THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

LOOKING AHEAD

February 2021, Vol. 42, No. 1

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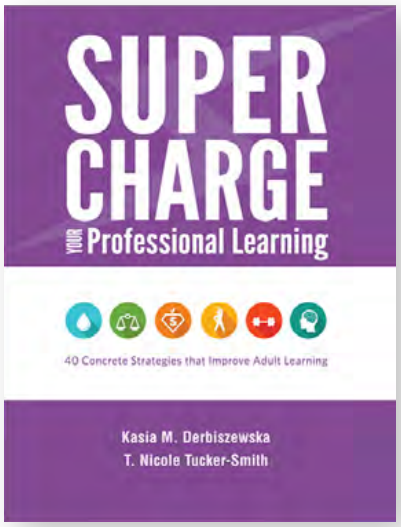
THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

> A power-packed guide to professional learning that is both rewarding and fun.
>
> — **Jennifer Levine,** Director of Professional Learning, CAST

Supercharge Your Professional Learning

40 Concrete Strategies that Improve Adult Learning



Kasia M. Derbiszewska is a nationally recognized expert in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) who collaborates with schools, districts, states, and other organizations to scale education reform.

T. Nicole Tucker-Smith, founder and CEO of Lessoncast, helps schools implement professional learning initiatives focused on inclusive leadership and teaching practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, and equity best practice.

> We all crave time for inspiration, growth, and reflection, and we know these cravings cannot be satisfied with 'one-size-fits-all PD' and 'sit-and-get.' This book is the ultimate menu to support a transition to 'supercharged PD.' If you are a PD provider, you need this in your toolbox.
>
> — **Katie Novak,** author of the bestsellers *Innovate Inside the Box* (with George Couros) and *UDL Now!*

Supercharge Your Professional Learning is available now in paperback ($34.99, 154 pages, 8.5x11″, ISBN: 978-1-930583-74-0) and in ePub format ($34.99, ISBN: 978-1-930583-39-9) wherever books are sold.

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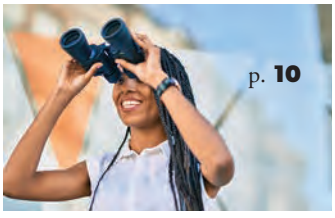
FEBRUARY 2021, VOLUME 42, NO. 1

in this issue ...

VOICES 7


p. 10


p. 14

RESEARCH 19

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

in this issue ...

FOCUS 23
LOOKING AHEAD


p. 24


p. 32


p. 28


p. 44

I SAY

Miguel Cardona

U.S. secretary of education nominee

"Oftentimes our educators take on a lot of the stressors that our students are experiencing, and they're trying to support the students as best they can. It's critically important, as we recover from this pandemic, that we look at our educators' needs as well and make sure that we're taking care of our educators so that they can take care of our students."

Source: Testimony before the U.S. Senate education committee, Feb. 3, 2021

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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- Providing effective feedback
- Coaching individuals and teams
- Selecting learning designs

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

HERE WE GO
Suzanne Bouffard

THE HOPE OF BRIGHTER DAYS AHEAD

When designer Kitty Black showed me a draft of this issue's cover, I couldn't look away. Over the past year, there have been many images from which I couldn't turn my eyes, or my thoughts late at night. But this was different. I kept looking at the image of this effervescent young girl because it's filled with hope.

This issue of *The Learning Professional* is about possibility and the hope of brighter days ahead. This is not to deny the many struggles we continue to face. But as authors in this issue point out, there is also opportunity in crisis, opportunity that can galvanize us now that there are some lights in the darkness.

There is opportunity in crisis, opportunity that can galvanize us now that there are some lights in the darkness.

For example, Linda Darling-Hammond, founding president of the Learning Policy Institute and leader of President Biden's education transition team, points out that educators have been innovating in extraordinary ways (p. 24). We can leverage these developments to transform teaching, she says — if we provide ample opportunity for educators to learn from one another.

Jal Mehta, professor at Harvard and an expert on deeper learning, finds potential in the way teachers have quickly become comfortable with new teaching methods they were reluctant to try before (p. 32). He shares reflection questions to help you leverage those kinds of shifts as you move forward.

Mary Antón, Lee Teitel, and Tamisha Williams (p. 36) write about a hope "rooted in the power of what the collective can do" to change the status quo and disrupt inequities. They share examples of how virtual learning networks are providing new opportunities to focus on race and equity.

Plus, Melinda George and Denise Glyn Borders share Learning Forward's hopes for more professional learning investment at the federal level and our requests of the new U.S. presidential administration. And on p. 28, Learning Forward team members share what they've been learning from our newest professional learning network, Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World, which is helping districts optimize new learning environments in equitable ways.

In this issue, I am thrilled to introduce three columnists who will share their insights with you throughout 2021. Jim Knight, senior partner at the Instructional Coaching Group, writes the new Keep Growing column. Sharron Helmke, Learning Forward senior consultant, continues the Coaches Corner column. Angela Ward, founder and CEO of 2ward Equity Consulting, pioneers the Equity in Focus column. Ward is also hosting a special members-only discussion of this month's column and the reflection tool she created that appears on p. 64. See p. 65 for details.

Of course, to achieve the potential this issue's authors envision, educators need support more than ever before. The Ideas section homes in on a crucial but often overlooked area of support: social and emotional well-being. The authors encourage us to attend to the needs of the whole educator as we do the whole child and address the needs and unique stresses for teachers of color.

As you read through this issue, we think you'll be drawn to many images beyond the one on the cover, as we feature original art that is integral to its creators' learning processes and professional growth. On p. 12 and p. 76, Chelyse Stefanik-Miller shares her journey with sketchnoting, describing how visual notetaking has changed her approach to learning. On p. 39, Tamisha Williams shares how she uses drawing when she facilitates professional learning.

What really makes us at Learning Forward optimistic about the future is all of you and your students. What about you? Share with us what makes you hopeful. You can send us your art or poetry, post a photo, or leave us a comment. Tag us on Twitter and Facebook with #LearnTwdTLP.

Keep up the great work, and keep the faith. ■

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

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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Equity and excellence in teaching and learning.

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INSPIRE. EXPRESS. ADVOCATE.

VOICES

NEW COLUMNS DEBUT

This issue of *The Learning Professional* introduces three regular columns. These authors will share their insights with our readers throughout 2021.

- **Coaches Corner**, by Sharron Helmke: "Support teachers or challenge them? We can do both."
- **Equity in Focus**, by Angela M. Ward: "Equity isn't just a word — it's an action."
- **Keep Growing**, by Jim Knight: "How to foster hope in tough times."

Learning Forward's recommendations address not only the immediate needs of educators but also several ways to improve the quality and equity of the supports provided for educators over the long term.

Melinda George, top, is chief policy officer and Denise Glyn Borders is president/CEO of Learning Forward.

CALL TO ACTION

Melinda George and Denise Glyn Borders

PRESIDENT BIDEN, HERE'S WHAT EDUCATORS NEED NOW

As the new U.S presidential administration takes shape, we at Learning Forward have hope and confidence that President Biden and Vice President Harris' leadership will mean great progress for every student and educator in America's education systems.

Learning Forward is ready to support and advise the new administration as it puts in place policies and funding to ensure high-quality teaching and learning for every student and, in particular, students who have been historically marginalized and underserved.

To that end, Learning Forward sent a letter to the Biden-Harris transition team that outlined our recommendations and requests, which fall into four categories:

- We recommend the creation of an Office of Educator Support, with a leader who reports to the secretary of education.
- We urge the administration to invest in meaningful research about the quality of and equitable access to professional learning as well as the impact of professional learning on teacher and student outcomes.
- We encourage the new administration to incentivize adherence to the definition of professional learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by embedding the definition in federal requests for proposals, competitive priorities, and subsequent award reporting requirements.
- We request funding for educator support, technology as a professional learning resource, increased broadband connectivity and access to devices, and social and emotional supports for educators.

Here is an excerpt of the letter. In this critical year, we ask Learning Forward members to make your voices heard. To learn more, visit **learningforward.org/advocacy.**

EXCERPT FROM THE LETTER TO THE BIDEN-HARRIS EDUCATION TRANSITION TEAM

Learning Forward, the only association focused solely on professional learning, offers the Biden-Harris administration the following recommendations for improving outcomes for teachers, principals, administrators, and students by improving the quality of and access to professional learning for all educators. Our recommendations address not only the immediate needs of educators but also several ways to improve the quality and equity of the supports provided for educators over the long term.

Create an Office of Educator Support.

Learning Forward recommends that a new Office of Educator Support be created at the U.S. Department of Education, with a leader who reports to the secretary of education. This office would serve as a repository of expertise, research and data, and best practices in professional learning.

The office would also focus on how professional learning can drive a more diverse and highly qualified education workforce of teachers, principals, and administrators. In addition, it would provide policy recommendations to ensure equitable access for every student to highly qualified and well-supported educators.

These recommendations would include building a strong workforce, aligning preservice and inservice needs, and promoting widespread use of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. Finally, this office could provide oversight for Title IIA of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Invest in meaningful research about professional learning.

Learning Forward believes that research is needed about the quality of and equitable access to professional learning that meets the ESSA definition, as well as about the impact of professional learning on teacher and student outcomes.

Current data show that the least-qualified teachers are placed in schools with the highest percentage of students of color and students living in poverty. Therefore, those schools require evidence-based, carefully selected professional learning aligned to student and educator needs. Learning Forward requests that the Biden administration and the incoming department fund research, including data collection related to the effectiveness of the Title IIA program and evidence from field-based effective practices aligned to the ESSA definition of professional development.

Learning Forward has begun a compilation of data briefs documenting professional learning's impact, and we would like to see this effort grow to be a national effort. Federal grant programs should prioritize field-informed research on access to and impact of professional learning interventions such as coaching, mentoring, and professional learning communities. Grants should require researchers to provide professional learning related to their findings so that states, school districts, and educators can make research-based decisions on the professional learning in which they choose to engage.

Incentivize adherence to the definition of professional learning in ESSA.

Professional learning must be aligned to the ESSA definition to have its intended impact. Leveraging the definition could be achieved by embedding the definition in federal requests for proposals, competitive priorities, and subsequent award reporting requirements, making professional learning a priority in discretionary grants, emphasizing and requiring alignment in other title programs, and raising awareness of the definition using the bully pulpit of the department. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning are aligned to the definition and provide a framework and tools to help educators at all levels meet the requirements of the definition.

Increase funding to support educators.

We look forward to a signal from the new administration that it is seeking to bolster funding for educator support, particularly Title IIA, both through President Biden's fiscal year 2022 budget request and through COVID relief funding. Educator support is more critical than ever as we address COVID-related student learning losses and the demand to accelerate learning.

Increase funding for technology as a professional learning resource.

The pandemic has revealed a tremendous opportunity to leverage technology as an integral aspect of ongoing, job-embedded professional learning. Technology enables increased access to professional learning and increased access for educators to resources, experts, and peers via asynchronous learning and online communities.

During this pandemic, we have witnessed how technology has increased just-in-time supports for educators, bridged geographic distances, connected isolated educators, and helped forge new and different connections and communities. As we move into the next phase of COVID-impacted teaching and learning, the Biden administration and the department must invest in capacity building for educators and systems to use technology-enabled supports for professional learning such as virtual coaching, virtual peer observations, virtual collaboration, and facilitated online communities.

Increase broadband connectivity and access to devices.

The pandemic has revealed the enormous homework gap that exists when some students have access to high-speed internet access at home and others don't. The homework gap disproportionately affects students from families of color and in low-income households. Many educators themselves experience an access gap.

Common Sense Media estimates that 8% of all teachers (between 300,000 and 400,000 teachers) lack an adequate internet connection for distance teaching. In addition to experiencing challenging circumstances as they teach online, these teachers are missing opportunities to learn from their peers and those outside their districts about how to navigate this difficult time. Learning Forward asks that the new administration prioritize delivering support for home broadband connectivity and appropriate learning devices to all educators and students.

Fund social and emotional supports for educators.

Learning Forward urges the new administration to make funding available for counseling for educators as well as encouraging flexibility in local regulations such as adding mental health days, as educators adjust to the new normal during and following the pandemic. This would include building capacity for trauma-informed teaching and learning, engagement around social justice issues, and facilitating student voice.

The secretary of education, President Biden, Dr. Biden, and other members of the administration occupy positions that provide an impressive opportunity to influence public discourse and policy. Given the pressure on educators to navigate and help students navigate the dual pandemics of coronavirus and social justice movements, we hope that they will use their bully pulpits in the first 100 days and thereafter to acknowledge the importance of supporting and retaining educators. ■

Wendy Robinson

'YOU CAN'T STAY IN THE NOW'

Wendy Robinson was superintendent of Fort Wayne Community Schools in Indiana from 2003 to 2020 and worked in that district for 47 years. She became president of the Learning Forward board of trustees in December 2020.

How did you initially get involved with Learning Forward?

At the beginning of my superintendency, I was meeting with a group of district administrators, and one shared that elementary schools in a region he oversaw were showing strong gains. When we dug into why, one of the things that came out was that he was working with Kay Psencik from Learning Forward. They were working with teachers to help them understand student data and learn from it. I asked, "So why aren't the rest of us doing that, too?"

I always said that it's nice to have a school show progress, but what are we going to do to have consistent growth across the district? Everything pointed to the need for system leadership in order to do capacity building. Learning Forward helped us build that. It was a gradual process of becoming more and more involved with Learning Forward over the years.

After this dark period, we're going to have to rely on professional learning to help bring us back together.

How did professional learning evolve in your district?

When I was starting out it in education, most professional learning was sit-and-get style. Early on in my administrative positions, I did have informal learning communities. I had a group of five or six fellow principals I would call when I had questions. We'd do an emergency conversation to solve an issue, but half the time we were just putting a bandage on it. We weren't looking at the outcome. What was lacking every single time was the "so what?"

As the state became focused on accountability [in the early 2000s], it mandated professional development, but it wasn't based on any problem or research. We were complying, but nothing was happening. We had pockets of excellence. A downfall of compliance is that the target keeps changing. A lot of our early professional learning was around how to get ready for the test. But every week, the target we were supposed to focus on changed.

About 10 or 12 years ago, through our work with Learning Forward, we said professional learning needs to be linked to everything, not just be an addendum to the [district] plan. We knew we needed a system approach.

How did you build that system approach?

We had 50 schools, and we knew we couldn't start off with all 50. So we worked on first having consistency across 10 schools. We focused on the teacher quality piece. We made sure the teachers in these high-needs schools wanted to be there, and they made certain commitments. One was to engage in schoolwide professional learning. This was a turning point away from pockets of excellence [and toward systemwide improvement].

Also, for all schools, we moved away from "flavor of the day" professional development. Everybody in the district had the same planning template that helped them find the issues we needed to deal with and then say what capacity building was needed. That drove the professional learning, and it was the beginning of professional learning communities (PLCs).

Wendy Robinson is president of the Learning Forward board of trustees.

What have been some of the most valuable things you've learned from Learning Forward?

Learning Forward has been a big part of our learning. Every time we went to an academy or a conference, we learned something new from other districts. The concept of PLCs is the

nugget that has been most consistent. Over time, we started turning over the learning to administrators and teachers.

Also, the Standards for Professional Learning have been very valuable. They became one focus of our planning, and people came to internalize them. It became second nature that any time you planned anything, you would tie it into that.

[Over time], it became evident to us that there is no such thing as mass professional learning. It has to be about systems, but it happens on the group or school or district level. And you have to have your central office embedded in professional learning because they're the ones developing curriculum. For example, the budget person needs to understand why schools need the funding for professional learning. We have to become an entire learning community.

What do you see as the most pressing needs in the field right now?

Before the pandemic, people had to collaborate; they had no choice. But now we're all isolated, and none of us has figured out how to get people closer together. After this dark period, we're going to have to rely on professional learning to help bring us back together. We'll have to think about what role professional learning plays for the collective and for the individual, including the emotional and spiritual.

There are people who will never get over the fear of coming to work. We'll have to ask ourselves: How do you get individuals whole again? Because adults have to be whole themselves before they can help kids.

Then we've got to focus on building teams. A year is a long time for people not to have the structures that have been built. Leaders are going to have to be responsible for looking at how you bring your team together again. How do we understand and try to process what we've been through — there has to be an entry plan for bringing everyone back — understanding the obligation of systems and teams.

That's a lot to do. How do you not get overwhelmed?

Personally, I have such abiding faith in people who go into education. In our profession, it's a moral obligation to focus on doing the right thing. You can't stay in the now — ever. People in my district used to say, "You're five years ahead of us." Well, someone has to be, because if someone's not, then you'll just focus on the problems you don't know how to solve today.

What are you looking forward to in your work with Learning Forward over the next year?

The wonderful thing about professional learning is that somebody somewhere has researched it, done it — whatever it is. One of the powerful things about Learning Forward is it opens you up to national and international connections and people who have solved problems.

It's absolutely exciting for me [to be in this role as president of the board] because we have a very strong board with a high value for this work, and the board members have diverse backgrounds but a like-minded commitment to professional learning.

People often say they are lifelong learners, but you can't say that without demonstrating it. I love learning from Learning Forward's journals, conferences, emails, and all of it. As a board member, I have an obligation to stay connected and continue learning. ■

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Chelyse Stefanik-Miller

A PICTURE OF LEARNING

Current role: Professional learning specialist, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia

Previous roles: Math specialist and math resource teacher; elementary and middle school teacher; K-12 music teacher

Learning Forward member since: 2014

Work that caught our eye: A frequent participant in Learning Forward conferences and events, she uses sketchnotes, also called visual note-taking, to organize and record her thinking. We enjoy seeing how she represents her learning visually.

How she started sketchnoting: "I saw someone sketchnoting at a Learning Forward Virginia workshop, and I loved how I got to see the learning of the day evolve. A couple years later, I was trying to grow our district's microcredential program — we call them specializations — and I thought it was important for me as a leader to earn a microcredential. I decided to learn how to do sketchnoting. I read about it and watched videos on it. I attended a conference with the idea I was just going to practice. But the process came really naturally, and I loved it. Now I can't take notes any other way."

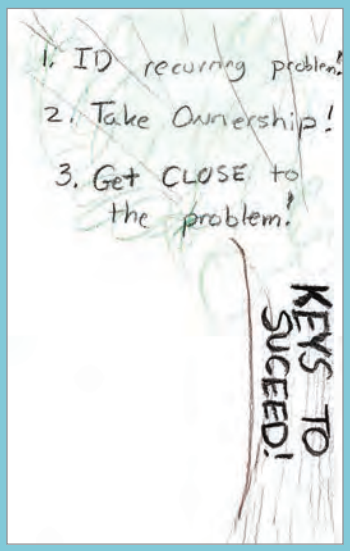
Why she loves sketchnotes: "You have to use a lot of cognition to listen, synthesize, and draw. You really have to follow where the presenter's thinking is going so you can put it into a visual. As a result, I'm able to remember things much better. Also, as a leader in my division, I can make my learning visible and inspire other people."

Other areas of expertise: "In 2015, when the district asked each specialist to develop an area of focus, I chose online learning and digital technology. As a young professional and a mom, it was important to me to have opportunities for teachers to learn on their own time, like after their kids went to bed. We've now been doing online professional learning for years. It helped this year with moving to virtual school because we already had some really strong examples of online professional learning."

