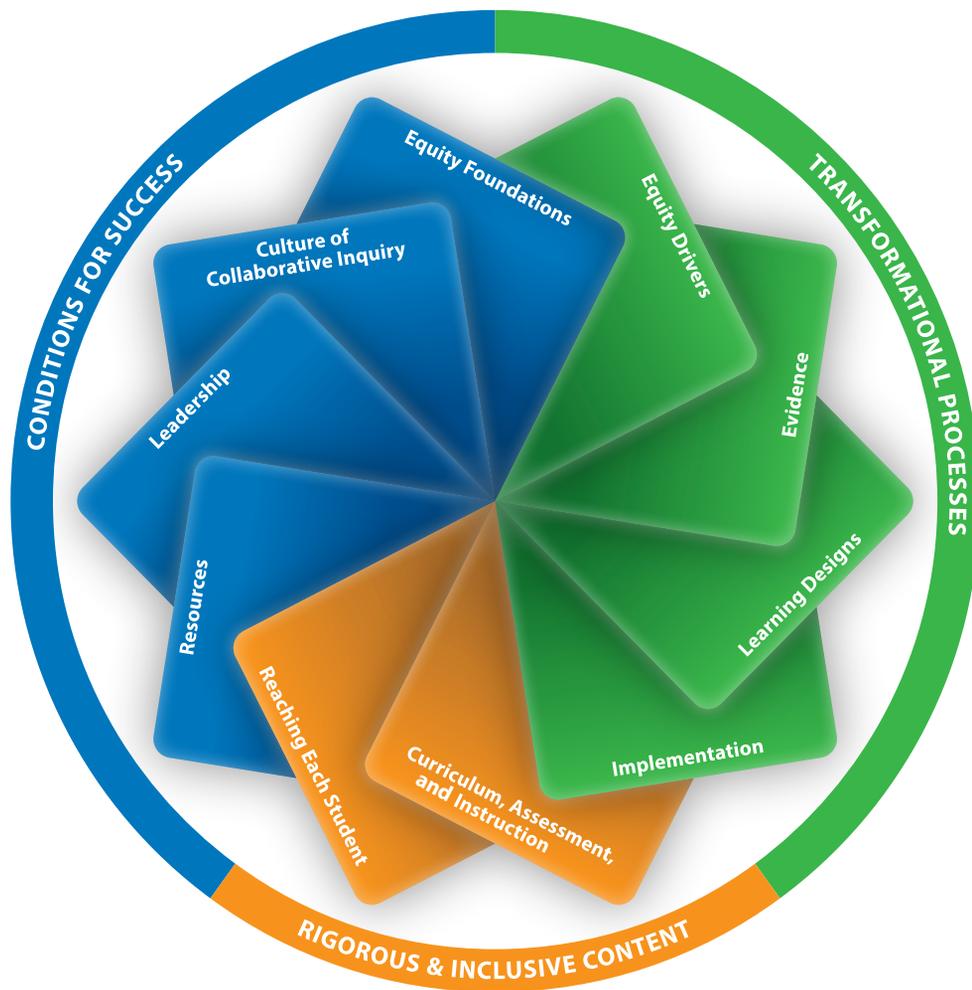


# REVISED Standards for Professional Learning

DISCUSSION DRAFT



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# An invitation to review

**L**earning Forward presents draft revised Standards for Professional Learning for stakeholder input and review. Created with the input of the Standards Advisory Council and support of philanthropic funders (see p. 7), this revision builds on the existing Standards for Professional Learning, published in 2011, and is informed by evidence and insights from Learning Forward members, staff, affiliates, foundation, and allies.

Learning Forward first published Standards

for Professional Learning in 1995. The revision in process will be the organization's fourth edition of standards that guide the field in understanding the conditions for and characteristics of educator learning that leads to improved educator practices and improved student outcomes.

Standards for Professional Learning have been formally adopted into policy in 35 states and many districts and widely embraced to guide professional learning practice throughout North America and across the globe.

## REQUESTING EDUCATOR INPUT

Learning Forward requests that you provide feedback and input on any and all aspects of this draft via the survey available at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/PTQ2NM9](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PTQ2NM9)

The survey includes questions on each standard and how standards are presented. Learning Forward will use submitted input to improve and finalize revised Standards for Professional Learning.

Implementation tools will accompany finalized revised Standards for Professional Learning. Tools will include role-specific recommendations, evaluation and assessment protocols, and resources for monitoring progress on standards implementation. The expected release date is early 2022.

Contact Paul Fleming, senior vice president, standards, states, and equity, at [paul.fleming@learningforward.org](mailto:paul.fleming@learningforward.org) with questions.

# Key assumptions guiding this draft

## **High-quality professional learning improves educator practice and student results.**

- The purpose of professional learning is to build educators' capacity to create successful learning for each and every student.
- Standards for Professional Learning describe the competencies and actions that educators demonstrate and take to establish and maintain high-quality professional learning.
- Educators committed to high-quality professional learning hold high expectations and assess professional learning's impact on educators and students.

## **The evolution of teaching and learning requires continual updates to Standards for Professional Learning.**

Developments since the 2011 publication of existing Standards for Professional Learning warrant an update to ensure educators create high-quality professional learning to meet current and emerging needs of students and educators. Critical themes informing the current update to Standards for Professional Learning include:

- Revised standards incorporate evidence from research and practice about critical topics for educators, including culturally sustaining instruction, social and emotional learning, and personalized learning.
- Advances in and demands for technology use inform teaching, learning, leadership, and professional learning.
- Collaborative learning through inquiry cycles remains at the heart of high-quality

professional learning.

- Building educator capacity and transforming educator behaviors, values, and habits require attention to knowledge, skills, practices, and beliefs. Sustaining change requires an understanding that shifting beliefs and practices is not linear. Some educators may shift their beliefs when they achieve success through changed actions, while some may change their practices because they have acquired new beliefs.
- Learning Forward seeks transformation through Standards for Professional Learning, guiding schools, systems, and organizations to become environments in which educators and students alike have equitable access to learning that responds to the demands of an ever-changing world.

## **High-quality curriculum and instructional materials are a critical priority for professional learning.**

- Research and evidence confirm the importance of the effective implementation of high-quality curriculum to achieve equitable learning outcomes for all students.
- This priority requires investments in high-quality curriculum paired with appropriate professional learning.
- High-quality curriculum and instructional materials are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and are culturally sustaining. Educators build capacity to implement, scaffold, and adapt instructional materials for the students they teach.

**Equity is both an outcome and component of professional learning.**

- An explicit emphasis on equity in, for, and through professional learning is woven throughout draft revised Standards for Professional Learning.
- 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.
- Equity in professional learning systems happens when educators attend to its presence in the conditions for professional learning, the processes of professional learning, and the content of professional learning.
- Learning Forward has long held the expectation that professional learning is a critical equity lever and that Standards for Professional Learning make it possible for more educators to experience high-quality professional learning. When more educators experience high-quality professional learning, more students experience high-quality teaching and learning.
- Equity is central to and embedded throughout existing Standards for Professional Learning (published in 2011). Updates represented in draft revised Standards for Professional Learning reflect recent developments and needs in the field.

**Educators lead learning for self and others.**

Each standard, and many sentences in the rationales for each standard, begin with the word “educator.” Three embedded concepts related to the word educator follow:

***Educators hold a variety of roles and titles:***

- The word educator throughout the context of draft revised Standards for Professional Learning represents an educator in any role. Learning Forward holds the assumption that regardless of title or role, every educator has responsibilities related to professional learning and thus for each of the

Standards for Professional Learning.

- When Learning Forward releases final revised Standards for Professional Learning in early 2022, accompanying implementation and assessment tools for many educator roles will provide greater specificity on particular educators’ professional learning responsibilities.

***Educators create and sustain professional learning and professional learning systems:***

- Each standard begins with the word educator because it is through educator actions and decisions that high-quality professional learning occurs. Educators are active agents in understanding and creating high-quality professional learning and the systems that support and sustain it.
- Educators establish professional learning systems that create alignment and coherence for learning. Professional learning systems eliminate silos between the multiple aspects of schooling that educator support crosses, including curriculum and instruction; talent development; human resources; diversity, equity, and inclusion; school finances; or student support, to name a few.

***Educators have an obligation to improve their practice:***

- Learning Forward believes that it is an educator’s responsibility as a professional to learn and grow throughout his or her career.
- Student and community needs change, technology changes, understanding about all aspects of education changes, and educators have a responsibility to increase their capacity to educate in an ever-evolving world.

**Policy guides practice**

- Standards for Professional Learning impact policy at all levels as they describe actions to transform practice that should be supported by policy and are informed by the experiences of educators.
- While Standards for Professional

Learning describe actions that educators take, policymakers are responsible for establishing policies and providing resources to support the meaningful and sustained implementation of standards.

- Learning Forward promotes the adoption of Standards for Professional Learning in policy at local, state, regional, provincial, and national levels. To date, 35 U.S.

states have adopted or adapted Standards for Professional Learning, and numerous other entities have incorporated or used them in guiding practice.

- To achieve the vision of Standards for Professional Learning, policymakers and practitioners partner through sustained investment and a shared understanding of their purpose.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Learning Forward appreciates the generous support of the following:

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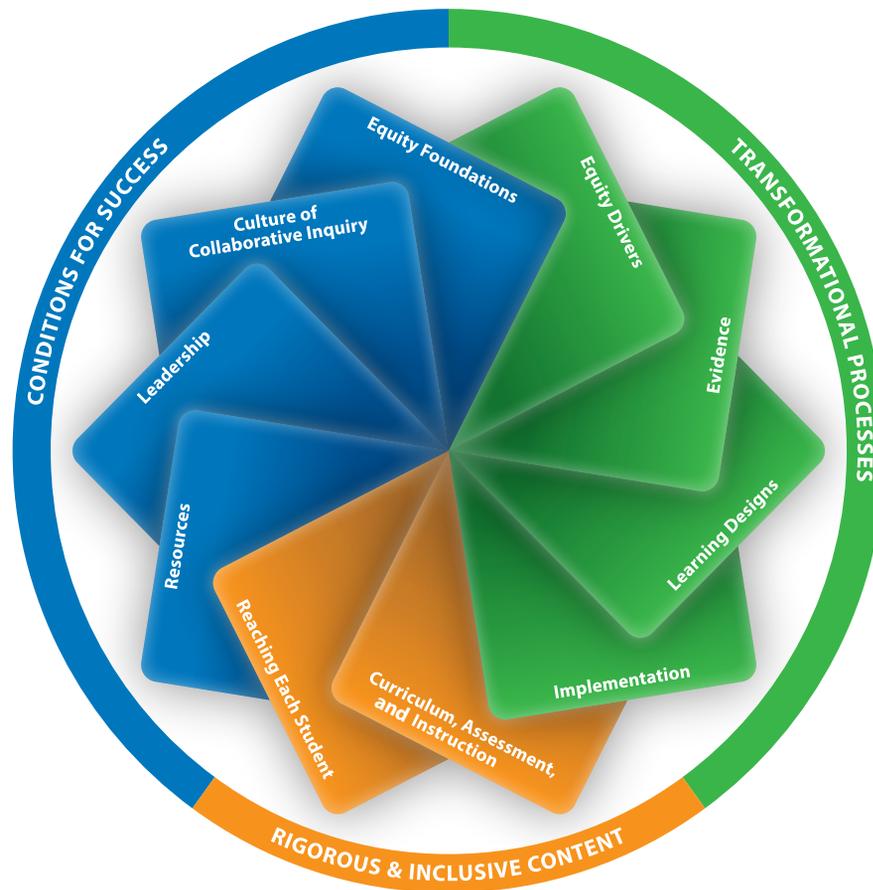
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### STANDARDS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sandra Alberti, Student Achievement Partners  
Jody Bintz, BSCS Science Learning  
Gracie Branch, National Association of Elementary School Principals  
Carol Campbell, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto  
Xiu Cravens, Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations, Vanderbilt University  
Linda Davin, National Education Association  
Elisabeth Dickinson, American Federation of Teachers  
Michelle Elia, Ohio Department of Education  
Amanda Ellis, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Leilani Esmond, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia  
Bryan Goodwin, McREL International  
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Eric Hirsch, EdReports  
Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward  
Maria Hyler, Learning Policy Institute  
Paul Katnik, Office of Educator Quality, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Joellen Killion, Learning Forward  
Anthony Mackay, National Center on Education and the Economy  
Scott Norton, Council of Chief State School Officers  
Linda Rost, Baker High School, Montana  
Carolyn Sykora, International Society for Technology in Education  
Nader Twal, Long Beach Unified School District, California  
Marlon Williams, Williams Middle School 180, Bronx, New York  
Jacqueline Wilson, National Policy Board for Educational Administration  
Litsy Witkowski, Rivet Education

### RESEARCH WORKING GROUP

Carol Campbell, co-chair, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 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 International  
Jeremy Roschelle, Digital Promise



## REVISED STANDARDS WORK IN CONCERT WITHIN A SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

In the pages that follow, Learning Forward presents 10 standards in three categories. To create high-quality professional learning that results in improved educator practices and improved student results, educators apply the 10 standards in concert. Such integration of standards means that concepts appear in multiple places throughout this document to demonstrate connections within and among draft revised Standards for Professional Learning.

While their particular roles may mean some educators will spend more of their professional learning energy concerned with specific aspects of applying Standards for Professional Learning, all educators have a role in understanding and implementing all standards.

The three categories within the framework outline a system for professional learning.

- Standards within the **Conditions for Success**

frame describe aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning.

- Standards within the **Transformational Processes** frame describe process elements of professional learning, elucidating how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets.
- Standards within the **Rigorous & Inclusive Content** frame describe the essential content of adult learning that leads to improved student outcomes.

The diagram illustrates the tight connections among all standards and the nonlinear nature of the system. Educators may enter the Standards for Professional Learning from any point. The diagram also echoes the cyclical, iterative nature of continuous improvement.

# Draft revised Standards for Professional Learning

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

### **Equity Foundations**

Educators establish a vision for equitable access to high-quality professional learning, create structures to ensure such access, and sustain a culture that supports the development of all staff members.

### **Culture of Collaborative Inquiry**

Educators commit to and drive continuous improvement, engage in collaborative learning, and take shared responsibility for improving learning for all students.

### **Leadership**

Educators establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, ensure a coherent system of supports to build individual and collective capacity, and advocate for professional learning by making both the impact of professional learning and their own learning visible to others.

### **Resources**

Educators allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize their use to achieve a vision for equitable outcomes for all students, and monitor the impact of resource investments.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

### **Equity Drivers**

Educators reflect individually and collectively to identify and address their own biases, support and collaborate with diverse colleagues, and cultivate beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors that accelerate ambitious outcomes for all educators and students.

### **Evidence**

Educators use evidence and data from multiple sources to plan and monitor their learning and assess its impact on students.

### **Learning Designs**

Educators set relevant and contextualized learning goals and apply the science of learning to implement evidence-based learning designs.

### **Implementation**

Educators understand and apply research on change management theory, engage in and learn from feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning that leads to long-term educator, student, school, and system outcomes.

## RIGOROUS & INCLUSIVE CONTENT

### **Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction**

Educators understand and implement the school or district's curriculum, select and use high-quality instructional materials, and strengthen content expertise for their area of responsibility.

