PIPELINE

MANY PATHS TO EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

An inspired, diverse, and thriving workforce is essential to achieving educational equity. For every child to have access to excellent teaching, every educator must be well-supported at each stage of the career pipeline. That takes a continuum of professional learning from preservice to the challenging first years of teaching, to developing as an expert practitioner and leader in the classroom, school, district, or beyond.

There are many paths to excellence, and we highlight some of them here. You'll see common threads in these articles, despite their different contexts — creativity, collaboration, and capacity building.

MENTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

NEW TEACHERS BENEFIT FROM LOUISIANA MENTOR PROGRAM

BY TOM MANNING AND SUZANNE BOUFFARD

Middle school teacher Leighann Fields remembers her earliest teaching experiences with mixed emotions. “When I was student teaching, the teacher I worked with had been at the school forever, and she knew so much. But she didn’t share it with me. I had to reinvent the wheel while I was driving down the road.”

Frequently criticized but rarely supported, Fields says she decided that she would be a different kind of teacher and a different kind of mentor if she got the chance. Now, 16 years later, Fields is getting that chance as a mentor teacher in Eunice, Louisiana.

Recognizing the need to more effectively support and retain new teachers in the state, the Louisiana

Department of Education launched its nationally recognized Believe and Prepare pilot program in 2014. This program offers aspiring teachers a full year of practice under an expert mentor and a competency-based program design.

The goal is to make sure that new teachers don’t have the kind of experience Fields did, so that teachers — and, most importantly, their students — can succeed from year one.

In 2016, the Louisiana Department of Education selected Learning Forward to design and facilitate a mentor teacher training program that provided expert teachers across the state with tools and skills to more effectively support teachers in their systems through their first three years of teaching. This three-year partnership was completed in

February 2020, with more than 1,600 mentor teachers participating.

Fields and other participating mentors were nominated by their school systems based on a track record of proven success with student learning, a working knowledge of curricular tools and resources, strong communication and time management skills, an interest and ability to lead others and help them grow, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Before the program started, Fields says that she “was always the go-to person for mentoring, but it was just about the routines and procedures of the school. I wasn’t allowed to observe in classrooms and observe or talk about curriculum. It wasn’t anything as detailed as what I do now” that she has participated in the mentor program.

“Sometimes I don’t realize I’m missing certain things, and Mrs. Fields will pop in and give me feedback that I didn’t even know I needed.”

— *Brittany LeBlanc*



Mentor teacher Leighann Fields, left, and her mentee, Brittany LeBlanc, have both benefited from the mentor program Learning Forward designed.

Brittany LeBlanc began working with Fields in her second year of teaching. In her first year, when she taught at a different school, she didn’t have a mentor, just informal conversations with “the teacher who had been there the longest.”

The relationship with Fields has been a game-changer for her. “Sometimes I don’t realize I’m missing certain things, and Mrs. Fields will pop in and give me feedback that I didn’t even know I needed,” she says.

The two have built a trusting,

lasting relationship that LeBlanc says she relies on. “You never know when you’re going to have a question or need your mentor,” LeBlanc says.

DEVELOPING INTENTIONAL MENTORING STRATEGIES

Participating mentors completed extensive professional learning and a series of assessments, designed by project partner Bloomboard, leading to an official Mentor Teacher designation from the state.

Learning Forward designed a nine-

day professional learning program and corresponding materials to build teachers’ knowledge and skills that they could practice immediately in their schools and with mentees. Learning Forward facilitators also provided both whole-group and individual support for mentor participants on their assessment series during and between in-person sessions.

Mentoring content was developed for cohorts comprised of elementary teachers, secondary English language arts teachers, secondary math teachers,

and secondary “universal” mentors. Programs included subject-area learning customized for the mentor’s content area and grade level, designed by project partners the Dana Center at the University of Texas and Schoolkit. The program was aligned to the Louisiana Teacher Preparation Competencies as well as the Standards for Professional Learning.

The focus of the mentor training program reflected the three core areas of effective mentoring: diagnosing teacher needs, developing coaching skills to meet those needs and improve mentees’ planning and teaching skills, and measuring progress.

Within this framework, known as the mentoring cycle, each participating mentor gained essential knowledge and skills in how to build strong relationships with mentees, diagnose and prioritize mentees’ strengths and areas for growth based on data and performance expectations, design and implement a coaching support plan, assess and deepen mentor content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy, and track progress over time.

Fields appreciated the emphasis on the coaching, explaining that she learned how to “find the problem, diagnose it, figure out what you can do to fix it, implement it, and come back to reflect.” Although she had done some of those steps previously, she says she had never really thought about the stages explicitly before.

That kind of intentionality was a major goal of the training, according to Santosh Chawla, one of the Learning Forward facilitators. “We focused on why we were doing particular strategies,” she says, in order to build meta-cognition. “Meta-cognition comes in a lot during coaching conversations. The coach is supposed to lead you to your own solutions.” The goal is to empower the learner, she explains, and

that takes intentionality and reflection.

Fields believes she has honed those skills as a result of the training. She remembers that during one session, “[the facilitators] had us write down the rules and procedures we go through on a daily basis. Having to stop and think about this made me so aware of the things I usually do unconsciously. Those are things beginning teachers need to know, and we [veteran teachers] need to be able to explain to them. We don’t think about those things anymore, but we need to become aware and explain why I do it this way and why it works. You can’t tell a new teacher, ‘I don’t know why I do it, I just do it.’”

DEEPENING CURRICULAR KNOWLEDGE

The mentor program emphasized that mentor teachers must be experts in their own (and their mentees’) content areas. This was woven into the mentoring cycle, beginning with setting short- and long-term growth goals based on teacher competencies and student results.



The goal is to empower the learner, says Learning Forward facilitator Santosh Chawla.

Then mentors created a logical sequence of coaching supports to develop mentee skill over time to reach the identified goals and identify and leverage high-quality, evidence-based resources to support mentee-specific needs.

The learning drew on research on high-quality instructional practices and was closely aligned with

state standards and curriculum. Fields says, “We really dove into curriculum and looked at the coherence map a lot. I had never heard of that before, and now I use it almost daily.” She adds that she “definitely came to understand the curriculum more.”

Chawla says that the facilitators also aimed to build teachers’ instructional strategies for content. For example, they aimed to help teachers shift from

a traditional lecture or sage-on-the-stage mode to an experiential mode, using interactive strategies that she says teachers tend to use less often than they should.

One of these techniques is scaffolding instruction to build student understanding. “We gave teachers a very difficult science text that they weren’t familiar with,” Chawla says. “We wanted to make it uncomfortable so that they could see what kids experience every day in the classroom. It was a very telling moment for the teachers. They were able to see how important it is to scaffold instruction.”

Chawla, whose expertise is in teaching literacy, also help teachers outside of English language arts classes embed the teaching of reading into their subjects — something many of them had never been trained to do. Teachers learned how to find relevant and grade-based leveled reading assignments and other ways to scaffold students’ reading development.

BENEFITS FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Results from the program showed that over all cohorts from 2017 to 2020, 95% of participating mentors reported feeling “prepared and confident to mentor resident and novice teachers.” Mentors indicated seeing improvements in student performance, their mentoring capacity, and their own instructional practices as a result of applying and sharing what they learned in the mentor teacher program. (See more results from the evaluation in this issue’s At a Glance feature on p. 68.)

Mentors used several strategies from the mentor professional learning sessions, both with their mentees and in their own classrooms, particularly in the areas of supporting new teachers in setting goals for their instruction and professional learning, developing partnership agreements with mentees, diagnosing management and instruction needs so that student learning can be achieved, and classroom management techniques.

Facilitators and participants also reported benefits that are harder to quantify but easy to recognize. Brittany LeBlanc says Fields has taught her to feel more comfortable asking questions, even though she tends to be independent and prefers to try things on her own first. The trust and nonevaluative nature of their mentoring relationship has been key to that progress.

“I usually have a hard time taking criticism, but with Mrs. Fields, it didn’t come off as criticism,” LeBlanc says. “She’s here to help. When she tells me where I’m a little lacking, she also tells me how she’s going to help me improve.”

Fields emphasizes this trust as a key to success. “I tell my mentees from the get-go that my room is a safe place. Whatever we discuss, it goes no further.” She adds that, “if the trust is

Brittany LeBlanc says Leighann Fields has taught her to feel more comfortable asking questions.

not there, there’s no real respect and nothing will get accomplished.”

Fields, who tears up when she hears how helpful her mentoring has been for LeBlanc, finds a great sense of satisfaction in her mentoring work, even though she wishes she had more time to devote to it, along with her full teaching load, school leadership committee responsibilities, and other work.

As she strives to balance these responsibilities and further her mentoring work, she is grateful for the group of peers she developed through the training program, a cohort of 5th-grade math teachers from

several schools and districts who call themselves “The High Fives.”

The cohort members share resources through a Google drive and text one another frequently for teaching questions and personal support. “We really bonded, and we’ve become a second family,” Fields says.

True to her coaching roots, Chawla also sees meta-cognitive benefits to the training. “In both content and coaching, the participants have become learners,” she says. “They know how important it is to be a learner and how to get there.”

•
Tom Manning (tom.manning@learningforward.org) is senior vice president, professional services at Learning Forward. Suzanne Bouffard (suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org) is editor of *The Learning Professional*. ■

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**TO
ACHIEVE
EQUITY,**

BUILD A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

BY LISA LACHLAN-HACHÉ, TAMMIE CAUSEY-KONATÉ, LOIS KIMMEL, AND ETAI MIZRAV

Increasing the racial diversity of the teaching workforce is an urgent priority. Policymakers and educators are advocating for more people of color in teaching and leadership positions.

We at the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) agree racial diversity is paramount for building a more equitable education system. The GTL Center, operated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), works with states and districts to examine and improve workforce diversity and equitable access to teachers using evidence-based talent management strategies.

We ask the tough questions: Do students who need effective and diverse teachers the most have access to them? Does the workforce reflect the diversity of the school or district's student population? Often, the answer is no.

Students from low-income backgrounds and students of color often attend schools with inexperienced or ineffective teachers. They also attend schools where the teacher demographics do not match the diversity of the student population.

WHY TEACHER DIVERSITY MATTERS

Research shows that establishing

a diverse workforce is key to closing student achievement and opportunity gaps. Teachers who are of the same race as their students are especially suited to understand students' cultural experiences and, therefore, are likely to employ instructional practices responsive to cultural strengths (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). A diverse workforce is associated with improved academic outcomes on standardized tests, attendance, retention, advanced-level course enrollment, graduation rates, and college-entrance rates for students of color (Villegas & Davis, 2008; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

The benefits of teacher workforce

Professional learning programs and systems play a critical role in making classrooms and schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Education leaders can revise initiatives, policies, promotion criteria, and leadership selection protocols to better serve teachers and students and prioritize racial diversity, equity, and inclusion.

diversification are not limited to students of color. White students benefit from seeing teachers and leaders of color in their classrooms and schools. Students tend to give these teachers high ratings in surveys, noting that they feel both cared for and academically challenged by these teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Teachers of color more frequently use culturally relevant instructional practices and have a greater likelihood of addressing racism and bias in their classrooms, which better prepares all students for a diverse world (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Yet across the U.S., the racial disparities between teachers and students are striking. More than half of the students in U.S. public schools are students of color (51%), while only 20% of teachers are people of color. Compared with a U.S. population of about 40% people of color, this is a disproportionately low percentage (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2017). Similarly, the gap between the percentage of Latinx teachers and students is larger than for any other racial or ethnic group (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

While the population of teachers of color is growing overall, the population of Black and Native American teachers is a declining share of the teacher workforce. Although schools have started thinking more about diversity in their hiring practices in recent years

(Bond et al., 2015), the lack of diversity is still troubling.

There is growing recognition that the ratio of teachers of color to students of color is linked to the proportion of leaders of color. For example, D'Amico and colleagues (2017) revealed that Black teachers were not likely to be hired in equal or greater proportions to white teachers in any context. Moreover, Black teachers were less likely to receive job offers from white principals or from schools with large white student populations.

Instead, they were more likely to be hired in schools with a larger number of Black students, students living in poverty, or a Black principal. Furthermore, promotion systems often overlook teachers of color for positions of leadership in professional learning, coaching, and curriculum design (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

Hiring more teachers of color may seem like a simple, straightforward solution to addressing these racial disparities. However, simply resolving to hire more diverse candidates will not address systemic problems.

For example, college graduates of color have, on average, higher levels of student debt than white graduates (Scott-Clayton & Li, 2016), and the low pay of starting teacher salaries may be a significant deterrent to teaching.

Furthermore, hiring quotas will not

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN TEACHING

Teaching has not always been a white woman's field. Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, 82,000 African American educators were responsible for the education of some 2 million African American learners.

Tillman's (2004) review of *Brown v. Board of Education* clarified that the ruling inadvertently led to more than 38,000 African American educators in the 17 Southern and border states being terminated from their positions as a result of "integration." There were also significant declines in candidates entering the profession — a 66% drop from 1975 to 1985.

With new requirements around certification and preparation program admission standards put into place in the 1980s, an additional 21,000 Black teachers were displaced. By 2001, African American teachers represented 6% of the public school teaching force, despite African American students representing 17% of the student population.

address the disproportionate attrition of teachers of color in their first years, nor the isolation and invisible tax teachers of color face when they enter classrooms (King & Darling-Hammond, 2018). We have entrenched historical inequities in workforce policies, conditions, and trends, especially in underserved schools, that will not be quick or simple to reverse (see sidebar on p. 25).

As systems aim to advance diversity in the teacher workforce, they must also address systemic inequities across the career continuum — from attracting students of color into the profession, to preparing them for the classroom, and then developing, supporting, and retaining them in the profession. How can we change our systems not just to recruit more teachers of color, but also to dismantle the inequitable and exclusionary practices that push teachers of color out of classrooms in the first place?

The workforce is shaped by a collection of decisions, requirements, mandates, and practices, all of which serve to attract, prepare, and retain some teachers and deter others. The GTL Center’s Talent Development Framework illustrates this complex continuum (see figure above), denoting intersecting elements of the teacher pipeline that influence who applies, enters, and remains in classrooms.

Professional learning programs and systems play a critical role in making classrooms and schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Education leaders can revise initiatives, policies, promotion criteria, and leadership selection protocols to better serve teachers and students and prioritize racial diversity, equity, and inclusion.

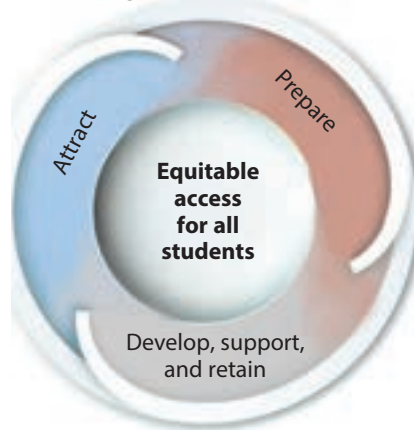
What follows are several programs that address systemic inequities across the stages of the career continuum and build diversity within the educator workforce through more equitable and inclusionary practices.

ATTRACT:

Recruiting candidates of color

Teacher residencies have been

TALENT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



cited as the “best way to recruit, prepare, and retain diverse, culturally responsive teachers who teach students of color and low-income students” (Bonner-Reed et al., 2020). According to the National Center for Teacher Residencies, 62% of residents identify as people of color, compared to 21% nationally (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2018).

Furthermore, residencies have higher teacher retention rates. After three years, 86% of residents are still teaching in the same school, compared to 50% of new teachers in urban districts.

