

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL



Setting
the
standard

**THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW
OF THE REVISED STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

June 2022, Vol. 43, No. 3

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ISAY

Segun Eubanks

Learning Forward board of trustees president and professor of practice and director of the Center for Educational Innovation and Improvement at the University of Maryland, College Park



“It takes your leadership to make Standards for Professional Learning real. We know that everywhere, from inside every school building to central offices, to state departments and to our colleagues in Congress and at the federal level, we need to embed these standards into the daily lives of our educators and into the practice that they’re engaged in each and every day. They cannot be things that sit on the shelf and that we talk about vaguely.”

— Excerpted from “First Look: Standards for Professional Learning,” Learning Forward webinar, April 25, 2022, learningforward.org/webinar/first-look-standards-for-professional-learning/

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With the new school year already around the corner, now is the time to get a head start on your professional learning. Learning Forward's Virtual Coaches Academy will launch a new cohort on July 21. This 12-week virtual academy provides instruction and practice opportunities that will enhance new and veteran coaches' effectiveness in leading coaching conversations, professional learning design, and facilitation skills. Designed for individuals and teams of coaches, this academy will empower your coaches to provide the support your new and returning teachers need.

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HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

THE 2022 STANDARDS ARE HERE — AND WE'VE GOT A LOT TO TELL YOU

This issue of *The Learning Professional* explores what's new in the revised standards and why they matter now more than ever.

Standards for Professional Learning drive everything we do at Learning Forward and in this journal. But this issue is special because it is entirely devoted to the recently revised 2022 iteration of the standards. It peeks under the hood of the standards revision process that took place over more than two years. It delves into the specifics of the new standards and how educators at all levels can apply them to improve teaching and learning. And it sets the stage for the many standards-aligned articles, tools, and issues yet to come.

In this issue's Voices section, you'll hear from Learning Forward leaders and expert columnists about why the standards matter now more than ever, what's new in the latest version, and how the 11 standards can work together to create coherent systems of learning for all educators and students.

The Research section explains how data and evidence drove the standards revision. You'll also find exciting results from a comprehensive review of the professional learning literature and a cutting-edge study that found standards-aligned professional learning is linked with positive outcomes for teachers and students.

In the Focus section, we share an overview of the revised standards and how they have evolved over time, then dive into how to implement standards at school, district, and state levels and in different contexts. Members of our Standards Advisory Council delve into three areas of focus that set the revised standards apart from previous iterations: equity, leadership, and curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

As part of our ongoing commitment to provide useful tools, this issue includes an excerpt from an Innovation Configuration (IC) map for the new standards. IC maps are role-specific tools that help educators at all levels assess their current implementation of each standard and plan their next steps. They have been a popular resource with Learning Forward members in previous iterations of the standards, and we're excited to share a preview of the updated maps.

We are grateful to the philanthropic organizations that have made the standards revision process and resources possible: the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies. Their support also makes it possible for us to make all the articles in this issue publicly accessible on our website.

We encourage you to share the articles widely with your networks and familiarize yourself with the many other standards resources available on our website and online bookstore.

We also hope you'll join us at our Annual Conference in December in Nashville, Tennessee, which will include many opportunities to explore the new standards, including the Standards Lab, where Learning Forward experts will be available to answer your questions about how to apply the standards in your specific context.

Looking forward, you can expect standards articles and tools in upcoming issues of *The Learning Professional*. I invite you to share your feedback and questions with us so we can make those resources as helpful to you as possible. Reach out to us by email or social media @learningforward #TheLearningPro.

Working together, we can build high-quality, standards-aligned professional learning systems for all educators. ■



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

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

The Learning Professional is published six times a year to promote improvement in the quality of professional learning as a means to improve student learning in K-12 schools. Contributions from members and nonmembers of Learning Forward are welcome.

Manuscripts: Manuscripts and editorial mail should be sent to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org). Learning Forward prefers to receive manuscripts by email. Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are provided at learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us. Themes for upcoming issues of *The Learning Professional* are available at learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us.