### **Reaching Each Student**

Educators recognize each student's particular assets and aspects of identity, understand students' contexts and conditions, and serve as advocates for and partners with diverse students, families, and communities.

## WHAT EACH STANDARD EXPLANATION INCLUDES

### **THE STANDARD**

Each standard explanation begins with the statement of the standard, listing the three key components as actions that educators take to achieve that standard.

### **THE OVERVIEW**

The explanation continues with information about each of the three key components of the standard. This section is intended to offer enough detail to help stakeholders understand the topic, its importance to high-quality professional learning, and implications for educator practice and student outcomes.

### **ESSENTIAL ACTIONS**

Several bullet points outline specific actions educators take in implementing the standard.

### **VIGNETTE**

This narrative, a composite informed by actual events, portrays how the standard plays out in a particular learning context. The vignette is not intended to serve as an exemplar but rather to portray a realistic learning journey over time.

### **REFERENCES AND RESOURCES**

The explanations include a list of cited references and related resources.



# CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Equity Foundations

Culture of Collaborative Inquiry

Leadership

Resources

# Equity Foundations



Educators establish a vision for equitable access to high-quality professional learning, create structures to ensure such access, and sustain a culture that supports the development of all staff members.

## Equity Foundations

**E**ducators build their capacity to create professional learning and supporting systems that serve each educator and respect all aspects of their identities. Educators recognize that high-quality professional learning can serve as a lever to achieve equity throughout schools and districts only when educators and students have access to and opportunity for learning. Vision, culture, and sustained structures for equitable professional learning are critical to eliminating barriers and dismantling inequities in schools. Here are the main components of the Equity Foundations standard.

### ● ESTABLISH A VISION FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS

Educators build their awareness of how white supremacy and institutionalized racism and sexism have shaped education systems and student outcomes through history. They study how barriers related to all aspects of student and educator identity limit access and opportunity for learning that fosters excellence within and beyond schools and learning contexts.

In exploring and establishing systems that promote equity, they consider policies at national, regional, provincial, state, and local levels. They study how education is funded and its connections to other elemental aspects of society, including health care, child care, housing, and the workforce. They explore how professional learning for educators at all levels of a school, district, or organization can address inequities.

Educators create professional learning systems that dismantle barriers to equity, applying their knowledge of how structures, policies, and beliefs have long served as impediments to learning for each educator and student. They examine models and evidence of successful practices in education to understand and implement practices that advance equity goals.

Educators make explicit their vision for professional learning as an equity lever, articulating the belief that professional learning has the potential to ensure each student experiences powerful teaching and learning. They connect educators' universal access to high-quality professional learning to students' universal access to high-quality learning. They define equity and its connections to professional learning.

### ● CREATE STRUCTURES TO ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS

Educators create structures to implement and integrate the vision throughout a professional learning system. Applying evidence about the importance of students experiencing teaching from educators of their race, educators study and transform recruitment and retention models (Gershenson et al., 2018).

Educators build their capacity to create and sustain educator and leadership development programs, pipelines, and networks designed to establish and maintain a diverse workforce, building on what is known about effective development programs in general, including the research about principal pipelines (Gates et al., 2019).

Educators are responsible for ensuring that data systems, platforms, and practices foster the use of data to identify if and where there are gaps in learning opportunities based on characteristics of student or educator identity. They build their expertise to support data use that advances how they and their peers identify specific student and adult learning challenges and take action based on that data.

Educators investigate how the allocation and use of resources is linked to achieving goals to create equitable access to powerful learning for each educator and each student. Resources include money, people, time, and materials for professional learning.

Educators learn to monitor the use of resources to maintain an intentional focus on equity goals. With their understanding of the importance of equity-centered resource use, educators advocate as necessary to ensure targeted support for high-priority needs and reallocate if appropriate.

### ● SUSTAIN A CULTURE OF SUPPORT FOR ALL STAFF

Educators apply their vision for equity in professional learning to how and what educators learn, considering their processes for learning and how the content builds their capacity to serve each student. They learn to support their colleagues through inclusive cultures and practices and by inviting educators at all levels to voice their needs, insights, and concerns.

They amplify diverse voices by adhering to norms and protocols that encourage educators who represent myriad aspects of identity to share their experiences and opinions. They invite diverse representation to decision-making bodies and conversations. Educators intentionally invite feedback about the professional learning culture to ensure all learners have voice and safety to grow as individuals and on diverse teams.

Educators study assessment and monitoring options to regularly audit that their professional learning system delivers on its vision for equity. They regularly and publicly celebrate their successes and acknowledge where they are falling short. They learn to hold themselves accountable to their vision and make adjustments to continue to improve.

### REFERENCES

Gates, S.M., Baird, M.D., Master, B.K., Chavez-Herrerias, E.R. (2019). *Principal pipelines: A feasible, affordable, and effective way for*

### EQUITY IS EMBEDDED THROUGHOUT THE STANDARDS

The Standards for Professional Learning include three standards that have a specific focus on equity. The **Equity Foundations** standard addresses the learning context, the **Equity Drivers** standard outlines how learning processes contribute to equity outcomes, and the **Reaching Each Student** standard addresses the specific learning content essential to building educator capacity for equity. The three equity standards are intended to serve as guideposts for all learning.

Each of the equity standards underscores particular aspects of other Standards for Professional Learning. For example, allocation of time and money is addressed in the **Resources** standard and it is also mentioned in **Equity Foundations**. This purposeful redundancy highlights how specific actions to achieve a vision for equity embed equity goals in each and every standard.

*districts to improve schools*. RAND Corporation. [www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Principal-Pipelines-A-Feasible-Affordable-and-Effective-Way-for-Districts-to-Improve-Schools.pdf](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Principal-Pipelines-A-Feasible-Affordable-and-Effective-Way-for-Districts-to-Improve-Schools.pdf)

Gershenson, S., Hart, C.M.D., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C., & Papageorge, N.W. (2018, November). *The long-run impacts of same-race teachers* [Working Paper 25254]. National Bureau of Economic Research. [www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w25254/w25254.pdf](http://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25254/w25254.pdf)

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Equity Foundations standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Develop a compelling vision for equitable professional learning by analyzing data related to race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, and opportunities for all students and educators.
- Individually and collaboratively conduct a thorough examination of policies and practices to determine the barriers that prevent equitable access to professional growth and learning.
- Directly name the inequities that exist in specific professional learning contexts and commit to changing state, district, province, or school structures, policies, or practices that are barriers to teaching and learning.
- Collaboratively create and sustain an inclusive, diverse organizational culture that promotes learning for each educator and student.
- Educate and motivate all staff to collectively commit to equity through:
  - Recognizing and dismantling historical and systemic inequities through the strategic allocation of resources to ensure excellence for all;
  - Confronting and correcting institutional biases of students and staff such as marginalization, deficit-based policies, and low expectations associated with race, gender, class, language, sexual orientation, and disability;
  - Acting with cultural competence and responsiveness in all interactions and practices; and
  - Developing a system to ensure systemwide progress toward professional learning goals.

VIGNETTE: **Equity Foundations**

## THE MULTIPLE LAYERS OF ADDRESSING EQUITY CHALLENGES

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

Looking back on her early years as a 7th-grade English language arts teacher, Tasha Baxter remembered how much she loved teaching. While she had a difficult first year and a slightly less difficult second year, she always enjoyed her time with students. She excelled at building rapport with students and her skill engaging students often considered difficult caught her colleagues' attention. She never thought she'd leave the classroom to become a principal.

As a teacher, Baxter benefited from a circle of supportive colleagues, meeting with them frequently in the middle school English language arts professional learning community and quickly becoming a valued member of the teaching staff. Baxter appreciated the support of one informal mentor in particular — the only other Black teacher in the building, Katrina Wyler. Wyler served as the building's guidance counselor.

Student enrollment in Baxter's large urban district included a roughly equal split between Black and white students, and Burbank Middle School had a higher Black student population than other middle schools in the district.

Wyler had been instrumental in pushing for Baxter to be hired full time after she had spent a semester student teaching in the school. Wyler and the assistant principal, Scott Diamond, who was white, met weekly to coordinate the student intervention program at the school. Through their frequent conversations, she helped Diamond understand how important it is for Black students to have Black teachers, not to mention the benefits to white students and the school as a whole.

Diamond gradually became an advocate to

further diversify the school's staff and asked Wyler to join him in conversations with central office staff for support in this effort. Their collaboration struck a chord with a district assistant superintendent for talent development who had concerns of her own about the district's recruitment practices and retention rate for Black educators.

As Baxter became more experienced, she gained leadership responsibilities at the school, serving formally as a mentor herself and as the building's teacher association representative. She also took newer Black teachers under her wing as the building continued to recruit and hire Black educators.

In one of their frequent morning chats in Baxter's sixth year, Wyler asked her when she was going to take her next logical step and become a principal. Baxter wasn't surprised — they had spoken about this many times. Baxter pointed out that almost every school in their district had a white principal.

Wyler explained that the leadership network was shifting. The assistant superintendent for talent development was leading a new initiative to formalize pipelines for educators of color, including a program to support principal development among the district's increasingly diverse staff.

District leadership at the highest level couldn't ignore the gains among Black students where more Black teachers had been hired. The district superintendent, who participated in a learning network with leaders from other districts, was modeling the effort after an initiative at another urban district his network had studied the previous year.

It was the principal development academy within the district that led Baxter to the principalship. She was in the first cohort — a small class that worked collaboratively over a two-year program to earn the initial leadership endorsement for her educator license. The district developed the

program in partnership with a local university.

The program combined elements of the university's existing education leadership program and customized support for the district's cohort, including a mentor from the district and a robust residency in her school that provided opportunities for her to acquire and practice leadership skills and practices.

Baxter didn't mind being in the first class, appreciating the opportunity to help shape what the program would become. She also recognized that it gave her access and an opportunity to provide input to district leaders, who were looking at the efforts to support and retain educators of color as an integral element to increasing gains among students of color.

During Baxter's time in the program, the district worked to infuse equity throughout the professional learning. Baxter took every opportunity to encourage district leaders to move from vision to action and frequently partnered with Scott Diamond, her former colleague from Burbank Middle School, to help the district look at multiple levels of the challenge.

Baxter and Diamond, now an assistant superintendent himself, persistently pointed out the multiple layers of addressing equity challenges, from continuing to transform the structures throughout

the district, including resource and data use, all the way to supporting school-level teams to examine and adopt culturally responsive practices.

The district established a mentoring and coaching program that supported teachers in implementing equity-oriented practices as an integral part of using high-quality instructional materials. The district also invested in additional learning for instructional coaches to increase their capacity to support educators in teaching diverse learners.

As the principal at Barker Middle School, Baxter took seriously her responsibility to participate frequently in grade-level teams, monitoring how teachers used the district's data platform to pinpoint which students needed academic help and access to social services. She was pleased that, in her school, the data indicated that students had increased access and opportunity to excel, and she knew that the district and school's professional learning for each teacher had propelled the school forward.

Looking ahead, Baxter knew that her district's investment in high-quality instructional materials would require an investment of time and money in professional learning to implement them and integrate the district's intentions to ensure that students experience culturally sustaining instruction.

# Culture of Collaborative Inquiry



Educators commit to and drive continuous improvement,  
engage in collaborative learning,  
and take shared responsibility  
for improving learning for all students.

## Culture of Collaborative Inquiry

Educators recognize that to increase and improve learning for every student, they must not only consistently develop their own knowledge and expertise, but also contribute to the collective improvement of their colleagues and their organization. They understand that their own impact can be multiplied and magnified when it becomes part of a collective effort.

They build a culture of collaborative inquiry when they consistently approach learning as a shared responsibility and privilege, knowing it is the essential pathway to student success. Educators embrace learning as an organizational priority, commit to reflecting on and improving their own practice, and support and contribute to their colleagues' learning.

Educators contribute to sustaining a culture of collaborative learning by engaging in informed, strategic, and consistent routines. Through repeated experiences, educators develop the habits of mind and practices that make collaboration truly effective. Here are the main components of the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard.

### ● COMMIT TO AND DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Educators recognize continuous improvement as both a driver and an outcome of meaningful collaboration and commit to engaging fully as learners willing to examine, reflect, and improve their own practice. They recognize that achieving shared goals takes time, persistence, and trusting, authentic relationships. As their confidence in the learning process and in each other grows, educators become more transparent about their own learning and more likely to take the risks and make changes that help raise student achievement.

Educators recognize that improvements in teaching and learning are accelerated by the

deprivatization of practice — making their practice visible and shareable. They open their doors literally and figurately to invite observations by peers as well as discussions about instructional successes and challenges and constructive feedback dialogues.

Educators understand that, individually and collectively, they influence student growth, and they believe that each improvement in their mindsets, knowledge, or skills leads to an improvement in student outcomes. They trust their colleagues will support them when they risk failure to test a new instructional strategy or acknowledge a blind spot in their approach to student learning. In turn, they support their colleagues as they do the same.

### ● ENGAGE IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Educators engage in collaborative processes that embed and facilitate continuous improvement. Using established frameworks and protocols ensures that the collaboration is directly relevant to their day-to-day work and focused on instruction that improves outcomes for all students. Educators use research, school and system goals, and professional experience to identify the most productive and appropriate collaborative strategies and models.

Educators engage in **consistent, recurrent learning cycles** that encourage and support collaborative professional inquiry. Collaborative inquiry involves rigorous, thoughtful questioning and rich discussions about all aspects of teaching and learning. Educators collaboratively analyze relevant data and outcomes, set learning goals, engage in individual and collaborative learning, implement strategies, and reflect on the results.

Educators develop a full understanding of the strategies identified to address a problem of practice, its intended outcomes, the evidence that supports belief in the potential impact, and the assumptions of educators. Educators use the analysis of data throughout the process to ensure each student's

access to and opportunity for challenging learning and identify students who need additional support.

Educators commit to addressing a **shared problem of practice** based on relevant data and an understanding of their own context. Problems of practice are focused on proximal challenges such as addressing student learning variability, implementing curriculum, aligning content across courses, and refining instruction. Educators then identify potential improvements to implement and test.

Educators are comfortable with some uncertainty about the outcomes of the test they are about to undertake because they will look at the results together and reflect about success, failure, and any needed adaptations (Donohoo et al., 2013).

Educators ensure that their collaboration is purposeful and tightly focused through **frequent team meetings**, either in person or virtually, and adherence to **shared norms** that support the learning cycle, such as time for reflection and being transparent about goals and data.

Educators align their learning goals across teams as well as to school, district, and system priorities to ensure that collaborative learning is directly tied to improving student outcomes. Educators use protocols, templates, and tools to support the development and use of shared language, engagement of stakeholders and policymakers, and common methods for collecting and analyzing data and evidence.

### ● TAKE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Educators hold themselves and their colleagues responsible for making progress toward the goals they have established, rather than placing responsibility on the students or external actors. Individual educator learning is valuable in improving each teacher's agency and self-efficacy; that learning is even more valuable when it adds to the knowledge and understanding of a team of colleagues and is leveraged for collective efficacy and improvement. Educators invest in others' professional growth because it leads to more equitable student learning and builds trust over time as engagement deepens and improves.