In 2020, the National Center for Teacher Residencies started an initiative to prepare 750 Black educators through 14 residency programs over a five-year period. The goal is to recruit, prepare, and retain Black educators in school districts with high concentrations of Black students.

This initiative includes a comprehensive set of responsive practices to mitigate common barriers facing Black educators. Supports include mentoring and induction, professional learning, mental health and social-emotional learning, and emergency funds.

PREPARE:

Addressing inequitable barriers to entering the profession

Teacher licensure exams

disproportionately create barriers for teacher candidates of color despite little evidence that these exams predict teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Petchauser, 2012). Multiple states recognize licensure exams as exclusionary practices and developed programs to offer a variety of pathways toward licensure.

For example, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Mississippi Department of Education have enacted alternative or new performance-based licensure structures throughout their states that offer an equitable approach to expanding access to teachers.

New pathways enable educators to pursue licensure while receiving ongoing professional learning supports. These programs recognize the value of demonstrated success in helping students succeed on high-stakes tests and illustrate that value through alternative pathways.

DEVELOP, SUPPORT, AND RETAIN:

Hiring practices and mentoring

Promoting racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in hiring practices is essential, even though it is not sufficient. Some districts and states are examining data about their current workforce to recognize and redress gaps.

For example, the Connecticut Department of Education, in collaboration with the GTL Center, examined hiring practices statewide. After a four-session series on culturally responsive hiring practices facilitated by center content experts, the state developed a guidance document to support districts in responding to a new policy (Public Act No. 18-34) that prioritized the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. Connecticut’s guidance resulted in a requirement that all districts have a teacher recruitment plan that prioritizes racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in hiring practices.

To address the disproportionate levels of attrition among new teachers of color, states and districts can also

prioritize building mentors' capacity to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in induction programs. Through the GTL Center's partnership with the Ohio Department of Education, the state recognizes the value of supporting mentors as they build their knowledge and skills toward equitable and inclusive mentoring practices.

Since working with the GTL Center, the Ohio Department of Education started working to revise its Resident Educator Program to more adequately address systemic inequities in education as well as the diversification of the teaching workforce.

The work started with using the GTL Center's Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce Data Tool to measure, analyze, and visualize existing educator workforce diversity gaps across the educator career continuum and at the state, district, school, and Educator Preparation Program levels.

Following this analysis, the Ohio Department of Education team worked with the GTL Center to use a modified version of the center's Root Cause Analysis Workbook to consult with educators and other stakeholders to identify the underlying root causes for identified gaps.

Next, the team linked identified root causes with evidence-based, high-impact strategies, like mentoring and induction. While the work is still underway, the state is in the process of developing guidance to mentors to support them in their work with beginning teachers from a variety of diverse backgrounds and identities.

The work aims to build on mentor standards that focus on deepening and maintaining equity principles and culturally responsive pedagogy, cultivating relational trust, caring, mutual respect and honesty, and advancing equitable, inclusive instruction through the application of equity and culturally responsive teaching.

These examples illustrate that

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diversifying the workforce is a complex endeavor that requires more than creating hiring quotas. These changes are only successful and sustainable when systemic barriers across all points of the career continuum are removed.

IMPLEMENTATION

In our work with states, we first take stock of the local, immediate, and historic contexts. Based on what is revealed, we address racial disparities with our Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce Data Tool for Practitioners. Yet we know the work doesn't stop there. Often, it is the programs, cultures, and policies that need to be addressed and refined with the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

To that end, the center created a guide called the READI Framework that recognizes that the districts and schools that most need equitable programs, like those highlighted above, are often least likely to adopt and implement them successfully — a phenomenon we call the “needs paradox.” The needs paradox is amplified when states or districts overlook underserved schools because of their perceived lack of readiness.

To address the needs paradox, we ask critical questions about resource deficiencies, educator supports, accountability requirements, disparities in working conditions, and the implementation capacity of staff. These questions surface and assess how well programs are designed to target the specific needs of underserved schools and help states and districts rethink their programs with the lens of equity.

At the GTL Center, we help state education agencies think about how the programs they set up for all schools or all students may unintentionally be exclusionary, especially for the most underserved.

For example, a tuition aid program

may be intended to help everyone enroll in higher education, but, in reality, often only the wealthy, white students take advantage of the program due to the foundational requirements and access to program information because of their social networks. In this case, the program designed for all is perpetrating a continuous cycle of inequity. The READI Framework drives us to infuse equity at the center of program design.

Diversity is an essential step that requires a broad look at policies and practices across the educator career continuum. While we embrace the movement toward diversification of the teaching workforce and the benefits of doing so, we also acknowledge how limited our focus is if we look at racial parity without recognizing the built-in barriers to success that inequitable systems create.

The sustainable efforts of diversifying our teaching workforce require a model that also prioritizes equity and inclusion. The challenges at hand will not be remedied by changing statistics alone.

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HELPING HANDS FOR NEW TEACHERS

INDUCTION PROGRAM BUILDS A BRIDGE BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND CLASSROOM

BY NICOLE SKEEN, ASHLEE A. LEWIS, CINDY VAN BUREN, AND THOMAS E. HODGES

For quite some time, many of us involved in teacher preparation at institutions of higher education have felt uncomfortable with preparing and supporting our preservice teachers through graduation, wishing them luck in their first years of teaching, and offering no official post-graduation support, short of the opportunity to return for a graduate degree.

This discomfort is particularly prevalent for those of us who believe that partnerships between institutions of higher education and teachers, schools, and districts have the power to transform education.

At the University of South

Carolina, we addressed this lack of engagement by creating the Carolina Teacher Induction Program (CarolinaTIP). Building on the strength of university-school partnerships and engaging in teacher-centered support, we demonstrate a commitment to our graduates beyond the degree by creating an innovative and added layer of support for induction teachers.

Our hope is that, by filling this key gap in the continuum of teacher support, our College of Education can play a role in not only recruiting and preparing the next generation of teachers but also in retaining them as successful professionals throughout their careers.

Here, we discuss universities' responsibilities to teacher graduates and our approach to partnering with districts to tackle those responsibilities through university-based teacher induction support. Finally, we share what we have learned about supporting early career teachers in addition to some of the results emerging from our approach.

HOW WE BEGAN

In 2015, South Carolina adopted the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, which articulates a shared vision of the knowledge, skills, and characteristics needed for students to be successful in college, career, and citizenship (South Carolina

The Carolina Teacher Induction Program supports the continued growth of teachers through their first three years in the classroom.

Department of Education, 2015).

The role of high-quality teachers is central to meeting this vision for the future. In our state and across the country, however, efforts to provide students with a high-quality education are undermined by our collective failure to recruit and retain teachers.

To ensure all students have access to highly effective teachers, we must find a way to stop the revolving door of teachers into and out of the classroom. We believe this requires an innovative approach to supporting novice teachers — an approach that intentionally and directly serves teachers' needs as they learn how to best meet their students' needs.

Thus far, the absence of institutions of higher education in supporting new teachers has been a glaring gap along the continuum of teacher support. Just as institutions of higher education depend on schools and veteran teachers to help prepare novice teachers for the classroom, schools should be able to count on these institutions to share responsibility for new teacher induction and support.

The Carolina Teacher Induction Program serves as a bridge between the university and the classroom, providing support of clinical application to novice teachers to positively impact teacher retention. The program is built on the university's and districts' shared goal of developing a college- and career-ready workforce.

The shared ownership of this goal, and of the support required to achieve

it, has implications for not only the development of preservice teachers, but also the continued growth of teachers through their first three years in the classroom.

Acting on the vision of the Holmes Group (Johnson, 1990) to transform educator preparation and professional development for practicing teachers, the university created the Professional Development Schools Network, and from that we have a rich history of partnerships with districts, schools, and teachers.

The network's mission is to establish and maintain spaces for research and innovation where university and public school partners collaboratively investigate student learning, professional development, clinical preparation, and induction to institutionalize best practices across teacher learning contexts. CarolinaTIP started within this deeply collaborative environment.

In its second year, the program expanded beyond the network and began creating partnerships with new schools. Now in its fourth year, CarolinaTIP has grown from serving 15 teachers in nine professional development schools to serving 131 teachers in 69 schools across six school districts in South Carolina.

Expanding beyond the network has allowed CarolinaTIP to strengthen its program development, have a wider impact on teacher efficacy and retention, and foster collaboration among our partner schools and districts.

HOLISTIC SUPPORT

To support new teachers, South Carolina created statewide induction and mentoring guidelines for districts (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017). According to these guidelines, induction support should include a district-assigned mentor for each novice teacher, mandatory teacher orientation to the district, and a yearlong induction program held within the hiring district.

With these relatively loose guidelines and inconsistent funding, induction support varies widely from one district to another, and there are limits to the support schools and districts can provide.

Districts and schools have an overflowing plate of responsibilities when it comes to onboarding new teachers. District staff must orient teachers to the protocols and structures of the district, educating them about everything from employee handbooks to organizational charts to teacher evaluation procedures. They must also provide professional learning on district frameworks, initiatives, curriculum expectations, assessments, and resources.

School-based mentors and other school staff face a similarly wide range of responsibilities as they introduce new teachers to the protocols, support staff, expectations, procedures, and resources within the school. In most districts, this does not leave much in the way of time or resources available for more comprehensive or responsive new

teacher support, such as personalized support in learning to balance the demands of the job and navigate the transition from student to professional.

With collaborative insight from partner districts, we identified a void in new teacher support, specifically support aimed at meeting novice teachers’ individual needs, that is not encompassed by existing curriculum, instruction, and procedural support.

As a result, we determined CarolinaTIP should approach support from a holistic and responsive stance with the goal of growing the overall capacity of new teachers. With schools and districts providing the necessary site-specific aspects, the program is meant to supplement, not supplant, local teacher support.

The ultimate goal of this symbiotic relationship is to collectively help novice teachers develop the tools and strategies required to meet their students’ needs and the self-efficacy and emotional resiliency needed to persevere and thrive in the profession.

To accomplish this, CarolinaTIP provides three years of scaffolded support. While some program aspects, such as emotional support steeped in empathy, are pervasive across all three years and all support remains responsive to the developmental readiness of the teacher, each year of the program maintains a progressive focus.

The first year uses a responsive coaching method and concentrates on helping teachers navigate and create a solid professional foundation, specifically focusing on working with other adults, reaching and teaching all students, and strengthening efficacy in classroom management.

The second year is designed to develop reflective practitioners and help teachers identify, explore, analyze, and grow their individual teacher identity using a goal-based coaching approach.

The third year employs developmental coaching, a more facilitative form of goals-based coaching, to help teachers identify and develop their personal leadership skills,

TEACHER EFFICACY AVERAGE OVERALL TEACHER EFFICACY RATINGS	
1 = NOTHING 3 = VERY LITTLE 5 = SOME INFLUENCE 7 = QUITE A BIT 9 = A GREAT DEAL	
2017 Cohort 3rd year of teaching (n=12)	
Time	Overall efficacy rating
Fall 2017	5.79
Spring 2018	6.78
Fall 2018	6.63
Spring 2019	6.73
Fall 2019	7.01
This table shows changes in the inaugural cohort’s overall efficacy over time from their first year in the classroom (fall 2017) to the third year in the classroom (fall 2019). Teachers used a 9-point scale developed by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) to rate their level of confidence in effectively carrying out specific teaching duties in three domains: classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies. Over the five time points measured, third-year teachers’ efficacy increased 1.22 on a 9-point scale. Due to the small sample size of this cohort, evaluators didn’t examine statistical significance but will do so for larger cohorts in the future.	

both in and out of the classroom.

All participants receive responsive in-class and personal support from an assigned coach and further targeted support in group sessions. Participants can also take two CarolinaTIP graduate courses at the university, with tuition paid by the program. The courses are offered during the summer and created to help teachers progress from their first to second year and then their second to third year in the classroom.

RESEARCH-DRIVEN DESIGN

Our efforts to support novice teachers through CarolinaTIP have

TEACHER EFFICACY AVERAGE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT RATINGS	
1 = NOTHING 3 = VERY LITTLE 5 = SOME INFLUENCE 7 = QUITE A BIT 9 = A GREAT DEAL	
2017 Cohort 3rd year of teaching (n=12)	
Time	Efficacy for classroom management rating
Fall 2017	5.62
Spring 2018	6.59
Fall 2018	6.63
Spring 2019	6.71
Fall 2019	7.40
This table shows changes in the inaugural cohort’s classroom management efficacy over time from the first year in the classroom (fall 2017) to the third year in the classroom (fall 2019). Teachers used a 9-point scale developed by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) to rate their level of confidence in effectively carrying out classroom management tasks (e.g. responding to defiant students, establishing a classroom management system with each group of students). Over the five time points measured, third-year teachers’ classroom management efficacy increased 1.78 on a 9-point scale. Due to the small sample size of this cohort, evaluators didn’t examine statistical significance but will do so with larger cohorts in the future.	

been guided, in part, by the literature on teacher retention and attrition. Research has found several indicators a novice teacher is likely to leave the profession, including struggles with classroom management, difficulties managing the stress and resulting burnout that often come with teaching, navigating the demands of the job, and a general lack of self-efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Strong, evidence-based induction and mentoring programs have shown

AVERAGE SOURCES OF JOB STRESS RATINGS
(LOWER RATING IS POSITIVE)

- 1 = NO STRESS
- 2 = VERY LITTLE STRESS
- 3 = MILD STRESS
- 4 = MODERATE STRESS
- 5 = HIGH STRESS
- 6 = EXTREME STRESS

2017 Cohort
3rd year of teaching (n=12)

Time	Job stress rating
Fall 2017	3.75
Spring 2018	3.46
Fall 2018	3.58
Spring 2019	3.71
Fall 2019	3.47

This table shows changes in the inaugural cohort’s job stress over time from the first year in the classroom (fall 2017) to the fall of the third year in the classroom (fall 2019). Teachers used a 6-point scale from No Stress (1) to Extreme Stress (6) adapted from Klassen & Chiu (2010) to rate their levels of stress related to areas such as accountability for student achievement, confidence in content knowledge, and ability to implement planned instruction. Over the five time points measured, third-year teachers’ job stress decreased 0.28 on a 6-point scale. Due to the small sample size of this cohort, evaluators didn’t examine statistical significance but will do so with larger cohorts in the future.

significant potential in improving teacher retention and overall performance (Bastian & Marks, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

The evidence base also suggests that one of the most important factors for supporting new teachers is individualized support, so we intentionally built CarolinaTIP around responsive, personalized, and individualized support to help teachers

improve their self-efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and classroom instruction while providing them with strategies for managing stress through emotional support, a strong sense of teacher identity, and a community of fellow educators.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

From the start, ongoing, formative evaluation has been essential to the development of CarolinaTIP. Our evaluation team works hand in hand with our development team (and is, in fact, represented on our writing team here) to provide ongoing feedback about the inner workings of the program.

In addition, the evaluation demonstrates that the program is yielding encouraging outcomes, including improvements in teacher efficacy (Tshannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), particularly in the classroom management domain that has been a major focus of the program. We have also seen consistent decreases in job-related stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010) as teachers progress through the program.

Teachers have overwhelmingly reported that the program has contributed to their desire to stay in the profession. Data collected through annual teacher focus groups provide further evidence of CarolinaTIP’s positive effect on teachers’ self-efficacy in the classroom and on their ability to respond to job-related stress, which are both strong precursors to retention.

Thus far, 98% of teachers participating in CarolinaTIP have remained in the profession. While we do not expect this extraordinary trend to continue indefinitely, we do believe these results are early indicators that the program is having the desired effect on new teachers and teacher retention.