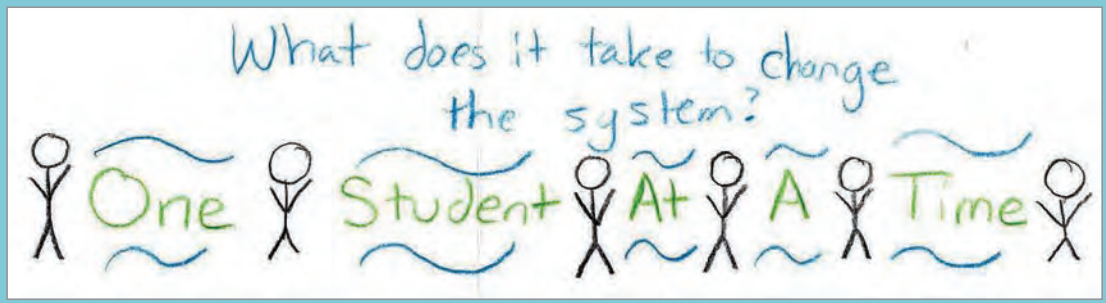
Why she's a Learning Forward member: "Learning Forward's resources and events guide a lot of the work we do in our district. For example, we applied the Standards for Professional Learning to create a course called Tuning Your Professional Learning Plan, where participants brought their plan to the session and we went through the standards and whether the plans address them. Then we took the participants through a backward plan to be sure the students benefited. Learning Forward is a valuable membership because of the processes in thinking and connections with others."

Why she values her Learning Forward local affiliate: "Having connections with other professionals in the state is valuable. When you learn from each other, you can provide even more support to teachers. This last year has shown how necessary that is. We've had to lean on and learn from each other when we were catapulted into a situation where no one was the expert. We have to continue to seek others and connect because that's where our greatest learning happens." ■

See more sketchnotes by Chelyse Stefanik-Miller in At a Glance on p. 76 or follow her on Twitter @ ChelyseMiller.



Examples of Stefanik-Miller's sketchnotes, created during recent webinars and conferences.



Illustrations by CHELYSE STEFANIK-MILLER

Sharron Helmke

SUPPORT TEACHERS OR CHALLENGE THEM? WE CAN DO BOTH

The challenge and opportunity we're being offered in 2021 is to meet teachers where they are while supporting their sustained growth.

Traditionally we welcome each new year as a fresh start, and many of us looked forward to 2021 with that same sense of hope, albeit more guarded than usual. Then, the insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6 brought us yet *another* example of the fragility of things we often take for granted.

Many of us held our breath until Jan. 20, when we witnessed restoration of the fundamental bedrock of our democracy. This year's Inauguration Day was different than previous ceremonies, and even as we lament this and our many other losses, we are reminded that resilience is possible. In the eloquent words of inaugural poet Amanda Gorman:

The new dawn blooms as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
If only we're brave enough to be it

So we move bravely into a new year, allowing our grief over losses both great and small to become the foundation of our resilience, shining light on whatever is within our personal reach.

My light is coaching, and I've been offered a way to shine that light in this recurring space to offer timely inspiration for coaches. As a coach, coaching consultant, and coach of coaches, it's my intention to challenge you to consider *every* coaching conversation an opportunity to brighten the light of your own coaching skills while supporting the growth of others. My coaching intention for 2021 is to fully embrace my role as an agent of professional learning and catalyst for positive change. I invite you to join me in this intention or any variation that suits your situation.

I feel a need to recommit myself to the full potential of coaching because school closures in the spring thrust many coaches, including me, into the role of lifeguard, helping teachers stay afloat in a sea of change and technology demands. Teachers needed coaches to be resource providers and technology supporters. This was the most pressing work, and we rose to it.

But as the immediacy of the spring shutdown drifted into the past and a new school year began, a new perspective began to emerge. I continued to hear from coaches supporting teachers' most immediate and stress-inducing needs, but I also heard from others looking to move beyond immediate needs toward longer-term goals, a "growing ourselves out of our problems" mindset. They argued we need to remember we are professional *learning* communities — we identify challenges and *learn* our way through them.

It seemed proponents almost exclusively held either one view or the other, and the choice determined whether coaches functioned primarily as resource providers and technology supporters or whether they were inviting teachers into problem-based inquiry and new learning.

As we consider how to best navigate 2021, it's time to take an inclusive view, asking what doing both — supporting and challenging — might look and sound like. It starts with recognizing there is no campuswide answer. Some teachers will need continued resource and technology support, while others may be ready — even eager — to take a more aggressive approach toward both immediate and systemic challenges using inquiry-based learning.

Coaches understand that sometimes the only way to improve a situation is to shift our

Continued on p. 18

Sharron Helmke (sharronhelmke@gmail.com) is a Gestalt awareness coach and a senior consultant for Learning Forward.

Angela M. Ward

EQUITY ISN'T JUST A WORD — IT'S AN ACTION

Educational leaders, specifically professional learning leaders, must all take actions, individually and collectively, to change systems while changing practices.

As an antiracist educator, I support colleagues in affective learning spaces to engage in critical self-reflection to create schools that are safe and supportive for students, staff, and families regardless of identity. In the past year, I have found myself coaching countless adults to develop their discursive muscle around educational equity during the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial violence, including the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on the educational, mental, physical, and financial health of Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities.

In summer 2020, I was struck by the juxtaposition of countless people and organizations — from community-serving institutions to celebrity athletes to Fortune 500 companies — posting letters of solidarity to denounce police violence while many state and national leaders refused to acknowledge racial violence.

Simultaneously, educators and politicians angrily took sides about what kind of learning approaches would be equitable and effective in a pandemic. Amid this national rhetoric, schools have been tossed around like political footballs.

Yet equity is not just a word, it is an action. You cannot do equity through a statement alone. The words have to be tied to concrete events that hold people individually and collectively accountable to an equitable outcome. Without measurable, attainable, and specific goals to hold executive and campus-level leaders accountable, equity postures and policies will not reach the classroom.

As educators, we love our jobs and get to shape the future of our world through the children we serve. What we often miss is our responsibility to critically love the system of education. Because that system has failed to shift through the ages, we cannot take at face value that policy decisions are equitable for all students. Educational leaders, specifically professional learning leaders, must all take actions, individually and collectively, to change systems while changing practices.

LEARN MORE

This continuing column will focus on critical self-reflection and implementing antiracist practices in schools. Learn more in the current issue:

- See p. 64 for tools by Ward on turning equity statements into action.
- Engage with Ward at 1 p.m. Eastern time March 29 for a discussion about her strategies and tools for action. **bit.ly/2NWRxQX**

I offer that teachers are the main actors in educational systems, and they stand ready to take action, to implement equitable strategies and tools. Teachers possess the praxis necessary to turn education on its head and create the space for all children to succeed. But who will provide teachers with permission to act on oppressive structures and implement more equitable practices? What will it take for teachers to dismantle classroom-level oppression immediately and not wait for approval? Ask yourself: Do teachers really need permission?

I invite you to critically reflect on your role in the system of education. Each role impacts the student and teacher in the classroom. As you engage in reflection, be honest about your

Continued on p. 18

Angela M. Ward (angela@2wardequity.com, @2WardEquity) is founder and CEO of 2Ward Equity.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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

Jim Knight

HOW TO FOSTER HOPE IN TOUGH TIMES

Hope requires that we believe we can get to our goal by taking the necessary steps along the path. The clearer the path, the more agency and confidence we'll have.

At the beginning of every new year, I create a playlist for my friends filled with music that brings me joy. I call it my happy list. This year, as I chose my songs, I realized that a theme was emerging: new beginnings. As Nina Simone sings, "It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me, and I'm feeling good" (Bricusse & Newley, 1965).

This year's playlist gives voice to my deep desire to turn the corner on the tough times we've all experienced this past year. I know I'm not alone in wanting a new beginning. For many, 2020 was the hardest year of their lives.

In times like this, we can feel tempted to give up whatever fight we are fighting. Coaches and other professional developers and leaders may feel doubly frustrated as they struggle to help others feel hope while they struggle to keep the faith themselves. I urge you to keep moving forward and support your friends and colleagues as they move forward. We are learning more and more about hope, and while the research isn't a guaranteed road map to success, it does identify several tangible actions we can take to remain hopeful.

1. FACE REALITY.

There are many excellent reasons to avoid reality. At times, almost all of us need the emotional protective bubble wrap of defense mechanisms just to negotiate the emotional terrain of everyday life.

The trouble is, as Miller and Rollnick (2013) explain, the motivation to move forward almost always comes from a discrepancy between where we are and where we want to be. So while turning our eyes away from the world may bring us some relief in the moment, it leads to avoiding learning, growth, movement, and, eventually, hope.

One way coaches can help others see reality more clearly is by offering to record them in action. The camera doesn't lie, which is why I like to say video is like rocket fuel for learning. But not everything can be recorded, so it's useful to identify friends and colleagues who are willing to tell us the truth about what they see. A coach, friend, or mentor may even help us see that we are being overly critical of ourselves and offer a more balanced view.

2. SET GOALS.

Hope researchers Snyder (1994) and Lopez (2013) describe hope as a process with three elements: goals, pathways, and agency. Goals are, in essence, our hoped-for future, and there is a mountain of research that tells us goals are important for motivation (see Halvorson, 2012).

Coaches can awaken others (and themselves) to their goals by asking powerful questions, like the famous question from solution-focused coaching (Jackson & McKergow, 2002): If you woke up tomorrow and a miracle had happened, and your class (or something else) was everything you hoped it would be, what would be different? What would be the first thing you would see that would show you that things have changed?

Goals must matter to the person being coached. That means people must choose the goals themselves.

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3. IDENTIFY PATHWAYS.

We also need to see one or more pathways to the goal we have set so that we have a clear picture of how to reach it. When coaches partner with others to identify strategies for reaching goals, they foster hope. Sometimes this involves asking questions, such as: What advice would you give someone else with your goal? What have you done in the past to successfully meet challenges like this? (Campbell & Van Nieuwerburgh, 2018).

When necessary, coaches can suggest strategies teachers might try. However, how they share that knowledge is a complex communication challenge. If they direct teachers or act like know-it-alls, coaches take away ownership of the goal and, ultimately, take away hope.

4. TAKE ACTION.

Hope also requires that we believe we can get to our goal by taking the necessary steps along the path. The clearer the path, the more agency and confidence we'll have.

Coaches can make the pathway easier to follow by helping teachers plan implementation of a strategy, explaining and modeling teaching strategies, and gathering data so that teachers can see their progress. Seeing our progress makes us more likely to believe that achieving the goal is possible.

In most cases, the best way to build momentum and deepen our agency is to take tiny steps forward and see the positive results. Coaches can help in this process by sharing specific, concrete, positive feedback. One true, specific observation delivered at the right time in the right way can stay with a person for a lifetime.

BE BRAVE

These are tough times, and that makes it all the more important to foster hope in others — and in ourselves. All of the strategies I've shared here can and should be applied by coaches and other professional learning leaders as well as teachers.

It takes bravery to persevere. But when we find the courage to look at reality, set goals, identify pathways, and build agency, we can foster hope. As educators, we need to feel hope, because there is a lot worth doing.

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COACHES CORNER / Sharron Helmke

Continued from p. 14

perspective on it. Powerful questions can do this by fostering new insights. Knowing this allows us to support teachers by offering a question, in addition to — or even rather than — an offer of help. Questions like: Who's showing up but not yet mastering the content, and what do their mistakes tell us about their learning needs? What assumptions are we making about our students, and what choices are we making based on those assumptions? How do we more effectively balance perspectives and voices in our planning meetings so our learning designs are more inclusive?

The challenge and opportunity we're being offered in 2021 is to meet teachers where they are while supporting their sustained growth. We're being called to be both a supporter and a catalyst for change, to coach for growth *with compassion and situational awareness.* Meeting the need to embody these two roles, often considered opposites, will require we use 2021 to brighten both our coaching instincts and skills. ■

EQUITY IN FOCUS / Angela M. Ward

Continued from p. 15

personal sphere of influence to change the system and dismantle inequitable practices. Actions speak louder than words, so adjust your goals and objectives to hold yourself accountable and do your part to shape the learning environments where students feel safe, welcome, and included.

I hold myself accountable to the students in my care by working from my personal sphere of influence to dismantle inequity in our educational system. In the professional learning I facilitate, I pivot from the traditional approach of scripted lessons and strategies to center personal stories and connections. I invite colleagues to share their experiences and stories to introduce new perspectives on longstanding issues. They enter these learning sessions often unaware of the ways institutional racism impacts them daily, but they leave with a collective commitment to improve educational practice. ■

EXAMINE. STUDY. UNDERSTAND.

RESEARCH

DEVELOPING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In her Research Review column, Elizabeth Foster discusses a timely study that examined the impact of an action civics curriculum called Project Soapbox. "It is a longstanding goal of schools to educate individuals to participate in a democratic society," she writes. "But recent events, including the storming of the U.S. Capitol and disinformation campaigns around the U.S. presidential election, have made it clear that we need to improve the way students understand history, government, and their roles in them. Civics education is more critical than ever."

— *"Program inspires students' civic engagement,"* p. **20**

RESEARCH REVIEW
Elizabeth Foster

PROGRAM INSPIRES STUDENTS' CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

▶ THE STUDY
Andolina, M.W. & Conklin, H.G. (2020, June). Fostering democratic and social-emotional learning in action civics programming: Factors that shape students' learning from Project Soapbox. *American Educational Research Journal, 57*(3), 1203-1240.

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

It is a longstanding goal of schools to educate individuals to participate in a democratic society. But recent events, including the storming of the U.S. Capitol and disinformation campaigns around the U.S. presidential election, have made it clear that we need to improve the way students understand history, government, and their roles in them. Civics education is more critical than ever.

A recent mixed-methods study offers information about how the features of a high school action civics curriculum and implementation support for educators helped students develop the knowledge and skills needed to participate in a democratic society. The researchers found that the curriculum structure combined with teachers' instructional decisions influenced student outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers examined the impacts of an action civics curriculum called Project Soapbox, a five-week curriculum that aligns to best practices in action civics and deliberately cultivates social and emotional learning skills. The curriculum is designed to develop students' knowledge about politics and current events as well skills related to civic participation through a structured process in which students develop and deliver speeches about community issues. Students ultimately presented those speeches to an audience of peers and community members during a citywide contest and were judged against a common rubric.

Action civics is a particular approach to civics education that focuses on eliciting student voice, developing and arguing a position or perspective, and engaging with relevant real-world issues. Research shows that youth who participate in civic education programs are more likely to participate in civic actions as adults and influence their families to participate as well.

The researchers conducted their study at nine public high schools in the Chicago area, focusing closely on nine classrooms. The schools served either majority Hispanic/Latinx or majority African American student populations; eight of the nine schools served 90% or more low-income students. The student sample was 41% African American, 48% Hispanic/Latinx, and predominantly low income. The researchers administered pre- and post-surveys, which were aligned to the Common Core State Standards and had been tested for reliability, to 204 students.

Student survey data was complemented by student focus groups and an analysis of student work, including watching the student speeches at a citywide competition. Student survey and focus group questions asked whether students felt they had improved in public speaking, confidence, and desire to speak up in class or when an issue in the community or politics inspired them.

Students were asked about their parents' or guardians' involvement in politics and current events as well as about classroom factors and teacher actions. Researchers also gathered data about which classes focused on Project Soapbox, how many class periods were spent on speech development and delivery, and how closely teachers adhered to the curriculum. Teachers also were interviewed about their experiences and pedagogical choices.

FINDINGS

The study found that students felt more confident about speaking in public and more likely to speak up and be civically engaged as a result of participating in Project Soapbox. Students'

likelihood of speaking up in the future was influenced by how much they felt that their teachers respected and encouraged their opinions.

One curricular structure that positively impacted student outcomes was that students chose speech topics relevant to their own lives and communities, such as immigration or gun violence. The more a student cared about an issue, and the more the classroom climate provided opportunities for student voice and agency, the more likely the students were to have positive reflections about participating.

The focus groups and interviews yielded student statements like: "That connection — it really meant something to me. That's how come I was passionate about it and willing to share with everyone else, because it was something that I felt very strong about."

Analysis of student survey data revealed that the home environment influenced student outcomes, as did the number of times students practiced their speeches and how comfortable students felt sharing their ideas and opinions in class. Students who came from homes where politics were discussed and where civic duties were practiced were more likely to say that they felt they were experts on their topic after participating in Project Soapbox.

The research also found that the more students practiced their speeches (a requirement of participation), the greater their confidence in their speaking skills and their belief that they had been heard. Success in the speech competition also helped contribute to students' feelings of connectedness and empowerment. Participation also impacted students' social and emotional well-being, having a positive impact on students' sense of agency, their sense of empathy, and their feeling of belonging.

Teachers in the study observed that the curriculum's emphasis on students listening to one another and providing supportive feedback improved students' active listening skills. Teachers observed that this created a sense of community as students came to know each other better and understand what is important to their peers. The research also revealed that students developed skills related to respectful disagreement with both peers and teachers.

The fact that students chose and became expert speakers on a topic important to them also helped teachers know and understand their students better.

This is an important aspect in building positive relationships and increasing student engagement. One teacher noted, "Through Soapbox, I find out what they care about, and it often … directs my course for the rest of the year." The pedagogical decision to create a classroom climate that encourages student voice improves a teacher's ability to make learning more personalized and engaging for students.

The researchers found that aspects of the curriculum, as well as teachers' instructional decisions and classroom climate, work together to positively impact student outcomes. And while the written curriculum provided the opportunities, the data revealed that teachers' choices shaped the students' experiences.

The variations in implementation depended on the teachers' experiences and goals for using Project Soapbox. Teachers appreciated the curricular supports, such as video links, sample speeches, handouts to help students analyze speeches, and organizers to help students move from brainstorming to structured speeches. The curricular scaffolding allowed them to integrate the curriculum into a range of courses and adapt the curriculum to varying degrees.

IMPLICATIONS

This study speaks to the importance of well-designed professional learning for achieving high-quality curriculum implementation and ultimately student success, as Learning Forward outlines in the Standards for Professional Learning. The **Outcomes standard** establishes the importance of linking educators' and students' learning, and the Project Soapbox research shows how closely tying these goals leads to impact.

To provide the opportunity for students to develop the knowledge and skills needed to become participatory citizens, teachers had to learn to create a classroom climate and appropriate supports for student choice and development of listening and collaborative skills.

The curricular scaffolding helped teachers to varying degrees in creating space for student voice, an important pedagogical skill that teachers often do not have the opportunity to develop or practice. The combined impact of structured curricular supports and educator decision-making speaks to the importance of good **learning designs** in professional learning that focus on the close tie of educator goals to student goals. In that way, the project can be a model for other classroom interventions, including but also beyond civics education. ■

DATA POINTS

1,000+ ACTIVE MICROCREDENTIALS

New America reviewed the landscape of educator microcredentials, defined as "a verification of a discrete skill or competency that a teacher has demonstrated through the submission of evidence assessed via a validated rubric." The authors found there are over 1,000 active microcredentials offered, and the two largest platforms (NEA and Digital Promise) resulted in 2,232 educators earning 4,219 microcredentials during 2019-20.

Educators expressed strong interest in microcredentials but less interest in displaying them to colleagues. The authors conclude that microcredentials have potential to improve professional learning but that "it is too soon to say with certainty" whether the potential will be fulfilled. The report includes recommendations for maximizing the potential benefits.
bit.ly/36BD82R

$75 MILLION ON TEACHER RESIDENCIES

To address concerns over teacher attrition and shortages and diversify the teaching pool, California has invested tens of millions of dollars in teacher residency programs. These teacher education programs focus on the classroom experience and theory to practice approaches and often provide a stipend for participants.

Research suggests that high-quality teacher residencies are a promising strategy for recruiting more teachers of color, reducing teacher turnover, and preparing effective teachers. But they are expensive to run, especially during the start-up phase.

This report recommends three approaches to find sustainable funding for teacher residencies:

Reallocate existing resources and roles; reduce costs for tuition, materials, and wraparound services; and reinvest savings from reduced turnover into residency programs. The report profiles districts where these strategies are working.
bit.ly/2YB8Hpk

19% OF TEACHERS' KIDS BECOME TEACHERS

The children of teachers are more likely to become teachers when they grow up, according to the Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a study of thousands of parents and children that began in 1979. About 19% of teachers' kids became teachers compared with 8% of nonteachers' kids. This intergenerational transmission of occupation was more common in teaching than in related fields such as counseling and social work.