In this way, educators assume responsibility for each student and are accountable to each other for progress toward their shared goals for students. Mutual accountability includes looking closely at

## RESOURCES

- **Campbell, C., Osmond-Johnson, P., Faubert, B., Zeichner, K., & Hobbs-Johnson, A. (with Brown, S., DaCosta, P., Hales, A., Kuehn, L., Sohn, J., & Steffensen, K.). (2017).** *The state of educators' professional learning in Canada: Final research report.* Learning Forward.
- **Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (2012).** *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school.* Teachers College.
- **Hattie, J. (2018).** *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning.* Routledge.
- **Jensen, B., Sonnemann, J., Roberts-Hull, K., & Hunter, A. (2016).** *Beyond PD: Teacher professional learning in high-performing systems.* National Center on Education and the Economy.

whether colleagues provide opportunities to learn for every student and developing strategies to address any inequities.

To inform this shared effort, educators seek out opportunities to learn from each other's professional experience, research, and observing peers and being observed. They commit to formative assessments of their own learning, shared reflection, and being reliable constructive colleagues who focus on improving instruction for all students.

They reflect on evidence of their shared impact as a way to build collective efficacy, the shared belief that educators are having a positive impact on student outcomes. Honoring this shared belief in their own impact, educators try to view questions and even conflict as productive, leading to a better shared understanding of how they work cooperatively to improve teaching and learning.

Educators value the ways in which shared responsibility and mutual respect for expertise creates opportunities for meaningful educator agency and for formal and informal leadership.

## REFERENCE

- Donohoo, J., Hattie, J., & Eells, R. (2018, March).** Collaborative inquiry for educators: A facilitator's guide to school improvement. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 40-44.

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Possess a deep understanding of the interrelatedness of the Standards for Professional Learning and how collaborative teams can use the standards to advance continuous improvement.
- Sustain a culture of learning and inquiry through their own commitment to continuous improvement and support of their colleagues' ongoing learning and development.
- Understand the power of making one's own practice visible and shareable to improve the collective efficacy of all educators to ensure all students experience academic success.
- Participate in school-based collaborative inquiry teams to implement, support, and assess evidence-based and inclusive instructional strategies to achieve the goal of academic success for each student.
- Use continuous improvement frameworks, tools, and resources to support teachers and leaders working together to identify common challenges and proposed strategies for improvement.
- Collaboratively analyze which of their collective efforts have an impact and take responsibility as a team to continue to improve for the sake of every student they serve.
- Support formal and informal ways to recognize teacher leaders who develop and amplify teacher agency, voice, and commitment to collective improvement.

VIGNETTE: **Culture of Collaborative Inquiry**

## COLLECTIVE IMPROVEMENT FOR ALL LEARNERS

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**E**ducators at the Claremont Secondary School in British Columbia are undertaking an effort to improve history instruction, and Leo Ganatra is at the center of the work to identify and address inequities of learning experiences among students. As the history department chair, he connects district and provincial goals to the priorities established by the school's educators.

Although the school has a long-established culture of collaborative learning, teacher interviews reveal that collaboration in some cases has become more about compliance than shared learning about educator practice impacting student outcomes. Ganatra is confident that the provincial priority to integrate the First Peoples Principles of Learning can be an opportunity to improve certain parts of the curriculum. And while he recognizes that there is a range among the faculty in terms of comfort with change and familiarity with the province's equity priorities, he also sees this as an opportunity to refocus and reinvigorate educator collaboration.

Like many of their colleagues around the world and across Canada, the Claremont educators appreciate that when inquiry is a driver of professional learning, it results in improved teaching and improved student learning. The practice of inquiry requires a commitment to working in a particular set of structured steps and a willingness to engage fully, which can be challenging to sustain. They appreciate that collaborative learning is more than people simply coming together to create buy-in or engage in group thinking. Collaborative learning is an opportunity for educators to share their experience as they practice professional judgment and develop additional expertise.

Ganatra convenes his department to discuss their current work and plans for the future. He has been in his role for two decades, so he is comfortable facilitating a meeting that encourages open dialogue and even disagreement.

The first meeting starts with a brief introduction, then a refresher about the collaborative inquiry process they will use to define their own problem of practice and identify the set of strategies they will collectively test and refine.

Ganatra raises the question about how the department can best address the First Peoples Principles of Learning. They engage in honest discussion about competing demands for teachers' time and energy and the fact that this is not something they have discussed before as part of their day-to-day work.

After discussion, the teachers agree that if there is to be a shift in the school's culture so that each student feels that his or her academic and personal growth matters, the educators must ensure their instruction is more culturally supportive and hold each other accountable to their shared commitment to inclusiveness.

The team begins by asking each other a series of questions, such as: What do we do already to address the First Peoples? Are there successful strategies we should keep? What needs to change to address the challenge? How do we know the change we are making is actual improvement? How will we know we are successful?

The team develops a problem of practice focused on building capacity to address the diversity of cultures and history of British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples, which aligns with the provincial priorities and is directly relevant to their own commitment to increasing understanding of First Nations peoples among all students.

The team zeroes in on a plan to incorporate additional content over several weeks and, true to

continuous improvement principles, collect data they can reflect on together to assess progress. The team aligns its professional learning goals to school and district priorities and refines its plan to ensure that the professional learning is directly tied to improving student outcomes.

Protocols for collaborative inquiry guide the department's subsequent meetings, where the educators focus on what their shared work is intended to accomplish, what they observe about their current situation in relationship to their stated goals, how they will know when they have succeeded, and what they will do with the lessons they have learned.

History team members ask each other challenging questions about impact and relevance, such as: Are we sure this lesson plan adequately conveys the complexity of British Columbia's First Nations cultural diversity? Have we created authentic opportunities for students to share about their own backgrounds and local contexts? The content of the discussion varies over the next year, but the process of collaborative examination is consistent.

The group has differences of opinions at times about how to proceed, but teachers remind themselves that they are part of a team of learners and leaders and the success of each student depends on their efforts.

Ganatra sees they are making progress on the question of how the department can best address the First Peoples Principles of Learning. However, two new teachers who have yet to experience this kind of process express some anxiety about their ability to integrate the new content.

Leigh Mantavas, one of the new teachers, appreciates that there is a culture of learning that encourages educators to be innovative about their own learning and teaching and share their experiences with colleagues and the community. However, she is unsure about her pedagogical skills for eliciting student voice in the classroom. She asks her colleagues for guidance and suggestions about

an online course that she can do at night or on the weekend at her convenience.

The team offers suggestions and an experienced colleague offers to join her, noting that they could do it together but asynchronously — take the course on their own but share and reflect together periodically. Ganatra recognizes that what they learn from the course will help keep the team up to date, so he invites them to lead the professional learning community meeting in a few months to discuss what they have learned with the whole team.

At the other end of the career continuum, Michael Matthewson is an experienced teacher who is skilled at engaging his students with new content. He has been frustrated by the time it takes to develop a shared problem of practice and agree on a series of iterative cycles.

To Matthewson, some of this work is intuitive and comes with experience, and he's not always sure what he is gaining from these collaborative discussions. But because he has agreed to trust the process, he engages fully in the discussion with Mantavas as she shares what she has learned about strategies to draw out quieter students through storytelling.

Matthewson comes to recognize that this is an area in need of improvement in his own classes and implements an adaptation of the approach as the year progresses. After a few months of observing previously reticent students engaging in classroom discussions, Matthewson shares this progress with the team, reinforcing both the value of the individual learning Mantavas undertook but also the value of the collaborative discussions about pedagogical skills.

Both educators have improved their skills, their sense of efficacy, and their trust in the power of collaborative learning. In turn, they have improved the knowledge and efficacy of their colleagues and made great progress toward improving the culture of the school for the benefit of all learners.

# Leadership



Educators establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, ensure a coherent system of supports to build individual and collective capacity, and advocate for professional learning by making both the impact of professional learning and their own learning visible to others.

# Leadership

**L**eadership in professional learning can transcend role, seniority level, or title. Educators in multiple roles can lead professional learning when leaders understand their role in the professional learning system and their sphere of influence and act accordingly — instituting policy, reforming an existing initiative, or advocating for a teacher-led innovation.

Superintendents, school board members, and community partners act as professional learning leaders by advocating for effective practices using the Standards for Professional Learning and the accompanying implementation tools as road maps and guides. A distributed leadership approach supports effective professional learning by fostering shared decision-making, multiple voices representing an initiative, and collective responsibility.

Teacher leaders can be modelers and facilitators of professional learning designed to build capacity for effective classroom practices, as can a principal, instructional coach, team facilitator, or content expert. Here are the main components of the Leadership standard.

## ● ESTABLISH A COMPELLING VISION FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators in leadership roles recognize effective professional learning as a key strategy for driving individual and collective improvements that result in better outcomes for all students. Professional learning leaders promote and support a culture that values continuous improvement for all educators in their school or system, articulate a vision for learning and equity using the Standards for Professional Learning as the foundation, and establish expectations for monitoring and adapting to achieve that shared vision.

Educators commit to a comprehensive and differentiated professional learning system informed

by formative and summative data and supported by policies and resources, including funding and time. They work toward a system in which observation, feedback, and the work of all students inform professional learning priorities and put supports in place that consistently building toward such a system.

Leaders hold clear expectations for equity across the system and provide meaningful professional growth opportunities so that each educator can thrive in the profession.

## ● ENSURE A COHERENT SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

Educators lead professional learning by maintaining consistency of vision, coherence among initiatives, and a comprehensive system of supports aligned to school and district goals. They encourage progress toward the shared vision by understanding the system, maximizing resources, leveraging or improving existing structures, and carving out new opportunities for professional learning.

They examine data and other evidence to get a sense of the overall coherence of the professional learning system and then look for opportunities to institute new procedures or initiatives to improve coherence and equitable outcomes for teachers and students.

Educators prioritize structures and procedures that support individual and collective capacity and skill building, allocating whatever resources they have control over accordingly and advocating for any additional resources they need. They strategically abandon or replace activities that do not align with or support the vision because misaligned activities diminish interest, engagement, and impact. Supports include progress monitoring tools and a process for analyzing observation data and teacher input to inform professional learning priorities.

Educators assume leadership roles when they

ensure that aligned and sustained professional learning supports the selection of curricula and instructional materials. Educators in certain leadership roles can arrange or facilitate teams of educators and opportunities for peer-to-peer observation, reflection, and action research, creating additional opportunities for embedded professional learning.

#### ● ADVOCATE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Leaders advocate for learning and capacity building for all educators by sharing the importance and impact of professional learning with colleagues, peers, school boards, policymakers, families and caregivers, and the broader community.

Part of that advocacy is fostering a shared understanding of the elements of high-quality and effective professional learning, the range of evidence-based strategies that can be leveraged and contextualized, and the power of continuous improvement cycles.

As learners themselves, leaders of professional learning appreciate the value of and seek evidence related to the effectiveness of professional learning strategies and contextualize approaches based on their own settings' needs and priorities. Effective

#### RESOURCES

- **Leithwood, K. (1992).** The move toward transformational leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 49(5), 8-12.
- **Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium. (n.d.)** *Teacher Leader Model Standards*. Author. [www.ets.org/s/education\\_topics/teaching\\_quality/pdf/teacher\\_leader\\_model\\_standards.pdf](http://www.ets.org/s/education_topics/teaching_quality/pdf/teacher_leader_model_standards.pdf)
- **The Wallace Foundation. (n.d.)** *School leadership*. [www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/pages/default.aspx](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/pages/default.aspx)

learning leaders model collaboration with colleagues to acquire new knowledge and practices and share their learning with others.

Educators at all levels value a range of inputs to inform decisions about organizational health and priorities, such as formative and summative student-level data and teacher reflections and observations school- or districtwide. Leaders model transparency about data collection on the impact of professional learning as well as about any gaps in opportunities for student learning or instructional challenges that the analysis of findings reveals.

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Leadership standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Model transparency about their own learning, both individually and in collaboration with others.
- Assess alignment across the vision for professional learning and the associated strategic priorities, policies, and practices and adjust as appropriate.
- Design and align structures of support using research and evidence about educator needs, the science of learning, and high-quality professional learning.
- Advocate for resources, including time, funding, and human resources, to ensure access to timely, relevant, meaningful professional learning for all educators.
- Provide sustained support, structures, and resources for a culture of continuous learning cycles focused on grade- or content-level, school, or systemwide challenges.
- Ensure that rigorous summative and formative evaluations as well as data and evidence about student and adult learning outcomes inform professional learning improvement efforts.

VIGNETTE: **Leadership**

## A PRINCIPAL MODELS LEARNING TO ADDRESS HER SCHOOL'S CHALLENGES

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**T**he Western district recently revised its mission statement to include professional learning as a driver for systemic improvement after reflecting on data showing challenges related to student achievement and teacher attrition. In addition, the district publicly acknowledged chronic racial, gender, disability, and language inequities, and pledged to address them by developing professional learning that addresses bias and institutionalized discrimination.

The mission statement formally recognized that professional learning has the potential to improve teaching and learning across content areas as well as in social and emotional and culturally sustaining teaching practices. District-level leaders identified several priorities to set in motion the district's commitment to professional learning, including a call for individual schools to better understand their data about how educators spend their time and the relevance of their current professional learning.

Loretta Stiles, an early adopter of the district's efforts to improve professional learning systems, is examining the way time and resources are allocated at her school, Woodbridge Elementary. She is especially interested in the potential of professional learning to address the school's challenges with its new writing curriculum, which has not improved learning as intended.

As principal, Stiles embraces her role as an instructional leader, yet recognizes the need for collaborative design and facilitation of professional learning when she is not the content expert. Formal and informal feedback provide observation data

about what is happening in the classroom and support improving instruction and developing relationships among teachers.

The Western district has no formal teacher leader designation, but it is exploring the use of locally issued microcredentials that would recognize a teacher's demonstration of a set of skills based on the rigorous and high-quality teacher leader standards.

As she has grown into her role over the last four years, Stiles has increasingly come to see professional learning as the solution to a range of challenges in the school and district. Realizing that sending all teachers to the same professional learning sessions wasn't producing the results the school needed, the school's leadership team now offers a mix of school-led, district-provided, and external professional learning, analyzing data about student learning and teacher content or pedagogical needs to contextualize and personalize learning.

Stiles reworked the master schedule to find time dedicated to collaborative professional learning meetings and instituted professional learning days focused on collaborative data analysis by content and grade-level teams of teachers. These changes have led to more productive discussions about student learning and instructional strategies.

Several teams implemented a protocol to discuss the instructional shifts required by the new writing curriculum. Their findings revealed that some instruction was not at grade level and prompted targeted professional learning supports for teachers, which resulted in improved conceptual understanding of grade-level texts.

Recent budget discussions at the state level seemed to be signaling that cuts to professional learning funding would be coming soon, so Stiles and a few colleagues are sharing their professional learning

impact data with state policymakers to make the case for sustained or — ideally — increased funding.

Experience has taught Stiles that she will be a better leader if she attends to her own learning. She is now focusing her reading on texts related to institutional racism to reflect on her own biases and as part of her commitment to being an engaged and informed leader. This learning was independent and private at first, but she increasingly shared what she has been reading and how it informs her thinking about inequities in her own school.

As her comfort level with talking about racism increased, she shared more about her learning journey with colleagues as a way to create a safe space for discussion and model learning and vulnerability. Her investment resulted in a personally rewarding experience as well as more understanding and support for the district's equity mission among her colleagues.