Through teacher focus groups, we have learned that there are two things about CarolinaTIP that participants value most: the positive, personal relationships they form with other teachers and coaches and the

completely nonevaluative nature of the program, made possible by the fact that the program is external to their employer. Teachers value having an external, safe space to be vulnerable, explore their individual teacher identity, share experiences, and grow together as professionals.

Because of this, maintaining the quality of relationships has been a central focus as the program expands. One path for maintaining those relationships has been hiring retired teachers to serve as part-time coaches. This allows new teachers to benefit from outstanding veteran teachers without draining the energy and time of teachers working in the system. Promisingly, as the program has expanded from one coach in the first year to 12 coaches, teachers have continued to report strong, nurturing relationships.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

The positive results of CarolinaTIP reinforce our belief in the need for universities and school districts to share responsibility for ongoing teacher support and retention. Although we recognize that our program offers unique elements that boost teacher self-efficacy and reduce stress, we also recognize the important support new teachers receive from the schools and districts in which they work.

A combination of university- and district-based induction programs, in conjunction with quality preservice preparation, is vital to the long-term success and learning of new teachers. Through the power of partnerships, it is possible to transform the landscape of new teacher learning and support and strengthen the teacher pipeline.

As we collectively and positively impact teaching and learning, one teacher at a time, the beneficiaries will be the students we ultimately serve.

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Nicole Skeen (skeene@mailbox.sc.edu) is university induction coordinator for CarolinaTIP in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. Ashlee A. Lewis (lewisaa2@mailbox.sc.edu) is a research associate professor in the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Center at the university. Cindy Van Buren (vanburec@mailbox.sc.edu) is assistant dean for professional partnerships and Thomas E. Hodges (hodgestse@mailbox.sc.edu) is executive associate dean for faculty and academic affairs in the College of Education. ■

To achieve equity, build a diverse workforce

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Lisa Lachlan-Haché (llachan@air.org) is director of strategic partnerships, Tammie Causey-Konaté (tcausey@air.org) is senior technical assistance associate, Lois Kimmel (lkimmel@air.org) is technical assistance associate, and Etai Mizrav (emizrav@air.org) is senior technical assistance consultant at the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders. ■



OPEN THE DOOR TO DIVERSITY

TEACHER RESIDENCIES IN URBAN SCHOOLS BOOST RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT

BY IMELDA NAVA-LANDEROS, JO ANN ISKEN, AND ANNAMARIE FRANCOIS

The progression of teacher learning from aspiring educator to accomplished practitioner is multifaceted and complex. Selecting a teacher preparation program is a critical point in this journey, but it is by no means the end. Strengthening teacher pipelines requires aligned systems that not only open diverse entry points and provide initial preparation but also

create opportunities for ongoing growth and development.

Teacher residencies are a model for coherent teacher development from preservice to teacher induction and beyond, through structured collaboration between universities and districts. Effective residencies are learning spaces that connect theory and practice in ways that center student and teacher learning.

Residencies initiate and nurture professional learning communities that center shared values, critical reflection, powerful pedagogies, and networks of sustained, ongoing development and support. Contrary to some educators' assumptions, residencies are far more complex than simply increasing time in student teaching placements.

An effective teacher residency depends on the hard work,

commitment, and trust of partner institutions. UCLA-IMPACT (Inspiring Minds through a Professional Alliance of Community Teachers) is such a partnership between the UCLA Teacher Education Program and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

UCLA-IMPACT is a post-graduate residency model that embeds a credential and a master's of education degree. The program's partners collaborated to construct and implement teacher preparation structures that laid a strong foundation for equity-focused STEM teaching and student learning in high-need partner schools. We focused on STEM because there are acute shortages of and attrition among STEM teachers, especially in urban Title I schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The partnership between UCLA-IMPACT and Los Angeles schools has taught us important lessons about how to better prepare STEM teachers to engage and persist in high-poverty urban spaces. As we describe here, we've seen how this model can improve teacher diversity and retention and even transform the culture and learning structures of schools.

BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Residencies prepare resilient and robust teachers in a way that reflects authentic field experiences and challenges, and they develop teachers' holistic understanding of school structures that affect teaching and learning (Guha et al., 2016). They have multiple benefits, including diversifying the teacher workforce, leading to higher teacher retention, and improving student achievement.

It has been well-documented that students benefit from exposure to teachers who reflect their own identities (Partelow et al., 2017). Teachers of color who teach students of color generally have higher expectations of students and can act as cultural brokers between the school and the community (Partelow et al., 2017). But across the

FUNDING FOR TEACHER RESIDENCIES

Funding for teacher residencies has increased both at the federal level over the last 12 years and in some states more recently.

The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Partnership Program has invested mightily to teacher residencies over the past 12 years. Within the last three years in California, Governor Gavin Newsom committed \$900

million to improve the quality of teaching and learning in California schools, including \$75 million specifically earmarked for teacher residencies.

This represents the largest financial commitment of any state (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2018). However, the state funding might be in peril due to recent events related to COVID-19 and the subsequent budget impacts on state coffers.

U.S., only 19% of teacher candidates are from minority groups (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Teacher residency programs are helping make teaching a more accessible profession for candidates of color. Forty-five percent of U.S. teacher residencies' candidates come from minority backgrounds (Guha et al., 2016), and over 80% of candidates in our program are aspiring teachers of color.

One of the ways residencies encourage a more diverse pool of candidates is by providing a living stipend while facilitating a full year of experience in a school site. The stipend is particularly critical for aspiring teachers from socioeconomically challenging backgrounds.

In a recent convening of local teacher residencies in Los Angeles, we were struck by how an alumnus of UCLA-IMPACT shared his financial hardships, coming from a low-income community and also having to help support his family. Unfortunately, he and his family lost their lease midway through the program and had to find a new space to live. He said the funding was critical in allowing him to enter a teacher preparation program, adding that reaching out to the directors and advisors was pivotal in helping him navigate that very stressful situation.

Residencies have also demonstrated promise in teacher retention. Nationwide, on average 20% to 30% of

teachers do not complete their fifth year of teaching. In high-poverty districts, teachers are 50% more likely to leave (Ingersoll, 2003). Papay et al. (2012) report that 55% of teachers in urban school districts leave their district and 70% leave their school.

In contrast, teachers who completed residencies demonstrate a retention rate of 80% to 90% in the same district within three years and 70% to 80% within five years (Guha et al., 2016). UCLA-IMPACT, which has placed 240 teachers in Title I schools that predominantly serve students of color, demonstrates over 86% retention after three years in the same district and five-year retention rates of 76%.

There is also evidence that residencies improve student achievement in classrooms led by new teachers. Both the Boston Teacher Residency and the Memphis Teacher Residency programs showed greater student achievement gains on standardized test scores when compared to new and veteran teachers (Papay et al., 2012; Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2014).

Further, the New Visions Hunter College Urban Teacher Residency Program in New York City saw greater K-12 student student achievement gains when compared to novice teachers prepared in more traditional pathways (Sloan & Blazevski, 2015).

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BENEFITS FOR SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

In addition to supporting individual teacher candidates, residencies have the potential for transformative school change. The partnership between universities and school districts can develop a rich learning community.

At the school sites, mentor teachers, preservice teachers, and administrators form an ecology for change and shift the thinking from preparing high-quality teachers for urban settings in isolated schools to supporting a community of educators at a school site and continued teacher development that can foster better outcomes.

At UCLA-IMPACT, we developed a cohort model that asks administrators to accept multiple teacher candidates at their school as student teachers. The cohort model exists as a built-in socio-emotional and pedagogical support within a shared context for both the student teachers and guiding teachers and thus serves as a vital support for teacher retention. For student teachers, it gives them peers to learn with and support through the experiences they share at the same school site.

The transformation that is possible through this approach is exemplified by this quote from a principal at a school site where the majority of science and math teachers are graduates of UCLA-IMPACT: “Our relationship with UCLA-IMPACT has been nothing short of transformative. If you look at our math department and science department, they are directly impacted ... there is a commitment to social justice, there’s a commitment to equity and access. There’s a commitment to the shifts in Common Core standards. The leadership that’s come out of those two departments ... really has changed who we are.”

This cohort approach is also beneficial for mentors, or guiding teachers, because it provides them with colleagues to share in the journey of developing as a mentor for student

teachers and teacher leader for the school.

Mentors are an important part of supporting teacher candidates and transforming the school culture. Without the investment in mentor development, the residency is more susceptible to being characterized by only increased field hours and funding and more dependent on the individual guiding teacher alone, rather than a community of practice. A community of practice has the potential to foster reflection on theory and practice that might lead to improved teaching.

The mentors also represent the residency’s commitment to continuing teachers’ development throughout the pipeline because the mentoring opportunities allow them to develop in their own careers. After several years of UCLA-IMPACT, we noticed that the mentors stayed, suggesting that they valued this career development opportunity.

As one principal said: “Another wonderful attribute of the UCLA IMPACT program is that they’ve built great relationships at awesome schools and identified really strong partner teachers and then really fostered those relationships. So you see partner teachers taking on their third, fourth, or fifth student teacher because it is a mutually beneficial experience.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

A core value of the program is that teacher development is a shared responsibility. This means that district-university partners work together to recruit, select, prepare, hire, and support program teacher candidates and alumni. This ensures the kind of robust arc of professional learning that strengthens the teacher pipeline.

Because the Los Angeles district has been a partner for many years, we have both grown from better understanding our respective contexts, goals, and needs. This cohesion, dialogue, and trust with partners supports teacher candidates and their ability to persist

Residencies have the potential for transformative school change. The partnership between universities and school districts can develop a rich learning community.

and navigate some of the challenges that may arise.

For example, we have intentionally partnered with the Los Angeles district’s new teacher induction program so that our teacher candidates can embed some of the work necessary for their master of education degree into the district’s induction program. After working together for many years, the district’s induction coaches now better understand our work and vice versa. This allows UCLA-IMPACT faculty to better address issues that may arise and address emerging needs for candidates in a more timely and responsive manner, and it creates a more consistent approach across preservice and ongoing professional learning.

Based on our experience, we have identified three action steps for districts and schools that can support the development of mutually beneficial university-district partnerships and improve recruitment and retention of teachers.

Welcome student teachers from a local university teacher education program into your classrooms — in cohorts, if possible. Having student teachers means that there will be a second adult (i.e. student teacher) to provide instructional support in some of your classes. Student teachers can also become part of the school community participating in clubs, tutoring, professional development and staff meetings.

Enculturating them into the school helps them build relationships with students and faculty and provides the school with additional adults to provide support and enrichment services to students. In addition, in opening your school to student teachers, you build a

cohort of mentor teachers that will get support from the university and further equip them to provide leadership and guidance to the rest of your staff.

Hire a cohort of new teacher graduates from your local university teacher education program. Hiring a cluster of teachers from your local university will create an important socio-emotional support system for your newly hired teachers during the difficult first year of teaching. When feasible, hiring teachers who were placed at your school during student teaching brings an added advantage: Those teachers are already familiar with the policies and procedures of the school, have developed relationships with the students, their families and the community, and have participated in the professional community at the school with the faculty and staff.

When the teachers described above are at midcareer (four to 10 years), encourage them to become a new cohort of guiding teachers. This cycle of preparing student teachers, supporting new teachers, and developing teacher leaders is a way to build schoolwide leadership capacity. Partnering with the university opens the door for veteran teachers to engage in professional learning with university faculty and to have university experts lead professional learning with the entire school faculty.

STRONGER TOGETHER

This work does not happen in isolation — institutions are better when they work together. We can develop a common language and overlapping visions toward change as we engage in the construction of knowledge and action through time and space, with a

theoretical foundation and examination of self, biases, affordances, positionality.

As one preservice teacher said, “As I learn more about teaching and build experience with students, I am realizing the extent to which building relationships and seeing students as human is vital to my own personal pedagogy and practice. More than anything (including content goals and visions for social justice and change), I believe that my responsibility as an educator is to treat my students as fully human and build their own capacities to fight for their rights to self-actualize and realize their own vision(s) for themselves.”

Ultimately, for us, it is about humanizing pedagogy, seeing each other and supporting each other through and in the work by engaging in critical reflection on theory and practice. We begin to see ourselves as part of a larger community and as a part of our students’ journey.

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Imelda Nava-Landeros (inava@ucla.edu) is a director of UCLA STEM+C3 and new residency program and lecturer. Jo Ann Isken (isken@gseis.ucla.edu), UCLA Principal Leadership Institute Faculty, and Annamarie Francois (francois@gseis.ucla.edu), UCLA Center X Executive Director, are faculty members at UCLA’s Center X in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. ■

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PATHWAY FOR PARAEDUCATORS

BOSTON PROJECT FOSTERS GROWTH OF PARAEDUCATORS IN MATH CLASSROOMS

BY JUDY STOREYGARD AND KAREN MUTCH-JONES

*“Before, I couldn’t stand math. But I like this program.
Last year, I taught the whole unit of math because that’s how empowered I was.
[I am] confident and ready to do it. Now I love it!”*

This statement of confidence by a paraeducator came after her participation in Doing the Math With Paraeducators: A Research and Development Project. Funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF DRL-1621151), the project was designed to provide experiences to support professional growth by building paraeducator mathematical knowledge for teaching and leadership in Boston Public Schools.

Paraeducators can play an important role in schools by supporting, complementing, and extending the work of classroom teachers. They have

unique assets to share and are more likely to reflect student demographics than teachers. For example, in Boston, 86% of students are nonwhite; 71% of paraeducators are also nonwhite, compared with only 38% of teachers.

Furthermore, paraeducators often live in and establish close ties with the communities where they teach, making them well-suited to make connections among staff, students, and families and include strategies and examples in their teaching that reflect their students’ lives and cultures (Rader & Pennell, 2019; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2018).

Providing paraeducators with sustained professional learning and

opportunities to continue their education can open important pathways to full teaching positions, which has the potential to diversify the teaching pool and address the critical teacher shortage that disproportionately affects high-need urban schools (Walker, 2019).

However, paraeducators face barriers that can prevent them from developing as professionals. Many have multiple jobs because of their low salaries, family responsibilities, and limited professional learning or planning time with their teacher colleagues (Butt, 2018; Uitto et al., 2017; Sharma & Salend, 2016).

Another major obstacle is that



Ara Tejada, left, and Carmen Vidal, paraeducators at Sarah Greenwood School in Boston, engage in collaborative problem-solving during professional learning.

many paraeducators do not see themselves as teachers, as was evident at our first meeting of Doing the Math. One paraeducator said with resignation, “We are just the paras,” while another lamented, “I’ve been a paraprofessional for a long time, and sometimes people think you’re just in there to wipe tables or do behavioral stuff.”

By participating in the project, however, the paraeducators we

worked with made a profound shift in perspective. They began to see themselves as mathematics teachers and even as mentors to their colleagues. With growing confidence, some are now returning to college, others are enrolling in test preparation courses with a goal of taking the state certification exam, and all are assuming greater teaching responsibilities within their classrooms. In these formal

and informal ways, they are not only entering the teacher pipeline but strengthening it.

FOSTERING GROWTH

What led to this shift? Our data, gathered through surveys, observations of professional learning and classroom interactions, and interviews from two cohorts of paraeducators, point to a cycle of experiences that encouraged

GUIDE FOR TEACHER-PARAEDUCATOR MATH PLANNING		
FOR PARAEDUCATORS	FOR TEACHERS	FOR BOTH TOGETHER
Describe something your teacher did in math (e.g. a question she asked, an example she used, or a comment she made) that encouraged student understanding.	Describe something your paraeducator did in math (e.g. a question she asked, an example she used, or a comment she made) that encouraged student understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a goal you can both set for the paraeducator to accomplish over the next few weeks? (Examples: Lead a small group, whole group, work on a particular concept with a small group over time.) • What are action steps you can both take to facilitate achieving that goal? • Describe the progress toward the goal. • What is something that happened in math class that you can celebrate together?

paraeducator growth, as described here. For each element, we offer evidence of the ways in which it contributed to paraeducator learning and teaching.