The pattern was particularly strong from Hispanic mothers to Hispanic daughters. It was similar among white daughters, white sons, and Black daughters, but there was "virtually no transmission of teaching from Black mothers to sons." The study doesn't allow for a full investigation of reasons, but the article suggests areas for future research.
bit.ly/2YH4eRQ

1/4 OF TEACHERS UNSURE HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENT WELL-BEING

The Association for Canadian Studies surveyed 250 high school teachers about teaching on the front lines during COVID-19. About 25% disagreed with the statement, "I understand the measures that need to be taken to support the well-being of students during the pandemic."

Only about half said they felt confident about how to adapt to changes required by the pandemic, and 40% felt confident upholding safety protocols in their classrooms. But the vast majority of teachers said they were committed to talking with their students about COVID-19 and teaching media literacy and how to find accurate information.
bit.ly/2O0ekeG

79% OF TEACHERS TO KEEP USING NEW PRACTICES

The Christensen Institute released results from the first of a series of educator surveys on instruction during the pandemic. The survey revealed that many schools are trying to re-create the traditional in-person learning experience online, rather than redesigning instruction for the new modalities. Yet less than half have the same amount of instructional time remotely as they did before the pandemic.

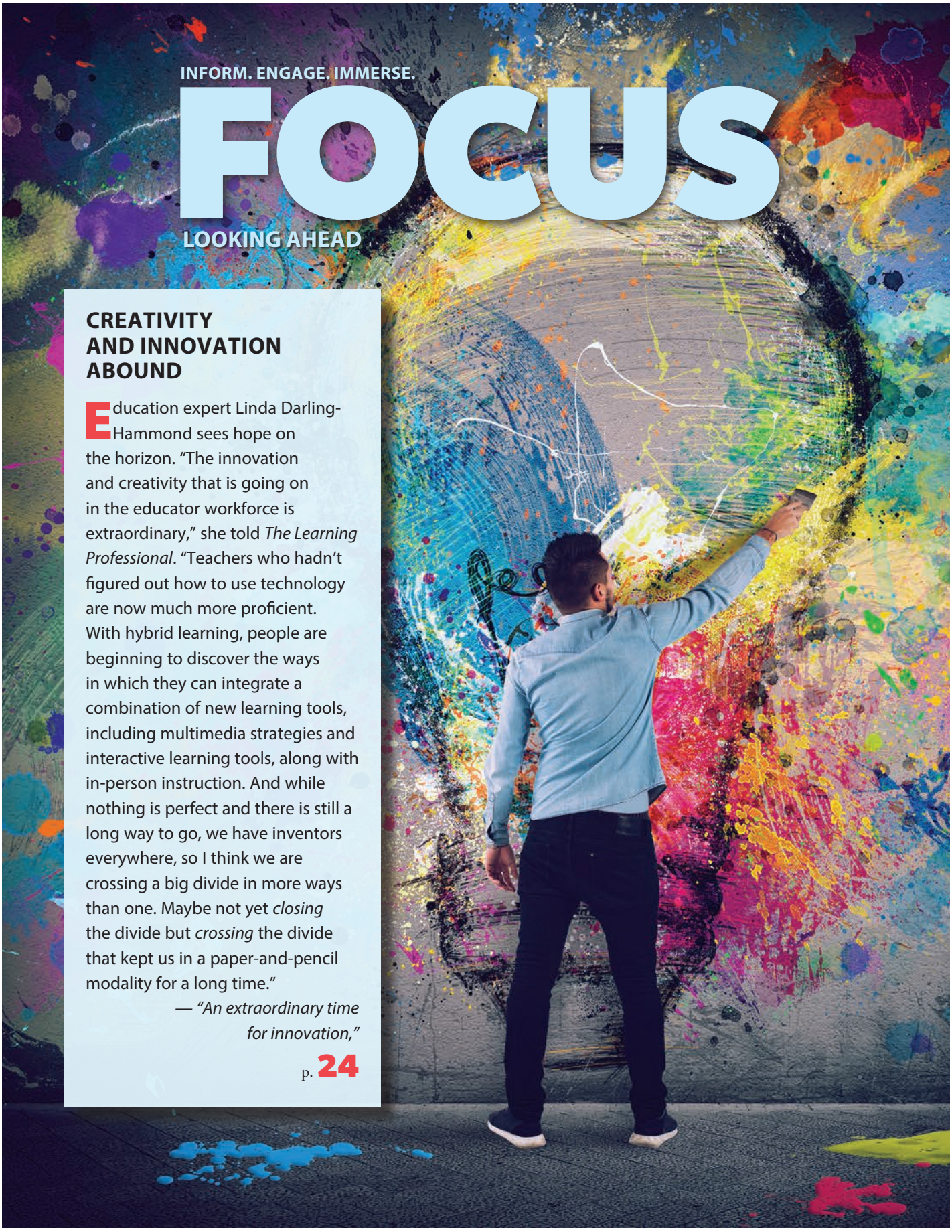
There is also a troubling gap in the resources for teachers to teach effectively: 87% of administrators expect teachers to develop their own remote learning materials, and indeed, only 22% of teachers use materials designed for remote learning, with most of those geared toward asynchronous instruction.

On the positive side, 70% of teachers who engaged in professional learning about remote instruction feel confident in their abilities, and 79% of teachers surveyed say they have discovered new practices or resources that they'll keep using after the pandemic. The report includes recommendations for making online learning more student-centered and effective and examples of promising approaches.
bit.ly/2MMoU8z

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

FOCUS

LOOKING AHEAD



CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION ABOUND

Education expert Linda Darling-Hammond sees hope on the horizon. "The innovation and creativity that is going on in the educator workforce is extraordinary," she told *The Learning Professional*. "Teachers who hadn't figured out how to use technology are now much more proficient. With hybrid learning, people are beginning to discover the ways in which they can integrate a combination of new learning tools, including multimedia strategies and interactive learning tools, along with in-person instruction. And while nothing is perfect and there is still a long way to go, we have inventors everywhere, so I think we are crossing a big divide in more ways than one. Maybe not yet *closing* the divide but *crossing* the divide that kept us in a paper-and-pencil modality for a long time."

— *"An extraordinary time for innovation,"*

p. 24

Linda Darling-Hammond

An extraordinary time for innovation

A conversation with Linda Darling-Hammond

LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University and founding president of the Learning Policy Institute, is a longtime leader in education, an expert on professional learning, and an influential researcher and policy advisor. She has been leading President Joe Biden's education transition team, giving her a unique perspective on the current moment in education and the future of U.S. policy.

Elizabeth Foster, vice president, research & standards at Learning Forward, spoke with Darling-Hammond recently in a conversation that focused on opportunity in the midst of crisis and what educators are learning and accomplishing during the shift to online and hybrid learning environments. Here are excerpts of Darling-Hammond's comments, which have been edited for clarity and length.

There are several things during this difficult time that can be seen as opportunities to make changes that have been long needed. What happens in human history is that, when we have moments of crisis — pandemics are just one example — people are very inventive. If we can allow people to share what they are inventing — allow teachers to share the pedagogies they are creating, the tools they are finding, the ways in which they are finding ways to support their students — we can transform aspects of the old model of transmission teaching that need to change.

It is a challenging time, and I don't want to minimize the grief and the stress and the difficulty. We do have

to worry about what people are calling "learning loss" — the fact that there are kids who are disengaged, kids who are having to work to support their families, kids who are not online, and kids experiencing grief and trauma. But in the midst of all these struggles, there are discoveries and insights and success stories that we need to understand and build on, especially when we see that people are collaborating in so many ways. There is innovation that could allow us, when we get past the pandemic, to reinvent schools in new ways and to serve children in new ways.

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Narrowing digital divides

One positive change is that we did in a few months what we hadn't done in two decades in terms of closing the digital divide. We have had a digital divide for more than 20 years, and there was a stark realization in March 2020 when schools closed that a third of kids (by some estimates and in some states) did not have the devices or the high-speed internet necessary to go into online learning. And this, of course, disproportionately affected students of color, especially African American and Latinx students, and low-income students. Because this issue was brought to the fore, because of that necessity, within just six months, most kids in many states got devices and connectivity.

There are discoveries and insights and success stories that we need to understand and build on, especially when we see that people are collaborating in so many ways. There is innovation that could allow us, when we get past the pandemic, to reinvent schools in new ways and to serve children in new ways.

While we still have work to do, people are actively engaged in doing the work at the federal and state levels so that kids who have been locked out of the digital economy because they were not equipped are now able to become proficient in the uses of technology that will allow them to be part of the digital economy in the future.

Technology also allows us to address a lot of the assistive technology needs for our students with disabilities. We are now more readily able to do text-to-speech, use larger fonts for reading, play that video of a lecture faster or slower or in a different order. We are getting a lot of reports that some students who were failing are actually doing better in this environment. I hear this almost every day from places all over California. Students with disabilities, and really all students, are adapting to these new tools in ways that are actually reinforcing and accelerating their learning.

Innovation among teachers

The innovation and creativity that is going on in the educator workforce is extraordinary. Teachers who hadn't figured out how to use technology are now much more proficient. With hybrid learning, people are beginning to discover the ways in which they can integrate a combination of new learning tools, including multimedia strategies and interactive learning tools, along with in-person instruction. And while nothing is perfect and there is still a long way to go, we have inventors everywhere, so I think we are crossing a big divide in more ways than one. Maybe not yet closing the divide but crossing the divide that kept us in a paper-and-pencil modality for a long time.

Teacher learning is a mixed bag, of course. Obviously, teachers are doing a lot of professional learning by webinar, and some of it is still comprised of deadly dull PowerPoint slides. But some of it is teacher-to-teacher professional learning — showing, demonstrating, sharing lesson plans and units, and building on each other's practices.

There are new opportunities to see each other teaching. In Long Beach, California, they have realized that they

have some great teachers that a lot of kids and teachers want to study, so they opened up certain classes with those teachers — they have some teachers teaching as many as 2,000 people. These teachers are known for their pedagogies generally but also for their distance learning innovations, so the district has allowed other teachers to come in and see how these teachers do their work. The district used the opportunity of the online world to help people learn from each other in ways that are not typical in brick-and-mortar schoolhouses, with the plan to build on that as they go back.

Right now, in online learning, some teachers are demonstration teachers and other teachers can watch their classrooms to see what they do and learn from them in a teacher-to-teacher professional learning model. This has been structured around the availability created by the technology, but the district intends to continue that when they go back to in-person instruction by having video cameras in some of the rooms and continuing to use digital platforms as a way to see one another teaching — and then to talk about it and learn from each other.

Teachers have been saying for a long time that they want to learn from one another. And that certainly has happened before. But you can reach so many more teachers when you are doing it online. It is no longer just, "Let's get together in the cafeteria of the middle school" — although that in-person time with the coffee and doughnuts is important for community building, too. But you can really create online communities and learning platforms that are teacher-to-teacher in very productive ways as well.

Found time for collaboration

Another great innovation in the hybrid context is that many districts are having one group of kids come in Monday and Tuesday in person and then learn online for Thursday or Friday, and that is flipped for the other group of kids. So then Wednesday is for professional learning and school cleaning day. The kids, who are learning to work asynchronously, can be given projects and tasks that they can do independently, whether from a learning hub or at home. In this way, we are getting a whole day a week for collaboration among teachers. This was so important in the spring, when teachers were just figuring it out, but it is continuing in some places.

There are a lot of ways to organize learning. Kids are becoming more self-initiating. Teachers are teaching kids to take more agency and are providing tools and materials that enable that. We need to build on this to allow children to become the owners of their own learning path.

We have needed this for a hundred years! In the United States, we have always had less planning and collaboration time for teachers than in other countries. We are one of the worst countries in the world in that regard. Our teachers teach more hours per week and more hours per year than any other country in the world and have less planning and collaboration time.

The difference between the international average for nonclassroom teaching time and the U.S. average is about eight hours a week. The average teacher internationally gets those eight hours to collaboratively learn and plan. So now, all of a sudden, we have magically discovered those eight hours that we were missing in our schools and districts. *(See more about this by reading a commentary about the international OECD TALIS data at edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/blog/1223.)*

We are also realizing that kids can learn to be agents of their own learning, and that there can be a combination of direct instruction, group work, assigning projects, putting kids in teams, and having them work with other tools — whether it is Khan Academy or some other multimedia interactive learning software or online gaming that teaches the history of the Underground Railroad.

There are a lot of ways to organize learning. Kids are becoming more self-initiating. Teachers are teaching kids to take more agency and are providing tools and materials that enable that. We need to build on this to allow children to become the owners of their own learning path.

LEVERAGING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

They say necessity is the mother of invention, and we are all feeling that necessity. That shared, felt need is very motivating, and it puts people in to a community of practice very naturally. There is an organic community of practice around "How do we do this thing?" and it makes people want to collaborate.

I think we want a mix of strengthening professional learning within the brick-and-mortar school and accessing ideas from across the country or even across the whole world. Teachers share kids in the building, but they share content with people from all over. Resources like the National Writing Project and the California History-Social Science Project allow people to ask, "How am I going to teach this concept using these new tools in new ways that promote student engagement?" These are the kinds of innovations and supports we want to encourage as we transform the nature of teaching.

We have certainly learned a lot as we have had to worry a lot about student engagement. Students can disengage online, especially if they are experiencing just transmission teaching. But many teachers have worked really hard to find new engagement strategies, including one-on-one approaches, ways that they can pop in to different types of breakout rooms, setting up office hours, structuring more project-based

learning, and putting the kids in the role of active learners around projects and ideas. Those are the innovations we want to be sure are part of the professional learning that people are experiencing as they are coming back in to buildings.

Parents are also seeing student engagement in a new way and may have a perspective on it that could be helpful for professional learning. Students, too, should have a voice so that they can help teachers understand what is engaging and what is not. Both could be important additions to the professional learning process.

OPPORTUNITIES ON THE HORIZON

While the [presidential] transition team's workings and decisions are confidential, President Biden and first lady Dr. Jill Biden have made it clear throughout the campaign and in their formal policy statements that they care deeply about teaching and about teachers. They want to see that teachers have lots of access to rich professional learning. They see that teachers are leaders and want to support teacher leadership in a variety of ways so that teachers can share what they know as mentors and as leaders in school improvement.

One of the things that they said is that they wanted the secretary of education be someone who had been a teacher. That was a criterion for the search, and in our nominee for secretary, Dr. Miguel Cardona, we did get someone who is deeply rooted in teaching. I think we are going to see a lot of emphasis on not only investments in teaching, including teacher compensation — which is on the agenda — but also in teachers leading the profession. ■

Many teachers have worked really hard to find new engagement strategies, including one-on-one approaches, ways that they can pop in to different types of breakout rooms, setting up office hours, structuring more project-based learning, and putting the kids in the role of active learners around projects and ideas. Those are the innovations we want to be sure are part of the professional learning that people are experiencing as they are coming back in to buildings.

A new network for a changed world

BY NICK MORGAN, ELIZABETH FOSTER, AND MELINDA GEORGE

Among the things we'll remember about the year 2020 are phrases like "You're still on mute" and "Can I share my screen?" They are emblematic of how educators have been challenged to navigate uncharted waters of remote learning and overnight technological adaptation. To quote another phrase that we'll remember as a cliché, "These are unprecedented times."

Learning Forward's newest network, Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World (DPLV), is designed to meet educators' pressing needs in this unusual moment by supporting districts and states with proactive planning tools and processes. Learning Forward and DPLV's first cohort of nine district and state education agency members are collaborating on how to stay strategic through the compounding challenges of responding to COVID-19, a national

reckoning with racial injustice, and growing fiscal uncertainty caused by a mix of public health and public policy developments.

The convergence of these realities is forcing a strategic reflection on our use of virtual platforms and tools to optimize radically different learning environments in equitable ways.

As schools face new and changing conditions, educators are responsible for ensuring that student learning continues as they themselves adapt to online, remote, or hybrid learning, synchronous and asynchronous. Professional learning has never been more important as schools and districts design and implement, in real time, new models for learning during and after this pandemic.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

Teams in the DPLV network engage in a planning process with customized coaching tailored to their local contexts and needs during and beyond the pandemic. They will ultimately produce a strategic plan that articulates clear goals and processes for a one- to two-year timeline. Learning Forward facilitators also support the group with new content and coaching related to common professional learning challenges among the network members.

The members of each DPLV team develop a shared vision and then compare the current state of their professional learning with that vision. Facilitators help them apply four lenses to this work: coherence and relevance, which together help participants question the purpose and focus of their professional learning efforts, and measurement and impact, which together force teams to consider the effectiveness of professional learning initiatives and how to manage them over time for maximum effect.

LEVERAGING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EXPERTISE

Our work is guided by the belief that highly effective professional learning is best achieved through a combination of internal wisdom and external knowledge.

DPLV facilitators are attuned to the needs and strengths of member teams. We host district spotlights intended to showcase efforts that member districts are already doing to address ongoing professional learning. For example, member district Frederick, Virginia, recently shared an online tool that it has created to both capture educators' professional learning goals as well as to take that input and use it to create a logic map that educators can refer to throughout the year.

At the same time, we bring resources, strategies, and expert perspectives to support members' work. We believe that districts' internal expertise can be complemented by collaboration with outside professionals to address the system's immediate and long-term challenges because it expands members' professional learning networks and helps ensure that limited time and money have the biggest impact possible.

For example, as many DPLV members incorporate equity and inclusion into their visions for professional learning success, we showcased the Liberatory Design Process and Mindsets in a guest webinar by Tom Malarkey, director of the National Equity Project. The Liberatory Design tools are evolutions of design

COHORT 1 PARTICIPANTS IN THE DESIGN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR A VIRTUAL WORLD NETWORK

- Alaska Department of Education, Alaska
- Fort Sam Houston ISD, Texas
- Fort Wayne Community Schools, Indiana
- Broward County Public Schools, Florida
- Miami Dade County Public Schools, Florida
- Tulsa Public Schools, Oklahoma
- Stafford County Public Schools, Virginia
- Frederick County Public Schools, Virginia
- Learning Forward Affiliate leaders: Alaska, Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia

DESIGN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR A VIRTUAL WORLD PLAN COMPONENTS			
		WHAT IT IS	**WHY IT'S USEFUL**
FOUNDATIONS	**Problem statement & vision**	• Two short written statements that succinctly define the scope of work.	• Provides communication for varied audiences over time.
	Team structure	• A list of core and expanded team members that have a direct role in plan creation.	• Ensures diverse input and inclusion. • Proactively manages stakeholder groups.
	Current state assessment	• Brief narrative that summarizes the data describing the current status of professional learning.	• Establishes the gap between the present state and the future vision.
MAJOR GOALS	**Key goals**	• Three to five goals that highlight the top priorities for professional learning in the chosen time frame.	• Establishes what successful change looks like and gives a priority ranking. • "If we accomplish these goals, we will happy with the status of professional learning."
	Major milestones	• Breaks down major goals into milestones through backward mapping.	• Creates a trajectory for directional progress. • "We will know we're on track if …"
OPERATIONS	**Short-term activity planning**	• Breaks down most immediate milestone only into activity plans.	• Limits detail planning to only most immediate time frame.
	Responsibility mapping	• Allocates staff and other key stakeholders discrete roles in strategy execution.	• Clarifies roles and responsibilities beyond direct staff.
	Process details	• Narrative for additional operations and process as necessary (e.g. measurement protocols or decision rights).	• Operations guidance.

tools from Stanford's d.school, enhanced for leaders to develop and use equity-centered design and activities to address their own problems in community with others.