This independent and collaborative exploration of systemic bias informed the content and design of professional learning. It also compelled her to think more about who is involved when decisions are made, establish a cross-role equity task force at the school, and participate in a districtwide principal-

level professional learning community focused on progress toward several collaborative equity goals aligned to the new mission.

Stiles supports the growth and development of those around her, informally by modeling and explicitly valuing learning, and formally as a mentor for a new assistant principal she recruited from the school's informal teacher leader cadre.

The district recently established a system of supports to build a principal pipeline, drawing on research that found this led to an increase in principal retention. This initiative addresses the trend of assistant principals and teacher leaders leaving the district for principal positions in a neighboring district.

Recognizing that she needed to increase her contribution to the district goal of a more equitable and diverse faculty, Stiles joined a districtwide initiative dedicated to elevating a diversity of voices and perspectives in district decision-making. She continues to look for opportunities to improve access to equitable opportunities to learn for students and educators, buoyed by the positive results she has seen so far and the growing commitment of her colleagues.

# Resources



Educators allocate resources for professional learning,  
prioritize their use to achieve a vision  
for equitable outcomes for all students,  
and monitor the impact of resource investments.

## Resources

Educators require significant resources to plan, facilitate, assess, and experience high-quality professional learning. Resources include money, time, people, technology, materials, and services from external providers. The level of investment in professional learning is tied to its quality and results. Further, educators' intentions and aspirations to achieve equitable outcomes for all students require an equity orientation toward resource allocation and use. Here are the main components of the Resources standard.

### ● ALLOCATE RESOURCES

Educators have access to funds to support professional learning from many sources, depending on the education context. A significant portion of professional learning funds pay for the people responsible for leading and facilitating professional learning. Coaches and mentors, for example, require a significant investment depending on the size of a district or organization and the number of coaches and mentors hired to support other educators. Other staff include those at the district and school level with professional learning responsibilities and salary expenses related to educators' learning or for substitute teachers when educators leave the job site to learn.

Educators have a unique appreciation for time as a critical resource for professional learning. The sustained, job-embedded learning described throughout Standards for Professional Learning requires time during the work day as well as on dedicated professional learning days during and beyond the school year. Collaborative, team-based professional learning happens ideally during the work week at schools and districts, which necessitates a master schedule with consistent, dedicated times for teams to meet.

Educators in many districts and schools have this

time available given the widespread implementation of professional learning communities or teams over the last two decades. Districts take a range of approaches to finding time, including early dismissal or early start days, creative scheduling with special area teachers, and block scheduling for different subject areas. Education contexts outside the U.S. allocate time use in ways that support their collective orientation toward the teaching profession.

Educators recognize technology, materials, and other learning tools as essential investments. Access to technology tools and platforms offers educators opportunities to connect and network with peers synchronously and asynchronously, access coaching and other expertise remotely, and engage in online learning of all kinds, from webinars and courses to simulations.

Learning management systems organize resources and opportunities and offer access to data about students and educators. Leveraging technology in professional learning can maximize scarce resources by eliminating meeting and travel costs and maximizing educators' use of time.

Fiscal resources also support contracting with external vendors or technical assistance providers to provide professional learning services. Such services range from long-term engagements around leadership development and curriculum implementation to shorter-term opportunities designed to achieve a specific goal aligned with school and system strategic priorities.

### ● PRIORITIZE RESOURCE USE TO ACHIEVE EQUITY

Educators make decisions about how to use their available professional learning resources to achieve school- and system-level strategic visions, and conversely, the resources available influence how educators plan and implement professional learning. Aligning resource-related goals and strategies across

departments within a district and across a system is particularly critical given how limited time and money are for professional learning.

As educators explore and discuss ambitious goals for students and professional learning’s role in achieving them, they take into account the money available and prioritize their most critical goals as well as the highest-leverage strategies. Equitable outcomes for each student are critical factors educators consider to make financial decisions. Educators analyze and disaggregate data to understand their greatest needs and areas for potential improvement, and prioritize resource use to address any gaps.

Educators in many districts are making investments in high-quality curriculum and instructional materials because they believe in the potential of such purchases to have a positive impact on students. Yet, without a concomitant investment in relevant and aligned professional learning, high-quality instructional materials are unlikely to achieve their promise to close learning gaps. The same is true of any initiative — high-quality professional learning is required for full, effective implementation.

### ● MONITOR THE IMPACT OF RESOURCE INVESTMENTS

Educators have the responsibility to know and make public information about whether their investments in professional learning are leading to the results intended for educators and students. Professional learning is often on the chopping block when education funds are cut or disappear altogether. These cuts are often made because those responsible for providing funds don’t understand the impact professional learning has on student success. This makes it even more critical to document and share the impact of professional learning investments.

## RESOURCES

- **Darling-Hammond, L. (2019, August 5).** *Investing for student success: Lessons from state school finance reforms.* Learning Policy Institute. [learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/investing-student-success-school-finance-reforms-brief](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/investing-student-success-school-finance-reforms-brief)
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- **Killion, J. (2013).** *Establishing time for professional learning.* Learning Forward. [learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/establishing-time-for-professional-learning.pdf](https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/establishing-time-for-professional-learning.pdf)
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Educators establish mechanisms to track resource use in professional learning, including time, money, technology, and human resources. They know where and how, for example, coaches are spending time, and what the intended results are for a coaching program. They use the theory of action grounding such a program to determine progress and sustain support as appropriate and share evidence about success to make the case for continuing funding.

Educators do the same with modified schedules in schools so they can talk with parents, educators, and communities about the vision for and value of weekly team time. Educators investing in a technology initiative share their goals and benchmarks and document progress toward goals along the way.

Educators determine which investments have not resulted in desired changes to educator practice or student outcomes, make decisions about what to continue or discontinue to fund, and determine how to use the resources in ways that are most productive.

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Resources standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Analyze level-appropriate (system, district, school) investments in professional learning and track impact on teacher and leader growth, retention, and student achievement.
- Invest in the professional learning necessary to ensure implementation of high-quality curriculum and culturally relevant instructional materials.
- Invest in mentoring and coaching to provide support to educators in high-needs schools.
- Allocate resources to ensure educators have access to technology tools to expand their access to high-quality professional learning and build their capacity to use technology with students.
- Create building-level schedules that provide time for teachers to meet in grade-level or subject-specific teams weekly.
- Monitor resource use to track how funds and time are used and whether investments are leading to intended results.
- Advocate for sustained funding for initiatives that demonstrate impact for students most at risk of experiencing learning gaps or leaving school.

VIGNETTE: **Resources**

## DISTRICT RETHINKS RESOURCE USE TO ACHIEVE EQUITY

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

In preparation for the purchase and implementation of a new English language arts curriculum, the North River School District in California undertook a major reallocation of professional learning resources. Despite significant financial investments in professional learning over the past few years, student English language arts scores remained flat and, in fact, dropped among some student populations.

District leaders commissioned a districtwide teacher survey about English language arts instruction and supports. When they looked at the data, they recognized that their investments had not yielded the intended results to achieve a significant increase in the percentage of students reading at or above grade level. District leaders had a difficult conversation about what to continue and what to strategically abandon.

They had already determined that they were investing in new curriculum, but they needed to make decisions about the associated professional learning. They had the option to stay with a long-term external vendor to provide support because the vendor supported their new curriculum as well as their previous materials. However, teacher feedback was largely negative about the vendor's professional learning.

Although the summer English language arts workshops were a longstanding tradition and some teachers had formed strong relationships over time, teacher survey data and an analysis of the financial investment compared to impact on teacher and student outcomes left the district with no choice but to cancel that contract.

The superintendent, Elisa Marshall, and the curriculum team used a review rubric based on

student standards and district goals to identify a high-quality educative curriculum, meaning the curriculum included integrated educator support and learning resources. The team recognized that its selection created an opportunity to more closely align the use of resources across the district, addressing some inequities in access to and quality of professional learning in English language arts. The strategic abandonment of the external vendor contract created room in the budget to hire additional coaches throughout the school year and increase existing coaches' workload from part-time to full-time.

Marshall also recognized the value in creating opportunities for the district's department of curriculum and instruction and the department of teaching and learning to work together more closely. She realized that collaboration on the new curriculum would result in common priorities for resource allocation. She shared her vision with the department leads and asked them to prioritize the identification of inequities in instruction across the district, bolstering a new strategy for distributing resources to support high-needs schools and students.

District administrators were somewhat surprised to recognize teachers' inequitable access to coaches, who were often assigned to schools based on the percentage of new teachers rather than by student socioeconomic status or achievement scores, which are often stronger indicators of the need for teachers to build content knowledge or pedagogical skills. With transparency around school-level needs and evidence about where resources would have the most impact, district leaders were committed to leveraging the coaches where they would help educators and students who needed them the most.

Jennifer Andrade, the district professional learning director, met with all of the principals to discuss the plan for building capacity to implement

the new curriculum. In addition to support from coaches, the district requested that each month, English language arts teams would use two of their weekly team meeting periods to focus on curriculum implementation.

At first, teams offered input to the district about their use of the educative materials with feedback on what was working and what was not. However, as Andrade monitored the team meeting logs, she quickly recognized that this was not a valuable use of the teams' time.

She worked with several principals and coaches to establish inquiry cycles in the teams, providing additional support in data analysis to get teams started in setting priority learning goals

for themselves and their students. Notes from the teams indicated that this new process, strengthened by facilitation and implementation assistance from coaches, led to greater self-efficacy among teachers and positive results in formative student assessments.

As their first full year of implementation concluded, Marshall and Andrade were encouraged by how the alignment of resources and shared priorities were driving the English language arts teams toward improvement. Teams across the district had established consistent routines with demonstrated improvements in teacher practices and student outcomes, and the schools defined as high needs achieved greater gains than expected.



# TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

Equity Drivers

Evidence

Learning Designs

Implementation

# Equity Drivers



Educators reflect individually and collectively to identify and address their own biases, support and collaborate with diverse colleagues, and cultivate beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors that accelerate ambitious outcomes for all educators and students.

## Equity Drivers

Educators fulfill their equity commitments by engaging in learning that leads them to develop new beliefs and behaviors and engage with their colleagues and students in ways that demonstrate understanding, appreciation, and respect for everyone’s race, culture, gender, sexual orientation and identity, and abilities. Here are the main components of the Equity Drivers standard.

### ● REFLECT INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY

Educators critically examine and reflect on how race, gender, ethnicity, language, and ability impact student learning opportunities. They engage in individual and collaborative learning that helps them better understand their school, system, and students, and then use that information to deepen meaningful reflection.

They appreciate that reflection is informed by individual experience, so they examine their own experiences and biases and seek out challenging conversations with colleagues. Educators talk to their students about their identity experiences and invite multiple discussions with students about their experiences to improve the quality and meaning of their reflection (Hammond, 2020; Mehta, 2020).

Educators engage in discussions with colleagues and students about how privilege, race, and class impact their mindsets and practices and examine institutional structures that act as barriers to equitable practices. They then collaboratively determine what actions need to follow the conversations to eliminate barriers.

Educators reflect on the current content of their professional learning and propose any changes needed to sharpen the equity focus or alignment with school and district equity priorities, such as adding anti-racist protocols or a review of bias in the

curriculum and instructional materials. Recurring conversations grounded in a culture of open dialogue are critical to the integration of equity and access across the system.

### ● SUPPORT AND COLLABORATE WITH DIVERSE COLLEAGUES

Educators recognize the value of diversity among colleagues and recognize that individuals have different experiences with aspects of the education system, such as supports, observations, or evaluations. Educators’ entry points for conversations about equity vary depending on their own race, class, language, and abilities. Their ability to enter and engage in frank conversations about bias will also vary depending on previous experiences and reflection.

They appreciate professional learning that examines and addresses everyone’s lived experiences, and they are open to giving and receiving feedback from colleagues to support this work. Educators engage in collaborative discussions and decision-making that recognizes inequities and honors all voices to broaden the conversation.

They acknowledge and talk about when privilege or unconscious bias is affecting decision-making or planning — such as when racism impacts classroom management practices or the selection and assignment of mentors and teacher leaders (Benson, 2019).

Even as they commit to examining their own experiences and confronting their own biases, educators also commit to collaborating with colleagues to examine gaps in teacher readiness to engage students and teacher mindsets toward students’ abilities. Educators also use externally developed and vetted frameworks and protocols to identify systemic inequities, institutional biases, and low expectations associated with race, gender,

class, language, sexual orientation, and disability (Comprehensive Center Network, 2020; Mehta, 2020; Pitts, 2020).

Educators take accountability for being informed about the contexts and demographics relevant to their work. They examine the power dynamics and support shifts that make the distribution of power more equitable and create learning environments that are safe for challenging conversations. Educators recognize the time it takes to make improvements toward equity and commit to sustained collaboration with others to challenge and transform individual and collective beliefs and behaviors.

They honor and model vulnerability, trust in the collective commitment to ongoing learning to improve equity, and they offer each other grace as they navigate challenging conversations and collaborations.

### ● CULTIVATE BELIEFS, KNOWLEDGE, AND BEHAVIORS

Educators use an understanding of change management to inform the processes of knowledge building about equity as well as the individual and collective examination of biases and behaviors. Educators recognize that changes in beliefs and practice often happen simultaneously in a mutually reinforcing cycle. Educators apply all possible strategies for strengthening the practices that positively impact students.

Educators advocate for equity-based professional learning for all of their colleagues to build a shared understanding of why change to inequitable policies and practices is required and how improvements will happen. They examine and discuss curricula and instructional materials for bias that will disadvantage some students' academic performance or create and prioritize time and space for such discussions

depending on their roles.

Not only do educators actively participate in ongoing professional learning related to culturally sustaining and anti-racist ideas and strategies, they call for discontinuing practices that are racially or culturally insensitive in any way. Educators in all roles seek to understand the experiences of diverse students and their own unconscious biases.

In addition, educators participate in and advocate for processes that disrupt institutionalized inequities, call for expanded pathways for growth and leadership, and challenge approaches to instruction and assessment that have led to historical inequities in achievement.

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## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Equity Drivers standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Develop a deep understanding of their unique social, cultural, economic, and political context of learning.
- Engage in individual and collective reflection on bias and privilege and how it operates often unconsciously in various educational social, cultural, racial, and political contexts.
- Examine and name stereotypes, bias, and the institutional structures and policies that drive behaviors related to inequity.
- Enable and facilitate shifts in mindsets about the need for asset-based approaches to teaching as well as inclusive and equitable learning designs and practices.
- Learn about culturally sustaining and anti-racist ideas and strategies, hold themselves to measurable outcomes that reflect these practices, and build capacity for self and colleagues to engage in equity-focused professional learning conversations, including giving and receiving feedback.
- Plan and engage in professional learning related to culturally sustaining pedagogy, affirming instructional practices, relationship-building strategies, and multiple learning designs that increase access to learning for adults and students.

VIGNETTE: **Equity Drivers**

## A VETERAN MATH TEACHER UNCOVERS AND REFLECTS ON HER BIASES

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**R**achel Williams has been teaching math in a suburban high school outside of Atlanta for 20 years. Over those years, she has seen the student population shift from predominantly white to predominantly students of color, although that same shift has not occurred among the school faculty.

