

A PROPOSAL

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# WHAT MATTERS NOW NETWORK

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MARYLAND | OHIO | RHODE ISLAND

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## Growing the What Matters Now Network – a funding opportunity to support educators through high quality professional learning

For more information about the What Matters Now Network, visit:

<https://learningforward.org/networks/what-matters-now-network/>.

**A**s educators navigate new teaching and learning environments, high-quality professional learning has never been more important. Learning Forward's **What Matters Now (WMN) Network**, an established network built to ensure continuous improvement, is an important way to provide support for educators while reinstituting and redesigning systems for quality professional learning in an education environment.

### LEARNING FORWARD IS SEEKING FUNDING TO:

- Build and adapt an ongoing network.
- Grow the WMN footprint within current participating states.
- Expand the WMN to additional districts and states.
- Capitalize on the structures and relationships to transition this work to virtual and hybrid environments.
- Support new innovations for virtual and hybrid environments.
- Create an implementation toolkit incorporating new and existing tools.





# ABOUT THE WHAT MATTERS NOW NETWORK:



The What Matters Now Network is a tri-state network of Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island, focused on the intersection between effective professional learning and high-quality instructional materials. The Network addresses leadership and systems issues, uses improvement science methods, and keeps an intentional focus on the practices occurring in schools to drive needed changes in policy at the district and state level.

One of the central tenets of this work is that practice inform policy. As a multi-state, multi-agency collaboration with through lines from classroom to state policy, the network integrates job-embedded professional learning with curriculum implementation, and shares leadership among diverse stakeholders. The initiative provides clear and scalable pathways for improvement that can be leveraged in additional subject areas or geographies.



The network has resulted in increased focus, purpose, and impact of the collaborative process of teacher-based teams, increased educator efficacy in assessing the quality of instructional materials, collaborative development and successful use of tools to guide educators in assessing student data/curricular materials and formulating strategies, and embedding improvement science practices including peer-based reflection and iterative testing of protocols and practices. (WestEd, 2019)

## KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

- MULTI-STATE, MULTI-AGENCY COLLABORATION WITH THROUGH LINES FROM CLASSROOM TO STATE POLICY
- INTEGRATION OF HIGH QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING WITH CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION
- SHARED LEADERSHIP AMONG DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS
- PRACTICE INFORMED POLICY USING DATA AND LEVERAGING IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE
- SCALABLE PATHWAYS FOR IMPROVEMENT CONTEXTUALIZED TO EACH STATE

### COALITION WORK ALIGNED TO STATE AND DISTRICT PRIORITIES

**Maryland** is focusing on increasing teacher capacity to identify and implement NGSS-aligned professional learning and instructional resources; **Ohio** is focusing on using collaborative learning teams to strengthen teacher practices for PK-3 literacy outcomes; and **Rhode Island** is focusing on increasing high-quality job-embedded professional learning in elementary mathematics (after piloting the process in writing).



# WHY ARE WE DOING THIS WORK?



*Research shows that professional learning that supports curriculum implementation increases the effectiveness of high-quality curriculum. (Jackson, C. K., & Makarin, A., 2016)*

## THE WHAT MATTERS NOW

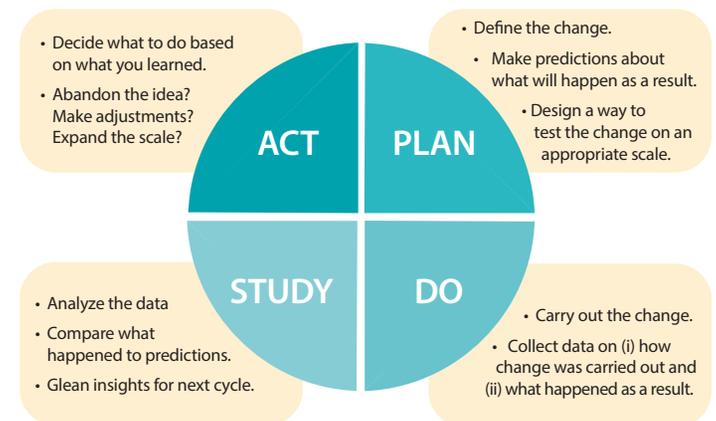
**NETWORK** identified three drivers that could be leveraged to improve teacher practice and, ultimately, to improve student achievement:

- **Job-Embedded Professional Learning (JEPL) Designs:** align professional learning designs to create coherence around teachers' effective implementation of high-quality instructional materials.
- **High-Quality Curricula and Instructional Materials (HQCIM):** provide all students with HQCIM that enable them to meet rigorous standards.
- **Leadership, Policy & Resources:** build infrastructure to incentivize, improve, sustain and scale implementation of professional learning grounded.

## Each coalition:

- **develops** a deep, data-rich understanding about the design and effectiveness of its professional learning system to support the implementation of high-quality curricula and instructional materials.
- **contextualizes** a problem of practice related to effective teaching and professional learning based on local needs and data and develops a plan for addressing it.
- **learns** about strategies for improving professional learning from examples from research, national experts, and other states, districts and schools.
- **identifies** policies and practices that inhibit or support the ability to scale and sustain effective professional learning to support implementation of high-quality curricula and instructional materials.
- **develops** state-specific policy recommendations informed by data, based on strategies tested by districts, and vetted by a diverse stakeholder group.
- **contributes** to and benefits from the networked improvement community in which stakeholders share and learn about effective professional learning strategies.