Professional learning must be tailored to the needs of paraeducators.

We offered 30 hours of professional learning, over the summer and the following school year. It emphasized the following:

Focus on mathematics for teaching. Most paraeducators began with little confidence in their own mathematical knowledge, and limited experience with math professional learning. As such, our initial sessions were intentionally structured to create a safe atmosphere so that they could express confusion and let go of their anxiety.

During these sessions, paraeducators engaged in mathematics for themselves. The discussions focused on mathematical understanding and problem-solving strategies as opposed to executing procedures. Sharing strategies with their colleagues proved to be a powerful experience. Many had only learned traditional algorithms and were not prepared to teach children who learned in a variety of ways.

For instance, one paraeducator said, “Listening to the different paras’ strategies ... I’m [now] more open to saying, ‘Oh, why don’t you use this manipulative?’ or ‘Is there another way you can do it?’ or ‘How did you get that answer?’ ”

Widen exposure to the district mathematics curriculum and available resources. Because our paraeducators’ roles had been confined to monitoring students to ensure they were on task, they had little familiarity with the district curriculum. Limited access to computers and printed copies of the curriculum materials, along with infrequent planning time with their teachers, further limited their exposure.

As a result, they were not aware of the mathematical goals for the students or the sequence of lessons in each mathematics unit. Once they explored the curriculum and understood the purpose of the professional learning activities, they were able to engage with the students in new ways.

As one paraeducator said, “Oh, I love the math games because you learn how to play the games properly. And so, when I go back after a session, I have that confidence to have a conversation and use the right language.”

During the sessions, we also shared resources and tools, such as the One Hundred Chart, the number line, and various manipulatives (e.g. counting cubes and bears). Some had never engaged with these resources before, and, by using them, they recognized the importance of these tools and representations, thus increasing their sense of competence.

Analyze student work. Once paraeducators increased their comfort with and ability to solve problems and share multiple strategies with

their colleagues, they were ready to analyze students’ work. As they investigated samples in which students solved a problem in a variety of ways, paraeducators identified and described, in detail, how each child approached the problem.

They compared the solutions across the student samples and discussed what each student knew and the type of practice required for students to be successful. We supported paraeducators to understand the importance of *listening* to students as opposed to *telling* students what to do, and we reviewed questions that would elicit student thinking.

Paraeducators found the process of looking at student work very meaningful. Via interviews and surveys, they described the importance of working to understand a problem before teaching their students and being prepared to prompt student thinking with questions such as: Can you explain what you’ve done? Can you tell me more? Is there another way? Knowing these strategies helped them develop their facilitation skills to support their small-group work with students.

Encourage partnerships between teachers and paraeducators.

To encourage partnerships between teachers and paraeducators, we included teachers in one session at the beginning of the project, and we asked them to complete planning protocols (see example above) that they

submitted to us at regular intervals. The protocols required teachers to list specific strategies they observed when paraeducators were teaching math and discuss them in relation to the goals of the lesson.

As the partnership grew, we noted that teachers became more intentional about including paraeducators in their planning. In the past, teachers had rarely provided paraeducators with advance notice or information about mathematics lesson activities or goals. Moreover, as a result of the partnership, we saw that paraeducators became more aware and often better prepared for what would happen each day. Here are observations from two paraeducators:

- “Before, I didn’t have a clue of what we would do. When she did the lesson, I would see it. After the professional development meeting with the teachers, we started to sit together and do planning together.”
- “Now ... she tells me in advance what she will be doing next and adds, ‘What do you think we can do to help that child?’ She even gave me books that I read at home.”

Validate paraeducators’ growth through transformed roles and responsibilities.

In addition to facilitating the group sessions, project staff visited paraeducators in their math classrooms and debriefed with them afterwards. For most, this was the first time anyone had observed their math teaching or given them feedback.

Paraeducators appreciated the observations as a validation of their practice. One said, “Something good that she [the observer] noticed was that we asked the children more ‘how’ questions, e.g. ‘How do you know?’ ‘Can you explain to me what you learned?’ That way, a person realizes that they are doing the job the way they should do it.”

Validation also came from

teachers in the form of increased math responsibilities and professional conversations. Based on survey and interview data, we found that teachers noticed changes in the way paraeducators interacted with the students during math class, particularly their ability to listen to student thinking, ask good questions, and identify appropriate resources to differentiate instruction. As a result, they gave paraeducators more responsibility and allowed them to take initiative.

One teacher described the change she saw in her paraeducator this way: “Last year, she was comfortable photocopying but either didn’t feel comfortable teaching or didn’t see it as part of her role. This year, she’s very involved. She talks to every student about what they’re doing, what they’re thinking. For example, someone had built a tower of $10+9$. She said, ‘How did you know it was $10+9$?’ She could have just moved on, but she stopped to ask.”

As responsibilities increased, many paraeducators noticed that both their teacher and their students were seeing them as another professional in the classroom. This further enhanced their feelings of self-worth. As one paraeducator said, “Sometimes [the teacher] even tells me to do the lesson [myself]. And it’s giving me that confidence, [her] saying, ‘I know you can do this.’ Those encouraging words are so helpful to me.” By the end of the project, almost all of the paraeducators facilitated small-group math learning, and some began leading whole-group math lessons.

Throughout this transformative time, we identified ways in which paraeducator-teacher math conversations deepened. Teachers asked for the paraeducators’ opinions, and the paraeducators reported their observations about how students were progressing and what tools and resources were helpful for their students.

As one teacher explained, “The

more confident she became with the curriculum, the more she was able to make recommendations and had wonderings about what or why [something] was happening with a kid and suggest questions or alternative things to do with them.”

Build a math community.

Paraeducators valued having time and space during professional learning to meet as a cohort and share ideas, mathematical strategies, and challenges. Rarely had this opportunity occurred during the school day.

Paraeducators continued to confer with one another at their schools, especially when trying to support struggling students or figure out confusing mathematics concepts. Their conversations and relationships grew as they shared new knowledge and instructional approaches.

Paraeducators told us of their increased connections and sense of pride in their colleagues. One said, “I’m proud of my colleague because at our first [professional learning] meeting, she was just really unsure. Seeing her confidence getting better and going up to the board to show us what she was doing was a great thing.”

In one school, including paraeducators on the math leadership team strengthened the community. Teachers on the team noticed that paraeducators asked good questions and made suggestions about how to extend mathematics teaching during after-school time.

Develop paraeducator mentors.

Our first paraeducator cohort was eager to continue, so we engaged in a second year of professional learning. Paraeducators cultivated their leadership abilities by facilitating sessions about analyzing student work for a new cohort of paraeducator colleagues.

This paraeducator-mentor program model went beyond the typical one-and-done format by supporting the new paraeducators’ teaching and learning

throughout the year. It also deepened mathematics knowledge of mentor paraeducators while helping them plan sessions and discuss potential challenges.

Paraeducator mentors expressed pride at their accomplishment in facilitating the sessions. As one said, “At first, I didn’t know if I was doing a good job, but when I saw a reflection that somebody wrote in their journal about me and the lesson that we did, I [thought], ‘Wow ... I made an impact on somebody!’”

Other participating paraeducators said they felt comfortable with the mentors, with whom they identified, and felt motivated by the authority and responsibility given to these peer leaders. One said, “I loved it because they were my peers, and it was just wonderful to see them running the show. You know? So that gave me confidence that I can do it, too.”

The only complaint registered was that the one-hour meetings were too short, requiring conversations and problem-solving to continue beyond the meeting. One paraeducator said, “We didn’t want to stop, and then we were talking about it at lunch with the other paras. So the conversation kept going, and we kept talking about it until we came up with a solution.”

The teachers also noted that paraeducators who mentored others seemed more comfortable and enthusiastic about teaching math. They showed a willingness to take on even more responsibility in the classroom. “Having [her in the project for] two years was very beneficial to our students. She was able to go deeper — do a minilesson on her own. Last year, it would have been trickier to do that.”

CONFIDENCE MATTERS

While paraeducators face many barriers to professional growth, our data suggest that it is especially important to address their lack of confidence. Helping paraeducators feel more comfortable with mathematical problem-solving increases their enjoyment of math and translates into greater confidence, both in teaching students and collaborating with their classroom teachers. This in turn leads to increased responsibility and a larger role in the classroom.

Our project findings suggest that this process doesn’t happen quickly, but rather develops over multiple years. By embedding sustained, effective paraeducator development models in school systems, we can recognize paraeducators as capable educators. Increasing professional opportunities and responsibilities can unlock their untapped potential and create career pathways.

The cycle of professional learning, project staff support, and teacher partnerships in which we engaged during this project developed paraeducators’ identities as teachers and learners of mathematics. Through this work, they came to see themselves as professionals, capable of furthering their education and their careers.

As one paraeducator said, “I just know seeing the youth [growing and learning] ... is something that I want to do. I’m going to continue my education, and one day be a math teacher.”

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Judy Storeygard (Judy_storeygard@terc.edu) is principal investigator for the Doing the Math With Paraeducators Project. Karen Mutch-Jones (Karen_Mutch-Jones@terc.edu) is co-director of the STEM Education Evaluation Center (SEEC) and senior researcher at TERC in Cambridge, Massachusetts. ■



*Thank you for
being a member.*



TEACHER LEADERS CREATE THEIR OWN JOBS

BY TIFFANY M. SQUIRES AND GERALD LeTENDRE

“All teachers can lead,” argued school leadership expert Roland

Barth (2001), and we need their leadership if we’re going to meet the needs of all students. Schools have become complex organizations that require diverse areas of expertise, and leveraging teachers’ strengths into new roles is critical for school improvement.

But are schools and teachers prepared to take on these changes? Fostering teachers to become school leaders requires teachers to develop a new set of skills as well as changes in existing patterns of leadership and school culture (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Colleges of education can play a key role in advancing teacher leaders’ practice in schools by integrating teacher leadership into existing programs of educational leadership or administration. However, they must get beyond their current practices of



University programs need to prepare graduates with skills that can support and sustain their multifaceted long-term professional goals. This includes the ability to craft new roles that have not previously been the norm for teachers and teacher leaders.

focusing teaching on leadership theories to prepare and support teacher leaders as they navigate their way to a new status in schools and districts.

Since 2008, the faculty at Penn State has wrestled with how to address teacher leadership preparation within existing programs that focus on leadership and administration. Very little has been written about teacher leadership programs. Wenner and Campbell (2017) identified only two published studies to draw on in the literature.

Our educational leadership program developed and implemented an emphasis for teacher leadership within our master of education program (30 credits). We also provide a teacher leader certificate program (12 credits) that leads to endorsement from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for teacher leader practice.

These online programs, offered in collaboration with Penn State World Campus, are organized around a core of inquiry. In managing and revising the program, our faculty drew extensively on the experience we gained from working with teachers in the field.

We recognize teachers as instructional experts with strong interests in improving teaching and learning. Further, we recognize that the principal, with unmanageable amounts of responsibility, cannot serve instructional leadership as just one person (Sebastian et al., 2018).

Inquiry is a way for teachers to contribute to the ongoing continual improvement of instruction (Smylie et al., 2002). Throughout the program, we ask our students, all of whom are active teachers or other working professionals, to engage in reflections about their learning and how it supports — or doesn't support — their future goals.

In our university's work with aspiring teacher leaders over the last decade, two core strategies have emerged that hold significant promise for fostering teacher leadership: 1) provide teachers with the skills they need to create their own jobs, and 2) provide training and extended (e.g. post-graduate) support in developing ongoing professional learning and online communities of practice.

To inform continual improvement of our teacher leadership program, we surveyed 48 program graduates, asking them to reflect on their experiences. We also asked about the perceived value of their program, their future goals/employment, and any obstacles they expected to face in seeking a professional role as a teacher leader.

We used thematic analysis to analyze the open-ended responses from survey data. We measured demographic and nominal data from those same 48 survey responses to inform understanding of narrative responses. We further analyzed these data to evaluate this teacher leadership program for better preparing teacher leaders for practice.

Findings revealed that teacher leader goals are unique and distinct from goals typical of other educational leaders in that teacher leaders wish to contribute leadership without leaving their primary role as a classroom teacher.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP GOALS

As our surveys revealed, most teachers in our program wish to expand on their current teaching capacity without formally moving into administration. This aligns with standard academic theories of teacher leadership that emphasize the core identity of teaching in the classroom — i.e. a leader among peers (Poekert et al., 2016; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Most

teachers in our survey indicated they would like to retain a connection to teaching while supporting instructional leadership (typically carried out by administrators) in the school or district.

However, realities of the occupational structure of public K-12 schools channel teachers into administration. Our respondents indicate that, to take on a leadership role, they have to either chose administration or forge their own unique position.

By preparing teachers leaders with the knowledge and skills to offer instructional leadership in schools or districts, our program encourages capacity building for these roles. Teachers will need to be advocates for teacher leadership if they are to create alternatives to traditional administrative roles for instructional leadership within schools.

Reflections from teachers who came from private schools, including international ones, further suggest that this dilemma facing public school teachers does not have to be the case. Teachers in private or non-U.S. schools often had a clear career path that allowed them to assume more formal administrative-type work while retaining teaching duties.

They did not appear to see the same tensions as teachers in the public system. For some, their school already had a recognized role as head teacher (i.e. a teacher responsible for leadership or management within the school, which may be considered synonymous with teacher leader).

As one student said: "I am now a head teacher in my building. I'd like to continue to be a person that is looked to for leadership skills but would like to remain in my current teaching position."

This position of head teacher wasn't an option for most graduates who worked in public schools. They talked about either the kind of position they could obtain in the current structure or the need to create their own position. Many were looking to their coursework for knowledge and skills that could help them build their own new roles.

Many also wished to move on to higher education to earn a doctorate, teach at the college level, or conduct research. It is notable that most graduates had multiple goals, yet the field's ideas about teacher leadership are often limited, lacking a theory or vision about how teachers can become thought leaders or teacher educators.

University programs need to prepare graduates with skills that can support and sustain their multifaceted long-term professional goals. This includes the ability to craft new roles that have not previously been the norm for teachers and teacher leaders.

WHAT SKILLS DO TEACHER LEADERS NEED?

Leadership, as a general concept, requires developing significant skill sets. We believe all teachers can and do lead, but to do this, our graduates said they needed new skills.

First, teacher leaders need to have the communication and political skills necessary to mobilize action among peers. Additionally, they need the research and writing skills that can promote their expertise as leaders in the fields of instructional practice.

Further, they need to be skilled in the practices of instructional leadership, including supervision, program evaluation, planned change for improvement, and professional learning. The sections that follow demonstrate findings from our surveys and explain how these data informed our program's development.

Communication for collaboration

Our surveys showed that communication among peers is a central skill that teacher leaders must

Inquiry, for a leader, needs to build to broader change. This means that inquiry requires rigorous research that peers and administrators will respect. For our graduates, developing research skills was seen as critical to their professional learning.

develop, and graduates appreciated the program's focus in this area. One participant noted the program had "given me some ideas on how to go about fighting for my school and my staff as a teacher leader," while another valued the ability to "foster collaboration among my colleagues."

With its origins in a cohort model, the online program retains a strong emphasis on promoting peer collaboration and building peer networks, but the faculty has grappled with how to promote communication and a sense of belonging in an online environment.