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url: www.learningforward.org

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
ISSN 2476-194X

The Learning Professional is a benefit of membership in Learning Forward. \$89 of annual membership covers a year's subscription to *The Learning Professional*. *The Learning Professional* is published bimonthly at the known office of publication at Learning Forward, 800 E. Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, TX 75081. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, TX 75260 and additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Learning Professional*, 800 E. Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, TX 75081.

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VOICES



RAISING THE STANDARD

Why adopt Standards for Professional Learning — and why now? Learning leaders from many diverse perspectives share how the standards matter and what it will take to fulfill their potential.



Standards for Professional Learning provide a clear rationale for prioritizing professional learning time, reminding us that educators' learning is directly connected to students' learning.

Denise Glyn Borders is president/CEO and Frederick Brown is chief learning officer/deputy at Learning Forward.

CALL TO ACTION

Denise Glyn Borders and Frederick Brown

NEW STANDARDS HELP US MEET TODAY'S CHALLENGES

When we embarked on the process of revising Standards for Professional Learning in 2019, we couldn't have anticipated the challenges that educators, students, and all of us would be facing today. Although the timeliness of the standards is not an accident, the timing is fortuitous. As educators and students struggle to recover from the setbacks of the pandemic, high-quality, standards-aligned professional learning is the best — perhaps the only — way for educators to develop the knowledge and skills to accelerate learning and differentiate support to each student's academic, social, and emotional needs.

Trends that have been exacerbated by the pandemic — including educational inequity, inadequate curriculum, lack of support for leaders and teachers, students' and teachers' stress and social and emotional needs, and racial division — drove every step of the standards' development. We have added new standards to address those realities and challenges.

These new standards include the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment standard and the Professional Expertise standard, which outline critical knowledge and skills for every educator, and three new equity standards that outline steps to ensuring every child has access to engaging, relevant, grade-level instruction and culturally responsive, trauma-informed practice.

Among the barriers we must overcome today are high levels of teacher attrition and troubling teacher shortages, especially in areas like special education, where students have the most pronounced needs. High-quality professional learning is a tool for retaining teachers because it helps them address their current challenges and demonstrates an investment in their growth and future in the profession. Simultaneously, robust professional learning systems position leaders to support an influx of new and relatively inexperienced teachers, many of whom have emergency certifications and little training.

Those leaders also benefit from their own professional learning. Systems are losing principals, superintendents, and other leaders, in large part because of stress, conflict, and exhaustion. Professional learning is key to addressing those issues, and the standards can serve as a guide. For example, the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard reminds us that there is strength in shared learning and mutual support. In our work facilitating professional learning networks, principals often tell us that coming together in community with others in similar roles to share frustrations, explore strategies, and learn best practices buoys them and keeps them moving forward.

Despite all these benefits, many districts are cutting back on professional learning time because of busy schedules or even a belief that they are helping educators by taking one thing off the plate. This is a disservice to educators because it deprives them of vital learning that can help them address urgent problems of practice and ongoing sources of stress and dissatisfaction.

Standards for Professional Learning provide a clear rationale for prioritizing professional learning time, reminding us that educators' learning is directly connected to students' learning. And they encourage us to reflect on how much growth is possible, which we witnessed when the pandemic challenged us to learn new teaching methods with unprecedented speed and urgency.

In this time of intense polarization, when citizens are divided along ideological and political lines, one thing everyone can agree on is that every child deserves the highest-quality teaching. Every child deserves to have teachers who recognize their gifts and assets and how to build on them. Every child deserves teachers who understand their unique needs and how to meet them.

For that to happen, every educator needs the highest-quality professional learning. When implemented fully and well, Standards for Professional Learning build systems that deliver on the promise of growth for every educator and, therefore, every student. Because when teachers and leaders learn, students learn. ■

A SPECIAL *Thank you* TO OUR STANDARDS PARTNERS:



The Carnegie Corporation of New York, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, & The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies



The revision of Standards for Professional Learning was made possible by the partnership and support of these three philanthropic funders. Learning Forward appreciates their commitment to this initiative and their recognition of the importance of high-quality professional learning for all educators.