## RAPID TESTING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT





# WMN TOOLS TO TRANSFORM PLCs

*In each WMN state, the PLC transformation process includes different methodologies and tools. Each state developed their own context-specific suite of tools based on the needs defined by the school-based teams, led by teachers. The tools have been refined and adapted to meet changing PLC demands.*

## KEY FOR ACRONYMS

- AoC** = Application of Concept
- TBT** = Teacher Based Teams (Ohio)
- PDSA** = Plan, Do, Study, Act Cycle
- PLC** = Professional Learning Community
- LASW** = Looking at Student Work
- NGSS** = Next Generation Science Standards

TOOL	USER GROUP	PURPOSE	WHEN COMPLETED
<b>OHIO: ELA</b>			
Discussion Rubric for Teacher-Based Teams (TBT)	Teacher-based teams	To identify if the TBT 5-step process orients the team to basing decisions on data, and to generate implications regarding learning progressions and selecting instructional materials	at the conclusion of the TBT's completion of a five-step process
Literacy Decision Rules Flowchart was used by Teacher-based teams, many of which are "grade-level teams"	Teacher-based teams	To guide instructional decisions and the selection of appropriate materials for teaching reading skills based on student assessment outcomes	N/A - guide document
TBT Discourse Instrument for Literacy Coaches	Coaches	To cross-check the quality of discussion within TBT meetings about early literacy-focused curriculum and instruction and to establish coaching priorities	Post TBT
Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling Application of Concepts (AoC)	Teachers	To identify if what teachers are learning in the professional development sessions transfers into classroom practice. Observational data from the tool is used for instructional coaching and support in the form of feedback and goal setting	N/A - guide document
Mirror Reflection Tool	Teachers	To determine teachers' perception of needs regarding early literacy curriculum and instruction	Post TBT
<b>MARYLAND: SCIENCE</b>			
MD PDSA Protocol for PLC Teams	Teacher teams	To serve as a guide for the three PLC meeting sequence and the steps teachers need to take in between	Throughout PLC series
MD NGSS Lesson Checklists for Middle School Science Teachers	Teacher teams	To assess the quality and NGSS-alignment of a lesson or multi-day lesson sequence	In PLCs (re exemplar or lesson choice)
MD Peer Collaboration Tool for Middle School Science Teachers	Teachers	To guide and support peer-to-peer classroom visitations. Includes a pre- visit, day of visit, and post-visit planning and reflection template. Design is focused on the implementation of Next Generation Science Standards, but could be used for any content area	During PLC #2; rest during peer observation.
MD Discussion NoteTaker for PLC Teams	PLC Notetaker	To capture reflections around lesson implementation and peer collaboration	During PLC #3
MD Self-Reflection for Middle School Science Teachers	Teachers	To gather data from individual teachers regarding perceptions of changes in practice and changes in student outcomes	During PLC #3
<b>RHODE ISLAND: WRITING AND MATH</b>			
LASW Protocol	Teacher teams	To identify and document the instructional choices teachers make based on student data and the curriculum	During PLCs
Met Team Reflection Tool	Teacher teams	To facilitate PLC conversations throughout the PDSA cycle	During PLCs
Post PDSA Reflection Tool	Teacher teams	To gather reflections on relevance and high quality instructional conversations during the PDSA process	Post PDSA
Unit Unpacking Protocol	Teacher teams	To prompt and guide collaborative teacher discussions about unit alignment to curriculum	During PLCs
Post PL Survey Tool	Teacher teams	To assess teachers' reflections on the quality and relevance of professional learning to math instruction	During PLCs
Walkthrough Tool	Principals and Superintendents	To observe teachers' understanding of and use of the curriculum	During walkthroughs



# HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

Over the course of eighteen months, in all three states, we saw state and district conversations about policy shift to include more teacher input, and teacher voice become central to decision-making on many levels. These results included: a district decision-making tool being revised based on feedback from teams of teachers; a district funding a pilot middle school science curriculum after hearing teachers concerns about the lack of curriculum or standards-aligned materials; and the addition of professional learning sessions and an observation protocol for principals based on teachers’ analysis of student data.

## WMN TOOLS THAT LEVERAGE PLCS TO IMPROVE PL RELEVANCE & HQCIM IMPLEMENTATION

IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE SUPPORT	PLC SUPPORT (REAL-TIME)	ASSESSMENT/REFLECTION OF PLC CONTENT AND DISCUSSION	OTHER
State driver diagram	NGSS checklist	Peer collaboration tool	AOC mirror tool to determine teachers’ perceptions
PDSA Protocol	Discussion note taker	Self-reflection tool by individual teachers	
Network driver diagram (Network)	Decision making rubric (used as reference)	TBT rubric used by teacher teams	
Improvement Science Toolkit	LASW protocol	TBT discourse tool used by coach	
	Unit unpacking protocol	Post PDSA reflection tool	
	Learning Forward Learning Teams cycle (Network)	Post PL survey	
		Walkthrough tool	

Developed in conjunction with the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPLR), Columbia University

For more about impact, see West Ed’s independent evaluation of the WMN Network: <https://learningforward.org/networks/what-matters-now-network/>.

The **What Matters Now Network** considers several factors in determining success, ranging from impact on teacher practices, to engagement in coalition meetings, to impact on state-level policy. We have seen progress in each state and in several areas:

**IN MARYLAND**, almost 90% of teachers reported that participation in the WMN PLC process improved their confidence in delivering Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)- aligned instruction.

**IN OHIO**, teachers report using data in every Teacher-based-Team conversation 100% of the time compared to 70% of the time when the project began and the team saw an increase of 10% in identifying/selecting high quality curriculum/instructional (standards-based) materials that fit with the students’ needs.

**IN RHODE ISLAND**, the Smithfield School District ranked 4th in the state for 3rd grade writing scores, 1st in the state for 4th grade writing scores and 2nd in the state for 5th grade writing scores. The WMN Network schools in Smithfield saw the two highest student growth potential with 62% high growth in one school and 53% high growth in the other.



# PDSA CYCLES ACROSS THE STATE



## CROSS STATE COMPARISON