In the core courses, most lessons require students to participate in discussion forums. They begin with a prompt relevant to learning outcomes for a given lesson and require students to submit at least one original post to the prompt and at least two additional responses to original postings of other peers.

Students said engagement in the content and with one another, through discussion forums, was beneficial. "The continual conversation between the classmates was helpful. Each person was able to add new insight, which expanded my thinking," said one. Students also write blogs about the class material, which gives them practice in communicating with external audiences (e.g. parents or the school community).

Social media provides another means of communication and of initiating participation in online professional learning networks.

Collaboration in these networks can happen asynchronously, which may be managed flexibly and individually, and ultimately provide for increased effectiveness. Additionally, these networks connect teacher leaders with current research, which provides helpful resources for teachers engaged in inquiry for leadership.

Educators in our program recognized the importance of these strategies. One student noted, "The emphasis on collaboration has been especially useful and relevant. Although it is an important skill that we all realize, really talking about it and studying it was helpful."

Inquiry as compelling research

Our surveys also substantiated inquiry as central to teacher leadership. Many teachers who enter our program have done some kind of classroom inquiry, but, for most, this was their first experience in carrying out a long-term, multifaceted inquiry project.

One graduate noted: "Actually going through the steps of the final project has shown me what I need to do in the future with my classroom inquiry." Developing a careful, considered inquiry approach was seen as critical to future success, and teachers need to learn to "effectively and efficiently complete the inquiry cycle."

But inquiry, for a leader, needs to build to broader change. This means that inquiry requires rigorous research that peers and administrators will respect. For our graduates, developing research skills was seen as critical to their professional learning.

One student wrote: "[I]mplementing an inquiry project and determining its validity and impact in my classroom was the most beneficial." Many graduates valued academic research and wanted to move beyond classroom inquiry. One student even noted: "My husband who just finished his Ph.D. work ... often commented on how he wished his master's program introduced him to the rigor of academic writing and research as we have been asked to do."

The inquiry that teacher leaders do also needs to be linked to the broader organizational or policy environment. Teacher leaders need to be able to use the results of inquiry to engage peers, convince administrators, and sway school boards.

STAFFING TEACHER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Analysis of these data indicated a need for us, as a faculty, to consider comparisons between what our teacher leaders indicated they need and what we know our aspiring school and district leaders need from their respective academic programs.

Specifically, when considering the interaction between teacher leaders and administrators within courses, some faculty considered that these interactions provide a unique opportunity for teachers and principals to learn the perspectives of the other. This interaction is beneficial to all types of school leaders.

A few faculty, however, expressed concern that this mixed-role method of interactions would be inappropriate, as they viewed the role of administrator as the antithesis to the ethos of self-empowered teacher professionals.

Our experience suggests that teacher leaders and aspiring principals not only benefit from interaction, but often also need relevant skills development to make the most of this interaction. We know that principals need to be instructional leaders and are under pressure to provide more observations and feedback and facilitate more effective professional learning.

These trends suggest that we need to prepare teachers and principals to create hybrid teacher-administrator roles that enable a greater range of individuals and their expertise to move into leadership roles in schools.

We also recognize that aspiring teacher leaders need support after graduating. Teacher leaders could benefit from participation in online communities of practice or professional learning networks.

These trends suggest that we need to prepare teachers and principals to create hybrid teacher-administrator roles that enable a greater range of individuals and their expertise to move into leadership roles in schools.

But singlehandedly creating one's own professional networks and communities of practice is a daunting task, and it begs the question of whether universities should develop online platforms that can link alumni, faculty, and current students in larger online communities of practice. We continue to investigate how social media programs might be able to create these important links.

NEW LEADERS FOR NEW ROLES

As a developing field, teacher leadership makes connections with new fields — e.g. neuroscience (Conyers & Wilson, 2016) — and can be disruptive of traditional administrative or leadership instruction, creating more pathways than currently exist. We can improve academic programs for teacher leaders by recognizing the fluid nature of the field and the multiple goals teacher leaders have.

Clearly, inquiry, teacher collaboration, and team building are important skills. Looking to the future, teacher leaders will likely be required to act as entrepreneurs (Berry et al., 2013). Technological change, reoccurring political reform, and an ever-shifting global economy will place pressure on schools and teachers to continually innovate and adapt.

They will need to be continually learning and encouraging others to learn, and they will also need to be able to communicate why this learning is needed. All of these skills can help teacher leaders craft and succeed in diverse leadership roles, some of which have yet to be envisioned.

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- Tiffany M. Squires (tms474@psu.edu) is assistant professor of educational leadership and Gerald LeTendre (gkl103@psu.edu) is professor and Harry Lawrence Batschelet II Chair of Educational Administration at Penn State. ■**



Kansas State University co-facilitates teacher leadership academies with seven local school districts. From left, Abigail Lynch, Nathan Downs, Kristi Timm, and Austyn McNew from Manhattan-Ogden Public Schools participate in a teacher leadership academy in 2017.

TEACHERS FIND THEIR VOICE

ACADEMY BOOSTS TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE, CAPACITY, AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

BY DONNA AUGUSTINE-SHAW AND JESSICA LANE

Teacher retention is a continuing concern. One of the reasons teachers leave the profession is that they don't feel valued or working to their potential. Developing teacher leadership is a positive way to improve job satisfaction, career development, and retention (Wixom,

2016). In addition, teacher leadership and influence in decision-making are positively associated with student achievement (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

One promising approach to strengthen teacher leadership capacity is through leadership academies. At Kansas State University, we co-facilitate teacher leadership academies with

“One of the big academy practices that best facilitates my learning is that everything is intertwined and related to each other. The spiraling of the information keeps everything relevant.”

—Academy participant

seven local school districts. Educators identified by their districts engage in a two-year process designed to build teachers’ confidence and skills and help them explore the career continuum as they work toward a master’s in educational leadership.

This model helps districts invest in keeping good teachers in their pipeline, either within the school or by advancing to other career opportunities within the district. It also helps teachers find their voice as they grow professionally, establish strong networks, and develop their leadership skills to impact student learning and contribute to the success of their schools. Some become teacher leaders in the classroom or in positions at the building level, and some pursue formal administrative credentialing.

As one academy graduate explained, “During the academy, I realized that one way to put my knowledge into action was by pursuing a building license, after which I became an assistant principal. . . . My thinking was reshaped, my mind was more open and more clear about education, and my goals grew with my learning.”

Another said, “I can’t think of another education experience that has been more meaningful, thought-provoking, or useful to me.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY-DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

University leadership preparation programs and school district educators have a responsibility to work together to prepare school leaders. Through strategic and collaborative planning between our university and local school districts, the academies emphasize preparing teacher leaders to better understand their own school and district systems and structures, as well

as their current and potential roles in them.

Each partnership academy is customized to local district needs through a planning team that meets to consider district goals in leadership preparation. One district established priorities around understanding the organizational system, leading in a collaborative and professional learning environment, and harnessing the power of collective efficacy in leadership. A new academy has set the district’s focus on issues related to equity and inclusiveness, using data to inform decisions, social and emotional learning, and an emphasis on personalized learning.

District liaisons and a university facilitator jointly plan instructional content and design. In addition, each participant is paired with a district mentor for the two-year cohort academy, which allows participants to further explore and develop their knowledge and skills and provides opportunities to practice and apply what they are learning about leadership in real-time experiences and projects.

In the collaborative partnership, district contributions include responsibilities to:

- Establish a planning team to identify local needs and select the focus for the academy along with providing input throughout the two-year cohort experience;
- Partner with the university to plan and implement curriculum, learning activities, and assess overall progress of students and the cohort;
- Determine the criteria for selecting academy participants, the application process, and selection of teacher participants;
- Provide support to students

such as books, supplies, location for classes, determining an appointed district liaison to co-instruct with the university facilitator, and assign field-based mentors from the district to work with teacher leader candidates during the academy; and

- Appoint mentors to guide field experiences and assist teachers in better understanding their strengths and interests.

The university collaborates in the academy model by:

- Ensuring that academy content is aligned with national leadership standards;
- Co-planning with the district liaison to facilitate curriculum, design learning activities, and assess student learning and cohort progress;
- Determining candidates meet university requirements for admission;
- Providing faculty to assist students in university processes and facilitate the two-year cohort and degree program; and
- Supporting the district in all aspects of the cohort process, including mentoring.

Teacher leaders in the academies range from entry level to more experienced and include teachers from general education, special education, and special topic areas, as well as educators with other positions like school psychologists or instructional coaches. Often, academy participants are seeking a second master’s degree as their curiosity has grown about decision-making or leadership (e.g. instructional coaching, building leadership, or curriculum and assessment support).

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT

A hallmark of the academy model is a coherent instructional framework to which all learning experiences connect, including coursework co-facilitated by university faculty and district staff both online and in person (pre-COVID), as well as field work. As one participant explained, “One of the big academy practices that best facilitates my learning is that everything is intertwined and related to each other. The spiraling of the information keeps everything relevant.”

Leadership standards are the foundation of this instructional framework. We focus on the Kansas standards for building leaders, which are based on the National Educational Leadership Preparation Program Recognition Standards.

We use a set of core resources for all the academies that focus on the contributions of leadership to student learning. They include Goodwin & Cameron’s (2015) 21 responsibilities for effective school leadership, which are categorized in the three areas of having a clear focus, managing change, and developing a purposeful community.

Beyond these core resources, we collaborate with the district to determine instructional materials, based on district needs and priorities. In response to current world and national issues, one academy is using two books that deal with competency-based education and social justice to promote knowledge and important conversations about student learning during the pandemic and equity issues.

Using grounded and emerging research in professional books outlines a sequence for content and instruction important to achieve the goals of the university and district.

REAL-WORLD CLASSROOM APPLICATION

The academy seeks to blend theory with real-world application. The program’s instructional emphasis is a simultaneous integration of theory and

ACADEMY REACH

The academy model operates in seven school districts statewide and one tribal nation in another state. Since 2000, 464 teacher leaders have participated in 28 partnership academies. Individual academy cohort enrollment varies between 12 and 24 students. Districts vary in their cycle of repeating academies as they consider local resources and recruitment of candidates (i.e. back-to-back, or one or two semesters between academies).

PARTNER DISTRICTS

Partnership districts include: Geary County Public Schools, Manhattan-Ogden Public Schools, Salina Public Schools, Dodge City Public Schools, Topeka Public Schools, Garden City Public Schools, Shawnee Mission Public Schools, and Osage Nation (Oklahoma). Teacher leaders from several districts have participated as a part of the ongoing partnership districts, including: Marysville, Rock Creek, and Wamego.

practice, exploring best practice, with a continual focus on learning outcomes for selected teacher leaders (Miller et al., 2007).

This purposeful connection between theory and practice helps teacher leaders apply their learning and think differently about their work. One academy teacher said, “I loved that the content matched what I was trying to accomplish in my classroom as well as seeing how administration handles things like behaviors, staff, budgeting, and running a building.”

This is enhanced by mentors moving the discussion to real-world experience. “One practice that facilitates my learning in the academy

is tying our learning directly to our schools,” one academy participant said. “I enjoy learning different topics in class and being able to apply it in my own school shortly after class. There are many strategies that I have read about in class and discussed with my mentor shortly afterwards.”

Mentors also help facilitate a special project that each participant completes over the academy. These projects demonstrate leadership contributions to school and district improvement initiatives. Special projects provide teacher leaders the opportunity to demonstrate performance skills across the leadership standards and apply what they have learned about leadership in real time.

Participants select these projects, in coordination with their mentor and district liaison, and showcase their leadership in defining the purpose of the project, working with others to accomplish agreed-upon goals, and assessing the success and next steps for the project.

Projects are a way for teacher leaders to assume a leadership role outside of their normal responsibilities and produce a measurable outcome important to the school, district, or community.

In addition, guest speakers from the larger district community share their broader perspective with students, providing teachers with the “balcony view” that builds an understanding and appreciation of the system. Examples of guest speakers include the school superintendent and directors from various district positions like curriculum, staff development, and finance.

Academies often host presentations about special topics such as the role of the counselor, focusing on real-life examples of how counselors and principals work together to support students and families. These connections have an intentional focus on strengthening the pipeline of support for students while exposing teachers to new ways of thinking about

the importance of relationships in the school community.

MONITORING GROWTH

Academy participants complete a self-assessment of their growth on a continuum over the two-year cohort experience. This is based on the work of Linda Lambert (2003), who identified components of emerging teacher leadership, considering four categories for teachers moving from reflective practitioner to thinking more critically as a leader.

She defined these categories as adult development, dialogue, collaboration, and organizational change, with a developmental continuum of dependent to independent to interdependent and, finally, leadership. We monitor the individual growth of each teacher leader through these self-assessments and ongoing progress toward increased leadership roles over the two years.

Academy participants get continual feedback on their growth in the areas of content knowledge, demonstrated skills, and reflection on their beliefs and values. These opportunities for individual and group reflection promote powerful learning and professional growth. “The academy has caused me to reflect deeper. ... The reflecting was something I will take with me into the future. ... Asking my own students to reflect has impacted how I teach,” noted one academy participant.

As educators in the academy reflect on opportunities to exhibit their leadership and explore the career continuum, they define their own growth by considering the leadership standards. An example of this continuum of leadership development specific to the standard focusing on vision and mission is made clear in the following stages (CCSSO, 2008):

- **Aspiring education leader:** Develop or revise the current vision/mission in department/grade-level teams;
- **Entry-level education leader:** Analyze the current vision/mission with others;

“The academy has caused me to reflect deeper. ... The reflecting was something I will take with me into the future. ... Asking my own students to reflect has impacted how I teach.”

—Academy participant

- **Early career education leader:** Work with others to identify and disaggregate data to improve the focus of the vision/mission;
- **Advanced career education leader:** Guide teachers and parents in discussions around data to ensure students and staff have necessary resources to reach goals in the vision/mission; and
- **Mentor/coach/specialist:** Teach and model ways to evaluate data points to implement a student-focused vision/mission with measurable goals.

As one academy participant said, “When starting the leadership academy, I knew I would learn more about how to be a leader, but during this process, I have ended up not only learning about how to be an effective leader, but also about myself. ... Over and over, I realized the fact that I am capable of so much more than I ever saw before. ... I am forever changed and forever moved to strive to be more each and every day.”

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Each leadership cohort is a cohesive and committed learning community. Cohort members and instructors are invested in and respect the continual improvement of each person. A sense of collective responsibility is evident in the dedication and strong relationships

that develop through the academy experience.

This investment in one another is essential so that each participant develops along his or her own path. Leadership matters at all levels of schools, and the academies help prepare teachers for whatever responsibilities they pursue as leaders in their schools and districts.

Teachers who are prepared this way are more apt to thrive in today’s complex school environments. As one participant said, “It is my mission as a teacher leader to empower others in our organization to not only lead, but to continue to commit to professional growth in teaching and learning practices that ignite outcomes leading to student success, the ultimate end goal.”