Ensuring direct connections from the external to the internal is a design principle and a commitment of the network. Therefore, participating districts discuss the implications or applications of the guest webinar in their teams and with each other. For instance, one network member, Tulsa Public Schools, which had already begun learning about the Liberatory Design process, talked about how they are using it to foster a culturally responsive and inclusive system.

Jamie Lomax, who is the director of organizational learning and equity for Tulsa Public Schools, shared this work on a network webinar and demonstrated how it is incorporated at multiple levels, from high-level strategy to daily operations. The conversation that grew out of this offers a good example of how cross-network collaboration enhances members' learning.

PRIORITIZING KEY GOALS

The DPLV network encourages members to focus on a limited number of key goals. Traditional school district strategic planning often results in long lists of activity-based goals, whereas the DPLV approach seeks a limited number of performance-oriented goals that will signal success or substantial progress toward each team's stated vision.

This process forces deep conversations about prioritization — a critical effort with limited resources in the pandemic response. The DPLV process moves teams from aspirational to tactical, with each phase of the work serving as scaffolding for the next to ensure consistency and coherence.

To determine priorities for goal setting, teams have collaboratively filled out an assessment of their professional learning challenges and strengths and noted where they have resources and momentum. This assessment helps teams examine where they are in their vision for professional learning during the pandemic and how to move ahead. The teams also created initial stakeholder engagement plans and are establishing goals and major milestones. See the table above.

As the teams continue their work, Learning Forward will focus on tools and resources aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning. The launch of a second cohort in February will also help increase the collaboration and critical-friend relationships with leaders from like-minded systems.

To connect the dots between their priorities, plans, and outcomes, DPLV members used a system of metrics to review summative performance as well as leading indicators to guide formative intervention and planning to meet evolving needs. Both the strategic considerations and the practical implementation details spur further dialogue and reflection about priorities and planning.

Measurement was the focus of a recent network workshop showcasing the work of the Long Beach Unified School District in California, which has made significant strides in developing systems for measuring and managing metrics around the impact of professional learning since its membership in the Redesign PD Community, which began in the 2015-16 school year. The district's work is based on Thomas R. Guskey's five-level framework for measuring impact (Guskey, 2002). As with Tulsa and Frederick, the Long Beach district's insights about its own path have been helpful for other network members.

BUILDING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

Moving forward, DPLV members will continue to develop sustainable and equitable solutions for immediate challenges and for a professional learning infrastructure that transcends the pandemic response. No matter our scenario moving forward, virtual environments are likely to remain central to fulfilling our missions for educators and students.

The potential is great. In many instances, we have seen that the virtual professional learning option offers benefits that we had not yet appreciated, such as saving time and bridging geographic distances. Learning Forward believes that by capturing lessons learned from the pandemic, we can make lasting improvements in professional learning in the service of excellent, equitable education for each and every student.

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Jal Mehta

Crisis creates opportunity. Will we seize it?

BY SUZANNE BOUFFARD AND ELIZABETH FOSTER

JAL MEHTA is a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. His work focuses on educational practices and policies that promote deep and meaningful learning. He has also conducted extensive research on the education workforce. He is the author of *In Search of Deeper Learning: The Quest to Remake the American High School* (Harvard University Press, 2019) and *The Allure of Order: High Hopes, Dashed Expectations, and the Troubled Quest to Remake American Schooling* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

The Learning Professional recently interviewed Mehta about how the COVID-19 pandemic is changing teaching and learning and how to seize opportunities for improving schools moving forward. Our conversation has been condensed and edited.

Q: Since last spring, you have been studying schools' reactions to the crisis and the implications for teaching and learning. What have you observed?

A: There have been two primary reactions to this year. For some people who were dissatisfied with schools before — who felt that things were too rushed and that there was not enough opportunity to get to know students — it has provided a new opportunity to rethink practices and redevelop routines in schools.

The more dominant reaction has been what social psychologists call threat rigidity. In periods of stress or threat, there is a tendency to freeze up and be resistant to change. We have seen that it's so hard and complicated to run schools right now that a lot

Disruption forces people to do things in different ways, and, over the last year, people have had a lot of experience doing things they hadn't done before.

of people are saying, "Let me at least try not to change the pedagogy, the curriculum, the materials." Because people are in a state of stress, there has been, on the whole, a conservatism about learning that I had hoped would not be the case. But it is a perfectly reasonable response to the circumstances.

Q: You tend to see this time as an opportunity. What are you optimistic about?

A: Disruption forces people to do things in different ways, and, over the last year, people have had a lot of experience doing things they hadn't done before. If I had come to you last year and said, "Let's do a flipped classroom," you would have had a lot of questions and concerns. But this year, you've spent the whole day on camera and making materials online, so, all of a sudden, the flipped classroom idea doesn't seem so foreign.

So maybe you're really looking forward to going back to the physical classroom and having an in-person discussion, but you think, "Hey, I recorded myself last year with the background and preparation for this novel, so why don't I use that video outside of class and then use the in-person time to do the discussion?"

There is literature on the concept of emergence from [organizational consultant] Peggy Holman and others, which shows that when there's major disruption, it produces lots of different experiments or experiences of different sorts. With good leadership, you get to see what is valuable about what's emerging and think about what you want to amplify. You can create a new coherence.

And if you add that with the sort of optimism that comes with gradually getting back to normal as the pandemic gets under control, it might be a really positive opportunity to incorporate what's working and let go of what's not working.

Q: You also see resistance to those kinds of changes. Why is it so difficult to change right now?

A: William Bridges, who does work on transitions of all sorts, including organizational changes but also divorce or death of a family member, is pretty clear that there needs to be a period where you grieve what has passed. Then there's a period of uncertainty. Finally, something new emerges in its place. But you have to go through a period of "hospicing" — letting go of the things that have been important to you but which the current reality doesn't create space for. And if you try to rush that process and don't allow for some grieving, it's really difficult to move into a new space.

The challenge with the pandemic is that, for a lot of people, there has been this sense of, "When can we get back to what we had before?" But in the case of schools, it's pretty clear that schools weren't working that well for a lot of students and teachers even prepandemic. So we want some things to go back to the way they were

WHAT WILL YOU KEEP AND CHANGE AFTER THE PANDEMIC?

To help you reflect on what you're learning during the pandemic and how to apply those lessons moving forward, Mehta suggests considering the following questions with your team.

- What have you learned about your students and their families this year?
- How could that shape the way you connect with families and students next year?
- What has worked well this year, and how could you amplify those things as you transition out of emergency education mode?
- What are you not looking forward to about going back to "regular" school?
- What would need to be "hospice" to make space for what you want to amplify?

before, but we want some things to be different. The takes time, and there's an emotional aspect to it.

Q: What are some of the losses you see for educators?

A: Lack of informal connections among adults is a real loss of this year. People continue to meet in department teams or grade-level teaching teams, and, in some cases, there is increased collaboration as people have tried to plan common lessons virtually. That's good, and we should build on it. But I think there's a lot that we've lost from the diminished hallway, lunchroom, and other informal conversations. The good news is that some places have become more deliberate about cross-planning, including across schools or districts. Both the formal and informal connections are important.

It all feeds into the question of what do we want to keep and what do we want to get rid of when the pandemic is over? In part, it's about what are the values of your community? There are a lot of things you could choose to do differently, but the choice depends on what your purposes are.

Q: How can schools carry forward the positive changes?

A: That's a really important question. Last spring, Justin Reich and I held some design charettes with teachers, parents, administrators, and students. We said, "Based on what you have experienced over the past few months, what should we do next year? What should we continue, and what should we change?" We're going to do that again this spring and summer, focusing on what things to keep for next fall and what structures would need to change in order to support those things.

I've learned that the timing of these conversations matters. Teachers are not going to have the bandwidth for significant reimagining during the school year. What they need right now are the things that are immediately actionable. The time to do the work of reimagining is in June and July, during paid professional learning time. My sense is that, at the end of the year, you want to briefly gather people's reflections about what worked well while everything is fresh and admin teams and teachers can do a little bit of planning over the summer. Then, in August, when there is fresh energy, a lot of schools have at least a few days of professional learning time, and that would be a natural time to talk about what will be different in the coming school year.

So this process of reflecting and reinventing might be more of a 15-month process instead of a three-month process. In the short term, you pick a few small things you're going to do next year, but you agree to have an ongoing conversation about what has started working better and what has gotten worse. For example, I'm imagining there will be some loss when people go back to work in person, just as there was some loss when they stopped going in person.

I've had a lot of conversations with people about appreciating the slower pace of life, having more family time, spending less time commuting, and such. We'll want to think in an ongoing way about whether the way we were living before the pandemic was the best way for us and our students, and if not, what can we do about that going forward?

Q: What supports can make that kind of adaptation possible?

A: It's the job of a leader to help people do the reflection and make sense of what they are experiencing and learning. The emergence literature talks about leaders' tasks of "name, nourish, connect, and grow."

The first step is for school leaders to name the things people are already trying to do — for example, naming that lots of teachers have connected with families, and that's a practice we want to continue. Nourishing is about taking things that are starting to take root and helping them grow. Connecting is about bringing together people who have similar instincts but don't have good ways of finding each other.

It's often when you get people together in small groups of two, three, or four and they discover something common they want to work on that really good things happen. Especially in larger schools, there are a lot of people who have never had enough substantive conversations with each other. Good things could come out if they found each other and found some things to work on together.

That said, I do think good professional learning happens in a mixture between internal and external expertise. People define what they want to work on and then they go and look at what other schools and other experts have learned and they try to cycle that in and get a sense of what it looks like in their own context.

But overall, we don't currently have the time we need for adults in schools, and that's a huge barrier to everything else we're trying to do. That needs to be addressed.

Q: What new practices are you seeing that you hope schools will keep moving forward?

A: In the Doctor of Educational Leadership program at Harvard Graduate School of Education, in which I teach, students take on a year-long residency and a strategic project. One of my students, Eyal Bergman, developed an innovative project around family-school engagement. In Chelsea, Massachusetts, where his district is located, administrators and teachers had negotiated an extra 10 days at the beginning of the school year for planning to help navigate COVID.

His district used part of that professional learning time to do what they called "trust visits" with families. These visits, rebranded from the traditional parent-teacher conference, took place in a variety of settings —

Zoom, on sidewalks in front of student homes, and outside the school building. It gave educators a chance to get to know the students and the parents' perspectives on the students at the beginning of the year.

Before the visits started, the school staff had a professional learning session where they reflected on their own experiences as students and the relationships between their families and schools. They thought about what would have made those relationships better, particularly in the context where most educators are white and 95% of students are children of color.

After the reflection and planning, they did the visits. Then the district convened nine "working tables." These were codesign sessions between different groups of teachers, administrators, and families across different schools at different levels. Each group focused on whatever problem or issue made sense for that age group. In all cases, the goal was to shift racialized power dynamics so that families did most of the sharing and educators did most of the listening.

This is a nice model of change because you're doing something coherent and connected to your values but then letting the river follow its tributaries. You see where it goes and what makes sense in different ages, schools, contexts. It's almost like a social movement model of change, as opposed to a model where the leader comes up with a plan and tries to get everyone to buy in. It's about collectively thinking about an issue you want to work on and then allowing people to work on it in smaller groups.

Another thing I've been thinking about as we move forward is the new functions technology has brought into the classroom and how we retain the spirit of them. Someone asked me in an interview, "What's the equivalent of the chat box when we go back to in-person learning?" I don't have a good answer yet, but I'm hoping some teachers will have good answers.

There has been this great benefit to seeing what people are thinking in real time, especially for more introverted students. But I can't imagine all of us sitting around with our computers, and writing things to each other on the screen. The question is: Is there some in-person way of accomplishing that same goal? I hope these kinds of questions spur new thinking so we can get the value of things we're doing now but in a different context.

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Virtual networks follow paths to equity

BY MARY ANTÓN, LEE TEITEL, AND TAMISHA WILLIAMS

In the chaos and upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been hard to keep a focus on race and equity in schools. And yet in this time of disruption of our very notion of what it means to be a teacher and how we do school, we recognize that keeping race and equity at the center of our work is essential. In this time of exhaustion and uncertainty, we find great hope for a future beyond the pandemic that is not a return to the status quo.

Our hope is rooted in the power of what the collective can do and in the roles we see virtual networks play in promoting that power. Virtual networks can inform and connect; they can nurture and disrupt. We need these actions to move forward individually and systemically to create a more equitable world.

Networks are powerful real-world examples of the value of collectivism at work. Networks bring together people across geography, ability, and types of institutions. They harness the collective knowledge and wisdom of an array of experienced practitioners, experts, individuals, and teams. Individuals benefit from the experience of the whole, and the whole grows stronger through collaboration. Out of individualism and isolation, collectives have been forming in ways that were rarely possible when educators were bounded by time and geographic space.

For educators of color, the opportunity to lean into affinity and multiracial spaces to collectively work toward dismantling racism has led to collective healing. For white educators, these networks offer a space in which they can be challenged and learn from collective wisdom without overburdening the often-limited number of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) colleagues in their settings.

This shift from embracing norms of individualism ("I can figure this out myself") to collectivism ("We are in this together, and together we are stronger") represents a profound philosophical shift and is a shift to cultural ways of being often associated with Black and Brown communities throughout the world.

UNDERSTANDING THE PANDEMIC VIRTUAL SPACE

As national and world attention focused on acknowledging racial disparities in spring 2020, experts and institutions stepped up to answer the knowledge void. Experts offered free webinars, lectures, and protocols. Access to people outside of one's own geography and network exploded. Zoom became as normal as texting.

Educators throughout the summer sought opportunities to step up and do their part. Offered at low or no cost throughout the summer, Black authors and experts shared wisdom not readily available before. For educators seeking to address racial inequity, virtual technology created the feel of a kid in a virtual candy store. Not only did we have this array of choices, but in the virtual world, we could sign up for everything and learn on our own schedule. Even as this virtual candy story supported learning through access to powerful speakers and fresh, engaging content, it could prove overwhelming to sort through the wealth of options.

VIRTUAL NETWORKS VARY

Thinking about the work that we have done in 2020, we recognize that we have embraced the power of collectivism to help us to "dismantle the master's house" (Lord, 2018). Our

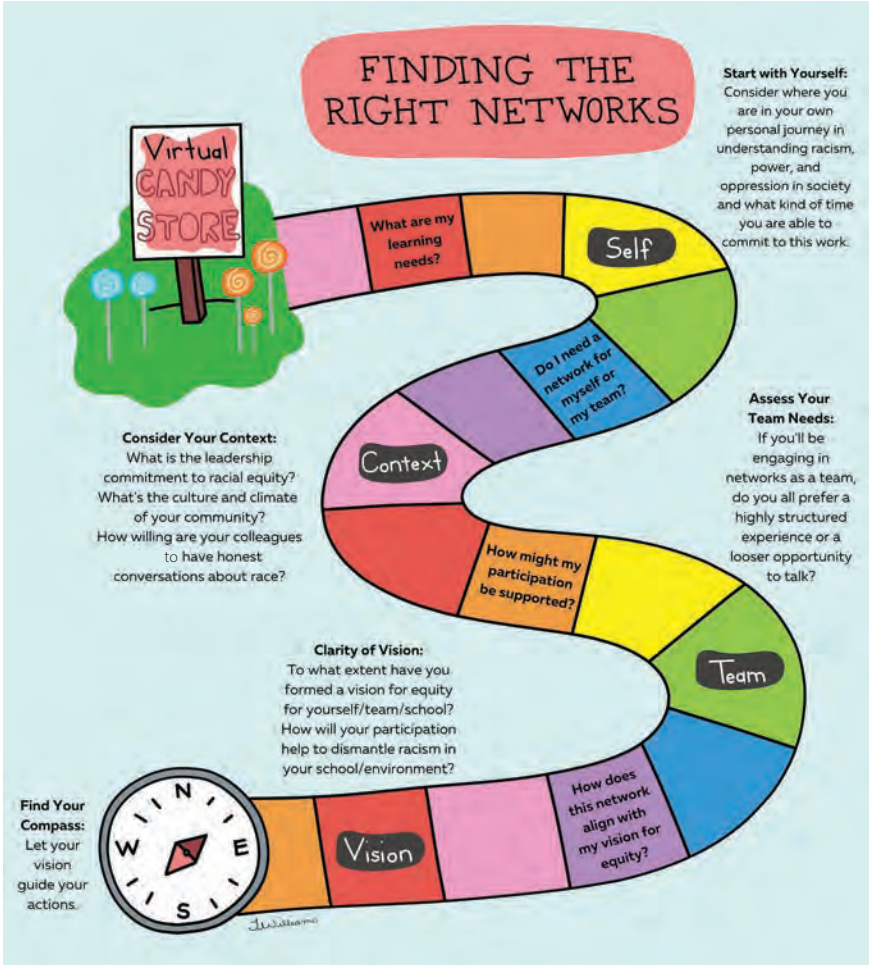

Illustration by TAMISHA WILLIAMS

THE RIGHT MOVES TOWARD EQUITY

Our ability to come together in community during the pandemic provides perspective and strength we did not have before.

experiences participating in, organizing, and learning from virtual networks suggest that networks can vary on a set of dimensions — not binary, but as points on a continuum. Matching them to what we need as individuals, schools, or districts can be helpful. What follows are ways to organize the different shelves in the virtual candy store.

NETWORK EXAMPLES FROM OUR COLLECTIVE PRACTICE

Through our practices, we have facilitated a variety of networks and offer these examples as ways to deepen your thinking about their similarities and uses.

Informal network:
CROSS-COUNTRY LEADERS

Mary Antón started Cross-Country Leaders in March 2020 as California shut down. This biweekly network provided a space for leaders to share, support, and hold each other accountable to continue their commitment to racial equity. Members invited colleagues to join, formed their

DIMENSIONS OF NETWORKS

- **Time:** One-shots, limited runs (three to four sessions for a continuing group or on a topic), or ongoing.
- **Membership:** Open, drop-in membership; closed membership, but not everyone attends each time; or fixed membership with expectation that all attend.
- **Participation:** Individuals, members of a team (e.g. from a school or district), or both.
- **Structure:** Unfacilitated or lightly to tightly facilitated.
- **Expertise:** Knowledge lies with the experts, with participants, or both.
- **Expense:** Free to paid services and sometimes mixed (voluntary donations).

TYPES OF NETWORKS

The dimensions above can be combined and organized into four types of networks.

- **Prenetwork:** The webinar or the noninteractive informational presentation, often by extremely knowledgeable people in the field.
- **Informal network:** Often job-alike or affinity spaces, places in which educators with exposure to concepts or who identify as a member of a particular group come together on a regular basis to discuss common issues, concerns, and questions.
- **Semistructured network:** Topical networks around identified and established topics over a set of sessions, usually with a consistent membership, often with a facilitator.
- **Structured network:** Includes access to expertise, communities of practice, coaching, and other forms of networked accountable learning designed to help schools and teams reach personal or systemic goals.

own networks, and leaders embraced the realization that district decisions sometimes continued to perpetuate the marginalization of communities of color.

This network offered ways to think together with others in shared spaces by centering conversation around questions such as: How do we create belongingness when all certainty is gone? How can we advocate for our staff and students of color? How do we ensure race is centered in each decision we make? Of critical importance in these was a central theme: Who is thriving in the midst of this upheaval? How can we learn both from their thriving and from uncovering our biases and assumptions about who needs help?

Semistructured network:
A SUMMER WORKBOOK FOR EDUCATORS

Tamisha Williams designed the WORKbook (**gumroad.com/l/educatorWORKbook**) for staff at one school, then broadened it to share across schools and systems. This guide consolidates resources, provides guidance, and points to ways that educators can dig into the underpinnings of racial inequities in the country and schools.

Williams set up a series of four companion meet-ups — virtual professional learning communities — for educators to work through and discuss the content of the WORKbook, in both full group and racial affinity spaces. Group interaction and dialogue drive the learning.