In response to this demographic shift and increased awareness about racial inequity in the community, the district recently issued an equity position statement. As a seasoned educator, Williams has seen a lot of changes in her school and district, including mission statements and priorities.

At first, she fully embraced each one, but over time became less and less excited about engaging in a visioning process or offering feedback about a mission statement. The recent equity position statement, therefore, did not strike her as something that would impact her directly, and, although she is white, she believed she has an inclusive teaching style.

Both the district and the school had done several surveys as well as classroom observations and mandated professional learning to gather information about educators' beliefs, experiences, and instructional practices as part of an equity audit. Williams answered honestly because she recognized the value of an open conversation based on the data that surveys provide, and she looked forward to learning about the status of other schools and the district overall.

Williams knew that a few of her colleagues had done interviews with an outside consultant, and she was eager to find out if that information was available as well. She joined that first day of the school's professional learning series with a mixture of anxiety and excitement.

Alicia McDonald, the district's associate director of diversity, equity, and inclusion, facilitated the professional learning. She outlined the professional learning plan and asked teachers to reflect on their experiences independently and then as a group at the beginning of the next session.

McDonald warned them that they would be having uncomfortable conversations and encouraged them not to walk away or disengage. She emphasized that the district's commitment was long-term and that support and coaching would be available throughout the next two years.

She introduced the approach they would be using across the district to guide the work and ensure that individual schools would have common and aligned resources. Each content area would examine its own curriculum, instruction, and assessment against an expectation of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy. Over the next year, educators would work in grade-level and vertical content teams to ensure that teachers in all classrooms applied and discussed the frameworks and approaches.

In one activity, educators watched annotated videos that highlighted where white teachers made negative assumptions about students of color who asked questions in math classes versus white students who asked questions. They broke into small groups and discussed what they had seen and what might be happening in their own school and district.

In their small-group meeting, McDonald asked Williams how she thought her race impacted her day-to-day teaching. Williams, thinking that because she was white she was unable to answer the question posed by her Black colleague, remained silent.

McDonald explained that she asked the question because she was interested, but also in part to highlight the differences in their experiences because, as a Black woman, she had never had the privilege of not thinking about race and culture.

Williams pushed back, noting that she had

incorporated reading materials that represented a range of backgrounds and cultures and that in math there weren't as many opportunities as in other courses to be subjective and therefore discriminatory.

She thought of herself as someone who "does not see color" and has read a great deal about equitable teaching practices. However, she has yet to engage in an honest conversation about how race impacts learning with a Black student or Black family.

The real issue, she thought but did not say, was that the Black students seemed more likely to enter her class without background knowledge about specific math concepts required to succeed.

In another activity, teachers read a research study about how teachers make sense of student misconceptions in math. In the follow-up teacher meeting, the math teachers together watched videos about math instruction that were narrated to highlight where the teacher responded differently to white and Black students who asked questions or responded to teacher prompts.

They then looked at principal and peer observation data from their school as well as from classrooms across the district. The data revealed that teachers responded to Black and white students differently when students asked questions in class. Teachers were more likely to dismiss questions from Black students as disruptive and more likely to provide verbal scaffolding that removed an opportunity for the students to come up with the answer themselves. They discussed what they had seen and read, and they talked about how these instructional practices might impact the rigor of instruction as well as the student's experience.

Several weeks into the professional learning series, a colleague raised the issue of students' background knowledge. Williams gingerly mentioned that, in her experience, Black students seemed not to have the requisite background knowledge when they came to her class.

Her colleagues pressed her for evidence, asking about her students and her experiences, as well as if it were possible that she was reacting differently to students of different backgrounds when they asked questions or revealed misconceptions about content. She thought back to the reading the team had done about how teachers are more likely to assume misconceptions are related to race or backgrounds for students of color.

Toward the end of the session, McDonald asked

the teachers to write a reflection piece before their next meeting about their own misconceptions. She also asked for volunteers to participate in a peer observation protocol that would include receiving feedback on an element of practice, but Williams felt she was not quite ready to engage in that exchange just yet.

Later, after she had written a self-reflection piece about her own misconceptions, Williams felt ready to engage in a conversation with just one colleague. That led to another conversation and then to more actively participating in some challenging professional learning conversations.

As a result of this extended and intense work, Williams realized that her students from all backgrounds sometimes lacked the background knowledge and skills, but that she had only been focusing on the gaps of her Black students. She also realized that she was unable to see the practices and structures that upheld racism because she was so accustomed to them and, in fact, had been unintentionally holding them up herself.

There was much work ahead. For instance, what Williams hadn't appreciated until this year was the impact of the multiple gateways that make it more difficult to get into her class. Her thinking on this was sparked by a district initiative in which each principal convened a faculty meeting to discuss the pathways to advanced coursework, and it gave her a new perspective on why her students in the intensified courses were there and who might also be there given different circumstances.

These conversations had a ripple effect, and now that the principal better understood the inherent bias in standardized tests, he committed to using a more complete body of evidence to determine which students qualify for gifted and talented classes. Williams was then encouraged because of this meaningful growth experience to join a group of educators interested in improving the diversity of students identified for the district's gifted and talented programs.

The team learned about empathy interviews, where they learned how to listen to students, families, and caregivers, and colleagues to gain a better understanding of students' experiences and different approaches to learning. Future discussions for the year will include a few sessions on shifting agency, voice, and dynamics in collaborative conversations. Williams is looking forward to these discussions.

# Evidence



Educators use evidence and data from multiple sources to plan and monitor their learning and assess its impact on students.

## Evidence

**E**xamining evidence and data related to educator efficacy and student learning guides improvement on many levels, from informing resource decisions to setting student, team, and individual educator learning goals, to planning professional learning. Educators use and analyze evidence and data to build collective knowledge and support ongoing learning and continuous improvement. Here are the main components of the Evidence standard.

### ● USE EVIDENCE AND DATA FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

Educators recognize that using multiple sources of student, educator, school, and system data leads to a more complete understanding of students' and teachers' learning needs than a single source of information. Data and evidence originate from different sources, for many purposes, and under a range of conditions. Therefore educators seek out a range of sources including student assessments, classroom observations, improvement cycles, pilot tests, and tools such as exit tickets related to students' understanding of key concepts.

Both quantitative and qualitative data inform planning and decision-making, and both formative

and summative data are required to understand student progress, challenges, and trends, including formative classroom-level data, unit tests, large-scale assessments, and year-over-year grade-level data.

Educators look at measures of teacher practice, such as peer observations and formal observation scores, and measures for student outcomes, such as teacher reflections on student engagement and aggregated student test scores. Disaggregated data about student engagement, absenteeism, disciplinary referrals, gifted and talented referrals, students of color access to honors and advanced coursework, and demographics are also relevant in setting goals for students and educators.

Educators at all levels disaggregate data in multiple ways to pinpoint where gaps in learning access and opportunity lie. Rigorous use of data is central to achieving equity goals in classrooms, schools, and systems. Educators explore data and trends in evidence to form insights about where inequities and barriers to learning exist.

Additional data sources provide relevant information about educators' experience, content knowledge, self-reported efficacy, and satisfaction. School and system data also provide insights into teacher attrition, retention, out-of-field placements, and experience with current curriculum and instructional materials. Educators also analyze disaggregated data about student access to effective teachers because students of color are often assigned new or less-effective teachers.

Educators also review and analyze relevant research studies about school or classroom improvement strategies and discuss how the findings might apply to their context. Educators purposefully link professional learning to a research base, or, if they use a strategy that doesn't have a strong evidence base, they are clear on the rationale for improvement and measures of expected outcomes.

Educators understand that education research

### EVIDENCE AND POLICY

Policy in many countries encourages the use of evidence in decision-making and budgeting related to professional learning. For instance, U.S. federal law states that professional learning strategies must be aligned with the four tiers of evidence defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act. Most professional learning falls in the fourth tier, which requires a strong rationale and a plan for ongoing monitoring.

is evolving to include nontraditional methods such as improvement science, which can yield valuable knowledge about a school and system, and to examine potential biases in how research studies are recognized.

### ● USE DATA TO PLAN AND MONITOR LEARNING

Data and evidence inform the planning, monitoring, and assessment of educator learning. Educators use data about student learning to set ambitious student learning goals. Educators use student and educator data to set goals for professional learning that are aligned to student goals and ambitious yet achievable. These goals are aligned with school and system strategic priorities for their learning as individuals and teams. Educators use their learning goals to determine what and how they will learn. Data inform learning designs as well as learning content.

Educators use and analyze data and evidence to monitor their progress, both individually and collectively. Coaches, peers, and supervisors offer support in monitoring progress toward learning goals through formal and informal observation and feedback processes. As educators learn in teams through inquiry cycles, they build in regular monitoring strategies to inform their ongoing work.

Educators use data to determine where they need discipline-specific, pedagogical, or individualized educator supports and to inform choices about resources and priorities at the school and system levels. Information about current resources and investments as measured against individual, school, and system goals guides decisions about how to allocate human resources, funding, technology supports, and time.

Educators consult research to design, implement, and sustain professional learning that is likely to have positive impacts on educator knowledge, beliefs, and practices and student outcomes. Educators understand that, while research findings can't always be replicated, evidence about what works for educators and students under certain conditions can inform their own initiatives and set expectations for investments of time and resources.

### ● MEASURE IMPACT

Collecting and analyzing data about the impact of professional learning is critical to reaching

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student, educator, and system goals. In addition, it is important to document how investments of time and resources in professional learning yield results for educators and students.

Educators prioritize evaluation of the impact of professional learning as part of any planning process or new initiative and set an expectation for data collection and measures of progress at the onset. Educators gather data about the learning process and impact, then collaboratively discuss and analyze data to make informed adjustments.

Educators embrace formal evaluations of professional learning, recognizing the importance of systematically gathering data and artifacts about coherence, alignment, achievement related to goals and benchmarks, engagement and satisfaction of participants, and progress related to building knowledge or sustaining implementation. Evaluation data can be specific to an intervention or program or can be more broadly related to progress toward a school or system goal. The evaluation questions and data collection plans need to be tied tightly to the goals.

Educators and researchers consistently seek data and evidence about professional learning's impact on student outcomes as well as data and evidence

related to the impact on teacher outcomes, including observable and reportable but not observable.

Key evidence of impact of professional learning includes evidence of positive changes in mindsets, strengthened classroom practice and interactions, improvements in content knowledge among teachers and students, and increased coherence among school and district initiatives.

Educators understand the realities of interpreting data such as how an upward trend may dip when a new initiative is implemented or how an analysis of student subgroup data can reveal a different story than the analysis of aggregated data.

Measuring impact can take a range of forms, from teacher teams collecting classroom-level data

in rapid cycles, to schoolwide educator surveys, to action research both internally and with outside partners. Educators are strategic and purposeful about the data they collect and their plan to use their analyses, and they balance the need to collect data with other priorities. As appropriate, they make goals, benchmarks, and data public to increase collective accountability and coherence across a system.

Educators model a commitment to using evidence by sharing the results of their own learning and actively participating in others' efforts to collect and analyze data about the impact of professional learning.

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Evidence standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Disaggregate student data in various ways to identify trends based on characteristics of student identity, including race, language, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use identified needs to set learning goals for students, and establish adult learning goals based on student goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate alignment of learning goals and assessments for students and educators to broader school or systemwide vision, mission, values, and beliefs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invest in educator and community capacity for understanding how research, evaluation, assessment, data, evidence, and measurement impact student learning.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply research and evidence to select relevant professional learning models and practices to achieve educator and student goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Protect time for teams to review and analyze student work and data collaboratively.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use formative and summative student data to identify, implement, and sustain educator practices that ensure an inclusive learning environment for all students.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commit to visible and shareable data collection and analysis to create responsive and personalized professional learning.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluate outcomes and assess progress and impact of professional learning against short- and long-term student, educator, classroom, school, and system goals and strategic priorities.</li> </ul>

VIGNETTE: **Evidence**

## A SCHOOL FOCUSES ON PUTTING EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**A**t the Benjamin Lewis Middle School in Maryland, two small teams of STEM teachers are piloting an improvement science-based effort to gather data and information about the impact of their science curriculum.

The school vision established a shared commitment to evidence-based decisions, and the principal often shares his own personal data experiences, including a new effort to survey teachers about the relevance of their professional learning to drive improvement overall and identify any gaps in teacher support. Findings from the survey led to the principal eliminating a low-rated professional learning workshop on outdated technology so that valuable resources could be spent elsewhere.

The principal also highlights how carefully analyzing data can help the school in its commitment to identifying inequities in student learning and engagement as well as inequities in teacher knowledge and pedagogical approaches.

Based on recent data showing that many of the school's students are struggling with demonstrating key learning objectives in a particular unit, teachers identify a promising classroom strategy based on a study they read in a district professional learning session, invest in learning how to use the strategy, and determine how to test it in their classroom.

Together they look at their own class data, including student responses to a short pretest about a key science concept. Together, the teachers discuss and set a goal for the post-test. After the test lesson, the teachers come back together to talk about what

their classroom data revealed about the impact of their instructional strategy and make adjustments for future instruction and assessments in the unit as needed.

To get to this point of using a collaborative inquiry process, some teachers on the teams participated in formal professional learning about improvement science while others are learning from their colleagues as they experience the inquiry cycles and recognize the value of collecting and analyzing their own data.

Districtwide, coaches and teacher leaders offer professional learning designed to encourage teachers' engagement with evidence. First, they establish that the use of evidence is important for two reasons: to know that a learning approach will lead to results and to satisfy federal and state regulations. Then the facilitators divide teachers into groups to read and discuss articles or studies. Teachers choose an article to focus on as it relates to their own or their students' learning goals and engage in discussion to explore potential application of the key findings.

Lewis educators also participate in districtwide data days, when teachers and administrators from schools across the district come together to examine district trends, learn about new initiatives, discuss learning progressions for students and teachers, and set learning goals for themselves and their students for the coming semester.

The principal is encouraged by seeing how educators are using evidence daily in multiple ways to inform their own learning. He plans to expand the use of improvement science for the next school year to infuse continuous data analysis into job-embedded learning so that all subject-area educators benefit from the process.

# Learning Designs



Educators set relevant and contextualized learning goals  
and apply the science of learning  
to implement evidence-based learning designs.

## Learning Designs

Educators plan professional learning based on a theory of action about what designs for learning will lead to the educator and student outcomes they seek. Meaningful and ambitious goal setting, based on the analysis of data related to student and teacher needs, combines with an understanding of how people learn to guide the design of high-impact learning.

Educators can meet a range of goals by implementing aligned learning designs, with an understanding that learning for transformation includes attention to not only building knowledge and skills but also addressing beliefs and mindsets and developing effective practices. Here are the main components of the Learning Designs standard.

### ● SET RELEVANT AND CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING GOALS

Powerful learning designs address educator and system needs and shared problems of practice and are grounded in an educator's daily responsibilities, with the goal of enhancing role-specific knowledge and skills. Designing professional learning requires knowledge of individuals' learning goals and the goals of the school and system, a mechanism for incorporating student and educator input, and an understanding of the realities of resources and requirements.