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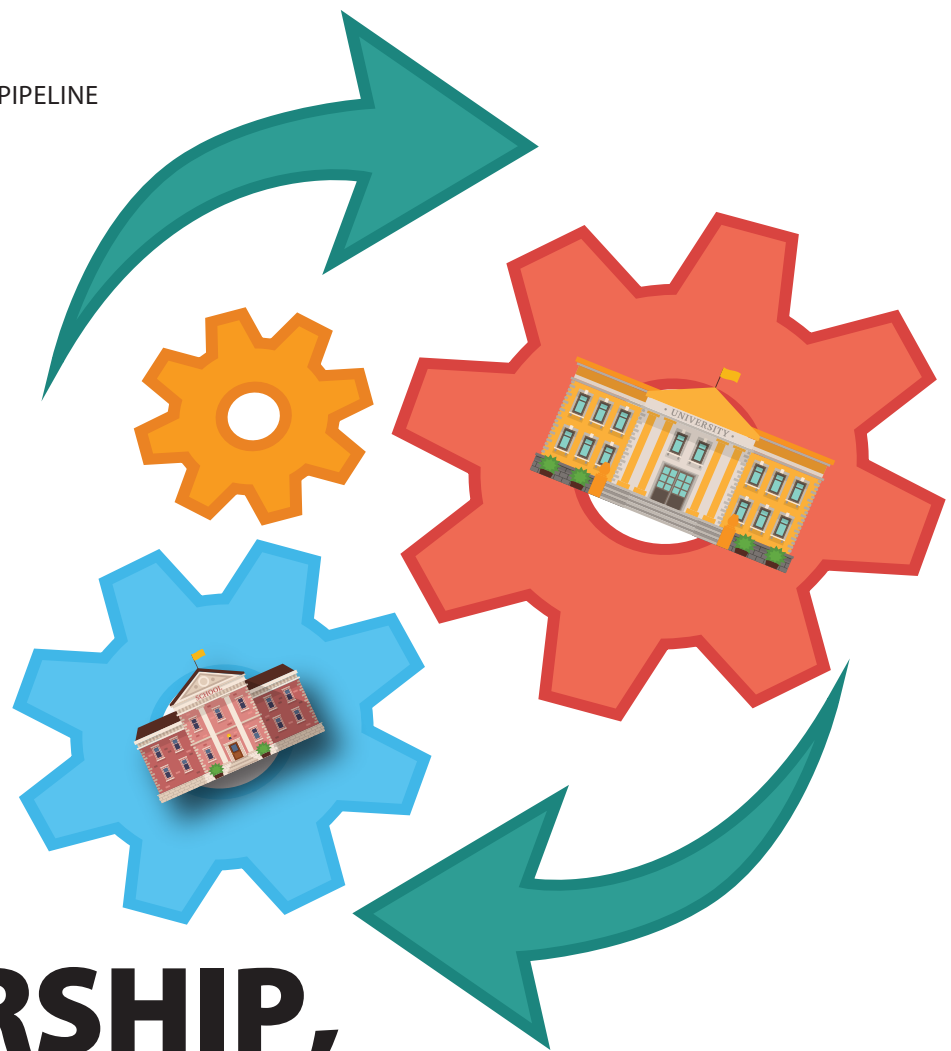
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Donna Augustine-Shaw (donna5@ksu.edu) is associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Jessica Lane (jjj3636@k-state.edu) is assistant professor of counselor education and supervision at Kansas State University. ■



LEADERSHIP, REDEFINED AND REDESIGNED

UNIVERSITY-DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP TAKES A NEW APPROACH TO PRINCIPAL PREP

BY RICHARD GONZALES, SARAH WOULFIN, CASEY COBB, AND JENNIFER McGARRY

The role of school leaders today is more complex than ever. Just ask principals.

Principals juggle a vast array of tasks, including creating and enacting an organizational vision, serving as instructional leader, nurturing a positive school culture, developing teachers' capabilities, and fostering authentic connections with students, their caregivers, and surrounding communities.

In short, principals are critical to the effectiveness of our schools, especially those serving children with the fewest advantages in life.

So how can we ensure that principals have the skills to carry out this challenging and evolving job? Enter the powerful combination of university principal preparation programs and the school districts their graduates feed into.

Research has demonstrated the value of university-district partnerships

in supporting the development of effective school leaders, and much has been written about how to initiate, structure, adapt, and sustain those partnerships. But in practice, the effectiveness of these principal preparation partnerships varies greatly.

Since 2016, the University of Connecticut has been part of an effort, supported by The Wallace Foundation, that seeks to improve principal preservice training. A centerpiece

of that work is the development and operation of university-district partnerships, from start to finish.

Alongside the Connecticut Department of Education, we have worked in partnership with Meriden Public Schools, Hartford Public Schools, and New Haven Public Schools. The latter two are the second- and third-largest districts in the state, respectively, but all three are urban districts serving a high number of students from low-income families.

Here we share how our experience in the University Principal Preparation Initiative shifted our mindset about the work we do with school districts from a transactional to a transformational partnership. We've learned some important lessons in our collaborative journey to enhance principal preparation in Connecticut.

A CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

Before the initiative, we somewhat narrowly conceived of districts as consumers of our “product”— graduates who would eventually fill school leadership posts in their schools. As such, our ties with district partners involved communicating about hiring processes and serving as connectors between our students and district talent offices. In practice, the end goal of our UConn Administrator Preparation Program, known as UCAPP, was filling human resource talent pools.

Just as necessity is the mother of invention in business, it can be the motivation for adaption in education. We now understand the necessity of school districts informing principal preparation and helping to address weaknesses in it.

For instance, we began our program redesign by convening a team of department faculty, professors, and district representatives to audit the existing UCAPP curriculum. One early finding was both enlightening and uncomfortable: We weren't adequately preparing our students in the areas of inclusive leadership, data analysis, and

Collaboration, in our new way of thinking, helps us better prepare leaders with the knowledge, skills, and judgment to deal with problems of practice out in the field.

family engagement.

To close these gaps in our new program of study, we engaged our district partners to define internship experiences for our students and assessments rooted in the reality of principalship work.

Collaboration, in our new way of thinking, helps us better prepare leaders with the knowledge, skills, and judgment to deal with problems of practice out in the field. Our partner districts now share data on their priorities to make sure our program adequately prepares leaders districts want to hire.

Knowing, for example, that districts across Connecticut share the challenge of chronic student absenteeism allows us to infuse this topic in the coursework. Instead of talking generically about school improvement, we can focus readings, discussions, and assignments on aspects of absenteeism to develop future school leaders' capacity to do something about it. Our hope is that this will mean that our graduates will need less on-the-job training to perform successfully.

What's more, university-based faculty and staff engage with district partners with a newfound sense of curiosity and openness to sharing ideas and learning from one another. Rather than viewing ourselves as perceived experts in either leadership or leadership preparation, we take the most pride in the title of “continuous learner.” That's because our learning has the potential to improve both principal preparation and district school leadership activities across Connecticut.

GREATER COLLABORATION

Even before our involvement in the initiative, we acted in accordance with research on university-district partnerships suggesting that formalized agreements between the parties are a best practice. We developed written agreements with districts to aid in UCAPP operations.

In exchange for professional learning for a group of its teacher leaders, a district would agree to recruit aspiring teacher leaders to attend information sessions and allow the use of district space for program classes. This practice reflected the transactional approach we applied to partnerships at the time. Until we viewed partnerships differently, we narrowly measured success only by self-serving outcomes — enrollment, graduates, and placements.

While we continue to cooperate with districts on strategic recruitment and development of principalship candidates, we now also collaborate with them on initiatives aimed at responding to other talent management issues.

For example, in one district where annual teacher turnover is a problem, we created a three-year teacher leadership program to enhance the instructional leadership capabilities of high-performing teachers. The group meets monthly at a school in the district and begins by discussing how to transfer theory about successful teaching and learning to classroom practice. By the end of the program, these teacher leaders design and present professional learning for their colleagues across the district.

We are proud and encouraged that the district retained eight out of nine teacher leaders who participated in the first cohort. We learned from their feedback that they all felt like they grew as teachers and leaders, but building community with their peers is what they valued most.

In another district, early-career principals were struggling to form and

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL PREPARATION INITIATIVE

The University of Connecticut is one of seven universities taking part in the University Principal Preparation Initiative, an effort supported by The Wallace Foundation to help improve preservice professional learning of future principals, especially for the nation’s highest-need schools.

These institutions are carrying out their work in partnership with school districts because university-district collaboration is viewed by many educators as a key to high-quality

training for aspiring principals.

The RAND Corporation is conducting an ongoing study of the venture, which was launched in 2016, and has released a report, *Launching a Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs: Partners Collaborate for Change* (Wang et al., 2018), describing the initiative’s first year.

Among other things, the researchers found that the universities and their partners had succeeded in establishing strong working relationships

that enabled them together to develop a vision for better principal training and begin planning a redesign of the course of study.

The university work is part of a longstanding endeavor by The Wallace Foundation to improve school leadership for the nation’s public schools. Among the efforts was an initiative in which six large school districts developed a comprehensive approach — known as the principal pipeline — to developing skillful principals.

Those districts put in place key parts of

the pipeline, including rigorous standards for the principal job, selective hiring and placement, aligned on-the-job support and evaluation — and high-quality preservice preparation.

Research about the effort, published in 2019 (Gates et al., 2019), found that schools in the participating districts markedly outperformed similar schools in other school districts in the same states in both reading and math. The districts also saw better retention of new principals.

cultivate effective leadership teams. Our program responded by incorporating into our curriculum field-based learning activities aimed at developing leadership teams.

We are also working with our state department of education to share what we have learned with other university-based programs. Developing effective leadership teams may emerge as a priority for other programs, and we are prepared to help build the capacity for strong work in this area statewide.

The shifts in thinking about, and our approach to, partnerships are consistent with the words of Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, “Sow a thought, reap an action” (Covey & Covey, 2020). In many ways, the UCAPP redesign process is an example of transformational change achieved through continuous learning.

ESSENTIAL LESSONS LEARNED

In our experience, the success of a program can be traced back to the

strength of the partnership behind it.

Consider the case of one program partner. The program director and a key district leader spent a year exploring interests and brainstorming collaboration ideas before engaging teams from each organization in a year of planning to launch an urban leadership cohort. Two years later, 10 veteran teacher leaders graduated. Half would move into leadership positions within a year. The district and UCAPP agreed to continue the partnership with a second cohort.

Unfortunately, major personnel changes in top leadership positions led to voiding the partnership agreement within weeks of the launch of the second cohort. Four years of building, planning, and cooperation was effectively paused, possibly undone, and remained so until the next stage of major personnel changes almost two years later.

The good news is that the infrastructure of the relationships and collaborative work survived. New

leaders, aware of the four productive years of collaboration, have made the partnership a priority again.

We have also been faced with change in state-level leadership. The head of the Connecticut State Department of Education Talent Office left after serving in the role during our program’s period of growth and change. This member of our team had supported UCAPP for more than six years and was instrumental to our redesign work. Our priority with the new leader is to build a working relationship, not merely brief her on the redesign project, which she will soon join.

If experience is the path to knowing, these are a few important lessons we’ve learned from our experience of growing and restructuring UCAPP:

- **Organizational partnerships are ultimately relationships between people.** Individuals in each organization who serve as brokers and connectors are

critical to the stability of the partnership.

- **Trust is paramount.** The trust established among partners creates conditions where all are inspired to take risks and be more innovative.
- **Support from top leadership at the state, district, and university level is essential.** Much of the time and effort required to make partnerships work is done by individuals in other roles, but the heads of those organizations matter. In some cases, they are the only individuals who can single-handedly help or hinder progress.

Organizational change expert Peter Senge describes a learning organization as “a group of people working together collectively to enhance their capacities

to create results they really care about” (Fulmer & Keys, 1998). We think this captures the essence of district-university partnerships, too.

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Richard Gonzales (Richard.Gonzales@uconn.edu) is associate professor in residence and director of educational leadership preparation programs at the University of Connecticut’s Neag School of Education. Sarah Woulfin (Sarah.Woulfin@uconn.edu) is associate professor in Neag’s department of educational leadership. Casey Cobb (Casey.Cobb@uconn.edu) is Raymond Neag Endowed Professor of Educational Policy. Jennifer McGarry (Jennifer.McGarry@uconn.edu) is professor and head of the Department of Educational Leadership. ■

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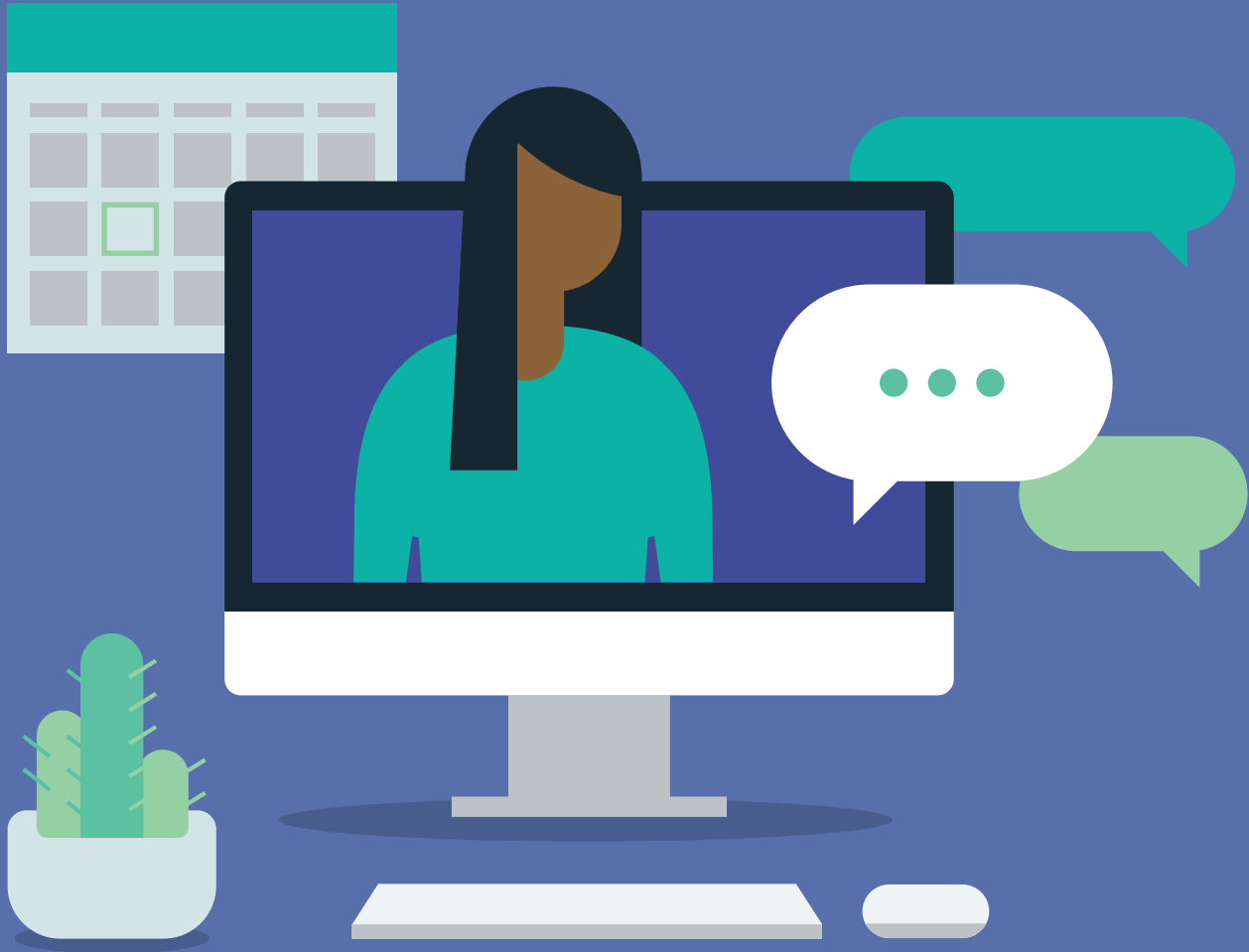


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TOOLS



ONLINE LEARNING NETWORKS

Can a learning network thrive online? Absolutely — but it takes intentional planning and the right tools.

The Texas Network for School Improvement (TxNSI), a collaborative of schools working to increase college and career readiness among Black, Latinx, and middle schoolers experiencing poverty, is making the virtual shift work effectively.