Semistructured network:
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT SUPERINTENDENT NETWORK: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL WORK ON RACE, RACISM AND EQUITY

When a white superintendent doing equity improvement cycle work in her district with Lee Teitel found that she lacked the breadth of knowledge and the language around equity to frame her leadership moves, she suspected her fellow superintendents in the region felt the same. She and Teitel co-designed

TAMISHA WILLIAMS

VIRTUAL NETWORKS VARY
There are many ways to organize the shelves in the virtual candy store.

TAMISHA WILLIAMS

BE IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL
The work to advance racial equity is a marathon, not a sprint.

a monthly network that addresses how these white superintendents, most of whom grew up in the white communities they serve, can support each other personally, professionally, and practically to disrupt and address issues of racism and inequity.

Structured network:
RIDES INTENSIVE CLINICS

Before the pandemic, Teitel guided schools and districts though structured, data-driven, race-focused equity improvement cycles, an approach developed with colleagues in Harvard's Reimagining Integration: Diverse and Equitable Schools (RIDES) project. During the pandemic, the tools and approaches remain the same, but the delivery system changed significantly.

Instead of meeting the needs of six to eight schools a year through a costly on-campus and hybrid institute, RIDES offers a series of free week-long intensive clinics that support over 200 educators in 40 schools. Teitel, Antón, and others on the RIDES team now offer independent networks that use similar approaches but, rather than being place-based, can bring together schools from across the country. Teams learn to work within their schools and districts and collaborate with teams from other settings to build a sense of community, share ideas and tools for racial equity, and deepen accountability.

LESSONS FROM VIRTUAL NETWORKS

Our ability to come together in community provides perspective and strength we did not have before. Here are some of the things the past year has taught us.

Make it fit your time and budget. Collaboration doesn't have to be expensive, time-consuming, or led by national experts. Networks only cost the time of the convener to set it up. In this time of isolation, our need to connect is palpable.

Diverse viewpoints spur thinking. We all benefit by focusing beyond a limited sphere of colleagues that we see every day. Learning across schools, districts, and states results in rapid sharing of resources, ideas, and ways to support students and teachers.

Everyone benefits. BIPOC benefit from collaboration and solidarity; white people from opportunities to talk about racism and white privilege without leaning on BIPOC.

It's a safe space for teams. Teams benefit from joining networks together, honing their shared focus, and being stretched by the experiences of colleagues from other schools and districts. Guided by the belief that deep work on race and equity must take place institutionally, RIDES networks create spaces that teams need to both

deepen their internal work and benefit from the work and insight of others.

Be in it for the long haul. The work to advance racial equity is a marathon, not a sprint. To make consistent and ongoing progress, equity work must be a part of the fabric of our practices, policies, and procedures. Teachers and administrators need to develop skills and trust to talk across racial lines about dismantling privilege and about race and its impact. Collaboration allows us to see the parts of the whole that each is engaged in and imagine a whole that puts all the parts together.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF VIRTUAL NETWORKS

Successfully navigating the virtual candy store requires three things: clarity of focus and a strong internal compass; thoughtful self-assessment of the needs and strengths of the individuals and teams in your setting; and deep understanding of which options might work best for you and when.

There isn't one "right" network. Think about what will be most helpful in your context to support reaching your vision. Amidst the chaos, confusion, and challenges of running schools and districts during the pandemic, leaders are struggling to keep a focus on sustained efforts toward antiracism and equity. Finding, picking, or forming the right network isn't always easy. As you think about your own learning, your context, and your staff's needs, consider your vision and where you are on your journey.

The urgency for centering race is often offset by the challenges of the pandemic. To lean into discomfort and take a marathon view of equity improvement requires that we recognize we are on a recursive cycle of continual improvement.

We are in a time of great opportunity. Whether learning is in person or virtual doesn't have to be the defining factor in our progress. Virtual networks have the potential to provide free or low-cost opportunities to:

- Provide alternatives to counter the way things have always been done;
- Provide affinity spaces to thrive (BIPOC) or affinity spaces to understand and question (white);
- Support essential content and research that challenge the status quo;
- Provide places for teams to build trust and try on challenging and often context-counter views and ideas; and
- Provide support outside of your institution for engaging in recurring cycles of equity improvement.

The lessons we are learning from educators give us hope. Decisions about the everyday aspects of running school are intertwined with the recognition that race matters and inequities exist. If we continue to hold these up for inspection, we can challenge both individual teacher assumptions and invisible institutional white norms that lift up some and oppress others. In the disruption of schools as we know them, we have an opportunity to dismantle racism as has never been presented before.

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AUTHOR USES ARTWORK TO FACILITATE DIALOGUE

The art accompanying this article was created by co-author Tamisha Williams. Williams is a facilitator and coach who works with educators on using an equity lens to better serve their communities. She uses art, movement, and storytelling in her facilitation to help educators focus and deepen their learning.

Williams, who has had a lifelong interest in art, began using drawing in her work after attending a conference session about facilitating courageous conversations visually. A director of equity and inclusion at the time, she used what she learned to redesign her faculty meeting facilitation to include space for visual reflection. She taught her colleagues how to use quick drawing methods to process their own thinking and visualize equity concepts in a new way.

Tamisha Williams

Now a facilitator in her own right, Williams says she appreciates the way that drawing taps into a different part of the brain and helps people really see what they're talking about. When she gives people simple drawing tips and asks them to represent their thinking visually, she finds that their drawings provide something to ground their stories and bring up information that they wouldn't have otherwise thought to share.

Williams is quick to point out that drawing and visual storytelling are not just for people who consider themselves artistically talented. "I love this work because I can bring this anywhere and use it with anyone," she says. In fact, she believes one of the benefits is helping people see that "some of the things they thought they could never do can be accessible."

Culture impacts learning — and not just for students

BY CORINNE BRION

The events of 2020 highlighted many longstanding truths about teaching and learning, truths that can help us move toward a more just and equitable future if we act on them.

One such truth is that culture matters for learning, especially for transfer of learning from abstract knowledge into practical application. Because this holds for adults' learning as well as students', it can and should have an impact on professional learning. Learning leaders should consider culture in their planning, implementation, and follow-up with educators.

Making professional learning more culturally relevant could help ensure effectiveness and decrease the trend of school systems spending money on professional learning that yields few results (Hess, 2013). In turn, this would contribute to better academic, social, and emotional outcomes for all educators and students, regardless of

Culture matters for learning, especially for transfer of learning from abstract knowledge into practical application. Because this holds for adults' learning as well as students', it can and should have an impact on professional learning.

race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, language, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.

Culture plays a central role in everyone's personal and professional lives, but it can be more or less visible to us based on our experiences and cultural location. As a native of France who resides and works in the United States, and as a second language learner and speaker, I find the impact of culture on learning and teaching to be highly salient, and it is an area of great interest to me.

I know what it's like to experience cultural mismatch. When I was principal of a new charter school in Oregon, I heard people ask, "What is she doing here, when she is not even from here?" It became very clear that to relate to and learn from one another, my stakeholders and I needed to better understand each other's cultures.

Based on my experiences as a former pre-K-12 teacher and administrator and a professional learning leader, I aim to bring a culturally responsive lens to other educators through professional learning. My work has taken me to many diverse places in Europe, the U.S., and Africa. In each place, I have learned important lessons about the impact of culture on educators' learning and transfer of learning into practice.

Many of those lessons were learned during six years of working in five African countries to strengthen the capacity of school leaders in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. My colleagues and I conducted professional learning events, trained local trainers, and conducted extensive longitudinal research projects (Brion, 2020, 2018; Brion & Cordeiro, 2020) in Burkina Faso and Ghana. We examined whether and how school leaders in those two countries implemented newly acquired knowledge after engaging in professional learning.

These various experiences across cultures resulted in the development of a research-based and culturally grounded framework that I refer to as the multidimensional model of learning transfer. The model aims to help leaders and professional learning organizers plan, deliver, and assess their professional learning to assist teachers as they implement new knowledge. Another goal is to improve student learning outcomes and well-being while also supporting a better return on schools' investments.

The model can be applied across cultures and contexts. If you are thinking the model does not apply to you because it is based largely on my experiences in Africa, I invite you to continue reading because the lessons related to learning transfer are applicable to all districts and schools.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN LEARNING TRANSFER

Lindsey et al. (2018) define culture as "everything you believe and everything you do that enables you to identify with people who are like you and that distinguishes you from people who differ from you" (p. 29). Culture is therefore pervasive in how we interact, how we learn, and whether we transfer, or apply, what we learn.

Learning is a social endeavor and knowledge is contextual. Culture affects learning transfer specifically because if cultural barriers prevent people from engaging in various aspects of the learning process, they will not be able to apply new knowledge to their jobs (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Closson, 2013; Sarkar-Barney, 2004; Silver, 2000; Yang et al., 2009).

For example, if the content and materials of the learning experience are not culturally relevant, or if a participant does not see her culture reflected in the facilitators and other participants, the learning experience will be less likely to lead to changes in practice (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013).

In my research in Africa, I have observed many examples of ways that culture affects learning transfer from professional learning. What follows are some of these examples.

THE NOTION OF TIME

In all five countries, the notion of time was lived differently. In Burkina Faso and Liberia, participants arrived one hour early to the professional learning, and the event started on time, whereas in Rwanda and Ethiopia, participants were slightly late. In Ghana, it was common for the professional learning to start two to three hours after the scheduled time.

Locals once shared: "You Americans have nice watches, but we have the time."

As facilitators from the West, we often wondered if the tardiness was due to the heavy traffic or the fact that we were working with school leaders who may have gone to their schools before the start of the professional learning. But local colleagues advised us to start on time, explaining that as participants began to see the value in the professional learning, they would come on time. When we followed this advice, we were respecting their cultural norms and values about earning trust and respect.

In Burkina Faso and Rwanda, we found that people tended to avoid uncertainty. As a result, it was important for them to know in advance — and in writing — what would happen on an hour-by-hour basis during the professional learning, how it would be led, and who would lead it. Once we understood these cultural traits and prepared accordingly, participant attendance increased.

Understanding the notion of time has especially important repercussions for the planning phase of professional learning because, during this phase, organizers communicate expectations and norms to facilitators and learners, explain who will benefit from training, state that participants are accountable to implement new knowledge, and share the schedule.

FORMALITIES MATTER

Citizens of Burkina Faso and Ghana greatly value traditions. Burkina Faso, however, is more formal than Ghana when it comes to professional learning. For example, it is not unusual for Burkinabe to have an opening and closing ceremony for professional learning, with media, speeches, and special addresses conducted with formal language and formal traditional attire.

As a facilitator, it was important for me to understand and respect these customs, and that helped me to form a bond with my audience. As an organizer, I learned to schedule accordingly, prepare the room adequately for the festivities, and include it in the invitation sent to the participants before the professional learning.

As another example, professional learning participants in many of these countries highly valued receiving a certificate of completion. The certificate has a symbolic value to the leaders and may also provide them with a certain status. As I visited schools, I saw the certificates posted and framed in leaders' offices just as some of my Western colleagues post their university degrees in their university offices. Knowing this enabled the team to include these items in the program and professional learning formal invitations.

WHO IS THE KNOWER?

In leading professional learning, it is important to understand notions of who holds knowledge and power. Power differentials can negatively impact the collaborative spirit that many professional learning leaders strive for.

For example, in West Africa, I found that participants were deferential to those of us who are white, especially when formal or academic titles were added to the whiteness. I and other facilitators coming from the West had to be aware of these power dynamics and work to change them. When I facilitated professional learning sessions, I constantly focused on building trust among the participants and stated numerous times that they were the experts and that I was there to facilitate and was eager to learn from them.

I also asked for my colleagues and me to be given local names to avoid the distance created by having a Western name and title. Ghanaian participants baptized me "Asantewaa," after a respected woman warrior who fought for what was the richest region of Ghana at the time, the Ashanti region. In Burkina, participants named me "Wendkuuni," or God's gift.

After these initial and unofficial naming ceremonies, I began introducing myself with these names during subsequent professional learning events. This practice made participants at ease and helped them to see me as a colleague, not a know-it-all.

We also aimed to reduce the cultural and power differences by using relevant and contextually appropriate examples and stories that leaders in rural and urban areas could relate to. To achieve cultural relevancy, we visited the countries numerous times, interviewed school leaders about their needs, collaborated with local educators and university professors, and sought feedback from participants after professional learning to review the materials and make the necessary cultural modifications, such as switching words most commonly used, examples, or pictures.

COLLECTIVISM

My experience suggested that "we" takes precedence over individual needs in the five nations I studied. In honor of this cultural value (and consistent with best practices in professional learning), we emphasized collaboration, which was familiar because the participants did it all the time in their communities.

We also focused on student-centered activities. This was more of a novelty for participants because the standard approach to professional learning in these countries is stand-and-deliver, in which the facilitator lectures and participants listen. As a result, it was necessary to coach local facilitators throughout the stages of professional learning on how these approaches enhance transfer of learning.

Collectivist values also influenced professional learning in other ways. The emphasis on collectivism made participants very interested in forming communities of practice and staying connected to put into action what they had learned during the professional learning. In Ghana, where many people use WhatsApp in their personal and professional lives, we did a WhatsApp

follow-up intervention (Brion, 2018) to provide further opportunities for peer learning. In Ethiopia, participants used Viber to accomplish a similar community of practice.

Collectivism also raised some challenges. In West Africa, it seemed to hinder participants and local facilitators from reflecting on one's own learning and from giving feedback to others — key components of adult learning. The collectivistic culture seemed to have created a norm of making nice and maintaining politeness rather than offering criticism. I observed this numerous times in the debriefing sessions with local facilitators. The Westerners often had to ask for feedback on their teaching, and the response was usually the same: "It was good."

A MODEL FOR LEARNING

Based on learning experiences like these, I developed the multidimensional model of learning transfer to promote cultural awareness when planning, organizing, conducting, and evaluating professional learning. In this model, I propose that culture is the overarching factor that affects all other dimensions of learning transfer.

The multidimensional model of learning transfer is inspired by the seminal work of Broad and Newstrom (1992), who identified six key factors that promote or inhibit learning transfer, but it is unique in considering culture as the main enhancer or inhibitor to transfer.

In the multidimensional model of learning transfer, I define culture as individual, sectional, departmental, organizational, regional, and national cultures as well as cultures related to a continent. Culture also incorporates the differential effects of age, gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and abilities, among others.

Culture affects all stages of the professional learning and learning transfer processes, including two stages that were not included in previous models such as Broad and Newstrom's and that convey the importance of making professional learning ongoing and sustained: pretraining and follow-up.

Pretraining includes the preparation and orientation of facilitators and other key stakeholders so that they can support the professional learning once it has begun, and follow-up includes structures for ongoing application such as coaching and professional learning communities to create a culture where learning and its application is valued.

Culture also affects all aspects of professional learning, including content, materials, and context in which the learning and larger work of teaching occur, and all stakeholders including learners and facilitators.

By considering how culture pushes on each of these stakeholders, elements, and stages, leaders can come to understand the role culture plays in our learning and integrate cultural awareness as they organize, implement, and evaluate their professional learning while also enhancing learning transfer.

A lack of such awareness presents numerous risks, including reinforcing stereotypes, increasing intolerance among groups, raising potential misunderstandings, escalating frustrations and defensiveness, and causing learners and facilitators to withdraw (Williams & Green, 1994).

The multidimensional model of learning transfer — and cultural proficiency more generally — can be useful for all schools and districts, especially but not exclusively those that serve a diverse student and staff population. As leaders, we should all understand our own culture and identities, as well as those of our staff, students, and communities, to ensure that learning occurs and transfers into practice.

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With new science standards, coaching is key

BY JUSTIN ANDERSSON, DANIEL SITZMAN, AMY ARNESON, AND ELIZABETH GANDHI

As the world races to combat a pandemic, slow climate change, and solve many other public health challenges, it's clear that developing young people's scientific knowledge should be an urgent priority in schools.

The goal of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) is to foster scholars and citizens who can think critically and creatively to address such problems and contribute to other scientific advances. The standards are based on *A Framework for K-12 Science Education* (National Research Council, 2012) and its vision to actively engage students over multiple years of school in three dimensions of science learning: scientific and engineering practices, the application of crosscutting concepts to deepen student understanding, and mastery of disciplinary core ideas (National Research Council, 2015).

This kind of thinking is not only important for future scientists. Recent trends show that more and

more citizens question the validity of science. Everyone could benefit from understanding the values and stakes of scientific inquiry.

But many schools have struggled to implement the standards. The learning called for in three-dimensional standards is demanding and rigorous (Lee et al., 2015), and the inquiry-based delivery necessary for a teacher to reach students at this level is a complex shift from more traditional teaching methods.

With inquiry-based teaching, teachers support students and students support each other in understanding their work instead of students being asked to complete tasks on their own. The classroom culture welcomes mistakes, and students learn by *doing* instead of memorization.

Because of these significant shifts, there is an urgency to identify professional learning that will best prepare teachers to meet the challenges of the Next Generation Science Standards (Haag & Megowan, 2015). In Omaha Public Schools in Nebraska, district science leaders turned to a form of instructional coaching called transformational coaching to complement and deepen other professional learning experiences while supporting the implementation of science standards.

The growing urban district, with 53,000 students, has experienced increased socioeconomic challenges, and student demographics show a greater diversity of backgrounds, with 114 languages spoken.

The district's science office, in an effort to support equity and diversity, recognized how the Next Generation Science Standards aligned with this goal and identified 12 successful educators to guide classroom teachers through the implementation of the new standards.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Conferences: Short bursts of training focused on a specific area of content or pedagogy, such as National Science Teaching Association national or regional conferences, the state science teachers conference, or other professional conferences.

Immersion experiences: One-time intensive engagement opportunities to immerse participants in inquiry for a specific science content area. Generally, these took place over several days or weeks.

Lesson study: An intensive curriculum development inquiry cycle consisting of identifying a curricular topic of interest, planning and conducting a research lesson, and using data to illuminate student learning, lesson design, and broader issues within teaching and learning (Lewis & Hurd, 2011).

Curriculum writing: Training in the five tools and processes for Next Generation Science Standards instruction (American Museum of Natural History, 2016) and five practices for orchestrating student discussion (Cartier et al., 2013). Working as a team of four to five teachers plus an instructional coach to create lesson plans and course guides for all units and instructional sequences in the new curriculum.

Graduate coursework: University courses that fit into advanced degrees, as well as courses that supported lesson study, curriculum writing, and immersion experiences.

An educational evaluation team partnered with the science office to help identify progress in the programming.

Data indicate that teachers gained confidence in their ability to implement the new science standards, while students experienced increased interest and engagement in the classroom when they engaged in inquiry-based learning opportunities that support the new science standards.

WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIONAL COACHING?

Transformational coaching (Aguilar, 2013) employs a variety of instructional strategies, including directive and facilitative approaches. With directive coaching, a coach imparts his or her knowledge and expertise to the teacher to help the teacher reach his or her goals. In contrast, facilitative approaches allow coach and teacher to collaborate as equals, with a focus on reaching goals that they have established together.

Coaches combine these two types of strategies to meet teachers at their current level of understanding and facilitate growth toward defined goals (Aguilar, 2013). Omaha chose this approach after district science leaders reviewed several coaching programs and attended in-depth coaching workshops with Jim Knight and Elena Aguilar. The leadership team crafted the transformational coaching program with influence from both models and worked with Aguilar and her professional development team to mentor the new coaches.

Over a 15-month period, the district collected data on 68 teacher participants, ranging from kindergarten to high school, who took advantage of the opportunity to design professional learning for themselves that would include support from an instructional coach.

The district invited all science teachers, special education teachers, and English learner teachers who support science students to apply to participate, with selection based on applicants' intended goals and principal approval. The program was flexible and adaptive to each teacher's professional learning goals and to emerging needs in the district, such as renewed focus on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the transition to the new science standards.