Considerations for design include whether the learning goals are classroom-focused or schoolwide, focused on grade-level or content teams, or supported by mentoring or coaching. School- and classroom-based designs focus on content-specific instructional practices or specific academic or nonacademic aspects of learning with the intent of improving instruction and, in turn, student learning.

The particular balance of how to strengthen content knowledge and pedagogical skill development depends on the experience and

background of the learners as well as the goal of the professional learning. In addition, educators recognize that the design of the learning is most effective when tightly tied to the cadence of the curriculum and the implementation of instructional materials.

Educators adapt the content and approach based on how experienced or familiar learners are with the curriculum, their comfort levels with adapting and implementing the instructional materials, and whether there is an educative curriculum that provides additional supports.

### ● APPLY THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING

Learning design requires an understanding of how people learn (Bransford et al., 2000) and attention to how to engage learners, how to articulate a learning progression, and how to encourage and facilitate inquiry in adult learners. Change management theory (Knoster et al., 2000) also informs design, as does evidence about the potential of a selected approach to result in the desired outcomes.

Grounding design in these theories supports a shared understanding of the approach, cadence, purpose, goals, and expected impact of the professional learning. Educators reference research about the science of learning to help determine the appropriate design depending on whether the goal is to increase knowledge, impact beliefs, or change practices.

Learning science research also provides guidance about how to engage and support educators depending on how comfortable they are with change in general, where they are in regard to taking on a new perspective — either a student's or a colleague's, their willingness to be vulnerable about their practice and possibly their failings, and how tightly they adhere to their current beliefs or whether they are open to learning and trying

something new.

Learning theory also offers guidance about which aspects of a learning experience need to be tightly scripted versus when flexibility and learner input and co-creation are more appropriate (Thompson & Wiliam, 2008).

Cognitive and empirical science calls for making new learning challenging yet attainable, engaging, self-directed, and rewarding in terms of impact on educators' feelings of self-efficacy. Learning designs are chosen to address the learners' context and prior knowledge, facilitate learning in multiple ways, and create active learning experiences that ask educators to use their professional experience and judgment to guide their engagement with both professional learning content and their colleagues.

In addition, educators are familiar with how the science of learning informs instruction in their particular content area and appreciate how it is pedagogical content knowledge combined with deep disciplinary knowledge that results in effective instruction for all students. Educators are also aware that the science of learning evolves and therefore engage in open discussions about emerging research.

### ● IMPLEMENT EVIDENCE-BASED LEARNING DESIGNS

Learning designers look to research to understand how to change beliefs and mindsets as well as what teacher practices are likely to be influenced by professional learning (Garrett et al., 2019). Research shows that some of the most effective professional learning occurs through active learning, in teams of teachers collaboratively examining student work, focused on implementing instructional materials and co-designing student assessments.

Learning facilitators can look to various structures and designs that have an evidence base about their effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), including:

- Peer observations (in person or through video);
- Co-teaching and peer observation and feedback;
- Action research;
- Peer or content expert coaching;
- Immersive learning experiences, in which the educator experiences learning as a student would (McNeill & Reiser, 2018);

- Collaborative study of curriculum and standards;
- Collaborative lesson, unit, and assessment implementation;
- Collaborative examination of student and educator work; and
- Communities of practice and professional learning communities.

Effective designs include opportunities to practice new learning and then to reflect, assess, and refine for continuous improvement. Certain content calls for designs that provide extended opportunities to apply new learning and practice new techniques, skills, and strategies that may contribute to the development of a team or collaborative culture. Any design is enhanced by the support of expert support, coaching, mentoring, and regular feedback discussions that support deeper understanding and transfer of the learning to practice over time.

Some learning designs lend themselves to being effectively facilitated or augmented by technology. Synchronous learning brings educators together across regions and geography, while asynchronous learning extends the learning experience and allows individuals to deepen their understanding and reflection at a personalized pace.

Online communities can provide access to resources as well as fellow learners, and virtual meetings are not restricted by the traditional challenges of travel or spaces. Specific technologies that enhance professional learning, such as bug-in-the-ear real time coaching (Rock, 2020) and video analysis (Taylor et al., 2017) hold promise for an expanded role for technology in addressing goals related to strengthening classroom instruction.

Educators learn how to leverage technology tools in ways that strengthen their instruction and allow them to engage and support a variety of learners, such as eliciting comments via online whiteboards or annotating and reflecting on videos of instructional practices.

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## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Learning Designs standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Create specific, aligned student and educator learning goals based on evidence about student needs and informed by the content and concepts covered in high-quality curriculum or instructional materials.
- Consider student and educator learning goals to design and scaffold learning with rigorous content and active learning that supports transfer of the learning to practice over time.
- Apply evidence-based professional learning designs that develop content expertise, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, and deeper relationships with students and colleagues.
- Use immersive learning designs that provide adults opportunities to experience new learning from the perspective of their students and reflect on what that experience means for potential changes in their classrooms.
- Match learning opportunities to multiple points in the school year and in curriculum implementation, and provide sustained ways to practice new learning, skills, and strategies with ongoing feedback, support, and coaching.
- Leverage technology and digital learning designs to increase flexibility and personalization to advance teacher practice and student learning.
- Model and promote active engagement to construct, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize new knowledge and practices that will positively impact all students.

VIGNETTE: **Learning Designs**

## ONE DISTRICT'S CAREFUL SELECTIONS LEAD TO STUDENT GROWTH

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**T**wo years ago, North Kingston district leaders assessed their math data and noted stagnation in student achievement and marked differences in the achievement of different racial groups. Not only were the student achievement numbers disappointing, but also the teacher survey data revealed that teachers found professional development sessions irrelevant and too general in some instances.

Surveys revealed that teachers were looking for professional learning that would help them better understand their own students' challenges and give them new instructional strategies. Interviews and focus groups with teachers showed that teachers had a range of instructional approaches to the state math standards.

Guided by these data, an understanding about the effectiveness of ongoing, job-embedded professional learning, and research about the benefits of focusing on implementation of high-quality instructional materials, the district selected a new math curriculum that includes embedded guidance and tools to support educators in implementing it effectively.

Recognizing that selecting and buying a curriculum is just the first step, the district committed to sustained professional learning with the goals of achieving the math standards, understanding and effectively implementing the new curriculum and related high-quality instructional materials, and facilitating collaboration to improve instruction across the district.

The district's professional learning team collaboratively reviewed the new curriculum as well as the data about students and teachers and mapped

out a series of evidence-based professional learning sessions designed to achieve student, educator, classroom, school, and system goals and strategic priorities.

The team identified the designated all-district professional learning days during the summer and at the end of each quarter as times to conduct formative assessments about the relevancy and impact of the efforts to improve implementation of the new math curriculum.

Taking a collaborative inquiry approach, the team planned a series of sessions focused on educators' current math instruction, opportunities to reflect on the new curriculum's strengths and challenges, introduction of new instructional materials and new strategies, and ways to assess student knowledge and understanding. The team tapped school-level leaders to facilitate the collaborative professional learning and provide feedback to the district about its impact.

At North Kingston Middle School, Jose Villanueva, an experienced teacher who has led a 7th-grade math professional learning community (PLC) for several years, is recognized as a trusted advisor and someone with deep math content knowledge. Villanueva started out as a teacher disillusioned with professional development. Once he understood how sustained professional learning differed from outdated sit-and-get workshops, he became interested in how professional learning could help his students.

His design and facilitation skills developed as he learned more about how individuals respond to change, how adults learn individually and collaboratively, and how to balance directive information sharing with opportunities to reflect and internalize new ideas and strategies. As a math teacher, he embraced data collection and analysis and committed to finding accurate measures of teachers' progress toward the stated goal.

For the past year, Villanueva has led a monthly PLC meeting to study the implementation of the new math curriculum. All of the teachers bring student artifacts from their classes, including in-class work, exit tickets, and formative or summative assessments. They discuss the math standards, the learning goals in the curriculum, and where the students' work is relative to the curriculum's expectations for grade-level work.

These discussions reveal where student background knowledge is insufficient or teachers' understanding of how concepts build on each other is not fully developed, leading to requests for professional learning to address not only content knowledge but also pedagogical content knowledge.

In some cases, the discussions lead to professional learning related to educators' beliefs and mindsets. As the educators better understood the connections across grade levels and concepts, they appreciated the importance of deeply understanding the whole curriculum.

For instance, after one grade-level discussion about why some students were consistently not able to move from concrete arithmetic to the symbolic language of algebra, Villanueva realized that several educators were not making explicit that shift in thinking. As this discussion went on, several colleagues reflected on their own practices and realized they had been assuming this was a lack of ability on the students' part rather than a concept that could be learned by a different approach.

Recognizing how important this one juncture was to students and their future math coursework, Villanueva designed a separate series of quarterly PLCs focused on deepening this instructional dialogue related to mathematics. He knew of a study that found that math teachers often fail to recognize common student misconceptions about mathematics until they discuss student data in a collaborative setting.

The study also found that many teachers attribute math challenges among students of color

to their backgrounds or perceived deficits. Given the discrepancies between white and Latino student achievement in math at Kingston Middle School, Villanueva wondered if this could be a factor in his school. He shared the study with his team of teachers and asked the team to reflect on whether this could be happening at North Kingston.

The combination of a focused article study, the shared understanding about how these decisions impacted students' futures, and a supportive team environment led to an open, productive discussion about what classroom factors were impacting students' learning and what instructional strategies might improve students' understanding of the content.

Later in the year, once the team had built trust and engaged in constructive dialogue, teachers observed and reflected on their peers' teaching in this regard. The principal and assistant principals have joined in the collaborative learning, developing and using an observation protocol that aligns with the guiding questions of the teachers' PLC so they can witness the improvements and share their own reflections.

Villanueva learned from his experiences during the 2020 COVID school closings that technology could make remote learning more effective than in-person learning in some situations. Even though that crisis had passed, Villanueva and his colleagues often looked to asynchronous learning opportunities when teachers had gaps in their content knowledge, moved a grade level, or were struggling with a new unit.

Villanueva found that some teachers wanted to watch videos at their own pace or study the research about an instructional move on their own. As long as the teachers' learning moved them closer to their goal, the mechanism could be flexible. Pleased with their momentum, members of the team committed to continuing their learning, documenting and sharing their progress as they continued to learn and grow as educators.

# Implementation



Educators understand and apply  
research on change management theory,  
engage in and learn from feedback processes,  
and implement and sustain professional learning  
that leads to long-term educator, student, school, and system outcomes.

## Implementation

Educators leverage the power of sustained implementation support to realize the promise of professional learning. They prioritize, align, and provide appropriate long-term supports for individual adult learners as well as for teams, schools, and systems. Educators use change management research to understand and support the continuous assessment and development of skills and knowledge needed to deepen understanding of a particular change, how it applies to individuals, and how to support others to embed it into their day-to-day work. Here are the main components of the Implementation standard.

### ● APPLY RESEARCH ON CHANGE MANAGEMENT THEORY

Educators design and engage in professional learning with the understanding that meaningful change is a complex, multifaceted process that requires sustained effort over time. Embedded effective change requires new learning and the development of new knowledge as well as unlearning ingrained misconceptions or biases. Developing awareness about structural or policy barriers to change may be necessary as well.

Fostering deep engagement and individual meaning making is more effective than relying on willpower or compliance. Fully appreciating and addressing the stages and levels of change as educators move from learning to knowing to understanding to application will result in professional learning that leads to consistent improvements for educators and students.

Educators recognize that change occurs when the vision and reason for change are clear and clearly communicated, and when there is a plan that describes individual and collective action and progress as well as the supports needed to move forward effectively.

Educators appreciate that learners respond

to change in myriad ways, as individuals have varying comfort levels with learning, risk-taking, vulnerability, and collaboration. Learners enter change efforts from multiple perspectives with varying levels of expertise and experience. In addition, sustaining change requires an understanding that shifting beliefs and practices is not linear. Some educators may shift their beliefs when they achieve success through changed actions, while some may change their practices because they have acquired new beliefs.

Educators rely on change management theory to determine colleagues' readiness for change as well as to define and recognize progress in the individual and collective knowledge building and improvement process. They understand colleagues' concerns as an aspect of what motivates individuals to change, including the degree to which they understand and embrace the vision of what will result from the new learning or changed behaviors.

Educators use change management protocols such as the Concerns-Based Adoption Model or Levels of Use to understand and make explicit what it means to experience change as individuals and on teams. Because change requires that individuals move from a theoretical understanding of what the change requires to an appreciation for what it means for them as individuals and practitioners, educators deserve and appreciate the need for sustained attention, reminders about goals, and structures that provide guidance and constructive feedback.

### ● ENGAGE IN AND LEARN FROM FEEDBACK

Educators embrace and contribute to a culture that values and uses meaningful, constructive feedback. This includes supportive relationships in which educators can share challenges, build trust, and examine beliefs and practices in a compassionate and productive manner. Individually and collectively, they engage in periodic assessment

about what new knowledge and skills they need to achieve their intended goals, how they are progressing toward their goals, and what improvements they require to strengthen their skills or build their knowledge.

They invite, provide, and experience feedback in contexts where they are practicing application of new skills and strategies, whether through minilessons in team meetings, co-teaching, or bug-in-ear coaching as they teach with students. Educators embrace feedback that provides specific, clear, action-oriented information related to achieving individual and school or system goals.

This learning and development process is supported by formal feedback and coaching. Educators can engage in feedback discussion with students, peers, critical friends, supervisors, principals, consultants, coaches, and mentors and in processes including guided observations, dialogue about exemplars, self-reflection, and formal coaching cycles.

Educators use formal protocols to structure and tailor feedback depending on process, relationships, and goals. Educators are clear on whether feedback is evaluative or nonevaluative and nonjudgmental and whether the focus is formative and related to continuous improvement or summative and related to end-of-year or unit goals.

## ● IMPLEMENT AND SUSTAIN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Sustained professional learning transforms new learning into changed practice and embedded internalized improvements. Educators ensure the effectiveness of professional learning by developing a comprehensive theory of action and logic model that clearly defines the challenge or problem of practice and the aligned purpose of the professional learning and change process. This plan then informs the timeline and cadence, benchmarks and progress monitoring, and resources needed for extended and sustained support structures.

In addition to a collective strategy and plan, individuals' development toward the vision for change is guided and supported by a plan with goals and benchmarks that delineates the steps for each person to obtain new knowledge, change his or her mindset, or develop a deeper understanding of a practice.

Educators experience sustained learning from

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other educators over time and in a variety of modalities and contexts to deepen understanding and application. Coaches in particular offer implementation support throughout the learning process. In the absence of or in addition to educators filling formal coach roles, teacher leaders, principals, or subject-matter specialists may provide a coaching function to sustain learning.

Applying new learning requires multiple cycles of practice, reflection, and adjustments as well as support structures to guide educators as they transform new learning into practice. This ongoing process requires educators to adapt procedures, calendars, meeting agendas, staffing arrangements, substitute assignments, and other structures. Recognizing the power of “voice and choice,” educators also provide opportunities for individuals to express their opinions and make adaptations as they personalize how and, in some cases, when they access new knowledge or demonstrate an understanding of a change in practice.

Educators adjust the supports and scaffolding of the change process depending on its purpose and goals, as the timing and knowledge differs whether the goal is related to changing mindsets or instituting new practices. They appreciate the need for some supports to be immediately useful while others address longer-term growth or sustainability. To mark and encourage progress, educators recognize quick wins and celebrate achievements along the way to achieving their vision.

