



## Learning Forward affirms the importance of educators learning about race

**E**ach student has the right to experience rigorous and relevant teaching and learning in school. High-quality professional learning for educators is the pathway to create such a reality for students. Learning Forward opposes any effort or policy that impedes educators' capacity to serve each student equitably, including efforts to limit educators' and students' learning about race and its role in history, society, and education.

Several states have passed or are considering specific legislation that censors and limits learning. At a time when educators are determined to understand precisely what their students need and create solutions to accelerate their learning, such policies exacerbate existing inequities in schooling and harm students.

Learning Forward defines equity as the outcome of educator practices that respect and nurture all aspects of

student identity rather than treat them as barriers to learning. In addition to race, aspects of student identity include gender, socioeconomic status, ability, ethnicity, and many others. Building educator capacity to respect and nurture all aspects of student identity doesn't happen by accident, but rather through structured, intentionally designed professional learning. Educators deserve support and trust to engage in this vital learning.

**Professional learning related to racial equity helps educators understand how aspects of student identity are assets that can inform and inspire the student learning experience and dismantle structures that treat those aspects of identity as deficits.**

Professional learning related to racial equity isn't tied to a singular theory, curriculum, or approach. It is informed by relevant local and national data, students' and educators' identified needs, and the goal of serving every student.

It may involve implementing, improving, and adapting culturally relevant curriculum materials and classroom practices so that each student has access to rigorous and relevant teaching. It may help educators understand the practices and policies that ensure each student has access to challenging courses in all subject areas — and help them understand the policies and structures that get in the way of equal access. It may include examining data such as rates of disciplinary action and students' placement in advanced courses, coupled with reflection on the causes of and remedies for discrepancies.

Throughout, professional learning related to racial equity helps educators understand how aspects of student identity are assets that can inform and inspire the student learning experience and dismantle structures that treat those aspects of identity as deficits.

Collaborative learning among educators about how race and other aspects of student or educator identity

impact the student learning experience is essential and complex. The ability to understand and navigate complexity is a vital skill of good educators. For example, when educators can examine both the societal progress for students of color and the enduring racist structures that impede learning, they are better equipped to serve each student.

Nonetheless, conversations about race and other aspects of identity may cause discomfort for educators seeking to understand how their own experiences and beliefs impact what they do within and beyond the classroom. Such conversations are critical to ensure that student needs are met. Discomfort is often a part of growth and development, as students know well from learning new and unfamiliar concepts.

Accomplishing these necessary but sometimes challenging conversations requires high-quality professional learning. Skilled learning facilitators create safe and trusting conditions for learning, adapt learning processes to engage educators and personalize the learning experience, support individual and collective reflection, and consider next actions to improve school and classroom practices.

When educators focus their

professional learning on the specific needs of their educator colleagues and the students they serve, they strengthen their capacity to create a rich learning experience for each student.

Learning Forward calls on our members, allies, and partners to:

- Build their own understanding of how race impacts educator and student learning, beginning with examining their own beliefs;
- Sustain and expand professional learning to improve practices to reach each student;
- Celebrate and support intentional explorations of all aspects of student and educator identity, including race, to achieve equitable outcomes for each learner; and
- Advocate to policymakers at all levels for each educator's right to study how history, culture, society, and student identity and assets impact teaching and learning.

Learning Forward's equity position statement informs this position and is foundational to all Learning Forward services and initiatives. Read more at [learningforward.org/about/vision-mission-beliefs/](https://learningforward.org/about/vision-mission-beliefs/). ■