Learning Forward is also grateful to the following individuals and education associations and organizations for their participation in the standards revision process. The diversity of perspectives contributed to creating Standards for Professional Learning that will serve educators in building capacity to serve each student through leadership and equitable and rigorous teaching and learning. Thank you for generously dedicating your time and expertise to this process.

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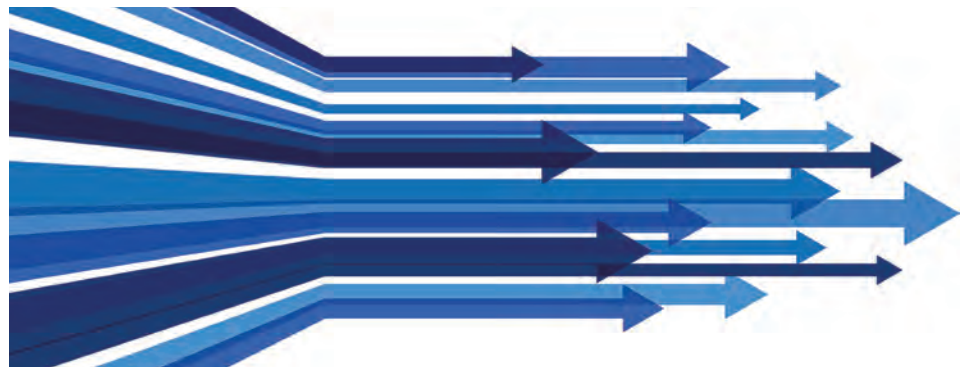
STANDARDS IN PRACTICE

Paul Fleming

WHY THESE STANDARDS MATTER FOR YOU (YES, YOU)

“How can Standards for Professional Learning help me and my schools?”

I remember being asked this question by a principal supervisor in 2014 when, as assistant commissioner at the Tennessee Department of Education, I was rolling out guidance and professional learning for administrators on the standards. Fast-forward to 2022, and this question remains pertinent as Learning Forward releases revised standards.



To learn more about applying the standards in your own role, visit standards.learningforward.org to find role-specific Action Guides.

The short answer is that Standards for Professional Learning set the bar for high-quality professional learning by defining the rigorous content, transformational processes, and conditions for success so that each educator experiences high-quality professional learning and each student engages in high-quality learning.

The central equity issue confronting public education right now is the need for a diverse, well-trained, and stable teacher and leader workforce equitably distributed across all states, communities, districts, and schools. A high-quality professional learning system aligned to Standards for Professional Learning can accelerate policies and practices for solving these equity challenges.

The challenges of the past 2½ years during COVID-19 have heightened the urgency for such a system. Educators at all levels are working harder than ever to meet the needs of their students despite sometimes daunting and ever-changing conditions.

In my conversations with school, district, and state leaders across the country, I see and hear that they understand the importance of equipping themselves and their colleagues with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to accelerate student growth and reduce the opportunity gaps that can derail their most underserved students at this critical time. They also understand they cannot do this work alone or in silos.

Many educators express to me this common and recurring hope: To be part of a collaborative and supportive system in which everyone is rowing in the same direction toward common goals undergirded by equitable and evidence-based policies, programs, and practices that accelerate excellent teaching and student outcomes.

Standards for Professional Learning, and the tools that accompany them, provide direction and guidance to steer the boat in that direction. They detail key roles and responsibilities for educators at all levels to help ensure that the standards are applied in a systemic way.

The table on the next page lists specific examples of how stakeholders at multiple levels can apply the newly revised standards to improve professional learning.

Paul Fleming (paul.fleming@learningforward.org) is senior vice president, states, standards, & equity at Learning Forward.