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Implementation standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Integrate research about theoretical, technical, and adaptive change into professional learning policies, practices, and models to support and sustain effective implementation.
- Adopt a science of learning contextual focus for systemwide and school-based professional learning to ensure a clear and direct application rather than solely a technical, theoretical focus.
- Support the development of highly skilled educators and ensure clear measures are in place to monitor progress.
- Develop common and clear expectations that define effective practices so that feedback is focused, relevant, valid, and consistent over time.
- Use supervisor and peer feedback, coaching, and continuous learning and improvement strategies to build capacity, strengthen relationships, and improve professional growth.
- Review content and professional learning standards-based implementation tools, role guides, resources, and assessments to determine alignment and coherence with individual, school, and system strategic priorities.
- Implement a continuous improvement process through a variety of modalities (e.g. collaborative learning teams, coaching, peer feedback, seminars) focused on achieving clearly defined student and educator learning goals.

VIGNETTE: **Implementation**

## A LONG-TERM, LARGE-SCALE PLAN TAKES SHAPE

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**T**he regional education services center representing several counties in rural Nebraska has taken on the challenge of implementing a whole-child learning curriculum across multiple pre-K-12 schools and classrooms over a four-year period. Educator surveys over the years revealed an upward trend in demand for more information and resources related to addressing students' social and emotional needs, and then declines in the region's economy made this need even more pressing. They are now in year two.

Mike Taylor is spearheading the effort based on his experience leading several wide-scale professional learning initiatives in both rural and urban settings, as well as his experience as an elementary school principal. He has been with the regional services center for seven years, and while he has been part of a successful science curriculum implementation, he has also seen several expensive initiatives flounder due to poor planning for sustainability and insufficient supports for educators. He believes that a comprehensive plan of sustained and multileveled professional learning is the key to success for this new social and emotional learning initiative.

Taylor understands well that professional learning is a process that extends across sites and contexts, takes time and nurturing, and requires individualized supports and feedback. Armed with the Standards for Professional Learning, research about effective change management, and the whole-child curriculum and tools, Taylor and his team spent a significant amount of time developing the theory of action for the implementation as well as assessing the current state of professional learning, learning communities and teams, and individuals'

experiences and backgrounds.

Ensuring that learning continues in multiple sites in a coherent way over four years is a daunting and complex charge, but Taylor has enlisted a group of educators from across the region who have dedicated a full day every quarter to creating a comprehensive plan and then assessing against the deliverables and benchmarks they set from the beginning.

The team first analyzed data related to several indicators such as chronic absenteeism, discipline referrals, counseling meetings, and student engagement. They then delved into change management theory and the science of how people learn. They read about and discussed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, Stages of Concern, trust building, and teacher agency. This book study group was so helpful to the planning team that they decided they should add a similar book study for educators into their plan.

The next step was to map out the implementation plan for the next four years. The stakeholder team planned the whole-child curriculum implementation as a series of learning experiences across grade levels and content teams with clear goals, benchmarks, and supports aligned with the state's strategic priorities rather than a collection of stand-alone events measured by a fixed number of hours. They also identified leading educators who could provide coaching and mentoring and lead professional learning sessions and events.

Taylor and the team then consulted with principals and district leaders to determine what days in the existing calendars he can use to introduce the initiative and then follow up with assessments of progress and reintroduce content in subsequent years. He asked each principal to find time each month to convene the entire faculty for formal work sessions and seminars related to

a particular knowledge or skill, to be followed by team reflections and discussion. The social and emotional learning curriculum provided guidance materials and discussion questions to support such conversations, but it was up to the regional center and the principals to pace them out appropriately and find or create time in everyone's schedules to focus on them.

Realizing that this is only the first step, he met with each principal to determine how best to provide supports and coaching. The reality is that many schools do not have access to dedicated coaches and mentors — often people are working in hybrid roles and coaching while also teaching — so their workload cannot be increased.

Keeping in mind that the goal of coaching and feedback is to provide specific, targeted, actionable input, Taylor and his team created a plan for differentiated supports in which educators would receive direct coaching, participate in a peer feedback relationship, or co-teach with a colleague, depending on experience and inclination to change. Their goal was to ensure that educators would have the opportunity to practice new strategies in a context where they could get feedback that would help them adjust and improve.

Recognizing the importance of feedback from peers, supervisors, and outside consultants who are expert in the curricular materials and strategies, Taylor created a matrix of learners, their needs, and the supports to be provided. He knows that a new

teacher in a school with overburdened teams will require additional conversations with a coach at stressful points during the year, including the weeks leading up to winter break and the end of the year, when student testing occurs.

An epiphany occurred when Taylor recognized that some of these supports can be offered virtually, connecting teachers from the same grade level or facing the same implementation challenge can connect by videoconference or even through asynchronous conversations in a private online community.

Freed from the constraints of location and travel, he launched virtual platforms for individual and collaborative feedback conversations in which grade-level peers can get together from different schools to discuss classroom-level challenges and successes as well as developmentally appropriate student exercises and assessments. He also planned for the launch of a virtual coaching program to connect coaches with additional educators and figuratively close distances by minimizing coaches' travel between schools.

Supporting educators in this way has had a positive impact on the budget for implementation, which was unfortunately inadequate from the start. Taylor has repeatedly advocated for more funding for sustained professional learning in future years, and he is hoping that the impact data he is collecting will help him make that argument even more forcefully in the future.



# RIGOROUS & INCLUSIVE CONTENT

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction

Reaching Each Student

# Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction



Educators understand and implement the school or district's curriculum, select and use high-quality instructional materials, and strengthen content expertise for their area of responsibility.

## Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction

Educators focus the content of their learning on what their students are learning. They understand and implement the overall vision for student learning that is tied to student standards and curriculum. They master and use the knowledge, skills, and practices essential to effectively identifying and using high-quality instructional materials, assessing student learning, and creating engaging classroom experiences for each student. They seek to master the content tied to their areas of responsibilities in the school and district. Here are the main components of the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard.

### ● UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT CURRICULUM

Educators have the responsibility to understand a school or system's curriculum to align classroom teaching to that framework for student learning. Learning Forward defines curriculum as a coherent plan for achieving defined learning outcomes as outlined in student standards.

Curriculum includes the core instructional or curriculum materials, aligned assessments, scope and sequence frameworks to pace learning, lesson plans, and a wide array of supplemental student materials to achieve learning goals (Steiner et al., 2018; Short & Hirsh, 2020).

Educators at all levels contribute to implementing the curriculum. School and system leaders prioritize ensuring that curricula are current, rigorous, aligned to and informed by college- and career-ready standards, and widely understood by all educators. They also prioritize professional learning tied to a high-quality curriculum and instructional materials because of their importance in ensuring each student has access to and opportunity for rigorous, grade-level learning.

High-quality professional learning advances

educators' capacity to understand curriculum and college- and career-ready standards. Educators master the content of the standards that guide the classes they teach, and they apply their understanding to their teaching and use of materials in the classroom.

They sequence learning based on the curriculum, which helps them implement and apply connections to standards in other subjects for alignment across subject areas and vertical alignment among grade levels.

When student standards change, along with subsequent changes in curriculum, educators collaboratively study how the changes impact their approach to student learning and adjust their practices accordingly with support from peers, coaches, and others.

As they become expert in using curriculum, educators develop assessment literacy related to using a variety of assessment approaches, both summative and formative, throughout the teaching process. Educators use assessments associated with their curriculum to understand which students are not achieving mastery of standards and ensure equity of access to learning and content in their classrooms.

They use formative assessments to continuously monitor learner progress to inform their own learning and adjust instruction and use of materials. They disaggregate assessment data at every opportunity to understand when students are not learning at grade level and discuss root causes and next actions.

Educators learn to use student work and classroom artifacts to gauge student progress, and they develop capacity to engage students in assessing their own learning and that of their peers. Educators build their capacity to adjust instruction and use of materials based on what they learn through assessments.

## ● SELECT HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

In addition to developing the capacity to implement core curriculum, educators build mastery in identifying and using high-quality instructional materials to tailor instruction so it leads to intended outcomes for each student. While educators ideally have a core set of curriculum materials aligned to student standards, ensuring that each student has the opportunity to experience grade-level work requires educators to supplement and scaffold with a range of relevant materials. Such materials may be in any format, including print, digital, video, or multimedia.

Recent research clarifies the importance of the quality of the instructional materials in use in classrooms (Boser et al., 2015; Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012) and the role of high-quality instructional materials in achieving equity in schools. It is equally important that professional learning focus tightly on the use of those materials (Wiener & Pimentel, 2017). While those responsible for a district or organization's overall strategy for student success are responsible for providing access to high-quality curriculum, every educator places a high priority on building capacity for curriculum implementation.

Educators explore the content of the student standards and instructional materials collaboratively, clarify the specific student learning objectives to be monitored and achieved, apply content knowledge through aligned instruction, and tailor the implementation of materials for individual students. When educator teams study materials and their implementation through inquiry cycles, they build their collective capacity to determine whether their materials meet the needs of their students and then make adaptations as needed.

Selecting high-quality instructional materials requires particular knowledge, skills, and practices. First, educators recognize why high-quality instructional materials matter, based on their study of research and information that document the importance of high-quality instructional materials. Depending on their roles, educators may have the responsibility of advocating for high-quality materials, whether to secure sufficient resources to invest in such materials or help peers and other educators embrace their use.

Next, educators become proficient in identifying

what instructional materials are high-quality for their subject area, grade level, and context. They learn what constitutes quality and what matters for their students as they consider standards alignment, cultural relevance, usability and accessibility, and whether there are educative elements to the materials, meaning specific support for the educators using the instructional materials.

Educators also consider whether and how instructional materials represent the diversity of voices, perspectives, and experiences of the students they teach. Educators can turn to trusted resources such as EdReports for information that helps appraise materials for selected content areas. Just as important is studying materials for alignment to appropriate student standards and their cultural relevance.

Establishing expertise in reviewing instructional materials is itself valuable professional learning because it requires a thorough understanding of student content standards and the kinds of instructional materials and strategies that help educators achieve those standards.

When educators have access to high-quality instructional materials, professional learning focused on implementing them becomes part of their daily work, embedded in the school week. Educators engage in professional learning that mirrors what and how students learn using the instructional materials for their classes.

Grounded in an analysis of student data and guided by clear learning goals for themselves and students, educators deepen their understanding of the instructional materials they are using, strengthening content knowledge as needed and building their capacity to understand and apply aligned instructional strategies.

The equity promise of high-quality instructional materials requires that educators strengthen their knowledge and skills in using those materials — as well as their own content knowledge in some cases — to understand which students require additional support to achieve grade-level standards and then apply instructional practices to maintain the rigor of classroom content.

Educators employ strategies to make meaning from student misconceptions to adjust their teaching. Educators also develop and leverage practices to ensure that students are engaged and challenged. High-quality instructional materials

support educators throughout this process as they balance their use of materials and complementary instructional practices.

Technology's role in teaching and learning changes constantly, and educators build expertise in using a range of digital tools and platforms. The instructional materials educators select are chosen for their content and relevance, not format. Therefore, educators build their capacity to use ever-evolving tools to create engaging learning for students. They study the potential for reaching students in innovative ways by leveraging evolving technologies.

Educators develop capacity to implement their high-quality curriculum and instructional materials in blended, hybrid, and remote teaching contexts as their curriculum and circumstances require. They learn to use technology for communication and relationship building, to convey information and complex concepts, for student assessment and engagement, and to build an open and collaborative learning environment with and among students. Educators also develop knowledge, skills, and practices to integrate digital and multimedia resources seamlessly with the face-to-face learning environment.

### ● STRENGTHEN CONTENT EXPERTISE

Educators continually build their discipline-specific content knowledge to understand the conceptual foundations of what students are expected to master as outlined in student standards and curricula. They develop their own mastery to be able to respond to student misconceptions and questions.

Educators also build capacity in content-pedagogical knowledge so they can help students make meaning through developmentally appropriate instructional strategies specific to subject areas. Educators develop expertise in content-specific instruction aligned to the instructional materials they use with students.

They explore the latest research and evidence available related to what they teach, and they apply what they learn in consideration of their students' specific needs. They build and maintain capacity to recognize and address the implicit and explicit biases and cultural implications associated with the content and instruction for which they are responsible.

The most applicable standards for each educator

### INTERSECTING STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

As described in the introduction, educators use the Standards for Professional Learning in concert to achieve their full potential in school improvement. Each of the 10 standards connects to all other standards, and they support one another in a high-functioning learning system.

Here are selected examples of how the **Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction** standard connects to other standards:

- Through the **Learning Designs** standard, educators engage with content and instructional materials in the ways that students do.
- In the **Culture of Collaborative Inquiry** standard, educators learn collaboratively in cycles of continuous improvement, focusing on specific student learning content and goals.
- The **Reaching Each Student** standard and the **Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction** standard are tightly linked as educators build capacity to create learning and implement materials in ways that are culturally relevant and accessible to every learner.

become primary texts for study and learning, whether content-area standards, teaching standards, leadership standards, standards on using technology with students, standards related to social and emotional learning, standards for teaching English learners, or others. Depending on their positions and roles, educators are responsible for mastering relevant standards and strengthening their capacity to apply them to what and how they teach, lead, and support students and other educators in schools.

Educators also draw on multiple guidelines and frameworks that describe particular aspects of and approaches to teaching and learning, which may or may not be embedded in other student content standards. When such frameworks are part of a school or district's approach to student learning, educators build expertise in understanding and using them. Examples include frameworks that describe

personalized learning, 21st-century skills, and Universal Design for Learning. No matter their role, educators build capacity to advance students toward excellence in rigorous learning environments.

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## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Study upcoming curriculum units with grade-level or subject-specific teams to anticipate likely challenges.
- Analyze disaggregated student assessment data to plan, adjust, and differentiate curriculum units based on the needs of all students.
- Collaboratively analyze student and educator work and data to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment policies and practices to ensure an inclusive and student-centered learning environment.
- Explore how the curriculum is most effectively implemented using technology tools to support a variety of teaching formats (synchronous, asynchronous, virtual, hybrid, and in-person).
- Develop a deep mastery of discipline-based knowledge to inform the effective use of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.
- Apply pedagogical content knowledge in a variety of settings to personalize learning and maximize academic outcomes for all students.
- Understand how the Standards for Professional Learning, teaching and leadership standards, and discipline-based standards align to support the school, district, or organization's vision and goals for instructional excellence.

VIGNETTE: **Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction**

## SCIENCE TEAM COLLABORATES TO STUDY AND IMPLEMENT NEW CURRICULUM

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

The science team at Eastside High School is focused on strengthening its capacity to use its new science curriculum over the next year. The science chair, David Morales, and the teachers on his team are concerned that the school's students aren't consistently experiencing the quality of teaching they deserve.

Student test scores compare poorly to other schools in the district, and the team has seen drop-offs in enrollment in higher-level classes, particularly among Black and Latinx students. Several recent graduates enrolled in demanding college courses acknowledged that they weren't prepared. Morales is convinced that the new curriculum materials will address their concerns, and he recognizes that his whole team needs meaningful and sustained professional learning to implement them at high levels.