Even though only a few teacher participants' initial professional learning goals sought to improve their implementation of three-dimensional teaching, many teachers and coaches soon realized that three-dimensional instruction could move them toward their other goals.

Ten experienced science teachers (four elementary and six secondary) served as instructional coaches, undertaking ongoing training in transformational instructional coaching.

Instructional coaches and teacher participants met with each other one-on-one several times a month for planning, learning sessions, observations, and reflective conversations. Coaches supported teachers to use student data to reflect on needs and plan future instruction; monitored teacher and student progress; led action research opportunities; and scaffolded teachers' adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards based on each teacher's individual readiness.

Even though only a few teacher participants' initial professional learning goals sought to improve their implementation of three-dimensional teaching, many teachers and coaches soon realized that three-dimensional instruction could move them toward their other goals.

For example, a teacher may set a goal to improve student engagement in a biology classroom. A coach would work with the teacher to find interesting lesson ideas and other strategies to get learners more involved, such as inquiry learning opportunities. Along with inquiry learning, the coach and the teacher would set out to learn more about science and engineering practices that can provide rigor to inquiry learning. The coach would support the teacher in the implementation of these lessons in the classroom.

Coaches also helped teachers connect other professional learning experiences — which they chose from a menu of options such as graduate coursework and curriculum writing — with classroom practices. (See sidebar on p. 45.)

IMPACT ON TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Education Northwest, serving as external evaluators for the program, collected interview, survey, and observational data from teachers and coaches, along with student survey and achievement data, during the 15-month period. (See graphic on p. 47.) Education Northwest interviewed participating teachers, school and district leadership, and coaches, and surveyed students.

Evaluators observed teachers' lessons, observed coaching conversations between teachers and coaches, and surveyed participating teachers' students twice in each school year, once in the first semester and once in the second. They interviewed participants and stakeholders once or twice per school year. Evaluators used scores from state science tests, administered at the end of each school year, to examine student academic achievement.

Results indicate that sustained, multiyear professional learning opportunities in tandem with instructional coaching were key in helping teachers adapt to the principles of three-dimensional learning, such as student inquiry (Davidson et al., 2019).

Coaching practices

Observations of coaching conversations between coaches and

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN TEACHER SELF-REPORTED PRACTICE DIMENSION SCORES AND STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS

Teacher dimension			Student survey item
Communicative interactions	Student-teacher relationships	Procedural knowledge	
0.56	0.59	**0.68***	My teacher thinks mistakes are okay as long as we are learning.
0.55	**0.67***	**0.70***	My teacher wants us to understand our work, not just memorize it.
0.58	**0.70***	**0.74***	My teacher gives us time to really explore and understand new ideas.
0.62	**0.76***	**0.77***	In my science lessons, I get a better understanding of the world outside of school.
0.58	**0.70***	0.67	In my science lessons, I explain my ideas to other students.
0.55	0.60	0.58	In my science lessons, other students explain their ideas to me.
0.64	0.62	0.64	During science lessons, my teacher asks me questions.
0.42	0.50	0.56	In my science lessons, we learn by doing experiments rather than being told the answer.

More agreement between students and teachers — Less agreement

Note: Values reported are Pearson's correlation coefficients (r), which measure the strength and direction of linear relationships between two variables. In social sciences, correlations with a magnitude above 0.6 are typically considered strong. Correlations found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level are shown in bold with an asterisk.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2018-19 student survey data and teaching beliefs and practices survey data.

teachers showed evidence of best coaching practices and best practices in Next Generation Science Standards, including:

- A frequent focus on students (85% of observations);
- Coaches making reference to the teacher's goal (71% of observations); and
- Coaches encouraging teachers to promote student inquiry in their classroom (75% of observations).

Changes in instructional practice

Multiple data sources suggest that participating teachers' instructional practices reflected best practices in inquiry-based science instruction throughout their participation in the program, and particularly at the end of the cycle.

- According to teachers' self-reports, the majority reported using hands-on/manipulative activities (72% of teachers who joined the program in the second iteration and 86% of teachers who participated in both iterations) and having students make conjectures and explore possible methods to solve a problem at least once or twice a week (61% of new teachers and 83% of returning teachers).
- According to instructional coaches' reports, 92% of participating teachers used hands-on/manipulative activities sometimes or most of the time, and 82% engaged students in making conjectures and exploring possible methods to solve a problem sometimes or most of the time.
- More than half (56%) of students perceived inquiry happening in their classrooms, reporting that "in my science lessons, we learn by doing experiments rather than being told the answer" in almost all lessons.

Student engagement and understanding

Teacher practices and student

outcomes were positively correlated.

For example, student interest and engagement in science was correlated with:

- Teacher perception of how inquiry-based their lessons were;
- Teacher reports of feeling more comfortable allowing students to think about and challenge ideas;
- Teacher reports of working to build relationships with their learners and student engagement;

Also, students of teachers who self-reported higher procedural knowledge (thinking critically and challenging ideas) were more likely to report that:

- "My teacher gives us time to really explore and understand new ideas" (r = 0.74); and
- "In my science lessons, I get a better understanding of the world outside of school" (r = 0.77).

APPLICATION

All students deserve access to instruction that puts them more in control of their own learning and motivates them to engage deeply with challenging material. Purposeful and focused professional learning is necessary to support teachers in refining their classroom practices to equitably provide access to this type of instruction.

Like Passmore (2015), we have seen benefits for educators and students when teachers enter into a combination of high-quality learning experiences and deep and lasting collaborations with coaches. We believe this combination is particularly important for implementation of new content standards that involve increased complexity in teaching and learning.

Interestingly, though the majority of participating teachers entered the program seeking to improve disciplinary content knowledge, about four-fifths of the grant participants gained the most confidence in science and engineering practices or crosscutting concepts.

Though the majority of participating teachers entered the program seeking to improve disciplinary content knowledge, about four-fifths of the grant participants gained the most confidence in science and engineering practices or crosscutting concepts.

These components, the least familiar of the science standards, are key to the implementation of three-dimensional curriculum. While the content for many grade levels has not changed much across different standards, what students are being asked to do with the content and how they are being asked to learn have changed.

Translating new and complex standards into classroom practices takes time and focused, purposeful hard work, but that work is paying off. Coaches and teachers tell us that their confidence and understanding are growing as they continue working together.

To continue this momentum, we are establishing and supporting curricular development teams. Participating teachers collaborate on a common goal, writing and expanding curriculum inspired by the Next Generation Science Standards, with grade-level colleagues from across the district or with a team in the same school. Instructional coaches will continue to support all participating teachers, limited only by the number of available coaches, to advance their understanding and implementation of three-dimensional science teaching and learning aligned with the state standards that were built in *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*.

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REACH. INVESTIGATE. DISCOVER.

IDEAS

EDUCATOR WELL-BEING

SUPPORT THE WHOLE EDUCATOR

If educators are focused on supporting the whole child, including social and emotional health, why aren't we supporting the wellness of the whole educator? And what can we do about that?

Paying attention to the whole educator benefits students as well as adults. As their wellness needs will be met, educators will have more space to be engaged in equity work and teach in a more critically conscious manner.

— "8 dimensions of wellness for educators,"

p. 50

8 dimensions of wellness for educators

BY ANGEL L. MONTOYA AND LAURA L. SUMMERS

Teaching is a selfless profession. Although many of us find great satisfaction in our work, most educators would probably say they are driven by the desire to help and inspire students. Too often, educators sacrifice their own well-being to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs. We have experienced this ourselves and seen it among educators we have supported.

Teacher wellness influences school culture and climate, instruction, and students' academic, personal, and emotional development (Sackney et al., 2000). It also affects the stability of the workforce.

Educator burnout has increased in the United States over the past decade (Wang et al., 2015; Koenig et al., 2017), and it has been attributed to chronic strain that results from the mismatch between job demands and available resources to emotionally and mentally cope with the job demands (Lauermann & Konig, 2016). And over the last 40 years, teacher attrition rates in North America have increased from 30% to 40% (Wang et al., 2015).

Yet wellness has not been systematically explored within the field of education (Sackney et al., 2000),

DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATOR WELLNESS		
EDUCATOR DIMENSION	DEFINITION	FUNCTIONS
Emotional	Awareness, acceptance, expression, and management of emotions.	Adjustment, coping, communication, maintaining relationships.
Environmental	Perceptions of working environment, including temperature, lighting, safety, décor, cleanliness, and comfort.	Reduces stress and promotes individual health and happiness, leading to productivity.
Intellectual	Engaging the mind, continually learning, and developing and applying knowledge.	Feeds creativity and inspiration.
Physical	Functional operation of the body, achieved through conventional aspects of healthy living such as exercise, diet, and sleeping habits.	Establishes balance, improves productivity.
Social	The degree to which individuals interact within their communities to improve their social environments.	Makes a productive work environment, propagates a happier and healthier working community.
Spiritual	Ability to find purpose in life and profession and to practice one's value system. Addresses one's beliefs, ethics, and philosophy not limited to one's religious beliefs.	Influences an individual's sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and professional drive.
Occupational	The ability to contribute unique skills and formal education to personally meaningful work.	A sense of self-efficacy to perform job responsibilities effectively and contribute to the school community. Another component is a sense of upward mobility in the profession, which relates to job satisfaction and engagement.
Financial	Economic stability and ability to make informed financial decisions. Includes the ability to live comfortably, invest in savings, save for retirement, and prepare for unexpected emergencies.	Financial concerns have the ability to influence one's decisions and interactions within the work environment and in one's personal life.

and teachers are often unaware of the few outlets that exist to explore their personal and emotional needs, such as counseling services, physical wellness memberships, and social support groups (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Clearly, there is a need for more emphasis on educators' well-being.

If educators are focused on supporting the whole child, including social and emotional health, why aren't we supporting the wellness of the whole educator? And what can we do about that?

Paying attention to the whole educator benefits students as well as adults. As their wellness needs will be met, educators will have more space to be engaged in equity work and teach in a more critically conscious manner.

DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATOR WELLNESS

Wellness is a multidimensional

WELLNESS AND EQUITY PERSPECTIVES

LAURA L. SUMMERS

The COVID-19 pandemic has created huge challenges for educators' — and everyone's — well-being. In both my personal and professional lives, I have striven to maintain as many of the eight dimensions as possible.

To help the educators I support maintain intellectual and occupational wellness, I launched a grant-funded, free, webinar series in partnership with our state library. In this monthly series, "Shine a Light on Innovative Practices," I invite a teacher to spotlight his or her effective practices (e.g. coaching practices, maker studio efforts, teacher collaboration) in school. Teachers from across the state have provided feedback on how much they appreciate the opportunity to learn what's working from peers during COVID.

ANGEL L. MONTOYA

When I was a classroom teacher and working on my doctorate, I began to feel my own well-being suffer, and I began to grapple with what wellness meant to me as an educator. I tried to unpack what professional and personal needs were not being met, but I felt stuck in a cycle of reflection with few resources to meet those needs.

After I began an examination of wellness research, I came to understand that wellness is an act of resistance to systems of oppression and allows one to engage critically as an agent of equity. As a result of my wellness journey, I became able to ground and center myself in my environment and have the reflective space to serve students equitably. I also came to fully embrace and find my voice for social justice in education and be an advocate for antiracism in education.

and holistic state of being that is conscious, self-directed, and focused on promoting and maximizing human potential (National Wellness Institute, n.d.). Wellness is the total integration of multiple dimensions (Morris & DeVane, 1994; Sackney et al., 2000).

We define educator wellness along eight dimensions described by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: emotional, environmental, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, occupational, and financial. The eight dimensions are described in the table on p. 51, and in the following pages, we describe their relevance for educators and some strategies to address them.

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Emotional wellness is a major component of an educator's daily life because it affects interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. For example, educators often need to manage their personal feelings of frustration to deal positively with students' challenging behaviors.

Educators can achieve emotional management and wellness through individual activities that allow for self-reflection and processing as well as maintaining connections with friends who are active listeners, trusted colleagues, mentors, coaches, or professionals who are trained in emotional wellness strategies.

Individual activities help, too — practicing mindfulness or meditation, partaking in a hobby, taking a leisurely walk in nature (Zurawik, 2020), or using journaling techniques to process through emotions (Pennebaker, 1997).

Educators may want to consider counseling when self-care techniques aren't enough. Counseling gives the educator a safe space with a neutral party to make sense of emotions and gain clarity in how to make necessary life adjustments.

ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

Because environmental wellness establishes the physical and mental foundation that grounds an educator's work, administrators and systems must create and maintain environments that minimize stress for teachers and students and support overall wellness. School districts and school administrators need an environmental climate policy that supports teachers' environmental wellness by providing maintained and controlled climates, including lighting, temperature, cleanliness, and access to immediate room repairs.

In our experience, even painting walls has positively influenced teachers and students' moods and willingness to keep the environment cleaner.

INTELLECTUAL WELLNESS

The pursuit of one's intellectual passion is essential for educators' relational and instructional engagement with students. It helps them stay current with evolving research and follow through with emerging best practices.

Schools are responsible for — and ultimately benefit from — cultivating an environment that helps employees pursue creativity and knowledge. Education systems need to provide educators with opportunities to continually expand their content knowledge and pedagogical practices, particularly in how to serve students in culturally responsive and equitable ways. High-quality professional learning is essential for nurturing intellectual well-being.

PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Educators often feel so extended by the day-to-day demands of their professional and personal lives that they don't make time for physical wellness. Educators who have a depleted sense of physical wellness are more susceptible to physical and mental illness, which has a direct influence on attendance, relationships, and capacity to serve students. In turn, this can have a negative impact on other educators and their ability to serve students.

School districts can support physical wellness by providing discounted gym memberships, access to school gyms with designated hours for educators to use district equipment, group exercise classes, or physical wellness challenges.

SOCIAL WELLNESS

Social wellness provides the foundation for interaction and participation with and commitment to students, parents, and the community that are rooted in mutual respect, interdependence, and cooperation (Sackney et al., 2000; Strout & Howard, 2012).

Educators must engage in opportunities that allow them to interact and socialize with other individuals outside of the workplace to meet their social wellness needs. Schedules filled with evening athletic events, school community events, professional learning, and lesson planning can interfere with educators creating a healthy work-life balance.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

Spiritual wellness allows educators to find their purpose and passion within the profession, enabling them to serve students equitably. Spiritual wellness is unique to each individual in how he or she will cultivate the understanding to support this dimension. Educators can create the space for deepening their spiritual wellness by examining individual aspirations, looking for deeper meanings, and analyzing recurring patterns through reflective journaling, meditation, self-help book studies, and introspective mindfulness time.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS

Schools have a moral obligation to build educator capacity and to retain and value each educator as a contributing member of the collective school district. Educators' occupational wellness is often threatened because of limited growth opportunities. For example, many educators believe that the only path for career advancement is administration — a pathway that doesn't appeal to everyone.

Education systems must make clear to educators that there are many ways to contribute to the school and the field. A district's professional learning or human resources department could provide seminars on possible advanced pathways by partnering with a local university to share training that is available for school instructional deans, school counselors, school psychologists, district office coordinators, and directors in areas such as curriculum, research and assessment, educational technology, and professional learning.

FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Financial wellness has a direct effect on educators' ability to support their life, health, and mental well-being. If an individual is under financial stress, this occupies an overwhelming amount of an individual's mental capacity, preventing educators from being fully mindful and critically conscious in their instructional practices and relationships — a direct threat to achieving educational equity, because providing antiracist and equitable services requires one to be mindful and reflective of his or her actions.

HOW THEY INTERCONNECT

To support the whole educator, it is imperative to understand the eight dimensions individually and then examine how they are interconnected. There are steps that we can take in each domain and across domains.

In our experience, this involves a blend of small and larger structural steps that education systems can take. For example, looking at financial wellness, a small step is shifting the payment schedule from 10 months to 12 months, making it easier to budget monthly expenses and plan for unexpected life situations on small salaries. Larger, more structural solutions include increasing teachers' salaries and partnering with municipalities to provide affordable housing options. The latter is an example of an approach that addresses multiple wellness domains, including environmental and perhaps physical in addition to financial.

To support students equitably, we must support educators in a range of ways, large and small, so that they can achieve all eight dimensions of wellness. We are past due in attending to educator wellness, and every step counts.

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Wang, H., Hall, N.C., & Rahimi,

Continued on p. 62

Stress, burnout, and mental health among teachers of color

EDUCATORS CALL FOR STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS

BY CHRISTOPHER J. CORMIER, VENUS WONG, JOHN H. McGREW, LISA A. RUBLE, AND FRANK C. WORRELL

Teaching in K-12 schools is stressful, as educators know and research documents. For example, Herman et al. (2020) found that 94% of middle school teachers reported high levels of stress.

Although all teachers experience stress, minoritized teachers of color often experience unique stressors. Common examples include being asked to translate for parents who do not speak English or function as the disciplinarian for students experiencing behavioral challenges (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Dixon et al., 2019). Often, these students are from other classes, and teachers are interrupted from working with their own students and completing their other responsibilities.

Minoritized teachers of color may accept these additional duties to support students who share their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but they also engender stress. Moreover, when there are racial incidents in communities (e.g. the Black Lives Matter protests), these teachers are often expected to take the lead in educating their peers while dealing with their personal responses to these issues.

The stressors minoritized teachers of color experience are multilayered and complex, yet there is a dearth of literature on this topic. Here is a brief overview of stressors and stress-related outcomes, particularly on mental health and burnout, and recommendations for these teachers and the school administrators who support them.

MENTAL HEALTH AND BURNOUT

Stress has physical and socioemotional consequences. These

can vary from mild to extreme, depending on the severity of the stressors and access to resources such as social support, financial reserves, and health care. In severe cases, stress can be a contributing factor to mental and physical illness.

Socioemotional problems are unfairly stigmatized and viewed as a weakness or personal failing. In fact, socioemotional problems are common and cause more disability and missed workdays than any other condition (World Health Organization, 2001). Research has established that about half of us from every demographic group will suffer a period of severe emotional distress at some point during our lifetimes (Kessler et al., 2005).

Moreover, culture and economic class can influence risk factors, the types of symptoms experienced, and availability of treatments. For example, individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at higher risk of experiencing stress and have less access to treatment, and men are less likely than women to seek help for socioemotional concerns (Katz et al., 1997; Reiss, 2013; Williams et al., 2010).

How does stress increase our susceptibility to emotional and physical illness? A common explanatory framework is the stress-vulnerability model (Zuckerman, 1999). Vulnerabilities refer to personal risk factors (e.g. family history of heart disease or depression) and stress refers to our emotional and physical responses to a stressor (e.g. job loss, caregiving for parents). Stressors are the potential triggers for stress and can stem from physical challenges (e.g. lack of sleep), environmental factors (e.g. living in a high-crime neighborhood), major life events (e.g. death in family), and daily hassles (e.g. racist interactions). Chronic stressors may trigger a chain of responses that, over time, can lead to physical or mental consequences.

Our feelings of stress are often directly related to how we interpret the stressor. In general, negative ways of thinking make us more vulnerable to experiencing stress and more likely to develop a physical or emotional illness, whereas more positive ways of thinking buffer our responses to stressors and are protective against the development of physical and emotional disorders.

A common consequence of chronic stress at work is burnout, which consists of emotional exhaustion (feeling overwhelmed), depersonalization (negative attitudes and feelings toward work), and a reduced sense of work accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1997).

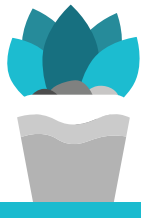
Burnout can have long-term negative impacts on individuals and organizations, and teachers who experience high levels of burnout often have other physical and mental health problems (Brunsting et al., 2014). Burnout becomes a problem when we have difficulty doing our jobs effectively or begin thinking about leaving our job (Awa et al., 2010). Burned-out teachers are seen as more distant and less sympathetic, and teachers with high levels of burnout tend to have more student problem behaviors and lower teaching effectiveness (Wong et al., 2017).

WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Burnout is more likely to occur when job demands outweigh our resources (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Demands can include an excessive workload, high levels of responsibility, lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities, or conflict at work. While minoritized teachers of color often have additional stressors, there are steps they and school administrators can take to mitigate the negative effects of

ASSESS YOUR PERSONAL RESOURCES

- How do I think about my work?
- What role does my identity play in my work?
- How is my physical health?
- Do I have social support and spiritual connections in my life?
- How do I usually deal with stress?



stress and promote social and emotional well-being.

Reduce or reframe the stressors

One strategy is to reduce exposure to stressors or reframe stressors from threats into positive challenges or career opportunities. For example, in a situation where a Black male teacher is frequently called on to be the disciplinarian for students of color (Bristol & Mentor, 2018), the teacher can discuss this with his colleagues or principal. This conversation can involve the following options:

Define the problem. The teacher can provide specific examples on how being seen primarily as a disciplinarian has a negative impact on his teaching effectiveness and tie these problems back to the school's goals. For instance, the teacher can document the time spent on this task and say, "In the past two weeks, I have stepped out of my own class seven times to help with disciplinary issues for other teachers. My students have lost a significant amount of instructional time. This year, our school aims to increase students' reading fluency by X%; I want to make sure that my students and I can meet this goal."

Clarify preferences. The teacher should decide whether he wants to take on the duty and communicate this choice clearly and respectfully. If the teacher is willing to engage in this activity, he can ask not to be interrupted during periods while teaching so that colleagues know when the teacher can be called on to assist.

If a teacher decides not to take on the additional duty, he can say, "I understand that I am the only Black male teacher in the school, and many Black male teachers take on the role of disciplinarian. I appreciate you seeking help from me, but I think my students would benefit more if I can focus on teaching them math and running the math club." This way, the teacher's colleagues and principal have a chance to reflect on their assumption (Black teachers are disciplinarians) and consider how they can help this teacher meet his career goals.

Formalize extra duties and gain recognition. A teacher who decides to accept extra duties can also ask that these tasks be made an official part of his duties and considered in merit reviews. When doing so, teachers can list the specific contributions they have made (e.g. the number of disciplinary actions completed in the past month).

Similarly, a teacher who is frequently called on to translate in meetings with parents can request that the meetings be scheduled at a specifically designated time and that this duty be formalized. In this way, tasks that were an imposition and a source of stress can become recognized contributions to the school community.

Supports and personal resources

Workplaces sometimes provide supports for employees in the form of handbooks with clear expectations or opportunities to provide feedback to the administration. When we have adequate and appropriate resources to do our jobs, we tend to have increased work engagement and satisfaction and decreased burnout. Supports like clear job expectations, autonomy, involvement in decision-making, and coworker and administrator support buffer feelings of burnout.

We cannot always change the external challenges we face, but we can change how we respond to them. We all have personal resources, and it can be helpful to list our personal resources and reflect on our ways of managing our emotions and our time.

The answers to this self-inventory (see p. 55) can help individuals manage burnout and work stress as well as identify areas for possible improvement. When we have or develop personal resources to counterbalance work-related stress, we are more likely to avoid burnout and have a more enjoyable and positive work experience.

What can be done if a teacher is already experiencing burnout? One option is an intervention called BREATHE-EASE (Ruble et al., 2019), which is an extension of work done in mental health settings (see Salyers et al., 2011). This intervention is applicable to both general and special educators and consists of a number of practices to help build personal resources (see also **www.compassforautism.org**). It begins with a focus on core contemplative practices, such as deep breathing and mindfulness exercises. The intervention also covers cognitive practices — for example, asking teachers to think about their work and reconnect with the meaning and values that brought them to teaching.

A third set of strategies focuses on physical options, such as getting appropriate sleep and nutrition. Additional aspects of the intervention include time management approaches (i.e. helping people think about how they can schedule their time and work more effectively with the time that they do have) and building social support and relationships at work, including learning how to have difficult conversations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are more sources of support for minoritized teachers of color.

- Profound Gentlemen **(www.profoundgentlemen.org)** is a nonprofit with a focus on mentoring and creating community for male minoritized teachers of color.
- The Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners **(community.cec.sped.org/ddel/home)** is a supportive group of minoritized teachers of color in K-12 schools.
- Cormier and Scott (2020) outline several advocacy strategies for minoritized teachers of color in special education.

CREATING A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

In many cases, the stressors in a school setting stem from the culture or climate and cannot be addressed by an individual teacher. Change needs to come from principals or other administrators (see list at right). Administrators can develop and sustain a work climate that promotes the idea that attending to one's own well-being is essential. Sometimes we just need to be given permission to focus on ourselves.

All of the strategies we outline here can be considered from a cultural lens. There are several questions that principals should always be asking: Do minoritized teachers of color in my school feel valued and respected or ignored and marginalized? Am I giving their suggestions the same weight that I give to suggestions from other teachers? Are they asked to take on additional duties in my school that are not acknowledged and rewarded? Does the curriculum reflect the diversity of the country and not just the demographics of the school, especially if the diversity of the school is limited? Is the cultural climate in my school a positive one for teachers from all demographic backgrounds?

Administrators need to be able to answer in the affirmative to all of these questions and know that the minoritized teachers of color will also answer in the affirmative.

EARLY INTERVENTION

If we can promote teacher well-being and identify early warning signs of stress and burnout in school settings, we can intervene earlier to provide extra support and avoid the long-term consequences of burnout that have a negative impact on schools, teachers, and, ultimately, the students.

However, as the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements have shown, these concerns are not independent of the broader societal context. Assessments of school climate must include a cultural lens so that minoritized teachers of color have support that allows them to contribute in meaningful ways without being marginalized and disenfranchised.

WHAT ADMINISTRATORS CAN DO TO REDUCE BURNOUT FOR MINORITIZED TEACHERS OF COLOR

- Have clear policies that are applied equally to all teachers.
- Ensure that all teachers feel that they and their culture are valued and respected members of the school community.
- Visit their classes and appreciate their unique styles and strengths.
- Ask how you can be an ally.
- Provide clear and realistic job expectations.
- Provide support for autonomy.
- Increase respectful communication.
- Create social situations where all cultural groups feel welcome.

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Continued on p. 62

SEL starts at the top

SCHOOL LEADERS' WELL-BEING HAS A RIPPLE EFFECT ON SCHOOLS

BY MELANIE STEFANOVIC, DANIEL REYES-GUERRA, AND DANA ZOROVICH-GODEK

Emotional intelligence is good for business. That's the growing consensus across sectors in recent years.

Anyone who has been on the receiving end of a physician's detached delivery of upsetting news would be glad to know that empathy training is gaining increasing traction in medicine. CEOs in a range of other fields increasingly consult emotional intelligence coaches to develop upper managers' so-called soft skills because they know that happy employees are more productive than unhappy ones. In schools, we call this focus on people's well-being and interpersonal skills social and emotional learning (SEL).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020).

Vast and mounting evidence demonstrates the positive impact of SEL programming for students' educational experiences and outcomes (see Durlak et al., 2011, and Weissberg et al., 2015), as well as the impact of teachers' social and emotional competencies on student mental health, behavioral outcomes, and academic performance (Jones et al., 2013; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Indeed, dozens of recent empirical studies and government reports signal growing calls for policy adaptations that embrace

SEL's short- and long-term benefits for teachers, students, families, schools, and society.

For many years, an intense focus on high-stakes accountability eclipsed SEL in schools, but that has begun to change. SEL has achieved increasing national attention and growth within the past year at the national and state policy levels. Congress approved and the president signed a bill with $123 million in landmark federal funding for SEL (Stringer, 2019).

The U.S. Department of Education launched the Center to Improve SEL and School Safety, and 40 states now have some form of SEL standards or competencies, with hundreds of school districts following suit. For instance, in our home state of Florida, 43 of the 67 school districts currently implement SEL initiatives and programs, as demonstrated through SEL Florida, a statewide clearinghouse for collaboration and advocacy.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, SEL has been more visible than ever: The topics of well-being and mental health now seem to permeate everything. They're in our daily conversations and the news headlines, trending on social media, and popping up in virtual trainings for educators.

But SEL research and practice have largely neglected a key player: the school leader. Most leaders have few, if any, professional learning opportunities to either improve their own SEL competencies or learn how to implement and facilitate SEL efforts for staff and students.

Yet we know about the ripple effect of school leaders and the scalable impact of school leadership. Through their direct influence on teachers, school culture, and the community (Clifford et al., 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004), school leaders have significant effects on student outcomes (Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2006; Louis et al., 2010). Therefore, to continue to improve the SEL of students and teachers, we must turn our attention to school leader SEL.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, SEL has been more visible than ever: The topics of well-being and mental health now seem to permeate everything. They're in our daily conversations and the news headlines, trending on social media, and popping up in virtual trainings for educators.

Research (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998) has shown, and educators know intuitively, that teaching, learning, and emotions are inseparably intertwined. Although the instructional leadership paradigm that has predominated in leader preparation and professional development since the 1980s tends to view the integration of SEL as beyond the basics of academics and curriculum, SEL is actually a return to the basics and supports instructional goals and academic progress. A 2017 meta-analysis of school-based SEL intervention categorized direct skills and effective outcomes in campus-based climate and culture as being inherently linked to the foundational knowledge of the instructional leader (Taylor et al., 2017).

With a view of SEL as foundational and essential for positive school outcomes, the Office of Educational Leadership and Learning at Florida Atlantic University, in collaboration with Dana Zorovich-Godek, adjunct instructor and policy leader at CASEL, recently launched a course of professional learning designed for school-based and district-level administrators to enhance their social and emotional competence and build their capacity for facilitating teacher and student SEL. The following account of the professional learning program describes the general purpose and format, course content and the underlying research, and a description of the powerful impact of the program on participants.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The course was originally built on the CASEL 5 competencies for SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, as well as an analysis of workplace expectations for adult SEL (Dusenbury et al., 2020). In light of the pandemic, the course was revised to include the theories and practices of trauma-informed and healing-centered school leadership as well.

The 16 participants involved in summer 2020 are students in an executive-level partnership program for aspiring school principals. They are all seated assistant principals in one of the

nation's largest urban school districts primarily serving in Title I schools and schools with high proportions of racial and ethnic minority students.

Participants received school district professional development credit as well as university credit toward their doctoral degrees by participating in the program. The course was held virtually over six Saturdays in early summer and will be offered to a new cohort of executive level students in summer 2021.

The course and its participants are part of a study sponsored by The Wallace Foundation, with the intent of building on the body of research on school leaders and those who supervise them. For this reason, course participants also include principal supervisors who worked to refine coaching strategies and instructional approaches that seek to infuse SEL into academics.

COURSE CONTENT

A thread uniting all six learning modules is transformative SEL leadership for equitable schooling (Jagers et al., 2019). Throughout the course, exercises and assignments develop skills in applying a transformative SEL lens in analyses of policies, procedures, programs, curriculum, and data.

Transformative leadership is defined as leadership that challenges inequitable social frameworks to create change in society, and it is distinct from transformational school leadership, which focuses primarily on change within the school. Transformative leadership theory positions the school leader as a social change agent with the responsibility and capability to elevate the voices of children, families, and communities to advance equity in society (Shields, 2010).

To that end, participants engaged in weekly reflections in response to prompts centered on the connections between SEL theory in course readings and their lived experiences as school leaders in historically underserved schools. They also learned ways to explicitly address educational equity through authentic school-family-community partnerships and to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships.

Understanding that SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities, course participants worked to produce specific and authentic parent engagement strategies that moved campuses from compliance to commitment.

The summative assessment, a culmination of work throughout the course, also challenged participants to apply SEL leadership competencies by investigating and addressing school leadership policy and practice within a specific geographic region.

Five major competency goals guided the learning activities. The first two goals were to understand the foundational theory of SEL relative to the whole-child needs of learners and apply an integrated approach to student development. The next two goals were to use tools to diagnose adult and student SEL needs and gain the skills in developing others in SEL. The fifth competency goal was to understand the processes necessary to sustain SEL-related efforts.

Supplemental readings to develop these competencies included research and publications from such authors as Elena Aguilar, Joseph Durlak, Roger Weissberg, Jason Cascarino, and Brené Brown, and from organizations including CASEL and PDK International.

In addition to video lectures and assigned course readings, participants identified their own resources to build on course learnings and synthesize various theories and approaches. To take theory to practice, learning activities involved acquiring and applying SEL knowledge and skills, including application of the three SEL signature practices — welcoming rituals, engaging activities, and optimistic closures — and the tenets of youth empowerment theory, which holds that empowering children in meaningful, prosocial activities promotes the development of cognitive and behavioral skills they need to understand their social environments and become independent problem solvers and decision-makers (Zimmerman, 2000). Finally, participants engaged in rotating peer coaching, where protocol check-ins called for reviews of fostering youth voice, agency, and engagement that are grounded in authentic family and community partnerships.

In the first of six learning modules, participants are exposed to the physiological basis of social and emotional competence. For example, neurological and physiological research findings were related to the specific competency of focus, deepening the knowledge of brain-based learning and the effects of emotions on cognitive processing.

In a particular session, participants explored the limbic system of the brain and physically constructed models of this system, particularly the amygdala — the area of the brain that signals flight-fright-or-freeze signals to the body. Next, the group was asked to add a series of weights and other elements to illustrate how trauma can physically inhibit other systems of the brain responsible for content acquisition and memory.

A strong foundational knowledge of the connection between leadership and neuroscience also guided the leaders as the course progressed, and they came to understand their own social-emotional states as central to the social-emotional health of their schools.

For example, the summer 2020 cohort discussed the crushing forces of constant accountability and compliance, and participants discovered how the toxic stress produced by this environment influences their daily decision-making and relationships. They explored how their most effective leadership practices — shared

leadership, relationship building, capacity building, and conflict resolution — become difficult, if not impossible, when the limbic system of the brain is in a constant state of emergency.

We worked with these leaders to help them develop strategies and techniques in de-escalation to reset the amygdala and stimulate the vagus nerve to promote regeneration. Sometimes thought of as meditation, simple breathing exercises and oxygenating the nerve system dramatically decrease stress hormones and open up neuropathways to a balanced state.

Groups used a deck of cards that directed them to either add or subtract the weights based on adverse childhood experiences. The results demonstrated the physiological challenges to the fundamental architecture of the brain when constant stressors are present. In the adolescent brain, these adaptations to tissue and functions can be permanent and dramatically impact the trajectory of the individual's life.

Participants experienced a tangible model of these effects, which led them to examine the logic of stringent discipline practices or even academic rigor unless the brain is in a state of readiness and its executive functions engaged.

THE IMPACT

Based on participants' self-reflections and their course evaluation forms, participants reported leadership growth and personal development. When asked if they would apply these practices, 90% of them reported yes and gave specifics on how they might incorporate them into their practice, including discipline, parent engagement, and instructional coaching.

Participants reported a heightened sense of self-awareness and a commitment to carrying their new focus on social and emotional well-being into their relationships with teachers and staff. Further, they made a commitment to critically analyze practices intended to address students in trauma but that neglect to focus on the renewal or reengagement of the brain.

These analyses resulted in the redevelopment of policies and practices on their campuses, such as the intentional inclusion of student voice and leadership in the formation of new policies — particularly ones that addressed equity and climate on campus. In their roles as leaders of adults, they viewed their new learning as immediately applicable for coaching sessions, collaborative decision-making, and difficult conversations.

An imbalanced leadership approach focusing on achievement alone diminishes the power of the school leader's influence to inspire and support staff and students. An academics-only approach is insufficient for leading effective schools because SEL skills and competencies are essential to good teaching and to effective learning.

A new model of instructional leadership inclusive of social and emotional competencies is possible. In fact, successful leaders combine often-dichotomized leadership practices to promote school improvement and student outcomes (Day et al., 2016). It is time to engage school leaders in professional learning in SEL that will improve social-emotional well-being for adults and students.

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Continued from p. 53

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DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

TOOLS

5 ASSERTIONS GUIDE STATE AND DISTRICT PLANNER

The tools on pp. 69-72 are part of Learning Forward's Professional Learning State and District Planner, which is designed to help state education agencies support local education agencies with implementation of Title IIA of the Every Student Succeeds Act. These five assertions form the foundation for the planner:

1. Effective professional learning builds collective responsibility by all teachers for success of all students.
2. Investments in professional learning impact the most teachers and classrooms.
3. Evidence must be the prerequisite for professional learning decisions.
4. Research elevates the importance of investing in high-quality materials for teachers.
5. Federal dollars should be invested in helping states and districts improve outcomes for all students.

Learn more at **essa.learningforward.org.**

DEFINING ANTIRACISM IN EDUCATION

I wrote this definition of antiracism, grounded in critical race literature and my years of experience as an educator, to provide our staff with an anchor to determine what it looks, sounds, and feels like in practice:

Antiracism is the purposeful act of actively addressing systemic racism and systemic inequities personally, professionally, and socially. Antiracist educators are conscious and aware of their personal bias, their worldview, and how they are privileged or marginalized racially. An educator is antiracist when they actively disrupt systemic racism and inequities from their own sphere of influence and they partner with other antiracist educators to enact collective disruption of institutional racism and systemic inequities (Ward, 2020).

— Angela M. Ward

Put antiracist commitments into action

BY ANGELA M. WARD

As racial violence in America took on an international focus in summer 2020, many began to make pledges and statements against racism. As an antiracist educator, I asked myself and those I work with: What is a pledge? What is a statement? People make personal pledges and commitments all the time, often to honor a cause or historical event. Educators pledge to the United States of America daily. In Texas, we also pledge to the state flag. But what comes after the pledge?

When a pledge to become antiracist or culturally proficient lacks actionable goals tied to the daily work of education, it is nothing more than a gesture or an empty promise. The families of Black and Brown children deserve more from us.

In 2020, I began to hear multiple outcries for support from teams of school principals in my school district who wanted to do more than make a statement. We have been engaged in dialogue about race and the impacts of racism on our work as educators. As I lead antiracist reflection and learning,

I have seen over the last 10 years that individual principals desired to do this work but weren't making critical connections to the larger issue of systemic racism.

I recognized that groups of schools impact a community of families, elementary to secondary, yet that group of principals wasn't sharing practice in ways that shift the experiences of the students and families they impact collectively.

Now the principals wanted to send a message to their communities that they were operating in solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter movement and that they were committing to make their campuses safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for students and families.

Last July, I led the first of five antiracist leadership learning sessions with more than 80 school principals from all racial backgrounds. In the series, we use the cultural proficiency framework (Lindsey et al., 2019) to ground our work in research and accountability to ourselves and the collective.

As a first step toward putting commitments into action, the initial three-hour session served as a place for principals to critically self-reflect, gain understanding of the impacts of whiteness (not white people) on their daily work, confront the realization that they have a direct role in perpetuating or dismantling systemic racism, and get comfortable about naming race for themselves personally.

First, group members negotiated what they needed from the five-session series, both as a learning community and in their respective campus planning teams. In this work, it is important to set personal learning intentions as you critically self-reflect on how to shift inequity from your personal sphere of influence.

The tool featured here was designed as a planning and critical self-reflection tool for principals to complete individually and for their vertical teams to complete collectively. The tool is anchored in the essential elements of cultural proficiency: assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity, and institutionalize cultural knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2019).

The essential elements serve as "standards for personal, professional values and behaviors, as well as organizational policies and practices" (Lindsey et al., 2019) and are one of four tools of cultural proficiency that guide our antiracist work to create identity-safe schools for students and workplaces for the adults who support them.