TEACHERS	PRINCIPALS	DISTRICT OFFICE LEADERS	STATE COMMISSIONERS/ MINISTERS OF EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage regularly with colleagues in professional learning on how to implement high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and aligned assessments. Participate in and contribute to inclusive professional learning practices in the school, recognizing how historical or systemic inequities have created barriers. Set professional learning goals with colleagues tied to student needs to engage in aligned professional learning. Expect and contribute to a school culture where professional learning connects to each student’s opportunity for and access to rigorous learning. Create and embrace opportunities to demand high-quality professional learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop or contribute to policies to provide high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and aligned assessments. Leverage inclusive professional learning practices in the school, removing barriers that result from historical or systemic inequities. Use multiple types of data and evidence to plan, design, implement, and evaluate professional learning. Create a vision for how professional learning enables educators to achieve school and system goals. Create schedules that include time for job-embedded learning for all educators in a school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize understanding and applying inclusive education practices across the system or district. Use learning theory in the design of professional learning and match appropriate learning designs with educator learning goals. Sustain learning with opportunities for practice, feedback, and follow-up in coordination with human resources such as leader and school coaches. Create a vision for how professional learning enables educators to achieve system goals. Design structural coherence across all entities that provide leader and educator professional learning services across the system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish expectations that professional learning for each educator is aligned to role- and content-specific standards, guidelines, and research. Analyze and track the impact of investments in professional learning on teacher and leader growth, retention, and student outcomes. Ground actions in understanding that professional learning is a change process that requires alignment across the whole system and sustained investment and implementation support. Set expectations that professional learning ensures all students have access to rigorous learning, inclusive of their race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, and other aspects of identity. Advocate for professional learning resources with policymakers at local, state, provincial, regional, and federal levels.



When Standards for Professional Learning are adopted into policy or written into guidance statements, they help construct the essential pillars of success for every educator.

Joellen Killion (joellen.killion@learningforward.org) is senior advisor, author, and consultant at Learning Forward. This column is adapted from the webinar “Standards for Professional Learning at All Levels of the System,” available at learningforward.org/webinar/standards-for-professional-learning-at-all-levels-of-the-system/

LEARNING LANDSCAPE

Joellen Killion

STANDARDS ARE THE BEDROCK OF A COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING SYSTEM

I think of professional learning like the engine of an automobile. It powers movement forward and propels the whole automobile toward the desired destination. Periodically, we tune up that engine. We provide maintenance so that the engine keeps running smoothly, effectively, and efficiently and reliably delivers its drivers and passengers to their destination.

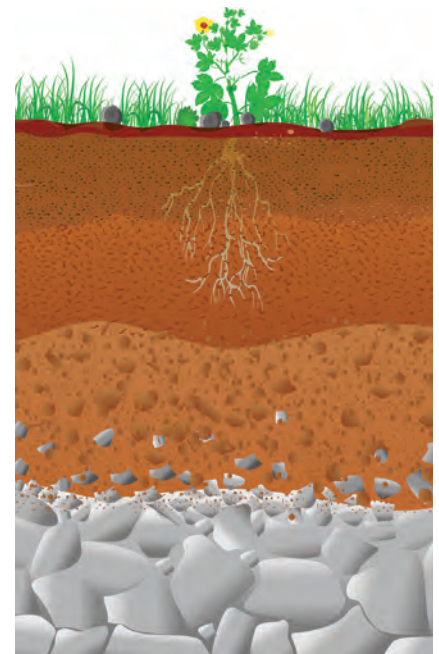
Like an engine, professional learning drives change. Success in all aspects of education depends on continuous change. Nearly every education innovation and initiative depend on human capital — the capacity of members of the education workforce to be at their best in everything they do and to work toward clear and defined outcomes for student success and high levels of performance in their own individual roles as contributors to the education system.

The constant change in the landscape means that schools have an imperative to change to meet the increasingly diverse needs of our students. This imperative requires every educator to be engaged in learning and growing every day. In many fields, professional fields particularly, there are standards that guide practice. These standards establish the expectations of high quality. To ensure high-quality expectations for the continuous learning of the education workforce, leaders in schools and school systems, intermediate and regional agencies, ministries of education, state departments of education, educational partners, and professional associations use standards about professional learning to guide decisions they make about the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning.

Standards are the bedrock of a comprehensive professional learning system. They serve as the infrastructure upon which that comprehensive system is built. Many educational systems have some components of that comprehensive system, and yet not all have all the elements in place.