The tool on the following pages, prepared by Catalyst:Ed, summarizes insights about the online shift from the TxNSI Hub, a collaboration among Learning Forward, Educate Texas, and the Dana Center.



A NEW PARADIGM FOR COLLABORATION

BY ROHINI McKEE AND MICHELLE BOWMAN

Learning communities provide unique opportunities for discussion, reflection, and growth. This is one of the reasons collaborative learning networks have been a focus of Learning Forward's work for decades.

In the past year, COVID-19 has presented many new challenges for educators, not only in teaching and connecting with students but in their own learning from one another. The necessity of physical distancing has required all of us who engage in networks to be nimble and adapt our strategies to an online environment.

Although frustrating, this need can be turned into opportunities to productively change the way we work. Now is the time to redefine not just how students learn, but also how we as educators create systems and processes to better support adult learning, collaboration, and collective impact. We can double down on the “why” of engaging in networked improvement efforts to benefit students, families, and communities.

That is the philosophy of the Texas Network for School Improvement (TxNSI) Hub, a collaboration among Learning Forward, Educate Texas, and the Dana Center to enhance middle school educational opportunities, especially in math. The hub supports a network of Texas schools working to increase the percentage of Black, Latinx, and middle schoolers experiencing poverty who are academically and behaviorally on track to graduate high school ready for college and career success. The hub focuses on supporting schools to use continuous improvement processes to accelerate equitable changes.

We believe that those processes can still thrive in the unexpectedly virtual world in which we now find ourselves. To understand how, Michelle Bowman, Learning Forward's vice president, networks & content design, recently participated in a panel discussion about the pivots needed to support learning in an online setting. The other panelists were Ryan Gallagher, director of continuous improvement at High Tech High in San Diego,

California, and Karen Zeribi, founder and executive director of Shift, which uses improvement science and human-centered design to support systems change.

To continue the learning from the panel, convening partner Catalyst:Ed developed the report *A New Paradigm for Collaboration: Virtual Network Support* to capture the lessons from network leaders on facilitating virtual network support and collaboration through an equity lens. The tool on the following pages is based on that report.

As we stressed during the panel and in the report, it is essential to embed equity throughout the work of continuous improvement, whether in person or online. Having difficult conversations about race and equity was already daunting in person. The addition of the remote setting can seem like an insurmountable barrier.

However, given the demands of a global pandemic, the disparate impact this has on people of color and communities experiencing poverty, and the systemic racism that underlies that



impact, we must ensure that we are having these conversations, even if we have to have them in a virtual space. Now is the time to open our eyes to differences, take time to acknowledge and appreciate them, and learn from them.

You can use the tools here to create an online space that makes it possible to focus on continuous improvement with an equity lens.

We encourage users of the tools to keep in mind a comment Bowman made during the panel discussion: “We need to go slow to go fast.” It takes time to build relationships, establish trust, and support one another. Taking that time will allow long-term progress and ongoing continuous improvement.

*

Rohini McKee (rohini.mckee@catalyst-ed.org) is an associate partner at Catalyst:Ed. Michelle Bowman (michelle.bowman@learningforward.org) is Learning Forward’s vice president, networks & content design.

ABOUT TxNSI AND ITS PARTNERS

TxNSI is one of 30 improvement networks nationwide to receive the Network for School Improvement grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. With this grant, we are able to connect with similar organizations, share and learn new strategies, and access high-quality technical assistance providers to deepen the work — a great benefit, especially as COVID-19 changes the needs of our students and families and the way we can support them.

Each member of the collaborative brings unique strengths to the partnership: Educate Texas serves as the network convener and provides analytical support, Learning Forward brings its expertise in professional learning and continuous improvement, and the Dana Center provides subject matter expertise and technical assistance around mathematics education and equitable student success.

Catalyst:Ed, which wrote A

New Paradigm for Collaboration: Virtual Network Support based on the continuous improvement panel, draws on education leaders’ collective expertise to help them innovate, excel, and scale to deliver breakthrough results for all students. To accomplish this, Catalyst:Ed:

- Builds and activates diverse networks of expert talent vital to the health and impact of education organizations;
- Connects education leaders with the right expert support to spark innovation and build capacity;
- Creates shared resource pools that all organizations can benefit from; and
- Disseminates critical information to build knowledge, while fostering greater accountability and a focus on results.

Learn more at www.catalyst-ed.org. To read the report on which this tool is based, see bit.ly/3eSfa6y.

Virtual network support tool

This tool helps network leaders plan for and implement techniques for engaging collaboration in virtual settings. Before your next virtual gathering, consider the tips and discussion items here and record your reflections. You may wish to note the items you have already incorporated and how well

they worked, those you wish to try and what you need to do to implement them, and those you haven't yet considered and first steps for applying them. You may also wish to add your own strategies.

1. MAXIMIZE ENGAGEMENT IN LARGE-GROUP VIRTUAL SETTINGS

Key consideration	Strategies	Reflections and additional strategies
<p>Know your audience: Remember that people may surprise you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider time zones and don't assume traditional business hours work best for participants. • Encourage turning video on but don't make it mandatory as sometimes people may not be comfortable or able to at the time. • Understand that virtual meeting fatigue is a real experience and plan frequent breaks. • Plan varied forms of interactivity to engage all types of learners and sharers. 	
<p>Leverage familiar routines: Build comfort to increase connection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage participants with platform features, such as the thumbs up or high five reactions. • Record collaboration in living documents to share strategies, crowdsource emerging ideas, or capture notes and next steps. • Use real-time polling features. • Use online breakout rooms to host deeper discussions in a smaller environment. 	
<p>Differentiate for tech savviness: Cultivate genuine engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up and lead with virtual meeting norms. • Teach people how to use a virtual background if they don't want others seeing into their home office. • Have a dedicated team member add "tech support" to their screen name so participants know to whom they can direct questions. • Send a document with a list of the tech tools that will be used before the meeting and contact info for tech help. 	
<p>Prioritize dry runs: Practice to avoid the avoidable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify roles and responsibilities for each team member and have a backup person for each role. Specific roles include presenter, breakout room coordinator, and chat monitor. • Rehearse the content and roles several times with each person. • Establish breakout groups in advance with the understanding that attendance may change and adjustments will be required. 	
<p>Focus your time with wraparound supports: Maximize your time and extend the learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider materials to read ahead of time so all attendees can join the discussion with baseline knowledge. • Provide communications that outline "know before you go" information along with the meeting agenda. • Maintain transparency in your communication regarding goals, strategies, and updates. 	

TOOLS

Virtual network support tool CONTINUED

2. FOCUS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Strategy	Tips	Questions or discussion prompts
Remind people often why they are using continuous improvement to solve current problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a prime time for rapid-cycle experimentation as you test how students learn in a virtual setting. • Through continuous improvement practices, you can share with your colleagues which strategies are working and which are not. • De-emphasize the tools of improvement and simplify the approach to continuous improvement. 	
Return to root causes that drive your continuous improvement work and network aim.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use empathy interviews to draw out lived experiences. (See the tool for conducting empathy interviews in the October 2020 issue of <i>The Learning Professional</i>.) • With the world changing so frequently, continue to revisit your root causes to make sure your strategies are still meeting the needs of your network members. 	
Engage in cross-network or cross-grade learning sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given that whole-network convenings do not look the same right now, be intentional on how you engage your network members. Consider smaller group settings to share learnings. 	
Leverage partnerships from district leaders or other support organizations to give teachers more time for deeper thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, take on some of the continuous improvement work at the network level. An example of this is completing the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) document that a teacher may normally be responsible for. 	
Use virtual visual organizing tools for capturing strategies, results, and takeaways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use tools that teachers have easy access to and can review if they have to leave the meeting early. • Encourage people to add updates, new questions, or discussion topics in the tool before the meeting so everyone can come prepared. 	

TOOLS

Virtual network support tool CONTINUED

3. CONSIDER CONTEXT

Understanding the context in which your network members operate is important for any successful effort. Articulating your starting place will not only help you plan but will help you share your learning with others.

Who are the members of your network? (You don't need to list names. Roles or general descriptions are sufficient.)	
How often will you be convening network members and what platform will you use?	
What is the problem of practice you are addressing?	
What do you anticipate as the major challenges to your virtual convening(s)?	

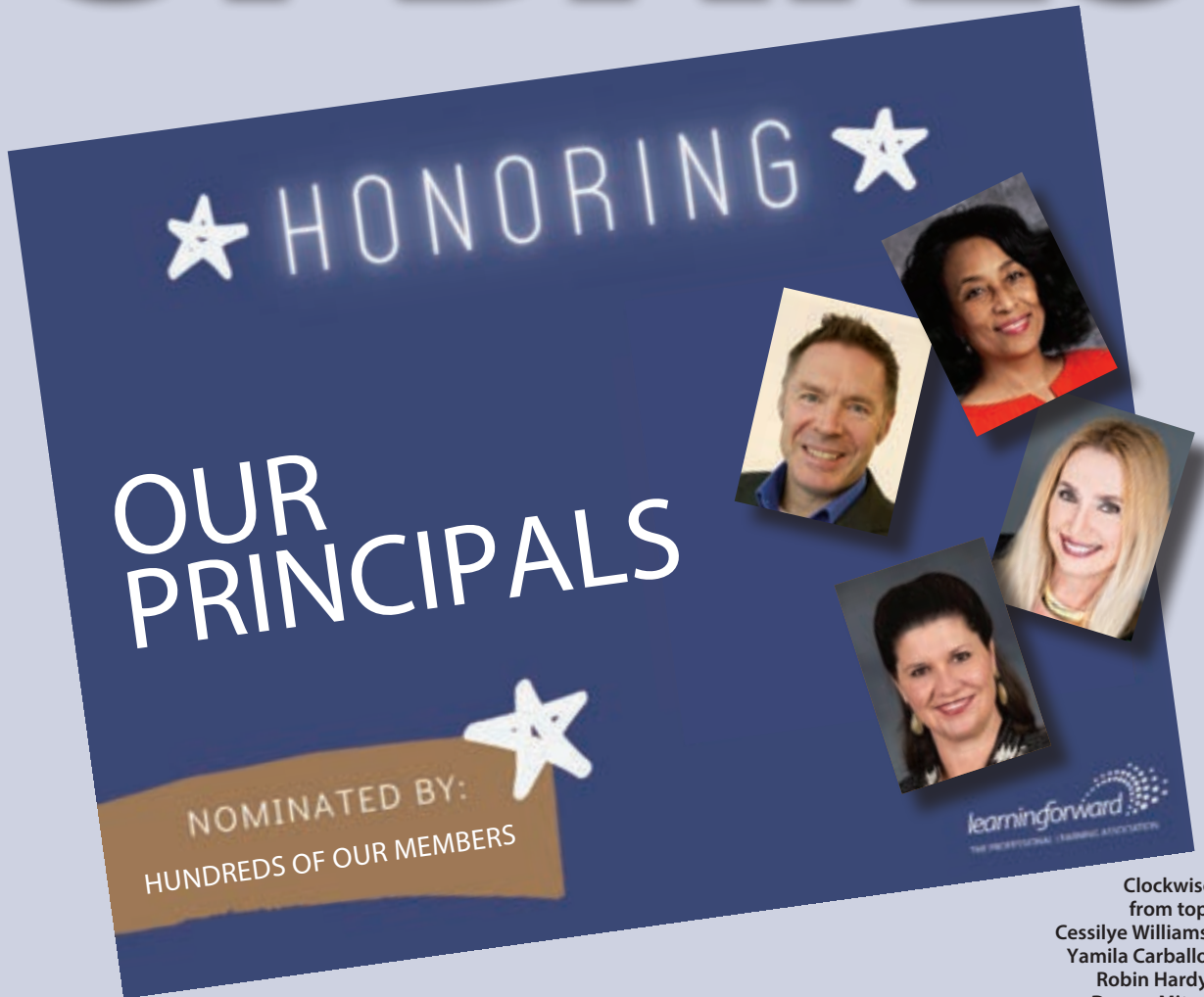
4. TOOLS FOR SHARED LEARNING

The following list of platforms is meant to help you research the best tools for you. You may wish to add your own ideas to this list.

TOOL TYPE	TOOL NAMES	TOOL PURPOSES
Virtual meeting tools	Zoom, WebEx, MS Teams, Shindig, Remo, Swapcard, On24	To hold online meetings. Some allow for participant agency in breakouts and small groups.
Polling software	Zoom, PollEverywhere, Menti	Gather real-time information from participants.
Project management	SmartSheet, Monday, Asana	Online project management system, allows for collaborative managing of timelines, processes, and project details.
Material management	JotForm, Nearpod, Google	Allows presenters to upload materials they would like to add to session descriptions and automatically saves them in Dropbox folder for processing.
Online messaging platforms	Slack, Facebook, Khoros, Remind, FlipGrid, CrowdCompass	Allows communication channels across teams. Peer-to-peer (referenced below) offers specific guidelines for tools.
Scheduling tools	YouCanBook.me, Calendly, Doodle	Scheduling software.
Collaborative boards and sharing	Mural, Padlet, Trello, Scrumblr	Digital workspace that allows templates to scaffold meetings and shared virtual whiteboards.
Community building templates	Peer-to-Peer Toolbox	Toolbox with templates for virtual community building strategies and frameworks.

CONNECT. BELONG. SUPPORT.

UPDATES



Clockwise from top, Cessilye Williams, Yamila Carballo, Robin Hardy, Darren Mitzel

CELEBRATE PRINCIPALS

Learning Forward celebrated National Principals Month in October by inviting our community to nominate principals to be featured on our Twitter page. We received over 200 submissions within the first 24 hours. Four of them are pictured above. Thank you to those who submitted, and, above all, thank you to all principals for the work you do, especially during this extraordinary year. Visit our Twitter page to join us in celebrating this inspiring group of principals.

twitter.com/LearningForward
[#NationalPrincipalsMonth](https://twitter.com/NationalPrincipalsMonth)



GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK ON REVISED STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Learning Forward invites comments from members, stakeholders, and educators on how the latest revision of the Standards for Professional Learning can best support them.

A two-year revision process, launched earlier this year with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, will result in Learning Forward's fourth iteration of standards that outline the elements of and conditions for professional learning that results in improved educator

practices and better student outcomes.

Learning Forward periodically updates the Standards for Professional Learning to reflect the latest research and evidence from practice to effectively support educators at all levels. The most recent edition was released in 2011.

Providing standards is only the first step in helping school systems and schools implement more cohesive and results-focused professional learning. Learning Forward is also developing and piloting tools and resources to support deep implementation and tracking.

The standards revision process is a

collaborative effort of Learning Forward staff, a 25-member Standards Advisory Council, and a Research Working Group. Additional working groups based in schools and systems will focus on ensuring that the standards and related tools and services advance the use and impact of the revised standards for practitioners and students.

Download the draft document at www.learningforward.org/standards-revision, which also includes a link to a survey with questions to guide reviewer input. Submit comments by **Jan. 15, 2021**.

STANDARDS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sandra Alberti, Student Achievement Partners

Jody Bintz, BSCS Science Learning

Gracie Branch, National Association for Elementary School Principals

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Jacqueline Wilson, National Policy Board for Educational Administration

Litsy Witkowski, Rivet Education

RESEARCH WORKING GROUP

Carol Campbell, co-chair, Ontario Institute for Studies, University of Toronto

Maria Hyler, co-chair, Learning Policy Institute

Laura Desimone, College of Education and Human Development, University of Delaware

Heather Hill, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Kellie Kim, McREL

Jeremy Roschelle, Digital Promise

Learning Forward network addresses virtual and hybrid learning challenges

Learning Forward's Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World network of school districts and state/provincial agencies is addressing challenges related to the design, implementation, and measurement of professional learning in virtual and hybrid models.