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JOIN A LIVE CONVERSATION WITH ANGELA WARD

Doing the work to build equity takes reflection, raises questions, and is best done in collaboration and conversation with others. To support you in this work, Angela Ward, creator of this tool and author of the Equity in Focus column, will facilitate a live, online discussion at 1 p.m. Eastern time on March 29. During this special opportunity exclusively for Learning Forward members, Ward will discuss how to go beyond equity statements, how to use the tools shared in this issue, and more. Come with your questions. For more information and to register, visit **bit.ly/2NWRxQX**.

ANTIRACIST LEADERSHIP: Critically self-reflective commitment

Antiracist reflection is most effective in community with others. Use this tool with your full vertical team of leaders or at least two other people. Consider which colleagues you work with daily and the mutual benefit of engaging in ongoing dialogue with them.
Vertical team name:
Members in attendance:
Vertical team antiracist statement: What actions/commitments did you make (or will you make)?
Individual campus antiracist statements: What actions/commitments did you make (or will you make)?

Campus name	Actions/commitments made to school community

ANTIRACIST LEADERSHIP: Moving beyond the statement

Cultural proficiency is an inside out approach to the way we do our work in schools. As educators develop critical self-reflective practice, it is important to understand our roles in the context of the larger school system and our teams, as well as our roles as individuals with power to make decisions for the students and families in our care.

Educators interested in leading from an antiracist lens must first engage in critical self-reflection. The traditional professional learning offered in schools isn't designed to nurture the personal educator praxis required to begin an antiracist journey. The professional learning session with the checklist of dos, don'ts, and strategies doesn't exist.

To lead from an antiracist lens, one must make a personal plan of action that guides your critical self-reflection. The chart here shows the essential elements of cultural proficiency and the behaviors and practices of school site administrators associated with each element. Use these to guide your self-reflective preplanning.

Review the reflective questions shared and work with the team members you listed to identify what learning the team needs to lead with an antiracist lens. After working with the team, use the reflective questions shared to personally reflect on your needs as you begin your journey to lead with an antiracist lens.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CULTURALLY PROFICIENT SCHOOL LEADERS

Cultural proficiency essential element	**Behaviors and practices of school site administrators**	**Learning intentions for the team** To lead with an antiracist lens, our vertical team needs:	**Learning intentions for the individual** To lead with an antiracist lens, I need:
Assess culture	Assess the culture of the school, and articulate the cultural expectations to all who interact there.		
Value diversity	Articulate a culturally proficient vision for the school. Work with educators and staff to establish standards for holding one another accountable for the vision.		
Manage the dynamics of difference	Provide professional learning and support systems for conflict management. Help faculty and staff learn to distinguish between behavioral problems and cultural differences.		
Adapt to diversity	Examine policies and practices for overt and intentional discrimination, and change current practices when appropriate.		
Institutionalize cultural knowledge	Model and monitor schoolwide and classroom practices.		

Source: Adapted from Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 150.

ANTIRACIST LEADERSHIP: Personal antiracist reflection

Use the following questions to begin the first pages of your personal antiracist educational leadership reflection journal. Creating a reflection journal is a great first step to building your antiracist leadership lens. Journaling provides me with the inside space to reflect on experiences and decisions I make based on those decisions. Reflecting in a written or electronic journal will also provide you with a historical narrative of your growth in this work.
What are the necessary first five steps to make the vertical team or your campus team commitment a reality?
What resources and support might you need to honor those commitments?
What learning do you need to act on your commitments?
What learning does your campus community require to understand your leadership commitments?
How will you communicate your antiracist leadership plan?
Who will need to be involved in the antiracist leadership plan? Why?
What checkpoint(s) will you set for the spring, summer, and fall?
How will you engage your campus advisory group and PTA in your plan?

The Title IIA equity multiplier

BY PAUL FLEMING AND MELINDA GEORGE

Learning Forward's Professional Learning State and District Planner (**essa.learningforward.org**) is a guide to help state, district, and school leaders implement professional learning to support high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.

Grounded in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) definition of high-quality professional learning as intensive, data-driven, job-embedded, and classroom-focused, the planner provides a system framework for planning professional learning.

It includes tools for states and districts to engage in five interconnected stages:

1. Define the vision.
2. Examine evidence to drive improvement.
3. Design and implement the learning plan.
4. Support and monitor.
5. Scale and institutionalize.

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

THE PLANNER was created with support from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. State departments of education and selected districts in Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, and Oklahoma provided feedback and piloted tools.

Expected benefits and outcomes from using the planner include:

- Support for classroom- or team-based and curriculum-anchored content professional learning that prepares educators to select and use high-quality curricula and instructional materials;
- Greater attention to equity-based professional learning to positively impact all students;
- Strengthened use of Title IIA funds on evidence-based strategies that result in more effective teaching and improved student outcomes;
- Tighter alignment of federally funded activities with state priorities; and
- Alignment of expenditures with the ESSA definition of professional learning.

Here we share some of the tools from stage 1 (define the vision). For local education agencies (LEAs), we include a diagnostic assessment. For state education agencies (SEAs), we include a tool for building a shared vision. For both LEAs and SEAs, we include a set of reflection questions that can be used at the completion of stage 1.

Because the five professional learning stages in the planner are fluid, and the tools therefore do not need to be completed in a chronological sequence, these tools can be used on their own or in conjunction with the other tools, which are available at **essa.learningforward.org**.

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TOOLS

Where are we now?

This diagnostic assessment tool is designed to support local education agencies (LEAs) in establishing or refining a vision for professional learning with the purpose of integrating a focus on selecting and using high-quality instructional materials and curriculum with content-anchored professional learning. The tool provides six statements for educators to assess the current state of their district's vision for professional learning and guide discussion and decision-making.

Our school district has adopted a vision statement that addresses professional learning or has a separate vision for professional learning.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Our district vision of professional learning addresses the importance of adopting and selecting high-quality instructional materials.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Our district vision of professional learning includes key components of the federal definition of professional development.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Our district vision of professional learning includes the use of evidence to make decisions and measure impact.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Our district vision of professional learning is aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Our district vision of professional learning is widely communicated and embraced by the stakeholders in our district.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

TOOLS

Building a shared vision

This tool is designed to support state education agencies (SEAs) in establishing or refining a vision for professional learning with the purpose of integrating a focus on selecting and using high-quality instructional materials and curriculum with content-anchored professional learning. The tool provides a comprehensive road map to support this visioning process.

Directions	Use the steps below to guide stakeholders in the development or revision of a vision statement for professional learning.
Materials required	Chart paper, markers, tape, and sticky notes.
Time	45–90 minutes.

1. Review goals and priorities for professional learning.

2. Discuss the role professional learning should or could play in accelerating achievement of identified goals.

3. Give everyone 25-30 minutes to review the federal definition of professional development, the description of the Standards for Professional Learning, the case for professional learning, as well as district planning documents. These can be found at **essa.learningforward.org** as resources 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4.

4. Ask each member to record on sticky notes the attributes and ideas, one per sticky note, they want to see included in the vision statement.

5. In groups of four or five, share the attributes and ideas on sticky notes, clustering similar ideas together.

6. Report similarities and record them on paper.

7. Use relevant resources to review what was written once more.

8. Consider other points to be made as part of the vision (e.g. the importance of professional learning and its role in relation to goals and priorities for high-quality instructional materials).

9. Come to consensus on the key points and language to include in a vision for professional learning that emphasizes selecting and using high-quality instructional materials.

10. Invite a small subgroup to write a first draft using the key points generated. Email the draft statement to group members before the next meeting or bring the statement to the next meeting for review and revision.

11. During the review and revision of the draft vision statement, consider which words may be confusing to others who aren't as involved in discussions about professional learning and high-quality instructional materials.

12. Encourage members to share the vision statement with stakeholders to seek feedback. It is important to acknowledge that stakeholders will not share the same depth of background knowledge nor are they likely to have the knowledge that team members possess. The varied points of knowledge give team members an opportunity to cultivate an understanding about the different definitions that they have collected and examined. The task is not to seek stakeholder support but rather to assess whether the statement makes sense and collect the questions it generates.

Reflection questions

These reflection questions are designed to be discussed collaboratively after completing the tools in stage 1 to inform next steps for using the vision for professional learning to align district and state strategic priorities.

1. Why is revisiting and revising a vision statement for professional learning essential?
2. What role does buy-in play in advancing a vision, and what are ways to achieve it?
3. How can an explicit focus on selecting and using high-quality instructional materials and curriculum in a vision statement improve professional learning?
4. What are other critical components of a vision for professional learning that will lead to results?
5. How can the district and/or state use evidence-based decision-making to maintain and monitor progress toward achieving its vision of professional learning and focus on selection and use of high- quality curriculum and instructional materials?
6. How will working through this stage increase impact of Title IIA investments?

CONNECT. BELONG. SUPPORT.

UPDATES

A VIRTUAL SUCCESS

Learning Forward held its first virtual Annual Conference last December. Our thanks to the more than 2,300 attendees participating in more than 50 sessions powered by hundreds of amazing facilitators, volunteers, speakers, and technical support staff, and supported by nine sponsors.

A FEW TAKEAWAYS:

- Annual Conference attendees love to connect any way they can.
- Virtual learning demands new ways of communication, facilitation, and learning design. Breaks for reflection and movement are a must in person and online.
- Student entertainment inspires learners in any setting. Great learning happens anywhere!

UPDATES

REVISION OF STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONTINUES

Thank you to all members who responded to Learning Forward's request to review the draft of revised Standards for Professional Learning, posted in early December. Feedback from members, Standards Advisory Council members, and other stakeholders will inform the next draft as well as the implementation tools that will be published in concert with new standards.

At Learning Forward's recent virtual Annual Conference, attendees engaged in four sessions on the standards revision process. Each session offered an overview of the revision and the recently released draft along with a panel conversation on a specific topic critical to the standards revision, including high-quality curriculum, equity, transformation, and research.

Videos of the four sessions and other information about the revision process are available at **learningforward.org/standards/standards-revision.**

NEW CAREER PLANNING PORTAL

The Learning Forward Career Center has launched a new career planning portal, a dynamic and interactive place for job seekers to research, plan, and develop their careers. Find detailed data, trends, and forecasts about specific occupations, including growth outlooks, compensation ranges, and more. Visit the career planning portal at **careers.learningforward.org.**

Advisors support *The Learning Professional*

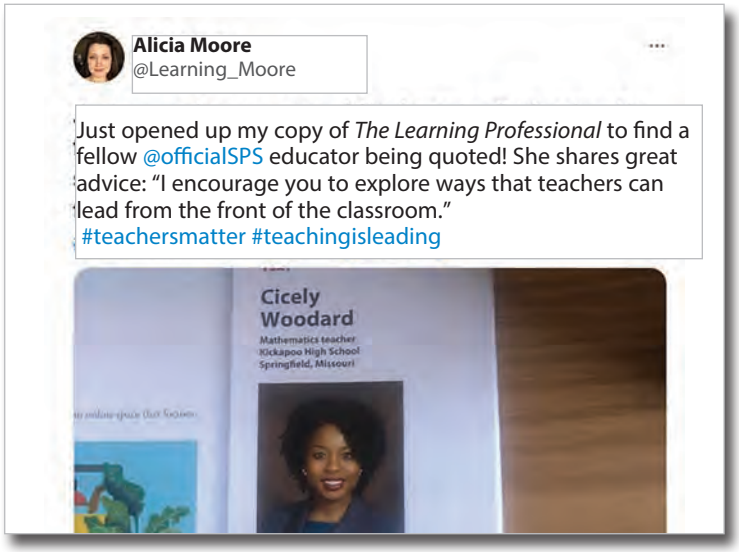
Learning Forward has recently engaged an advisory board to offer input and expertise to continually improve *The Learning Professional.* Advisors have agreed to support Learning Forward by providing overall feedback on the magazine, advising on issue themes, reviewing member feedback, and, on occasion, offering input on author and article selection relevant to their particular expertise.

The nine advisors, listed below, represent a diverse range of perspectives. and Learning Forward appreciates their counsel.

- **Beth Brockman,** assistant superintendent for employee services, Plano (Texas) Independent School District; Learning Forward Academy graduate; chair of Dallas 2018 host committee.
- **Steve Cardwell,** associate vice president – academic at Kwantlen Polytechnic University; past president of Learning Forward board of trustees; Vancouver host committee member.
- **Ramona Coleman,** director of professional learning at Fort Wayne (Indiana) Community Schools; Learning Forward Academy graduate and coach.
- **Betsy Corcoran,** co-founder of Ed Surge.
- **Heather Hill,** Jerome T. Murphy Professor in Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- **Beverly Hutton,** deputy executive director, National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- **Monica Martinez,** director of strategic initiatives at Learning Policy Institute and former Learning Forward board member.
- **Barbara Patterson Oden,** assistant principal at Truitt Intermediate School with Chesapeake Public Schools; president of Learning Forward Virginia; Learning Forward Academy graduate and coach.
- **Maurice R. Swinney,** chief equity officer, Chicago Public Schools; former president, Learning Forward Louisiana.

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

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POST



Learning Forward Georgia Board members: top row, Wanda Mangum, Leilani Esmond, Ave Tatum, Lisa Manross; second row, Janet Johnson, Chris Atkinson, Lynn Seay, Shon Davis; third row, Alena Zink, Melvina Crawl, Kimberly Turner, Tarnisha Dent; bottom row, Tekmekia Gilchrist.

Learning Forward Georgia goes virtual

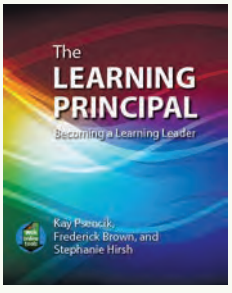
In January, the Learning Forward Georgia Affiliate hosted its first virtual conference: Striving for Excellence in a Virtual World. Educators representing districts throughout the state presented 12 topics through the virtual lens, including equity, formative assessment and feedback, engagement, school culture, building community, and managing the virtual classroom. More than 180 people registered for the event.

Joellen Killion welcomed participants during the opening session. Participants selected three 50-minute concurrent sessions, facilitated by Learning Forward Georgia board members, followed by a closing session.

"This was a fantastic experience, and I am so thankful for the opportunity to attend," said one participant. "I feel that I am leaving with ideas and tools to use immediately with the teachers and students in my school. This learning is exactly what is needed during this time."

For more information contact: **learningforwardgeorgia@gmail.com.**

NEW BOOK FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



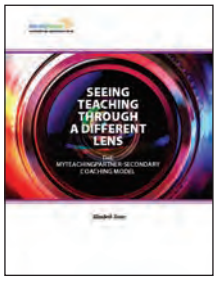
The Learning Principal: Becoming a Learning Leader, by Kay Psencik, Frederick Brown, and Stephanie Hirsh, applies a learning lens to each of a principal's many critical responsibilities. Through that learning lens, the principal is able to find new ways to strengthen impact and the potential of the entire faculty.

Chapters cover prioritizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment; managing change; designing learning; maximizing resources; and coaching and feedback. The book also helps learning leaders apply rigorous standards to their learning and includes a chapter on the role of the central office in supporting principals. With action steps, reflection questions, and dozens of online tools, this book transfers deep principal learning to practice.

Order at **learningforward.org/store.** Price: $36 members, $45 nonmembers.

FREE PUBLICATION FEATURES VIDEO-BASED COACHING MODEL

Seeing Teaching Through a Different Lens: The MyTeachingPartner-Secondary Coaching Model, a new paper from Learning Forward, highlights the voices of coaches and teachers to provide information about an instructional coaching program with a strong evidence base that is helping educators improve interactions with students in ways that increase student engagement and achievement.



For the past three years, Learning Forward has engaged in a federally funded project led by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to better understand MyTeachingPartner, especially the secondary version, MTP-Secondary (MTP-S). A key goal for Learning Forward in this partnership is to elevate the voices of the coaches and teachers who are experiencing the program.

Read the full report at **learningforward.org/report/myteachingpartner-secondary-coaching-model.**

RENEWING DISTRICT MEMBERS

The following district members are renewing and continuing their engagement with Learning Forward.

- Hastings Public Schools, Hastings, Nebraska
- Norman Public Schools, Norman, Oklahoma
- Walton County School District, Monroe, Georgia

AT A GLANCE

Drawn to learning

We are always inspired by the creative and meaningful ways that Learning Forward members process and apply their learning to make changes in practice that improve students' lives. Chelyse Stefanik-Miller, who is featured in this issue's Member Spotlight (p. 12), uses sketchnotes to synthesize the ideas she gains from professional learning. A professional learning specialist with Virginia Beach City Public Schools in Virginia, she originally learned how to create sketchnotes to demonstrate to teachers how to develop a new skill. Now, she says, "I can't take notes any other way," and she loves how sketchnotes allow her to make her learning visible for others.

How do you process your learning? Share your art, poetry, storytelling, photos, or other artifacts with us on Twitter and Facebook @LearningForward and include the hashtag #LearnFwdTLP.

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THROUGH THE LENS

OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

LEARNING FORWARD'S
STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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

Learning Communities

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

Leadership

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

Resources

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

Data

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

Learning Designs

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

Implementation

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

Outcomes

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

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

Ways you might use this tool include:

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

STANDARD: RESOURCES **IN ACTION** **When we talk about the need for resources in professional learning, we often focus on financial or material resources, yet human capital is the most important resource. This issue's Ideas section focuses on the importance of educators' well-being in order for schools and students to thrive.**	**TO CONSIDER** • What are the implications of thinking about "the whole educator" as a means to serve the whole child? How might this change your professional learning approaches? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ • How are you learning about and addressing the needs of and barriers for teachers of color? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
STANDARD: IMPLEMENTATION **IN ACTION** **High-quality professional learning is grounded in a commitment to continuous learning and improvement. The international crises of the past year have presented many challenges but also many opportunities to reflect and rethink our work in schools, as both Linda Darling-Hammond (p. 24) and Jal Mehta (p. 32) point out.**	**TO CONSIDER** • What new professional learning strategies or approaches have you benefited from in the past year that you hope to continue in the future, even after the pandemic? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ • What priorities has the pandemic elevated, and how will those shape your work in an ongoing way? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

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

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504 S. Locust Street
Oxford, OH 45056

NEW BOOK!

The Learning Principal: Becoming a Learning Leader

by Kay Psencik, Frederick Brown, and Stephanie Hirsh

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$45.00 nonmember | **$36.00** member
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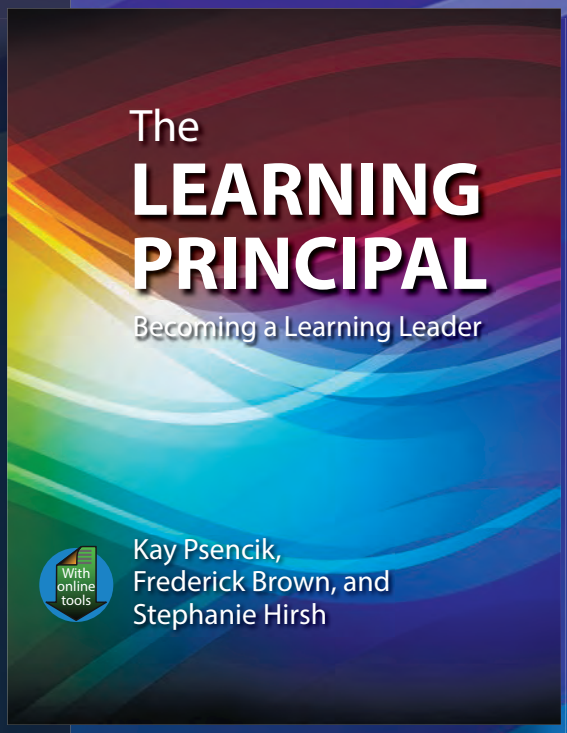

Dozens of online tools extend the resource and offer additional practical resources to deepen learning.