When a team of practitioners and Learning Forward consultants led an initiative many years ago to explore what constituted a comprehensive professional learning system, we identified 20 core elements. Of those 20, there are just a few that are absolutely essential. They include standards. We can't have a system without standards to guide decisions and define quality. Also among the core elements of a comprehensive professional learning system are a vision and goals, resources, roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, and ongoing assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of professional learning.

Together, these elements build a solid infrastructure that allows every partner in the education system to join forces, collaborate, and work with clarity toward excellent outcomes for educators and students. When Standards for Professional Learning are adopted into policy or written into guidance statements, they help construct those pillars of success for every educator. They unify stakeholders' commitment to high expectations and facilitate routine use of the standards to leverage every effort toward the success that we expect for educators and students. ■





POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Melinda George

For more information on making the connection between standards and policy, visit: learningforward.org/standards-in-policy/

Melinda George (melinda.george@learningforward.org) is chief policy officer at Learning Forward.

MAKE THE CONNECTION FOR POLICYMAKERS

When the revised Standards for Professional Learning were released this spring, I had an inspiring conversation with a lead appropriations staff person from the U.S. House of Representatives. We were discussing the graphic that depicts the standards and shows how all the standards work together to improve systems to support professional learning.

Just like that, a light bulb went on for him. He said, “So, if a state or school district adopts the standards at the system level, then we can know that policies and investments in that system will be strong because the professional learning being offered aligns to the standards.” My face lit up. “Yes! Exactly!” I told him.

My colleague’s aha moment shows why it is crucial for learning professionals to be intentional about explaining connections between the new evidence-based standards and proposed and enacted policies at the federal, state, provincial, and district levels. The standards can help us build the confidence of policymakers that the policies they are creating and the investments they are recommending will be used wisely and in a manner that will positively affect teaching and learning.

Making that case is the job of everyone who values professional learning. Here are three steps you can take in your interactions with decision-makers, including leaders in your system and lawmakers at the state and national levels.

Help policymakers understand the standards.

Many policymakers understand that professional learning is necessary, but they may not recognize that educators at all levels need professional learning *specific to their roles and responsibilities*. Furthermore, they may not be familiar with the fact that high-quality professional learning is ongoing, job-embedded, and collaborative. In fact, this is quite different than what most policymakers envision when they hear the term professional learning. Explaining the standards offers educators an opportunity to establish a common language with policymakers so that they understand the kind of professional learning we are asking them to support.

A great starting place when talking with policymakers is to help them understand the role of standards in building an educational system in which high-quality professional learning results in the improvements educators seek for themselves and their students. Explain that when states, school systems, and other jurisdictions adopt Standards for Professional Learning in policy and tie adoption to the actions that impact practice — for example, integrating standards into educator performance processes or requiring standards alignment in district planning — practice changes as a result.

Point out that there are 11 standards that outline a system for professional learning. Explain that these standards fall into three categories (Rigorous Content for Each Learner, Transformational Processes, and Conditions for Success), but they must all be present for the system to lead to student success. To help provide an overview, share a copy of the Quick-Start Guide, which can be found on our website (standards.learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2022/04/quickguide.pdf).



Show what high-quality, standards-driven professional learning looks like.

When working with policymakers, it is important to be explicit about how to invest in a systemic approach to professional learning based on the standards. Describe an investment that was made in your school or district that supported ongoing, job-embedded professional learning. Paint the picture: What was the problem that you needed to solve? What was the duration of the professional learning? How many educators and students benefited? Does your school or district have the resources and support to continue this as an ongoing practice? Make sure that the policymaker knows who designed, facilitated, and engaged in the professional learning. Draw the connections between the standards and the impact of the learning experience.

Emphasize how standards-driven professional learning is making a difference.

Policymakers need to know that their efforts to remove barriers to professional learning and the funding that they provide to support professional learning are improving teaching and learning. To make that case, bring evidence and data.

