

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE FOR DISTRICT TEAMS

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LOOKING AHEAD



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

This guide will help you take your teams through a deep dive into the latest issue of [The Learning Professional](#).

By reading the issue and using this guide, teams will:

- Reflect on what you've learned during pandemic schooling;
- Plan for how to improve teaching and learning next year;
- Learn about eight dimensions of wellness and plan how to support them among your staff; and

- Consider how to expand your team's learning networks.

You may wish to send this guide, or portions of it, to your team members to help everyone engage in the activities. Alternatively, you may wish to use it as a facilitation guide and walk your team through the activities yourself. We invite you to share the learning opportunities however they work best for you.

Be sure to give us feedback about whether you found this useful, and, if you post on social media, tag us [#LearnFwdTLP](#) [@LearningForward](#) so we can share your good work.

NEED HELP LOGGING IN? If you or your colleagues have questions about logging in with your district membership to access the articles, call **800-727-7288** or email christy.colclasure@learningforward.org.

GET STARTED

Plan for next school year and beyond

In his interview with *The Learning Professional*, [Jal Mehta explains](#) why he sees the pandemic as an opportunity to rethink schooling and engage students more deeply. He shares suggestions for how to make positive changes and carry them forward, as well as barriers to change that educators should watch for and overcome. Ask your team to read the article and jot down their reactions to prepare for a conversation about reflection and planning.

ACTIONS:

1. As an icebreaker, ask all participants to share one word that characterizes this school year so far. Then ask them to share one word that describes something positive about this school year.
2. Acknowledge the value of holding both negative and positive feelings simultaneously, and talk about why this is important for educators and students.
3. Frame and facilitate a conversation about opportunities for positive change as you plan for next year. In large or small groups, ask participants to discuss the following questions Mehta recommended. Record notes with Padlet or Google Docs, flip chart paper, a notebook, etc., so you can revisit them later.
 - 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 you need to “hospice” to make space for what you want to amplify?
4. As a group (or in grade-level or content-area teams), make a start-stop-continue plan based on what you’ve learned this year. Place an asterisk next to each practice that will require further discussion and planning.



START:

Practice(s) you will start using next school year

STOP:

Practice(s) you will stop using next school year

CONTINUE:

Practice(s) you will continue using next school year

5. Make a plan for next steps, including roles, responsibilities, and scheduling the next planning meeting.
6. To end, ask all participants to share a word that characterizes how they feel about next year.

NEXT STEPS

Support your team’s wellness

Even as we look hopefully to the next school year, we must acknowledge that this has been a year of collective trauma, not only for students but also for educators. This year has highlighted the importance of attending to our own and our colleagues’ wellness — a focus we should maintain long after the pandemic is over.

In the article [“8 dimensions of wellness for educators,”](#) Angel Montoya and Laura Summers explain that wellness is a multidimensional construct. They describe the dimensions we should attend to as we support our colleagues.

ACTIONS:

1. Ask your leadership team to read the article.
2. To begin the conversation, ask each participant to share one dimension that most resonated with them and one dimension that most surprised them or hadn’t occurred to them before.
3. As a team, fill out the following table, considering each dimension.
4. Place a check mark next to the dimension(s) you think is most important to attend to or improve right now.



WELLNESS DIMENSION	✓	What are you currently doing to support this dimension among your educators?	What might be undermining this dimension of wellness?
Emotional			
Environmental			
Intellectual			
Physical			
Social			
Spiritual			
Occupational			
Financial			

5. Brainstorm ways you could improve this dimension(s). What should you stop doing? What can you start doing to improve it?
6. How will focusing on that wellness dimension(s) benefit staff? How will it ultimately benefit students and families?
7. A major challenge with promoting wellness is to make it ongoing. How will you make a long-term commitment and hold yourselves accountable to it?

Build your learning networks

Several articles in this issue talk about the power of learning networks, especially as we navigate emergency schooling and begin to transition back to in-person schooling. These include

- [“A new network for a changed world,”](#)
- [“Virtual networks follow paths to equity,”](#)
- and
- [“An extraordinary time for innovation.”](#)

ACTIONS:

1. Linda Darling-Hammond describes the way many educators are connecting with peers outside their geographic area as a result of the growth in virtual learning. Discuss the following:
 - o What would you like to learn that you feel is unavailable to you in your own community? How might teachers and others you supervise answer this question?
 - o Have you already sought and/or connected with peers outside your school or district to address these learning needs? Why or why not?
 - o If you have, how helpful (or unhelpful) has this experience been?
 - o If you have not, or have been unsatisfied, where could you look to make connections and pursue your learning goals?
2. Mary Antón, Lee Teitel, and Taisha Williams share the following lessons they have learned from their work with equity-focused virtual networks over the past year. As you seek and engage in learning networks, reflect on these themes and how to implement them.



To what extent does your network embody this principle?

How can you embed this lesson more deeply into your network?

The networks you choose or create should fit your time and budget.

Diverse viewpoints spur thinking.

Everyone benefits from working collaboratively toward equity.

Networks create a safe space for teams.

To make meaningful change, be in it for the long haul.

3. Broadening learning networks requires commitments at the leadership level as well as interest and commitment from individual educators. Consider the role(s) the district should play.
 - o How can leaders enable and support educators to make learning connections within and outside of the district?
 - o How can you make district professional learning more responsive to educators' interests while also encouraging educators to broaden their networks?
 - o What policies and structures would incentivize educators to broaden their learning networks?