Fran Maddox, a biology teacher, is eager to share classroom resources that she believes will prove more engaging for their students, and Morales stresses that knowing and using the new curriculum well is the top priority if their concern is to ensure each student has access to rigorous, grade-level learning. The educators agree to study their upcoming units in depth in teams.

Although the district and state had adopted the Next Generation Science Standards the year before the district purchased new instructional materials, the teachers recognized that, after the initial release, district leaders didn't allocate sufficient time for teachers to shift instruction or practices and that their high-quality materials gave them relevant resources to teach to the standards.

After studying the instructional materials, the

teachers are excited yet frustrated. They see so many opportunities to improve, but they also understand how much they have to learn. Among the teachers, the experience levels vary widely, with one team member fresh out of college and Morales with more than 25 years of experience.

While studying the instructional materials, Clara Ortiz-Westin, the team's newest teacher, recognized her need to go back to the Next Generation Science Standards to bolster her understanding of several key concepts in the physical sciences. Her teammate, Jayne Evans, invites Ortiz-Weston to her class for an upcoming lesson that Evans believes demonstrates strategies for addressing misconceptions. Maddox commits to contacting the science chair at Long High School, another school in the district that has seen success with the same instructional materials.

Based on her conversation with the science chair at Long, Maddox offers suggestions for how to streamline their study and starts a shared team Google folder to keep their notes and questions in one location. As a team, the teachers agree they are finding great value in unpacking their instructional materials in detail and sharing what they know with one another. Morales reminds the team that the student learning goals represented throughout the standards and curriculum are their guideposts and that monitoring progress toward those guideposts must be part of their work.

Six months later, the science faculty has made significant progress by establishing a rhythm of unit-specific team meetings, where teachers identify their learning needs and an agenda to meet them. Not only does each teacher have a more thorough understanding of the instructional materials, but teachers have also developed, practiced, and modified a range of supplementary adaptations for the students who struggled to achieve grade-level mastery. A district science subject specialist coach joins learning teams periodically to help examine

data in particular and suggest next actions for study. She also joins teachers in their classrooms to observe and debrief lessons.

The team meetings always begin in the same way: Teachers start by sharing data about student progress, sometimes through student work artifacts, quiz answers, or unit tests. Each teacher is responsible for the student evidence he or she will share. As a team, the teachers make meaning from the data and discuss implications to help revise the unit, including assessments.

From there, the meetings vary. During some conversations, a teacher may conduct a brief minilesson to showcase an instructional practice and answer questions. Other times, the teachers will watch a video together of a model lesson or discuss a supplemental resource they've agreed to study to

strengthen their own subject expertise. They always end by committing to their next agenda.

As the year ends, Morales is pleased to see improvement overall, with evidence in every class of advances in student learning as shown through student work demonstrating mastery, unit tests, and his classroom walk-throughs and observations of rigorous instruction. He knows that in the following year, the team will commit more of its time to learning to use the curriculum.

Morales successfully advocates for an extension of team meeting time with the principal and also makes the case with the curriculum coordinator that a member of his team will serve on the district's instructional materials committee to inform the district's professional learning and implementation practices.

# Reaching Each Student



Educators recognize each student's particular assets and aspects of identity, understand students' contexts and conditions, and serve as advocates for and partners with diverse students, families, and communities.

## Reaching Each Student

**E**ducators engage in professional learning that helps them create high-quality learning experiences for each child, regardless of race, gender, ability, ethnicity, sexual identity, native language, physical and emotional differences, socioeconomic status, or any other aspect of a student's identity or life experience. Here are the main components of the Reaching Each Student standard.

### ● **RECOGNIZE STUDENT ASSETS AND ASPECTS OF IDENTITY**

A critical dimension of leveraging professional learning to achieve equity in schools is recognizing the importance of building all educators' knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions to tailor teaching in consideration of each student's particular needs. This requires the development of skills and practices for educators to address the cultural relevance of student learning, as well as the social and emotional aspects of the classroom experience.

Professional learning that increases an educator's capacity to personalize learning based on who a student is and how he or she learns is tightly integrated with the academic aspects of teaching and learning. Such learning takes into account the curriculum and instructional materials in use in a classroom. The quality of materials is essential to reaching each student as is the degree to which materials represent the students in schools and classrooms. Educators also address their capacity to recognize and serve students with a range of abilities, often working in partnership with specialized staff to adapt all aspects of teaching to create learning that is both rigorous and accessible.

As educators strengthen their capacity to teach to the whole child, addressing all aspects of academic and nonacademic development, understanding the importance of social and emotional learning is

### **A NOTE ON DEFINITIONS**

As educators and their advocates expand their understanding of and strategies for eradicating barriers to learning grounded in long-standing inequities, shared definitions of relevant terms are essential for sustained improvements, particularly among educators who share collective responsibility for a group of students. Leading thinkers in the field of education, for example, have continued to refine their conceptualization of developing curriculum that is relevant, rigorous, and sustaining for students (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

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. This definition is one part of Learning Forward's equity position statement, available at [learningforward.org/about/vision-mission-beliefs/](https://learningforward.org/about/vision-mission-beliefs/).

critical. Educators learn about the intersection of students' social and emotional skills and academic success and leverage strategies to help students develop such skills (Jones & Kahn, 2017).

Strengthening educator capacity to teach each student effectively and create anti-racist classrooms includes a focus on self and the particular students educators serve as well as in-depth learning about various content and pedagogical areas to improve classroom culture and instruction.

Educators examine their own experiences, assumptions, biases, and behaviors as part of developing culturally sustaining instruction. They move beyond reflection by shifting practices, monitoring impact, and sustaining the critical work of talking openly with colleagues and students about such topics as race, culture, and class.

Educators learn to create classrooms where students have voice, agency, and safety to talk openly about their lived experiences. What educators hear from their students helps them identify areas for further exploration.

### ● UNDERSTAND STUDENT CONTEXT AND CONDITIONS

Educators learn also about the big-picture aspects of student identity and experience, increasing their knowledge of local, national, and global history and culture as well as contemporary implications so they understand better the experiences and needs of the students, families, and communities they serve.

Educators explore the complexities of how students' identities affect their lives and their contexts for teaching and learning. They seek to understand how all aspects of a student's life impact his or her opportunity and access to meaningful schooling, including family or caretaker details, living situations, socioeconomic conditions, and physical, emotional, and mental health details.

Professional learning that increases educators' capacity to see and leverage aspects of students' identities as assets rather than deficits enables them to create culturally sustaining instruction and classroom environments.

### ● SERVE AS PARTNERS AND ADVOCATES

Educators strengthen capacity to interact with families and caretakers as well as community members so they can draw on essential sources of student information to create meaningful learning experiences. Educators who work with families as partners provide essential support to parents and caretakers, who are then better positioned to engage fully in their children's education.

Educators working as family partners can more deeply leverage cultural assets, integrating

## RESOURCES

- **Ferlazzo, L. (2017, July 6).** Author interview: 'Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies.' *Education Week Teacher*. [blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom\\_qa\\_with\\_larry\\_ferlazzo/2017/07/author\\_interview\\_culturally\\_sustaining\\_pedagogies.html](https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom_qa_with_larry_ferlazzo/2017/07/author_interview_culturally_sustaining_pedagogies.html)
- **Moisés Esteban-Guitart, M. & Moll, L.C. (2015, March 5).** Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology*, 20(1). doi.org/10.1177/1354067X13515934

relevant information into instruction. They are also better positioned to allocate or advocate for particular resources to meet a student's need for specific support, whether that comes in the form of technology tools, learning need modifications, or health and wellness referrals.

Individual educators are not solely responsible for serving the multitude of various student needs that are often identified in the classroom. However, any educator may serve as a primary liaison for a student and therefore needs capacity to tap appropriate colleagues and collaborate to address particular student needs.

## REFERENCES

- **Jones, S.M. & Kahn, J. (2017, September 13).** *The evidence base for how we learn: Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development*. The Aspen Institute.
- **Ladson-Billings, G. (2014, Spring).** Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, (84)1, 74-84.

## ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

To achieve the key outcomes of the Reaching Each Student standard, educators develop individual and collective capacity through high-quality professional learning when they:

- Understand diverse student contexts and access to all learning supports needed to accelerate student identity and learning assets in access, opportunities, and outcomes.
- Explore how an aspect of student identity offers opportunities to customize teaching and learning and what specific instructional strategies will ensure particular students have access and opportunity to learning.
- Study how to create a safe and inclusive learning environment that recognizes social and emotional as well as cognitive aspects of learning.
- Build trusting educator-student, student-peer, and educator-family relationships that value each student's assets to support academic learning and positive social and emotional development.
- Support appropriate social and emotional learning with practices that focus on the development of the whole child.
- Develop and sustain family engagement by cultivating family partnerships to support student learning in and out of school.
- Understand, value, and employ the community's cultural, social, intellectual, and political resources to promote student learning and reciprocal partnerships.

VIGNETTE: **Reaching Each Student**

## STEM ACADEMY STRENGTHENS CULTURALLY SUSTAINING INSTRUCTION

*The following narrative, a composite informed by actual events, illustrates how this standard impacts the course of professional learning.*

**T**he Blendon STEM Academy serves students in grades K-5 in an urban setting in the Midwest. Kicking off her second year in the building, principal Carolyn Lee is determined that her grade-level teams will integrate a focus on culturally sustaining instruction into their weekly conversations about upcoming lessons. Based on student engagement and performance data, Lee believes students will benefit if faculty members strengthen their capacity in this arena.

Seventy-two percent of the student population of Blendon STEM is Black, and teachers understand that their instruction has to meet the needs of the students they serve. At the same time, there are very few teachers of color on the faculty.

As one of the few Black educators in the building, Lee knew that she would need to ask her colleagues at the central office for support in increasing teachers' awareness about racism and its role in the classroom as part of the effort to increase the cultural relevance of instruction throughout the building. She also recognized that several teachers in the building had already embraced strategies for incorporating more aspects of their students' backgrounds into instruction.

The entire faculty participated in a district-led professional learning series on implicit bias. While Lee knew this was necessary, she also recognized it wasn't sufficient to achieve the level of awareness essential to shift practice. The sessions were useful in introducing concepts of white privilege and normalizing conversations about race. They also revealed some educators' discomfort in talking about students' race, with a couple of white educators preferring to remain color-blind on the issue.

Lee embraced the opportunity to have a district coach visit several of the grade-level teams as they processed follow-up readings from the sessions and started to consider implications for next learning. The coach facilitated one difficult conversation in particular and recommended that he return occasionally to continue the conversations over the course of the year.

Meanwhile, three of the educators with experience in infusing cultural relevance into lessons invited teachers to join them in their classrooms to observe specific lessons. Before each lesson, Lee shared a Google doc with four or five look-fors and questions to guide observation.

Observing teachers kept notes, and Lee facilitated a conversation after the lesson. Each lesson resulted in teachers identifying specific takeaways and generalizing tactics they might adapt in their classrooms.

The opportunities to observe colleagues contributed to the grade-level teams' weekly conversations. Each team took a closer look at its grade-level data, disaggregating the data by race and gender and identifying particular learning needs.

Each team established measurable goals for students to then pinpoint their own learning goals as teachers. Most teams revised upcoming lessons and used unit assessments to monitor progress. Both the district-level coach and Lee provided support to the teams as they implemented new lessons. They also served as team facilitators on occasion.

Faculty explored individual and collaborative opportunities for learning to expand on their work together in grade-level cohorts. For example, the coach and a 5th-grade teacher designed a learning day for the teacher using a student shadowing learning design so she could walk in one of her student's shoes and deepen her understanding of his experience as a Black youth in the community and the school. She brought her lessons learned back to

her team and considered implications for her class and the school as a whole.

As part of their immersion into understanding slavery, the Civil Rights movement, and recent race-related incidents in the U.S., six white educators undertook a book study that evolved into a book club, moving from a focus on slavery and the founding of the nation to the ways that racism undergirds so many aspects of contemporary society.

For each book they read, the team held a conversation that was open to any faculty member. Lee joined occasionally. For one conversation, she invited a local law enforcement officer who had long volunteered at school events to offer her point of view. She also engaged the school's parent group in a parallel conversation around a selected book, which spurred a series of parent-teacher pizza nights for informal conversations to surface insights that helped educators understand individual students and families as well as cultural connections to deepen.

While the topics moved beyond the school's STEM focus, the educators' deeper understanding of societal barriers helped them with instructional

goals as well as to become informed advocates, for example, for students' ongoing access to rigorous learning in subjects where Black students are often underrepresented.

As the school year wound down, Lee invited grade-level representatives for a frank conversation about how the learning had served them and what changes they saw in their data and the school's culture. Several teachers cited successes with the team-level goals they had established for students.

As the conversation continued, some teachers confessed they still felt uncomfortable at times talking about race, but they understood how important it is. The 5th-grade teacher who had shadowed a student for a day advocated for more opportunities to hear from students and volunteered to design a student survey to get student input to inform their learning for the coming year. Another educator volunteered to partner and create a family-caretaker survey as well. Lee concluded by celebrating their progress and inviting them to continue the debrief with their grade-level teams.

## Crosswalk with 2011 Standards for Professional Learning

DRAFT REVISED STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	2011 STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS	
<p><b>Equity Foundations:</b> Educators establish a vision for equitable access to high-quality professional learning, create structures to ensure such access, and sustain a culture that supports the development of all staff members.</p>	
<p><b>Culture of Collaborative Inquiry:</b> Educators commit to and drive continuous improvement, engage in collaborative learning, and take shared responsibility for improving learning for all students.</p>	<p><b>Learning Communities:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.</p>
<p><b>Leadership:</b> Educators establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, ensure a coherent system of supports to build individual and collective capacity, and advocate for professional learning by making both the impact of professional learning and their own learning visible to others.</p>	<p><b>Leadership:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.</p>
<p><b>Resources:</b> Educators allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize their use to achieve a vision for equitable outcomes for all students, and monitor the impact of resource investments.</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.</p>

## Crosswalk with 2011 Standards for Professional Learning, continued

DRAFT REVISED STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	2011 STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES</b>	
<p><b>Equity Drivers:</b> Educators reflect individually and collectively to identify and address their own biases, support and collaborate with diverse colleagues, and cultivate beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors that accelerate ambitious outcomes for all educators and students.</p>	
<p><b>Evidence:</b> Educators use evidence and data from multiple sources to plan and monitor their learning and assess its impact on students.</p>	<p><b>Data:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.</p>
<p><b>Learning Designs:</b> Educators set relevant and contextualized learning goals and apply the science of learning to implement evidence-based learning designs.</p>	<p><b>Learning Designs:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Implementation:</b> Educators understand and apply research on change management theory, engage in and learn from feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning that leads to long-term educator, student, school, and system outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Implementation:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.</p>
<b>RIGOROUS &amp; INCLUSIVE CONTENT</b>	
<p><b>Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction:</b> Educators understand and implement the school or district’s curriculum, select and use high-quality instructional materials, and strengthen content expertise for their area of responsibility.</p>	<p><b>Outcomes:</b> Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.</p>
<p><b>Reaching Each Student:</b> Educators recognize each student’s particular assets and aspects of identity, understand students’ contexts and conditions, and serve as advocates for and partners with diverse students, families, and communities.</p>	