We have a strong research base to share about the newly revised

Policymakers need to know that their efforts to remove barriers to professional learning and the funding that they provide to support professional learning are improving teaching and learning. To make that case, bring evidence and data.

standards, which you can read and download at our website (standards.learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2022/04/standards-research.pdf). As part of that research base, the American Institutes for Research recently conducted a meta-analysis (a sophisticated strategy for combining findings from multiple studies) that found that professional learning aligned to Standards for Professional Learning leads to improved teacher and student outcomes (Garrett et al., 2021). (Read more about the findings in this issue's Research section.) These findings are exactly the kind of evidence many policymakers have been asking for, so we strongly encourage you to use it as a conversation starter.

Just as important as national data are your local experiences and results.

When you meet with a policymaker, share your stories about effective professional learning in your system. Whenever possible, bring data that shows how the professional learning had an impact. Being able to complete a sentence that begins with "And as a result ..." means that you are confirming for policymakers that their investments were strong and having an impact in education. See the library of data summaries on our website for an example of how other educators have made their case: learningforward.org/title-ii-a-data-summaries/

Your voice matters, and there are no better advocates for professional learning than those who have benefited from it and improved student learning as a result. We encourage you to use the new standards to make your case even stronger.

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We have to take a critical look at ourselves and the systems we support to challenge the status quo, ask uncomfortable questions that surface problematic frames of reference, and act on that learning in service to students.

Nader I. Twal (ntwal@lbschools.net) is a program administrator in the Long Beach Unified School District's Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development. He is also a member of Learning Forward's Standards Advisory Council.

DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE

Nader I. Twal

STANDARDS HELP EDUCATORS REACH EACH AND EVERY CHILD

As a reflective practitioner, I have often found it helpful to consider the history of the traditions and practices that we hold dear in education — including those that might be rooted in troubling histories. As calls for social justice grow louder and the imperative of equity grows more urgent, the traditions that may have sowed inequity are those we most need to examine.

As a member of the Learning Forward Standards Advisory Council, which has helped to shape and shepherd the newly revised Standards for Professional Learning, I believe it is prudent to pause and reflect on the history of educational standards. Doing so highlights why thoughtfully designed professional learning standards are so urgent and how the latest revision explicitly addresses equity.



Early versions of the professional standards that governed educational leadership at the turn of the 20th century, and professional learning by extension, drew on a history that valued organizational order and operational coherence over justice, equity, or community. The authors of these standards relied on industrial business models of efficiency and hierarchy as exemplars, which translated into standardized, regimented, and managerial models of education, education leadership, and professional learning.

Ellwood P. Cubberley, often considered one of the founders of traditional educational leadership, relied heavily on the tenets of social Darwinism to frame his explanations for the racial disparities and “enabled schoolmen and commentators alike to ignore or even to bemoan and denounce the increasing diversity in American public schools as a looming threat to the larger polity” (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006, p. 280). Given the pervasiveness of his texts and influence in the first half of the 20th century, the result of Cubberley’s thinking was that “generations of mainstream educational administrators were simply not interested in broadly defined discussions of individualism, democracy, and community” (p. 281).

Today, as equity-minded leaders focus on the needs of the marginalized, build our critical consciousness, and not only name inequity but also aim to redress it, these old standards can impede rather than accelerate progress. That’s why I jumped at the opportunity to serve on the Standards Advisory Council. Learning Forward has a strong history of centering the right work at the right time in service to all students, so engaging with and learning from thought leaders from all over the world about supporting educators to reach each and every child felt like an opportunity that I could not pass up.

During the revision process, we learned from and built on the previous iteration of Standards for Professional Learning as we crafted updated ones responsive to our times and our learning over the past 11 years. What stood out to me in the process was the intentional, thoughtful, and bold way that the advisory group, subgroups, and Learning Forward leaders centered equity

in all 11 standards, while amplifying its importance in three dedicated standards: Equity Practices, Equity Drivers, and Equity Foundations. Each of the three equity standards has clear indicators to ensure that the work transcends tokenism and demonstrates that “equity is both an outcome and aspect of professional learning” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 8).