Network partners' shared problem of practice is how to develop an equitable and sustainable system of professional learning that maximizes the potential and impact of digital-mediated learning and leverages the current environment.

Learning Forward facilitates the network through virtual convenings, customized coaching, resources, and organizational management tools. The work focuses on three stages: supporting ongoing success in virtual and hybrid learning environments, responding to maximize learning during the school year, and reinventing professional learning to acknowledge and embrace new learning models.

Teams from each partner organization work with a Learning Forward coach to create a contextualized, comprehensive professional learning plan with outcomes and solutions aligned to district/province and state strategic plans. The teams will capture lessons learned from the emergency shift to virtual and digital-mediated educational models to inform the improvement of



APPLY TO JOIN THE NETWORK
Learning Forward is accepting applications for cohort 2 of the Design Professional Learning in a Virtual World Network, set to launch in early 2021. Deadline to apply is **Jan. 15, 2021**. For more information, visit learningforward.org/networks/virtual-design.

professional learning.

Integrating needs assessments at each stage, teams use innovative professional learning strategies to ensure equity. They also create the goals for a professional learning plan with sustainable solutions that work across departments. The network design engages leaders from like-minded states for collaboration and critical friend relationships.

The first cohort includes teams from the Alaska Department of

Education, Broward County Public Schools (Florida), Fort Sam Houston (Texas), Fort Wayne Community Schools (Indiana), Frederick County Public Schools (Virginia), Miami-Dade County Public Schools (Florida), Tulsa Public Schools (Oklahoma), Stafford County Public Schools (Virginia), and a team of Learning Forward Affiliate leaders from the participating states — Alaska, Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia.



UPCOMING WEBINARS

Learning Forward's virtual teaching and learning webinar series resumes in January. Topics include:

- **Jan. 14, 2021:** Sustaining Your Wellness for the Long Haul
- Jan. 28, 2021:** Coaching in a Virtual World: What to Keep and What to Change
- Feb. 11, 2021:** Culturally Responsive Instruction in an Online World
- Feb. 25, 2021:** Assessing Student Work Online

To learn more and register, visit learningforward.org/webinars.

Learn more at **consulting.learningforward.org/mentor-teacher-academy.**



Learning Forward to support Texas mentors

With a proven track record of providing research-based professional learning for mentors that improves their practice in building the efficacy of new teachers, Learning Forward has been named an approved provider of mentor teacher support in Texas.

The Texas Education Agency created the Mentor Program Allotment as part of comprehensive state education legislation passed in 2019. As part of the program, Texas districts may apply for funding to support teachers who have spent less than two years in the classroom by implementing a state-approved, research-based mentoring program to train experienced classroom teachers to become mentors.

Learning Forward's mentor teacher program provides professional learning for mentor teachers to understand and develop skills in the five key areas of best mentorship practices as identified by the Texas Education Agency:

1. **Effective mentoring partnerships**, including developing trusting relationships between mentors and beginning teachers, communicating effectively with beginning teachers, and engaging in

conversations with beginning teachers on diversity, equity, and culturally responsive teaching;

2. Implementing **coaching cycles** that appropriately differentiate coaching for beginning teachers;
3. **Data-driven instruction** that builds beginning teacher skills in analyzing student work, designing formative and summative assessments, and using data to set professional learning goals;
4. **Lesson planning** to support beginning teachers in preparing TEKS-aligned, culturally responsive, research-based lessons; and
5. Establishing a **supportive learning environment** by building capacity to develop and implement classroom routines and procedures that maximize instructional time and create a welcoming, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Learning Forward will begin supporting Texas mentors by facilitating virtual and face-to-face cohorts of mentors in summer 2021.

A FOCUS ON EQUITY IN MIAMI-DADE

Learning Forward is providing a virtual support program to leaders at the Maritime and Science Technology Academy in Miami-Dade County to create and sustain a school culture that ensures each student experiences relevant, culturally responsive, rigorous learning from a faculty that takes collective responsibility for its own professional growth and the academic and personal success of all students.

Academy staff will get support in building, scaling, and sustaining a coherent professional learning system that explicitly connects adult learning and equitable student outcomes within a context that nurtures all students' strengths and aspects of identity.

Learn more about the five key drivers of a learning system and how effective systems meet the learning and social emotional needs of all students at **consulting.learningforward.org/consulting-services/system-improvement.**



ACADEMY CLASS OF 2020 GRADUATES

Congratulations to the Academy Class of 2020. Facilitated by Nikki Mouton and Joe McFarland, this class first met in July 2018 and has since learned together, weathered a pandemic, and improved the lives of students across the world.

The Academy is Learning Forward's flagship learning experience. Members spend 2½ years learning together and addressing a problem of practice with the support of Learning Forward coaches and resources. To find out more, visit **learningforward.org/academy.**



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

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

Just as teachers are designing new models of learning to meet their students' success, schools and systems need to provide professional learning support for teachers, coaches, and leaders to ensure they are collaboratively adapting and continuing to work toward a common vision of excellent teaching and learning every day.

We are now offering the high-quality professional learning you've come to expect from Learning Forward in a virtual learning environment. Our virtual professional services help teacher leaders, coaches, mentors, and school leaders lead and facilitate virtual professional learning that reflects best practices in both adult learning and online learning.

Learn more at consulting.learningforward.org.

TURN SPARE CHANGE INTO A GIFT FOR EDUCATORS

As we enter the holiday season, consider giving the gift of success.

At Learning Forward, we believe that education will ultimately create the equitable society that all students deserve. The Learning Forward Foundation supports this effort by giving scholarships and grants to deserving candidates who would otherwise be unable to participate due to an inability to fund their continuing education.

Educators' expertise is directly tied to student success. As we come to the season of giving, please

consider giving the gift of success to a fellow educator who can take that gift and pass it on to the community that needs it.



One way to make this happen is to sign up for a new giving option from the Learning Forward Foundation. Thanks to a partnership with Roundit, the giving app, we can offer you the ability to round up your credit or debit card purchases and donate that spare change to help a fellow educator on his or her professional learning journey.

By giving just a few cents every time you use your card, you ensure that educators who can best benefit from Learning Forward are given the opportunity to do so. Signing up is easy, safe, and secure.


For more information or to sign up, visit signup.roundit.com/cause/00013.

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

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Emily Haas Brown @Jebsmomma · Oct 16
After graduation, my dissertation chair challenged me to keep writing and pushing forward. Presenting my first published article, published online in *The Learning Professional*, the online journal for Learning Forward
[#LearnFwdTLP](#) [@LearningForward](#)

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE:
The teacher-student connection. Tool offers a road map to improve relationships
learningforward.org



UPDATES

PLANNER GUIDES IMPLEMENTATION FOR STATES AND DISTRICTS

Learning Forward recently released the Professional Learning State and District Planner to support state, district, and school leaders with the implementation of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials through professional learning that is intensive, data-driven, job-embedded, and classroom-focused.

The planner provides a professional learning system framework to guide states and districts through a recursive process of planning professional learning with five stages and corresponding state and district tools.



Decision-makers can use the activities and tools to prioritize selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials as well as curriculum-anchored professional learning. The tools and resources also offer related guidance to ensure compliance with professional learning requirements embedded in Title IIA.

State departments of education and

selected districts in Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, and Oklahoma piloted different tools in the planner during the 2019-20 school year, providing ideas and feedback about its content and structure. The planner was developed with support from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

The Learning Professional invites submissions from educators and leaders at all levels for the following issue themes:

April 2021: Nurturing early learning. Deadline: Jan. 31, 2021.

June 2021: Action for equity. Deadline: Feb. 15, 2021.

For submission guidelines and more information, visit learningforward.org/the-learning-professional. Follow us on social media at [#LearnFwdTLP](https://twitter.com/LearnFwdTLP).

NEW DISTRICT MEMBERS

Learning Forward welcomes the following new district members: Regional School District 13 in Durham, Connecticut, and Thornton-Township High School District 205 in South Holland, Illinois.

Learning Forward's district membership is a great way to spread the learning across schools and educators in your district. Districts get access to exclusive benefits, including a discussion guide for each issue of *The Learning Professional*. To learn more, visit learningforward.org/membership.

Follow us on social media.

Share your insights and feedback about *The Learning Professional* by using [#LearnFwdTLP](https://twitter.com/LearnFwdTLP).

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POST



SAVE THE DATE



CONFERENCE DATES: DEC. 4 - DEC. 8, 2021 • IN AURORA, COLORADO

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

JOIN US AT THE BRAND NEW

Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center



STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 USC 3685)

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Editor: Suzanne Bouffard, 800 E. Campbell Rd., Ste. 224, Richardson, TX 75081
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15. Extent and nature of circulation

	Average number of copies of each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
a. Total number of copies	4,202	3,963
b. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales (not mailed)	145	127
2. Paid or requested mail subscriptions (include advertisers proof copies and exchange copies)	3,403	3,366
c. Total paid and/or requested circulation	3,748	3,693
d. Free distribution by mail	169	None
e. Free distribution outside the mail	200	200
f. Total free distribution	369	200
g. Total distribution	4,117	3,893
Percent paid and/or requested circulation	91%	95%
h. Copies not distributed		
1. Office use, leftovers, spoiled	21	21
2. Returns from news agents	None	None
i. Total	4,117	3,893
Percent paid and/or requested circulation	91%	95%

16. **Publication of statement of ownership** will be printed in the December 2020 issue of this publication.

17. **Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner.** I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on this form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including multiple damages and civil penalties).

Tracy Crow

AT A GLANCE

MENTORS MATTER



Mentoring is a powerful way to build the capacity of new teachers. High-quality mentoring improves new teacher retention¹, student achievement², and veteran teachers' leadership³.

To cultivate effective mentors, Learning Forward engaged in a three-year initiative with the Louisiana Department of Education. We worked with mentor teachers to equip them with tools and skills to lead ongoing, school-based coaching.

Mentors:

33 cohorts
1,546 mentor teachers



Baton Rouge, Ruston, Lafayette, New Orleans, Shreveport, and Marksville

Design:

9
7-hour professional learning sessions



Effectiveness:

95%
of mentors felt prepared and confident to mentor resident and novice teachers

95%
of mentors felt prepared to apply for the state mentor teacher designation following training

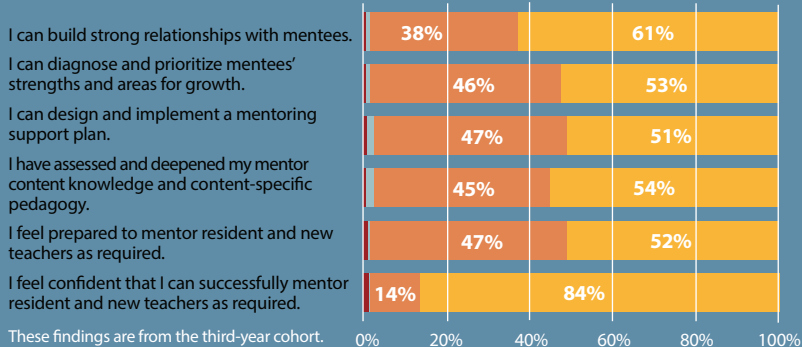
The vast majority of mentors reported they would be able to use what they learned in their:

day-to-day teaching role **93-98%**

role as a mentor teacher **95-98%**

Mentors' reports of outcomes:

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree



Mentor insights:

"I am better equipped to support the needs of other teachers."

"I have really seen so much improvement in my mentee because of focusing on small areas at a time, rather than trying to fix everything at once."

"It solidified what I already did in the classroom, and maybe some things that I need to improve on also."

"It has made me step back as more of the know-it-all and kind of put it more on the mentee, so they can learn what I already know, but I am just guiding them to that."

¹ www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Mitigating-Teacher-Shortages-Induction-Mentorship.pdf

² newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/NTC_i3-Validation-eval-brief_062017_final.pdf

³ www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may03/vol60/num08/Fostering-Leadership-Through-Mentoring.aspx

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: LEARNING COMMUNITIES</p> <p>IN ACTION Several articles in this issue describe the benefits of districts and universities working together to strengthen the educator pipeline. Each institution has strengths to share with and needs that can be filled by the other. These partnerships can benefit the whole continuum of professional learning, from preparing and supporting new teachers, to cultivating teacher leadership, to preparing school and district leaders.</p>	<p>TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you hear the phrase “district-university partnership,” what associations come to mind? What are your positive and negative assumptions? How can you look deeper than your initial impressions to explore opportunities you haven’t before? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role do partnerships with educational institutions outside your own play in your learning communities? What additional roles could they play, and what would it mean to make those institutions an integral part of your community? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>STANDARD: LEADERSHIP</p> <p>IN ACTION Teacher leadership can take many forms and have many benefits, as articles in this issue show. Whether as mentors, facilitators, or aspiring school and district leaders, teachers who build their leadership capacity contribute to their school communities in positive ways. In addition, by committing to ongoing growth, they become stronger teachers and models of learning for peers and students.</p>	<p>TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of teacher leadership roles exist in your school or district? Are there multiple pathways for teachers with different goals (e.g. mentoring new teachers, coaching, preparing for principalship)? If not, how can you broaden teacher leadership roles? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective teacher leadership programs help participants grow as teachers themselves while building their capacity to support others’ growth. How will your teacher leadership initiatives balance these intertwined goals? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

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

NEW BOOK!

The Learning Principal: Becoming a Learning Leader

by Kay Psencik, Frederick Brown,
and Stephanie Hirsh

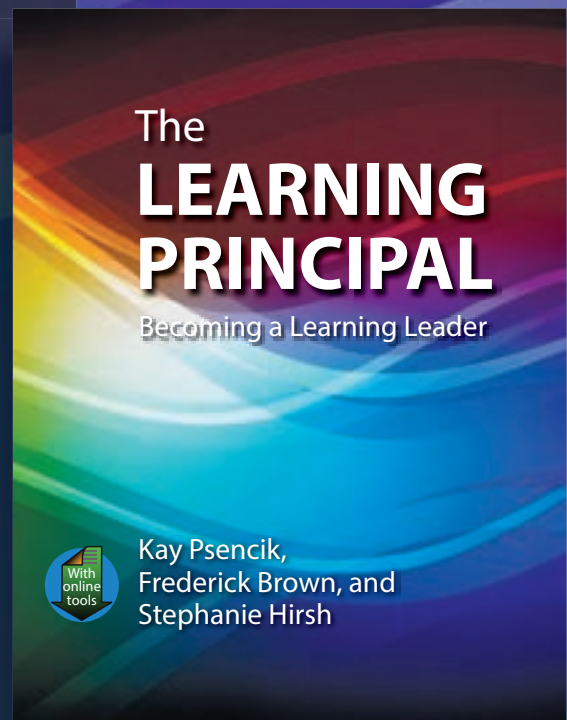
The Learning Principal: Becoming a Learning Leader offers a point of view on how a principal applies a learning lens to each of their many critical responsibilities. Through that learning lens, the principal is able to find new ways to strengthen impact and the potential of the entire faculty.

Chapters cover prioritizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment; managing change; designing learning; maximizing resources; and coaching and feedback. The book also helps learning leaders apply rigorous standards to their learning and includes a chapter on the role of the central office in supporting principals.

With action steps and reflection questions, this book transfers principal learning to practice.

\$45.00 nonmember | **\$36.00** member

Order today at <https://learningforward.org/store/>.



Kay Psencik,
Frederick Brown, and
Stephanie Hirsh

*Dozens of online tools
extend the resource and
offer additional practical
resources to deepen
learning.*