The standards acknowledge and celebrate multiple dimensions of identity and equity. In today’s climate, it’s worth addressing why it is important to talk explicitly about race in standards. Davis et al. (2015) did so in a succinct and profound way when writing about leadership standards, and their sentiments are applicable to professional learning as well: “If standards imply that race does not matter, then our education system will continue down a path in which many leaders continue to be trained and hired despite being ill-equipped to recognize and counteract the negative ways in which racism affects educational practices and outcomes.” Davis and colleagues went on to explain the need for “particular knowledge and skills” that “must be clearly articulated in the standards that guide the practice, preparation, development, and

We cannot afford to be color-blind when it comes to the standards that shape our profession and our professional learning because the inequities and disparities in our system often fall along racial lines.

evaluation of school leaders” (p. 358).

In other words, we cannot afford to be color-blind when it comes to the standards that shape our profession and our professional learning because the inequities and disparities in our system often fall along racial lines. In response, we have to take a critical look at ourselves and the systems we support to challenge the status quo, ask uncomfortable questions that surface problematic frames of reference, and act on that learning in service to students. The revised Standards for Professional Learning give us a way to do that so that we calibrate our efforts, challenge our assumptions, and correct our course as we guide the learning of educators at all levels of the education system.

I am proud of and grateful for the bold and significant revisions that amplify the focus on equity in

the revised Standards for Professional Learning. As the introduction to the standards states, “The evolution of evidence and insights about educator and student learning requires periodic updates to Standards for Professional Learning” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 7). At this time, in the current context, these standards make great strides in naming and dismantling barriers to equity and replace them with actionable indicators that advance inclusion and justice for all. Now the real work begins.

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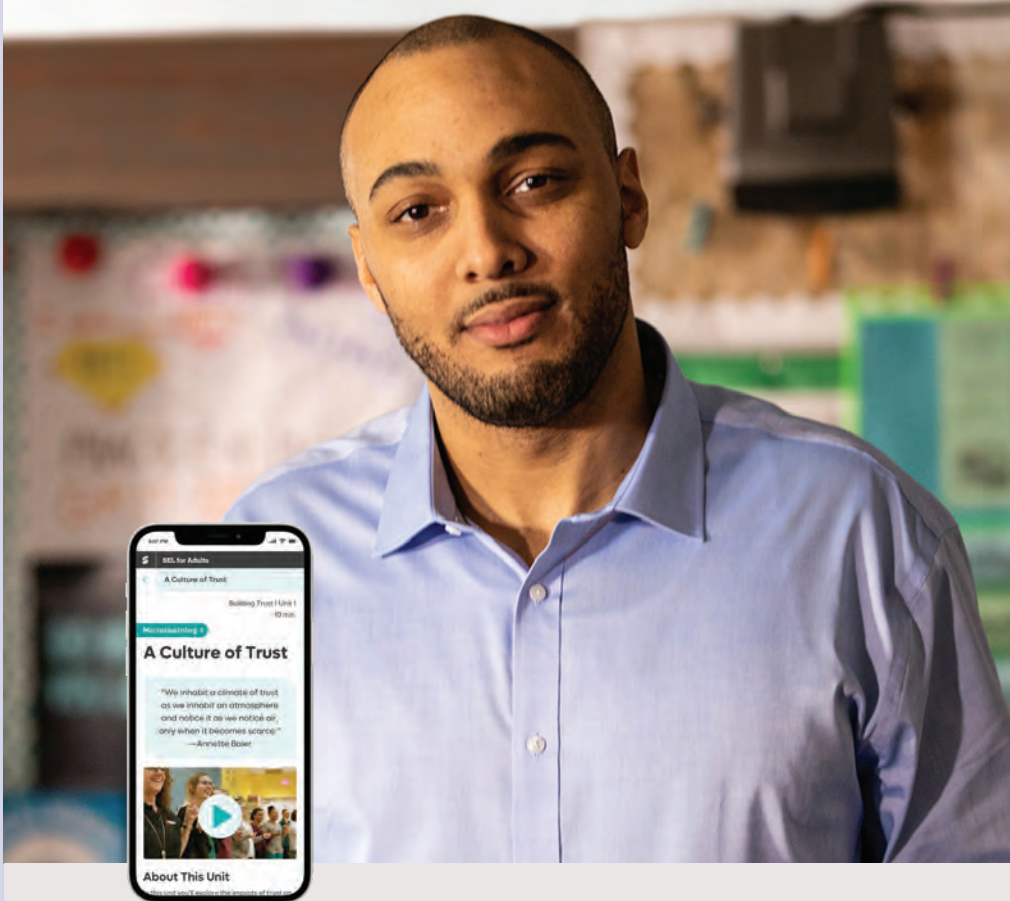
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About the **Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI)**

Learning Forward’s Standard Assessment Inventory (SAI) is a 50-item survey that measures the alignment of a school’s professional learning to the Standards for Professional Learning. The SAI also measures teachers’ perceptions to provide important data on the quality of professional learning.

For more information, contact Tom Manning at tom.manning@learningforward.org.





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When we recognize and value each teammate's stories, gifts, and diverse ways of seeing the world, it contributes greatly to the fabric of the collective, the learning of its members, and the shared future of a school.

Jennifer Abrams (jennifer@jenniferabrams.com) is an independent communications consultant and leadership coach.

GROWTH & CHANGE

Jennifer Abrams

CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY IS MY STARTING POINT

Educators know how important it is to establish clarity before expecting accountability. Clarity about purpose and goals is necessary for having humane, growth-producing conversations and taking effective steps toward any new initiative or practice, including high-quality professional learning. Learning Forward's newly revised Standards for Professional Learning are an essential piece to the clarifying conversation we all need to have about educator growth so we know what professional learning should look like. With this understanding, we can shape powerful professional learning that will help us create better outcomes for all students.



Any of the 11 standards can serve as an entry point for improving educator learning, but in my work with schools and districts, the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard is an especially valuable starting point. In its discussion of the standard, Learning Forward states, “When educators at every role, grade level, and content area collaborate for continuous improvement and support their colleagues’ ongoing learning and development, they increase learning opportunities for each student” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 60).

Clarity about collaboration is essential yet often missing in the current moment. Many of us talk about collaboration, but we don’t immediately know how to establish a culture of collaborative inquiry or act within one. Although we have credentials in how to teach our students and our subjects, many of us haven’t focused enough on the skills, capacities, and mindsets around how to work together to examine our practice, grow as educators, and improve teaching and learning environments.

The Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard acknowledges this need to grow our collaboration skills, asserting that effective professional learning “increases educators’ knowledge about the benefits of collaboration *and* strengthens their capacity and skills to collaborate” (emphasis mine) (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 61). The standard clarifies further by explaining specific skills and capacities that should be developed, “skills such as active listening, ensuring parity among speakers, respecting diversity of opinions, and shared decision-making” (p. 61).

In learning these skills and developing a collaborative, growth-oriented culture, educators increase their ability to contribute to each other’s development. How we work together matters. The willingness to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with the collective is critical to the work done in schools. As Alan Briskin and his co-authors write in *The Power of Collective Wisdom and the Trap of Collective Folly*, this stance of engagement with the collective “can be learned and practiced, becoming a new way of being in relationship with others, a new type of human association leading to unleashing the spirit of cooperation” (Briskin et al., 2009).

Professional learning that emphasizes collaborative inquiry has embedded within it two principles. First is seeing the group as a value-add to your work. This means that you understand how the group adds to your knowledge and development, how the group’s collective wisdom

Continued on p. 20



LEARNING LEADERS

Baruti K. Kafele

EQUITY IS A STANDARD OF PRACTICE

The practice of equity in education isn't new, but the application of the word equity is still in its infancy. Even though I was always an equitable practitioner, I had no word to apply to what I was doing as a teacher and as a principal, which was meeting my students where they were and as they were. I watched the word equity take off like a rocket beginning around 2012. From there, I watched it soar to the extent that it's probably the No. 1 topic in education conversations today.

This increased emphasis on equity is a good thing, but it is also polarizing. Some districts, schools, and educators, as well as legislators, want no part of it. I have had a small number of consulting clients request that I not mention the word equity in a six-hour session because they feared it would trigger backlash from some of the staff. That's a difficult ask for me because equity is at the core of who I am as an educator and who I have been since I walked into my first classroom in 1988 — you could say that I “bleed” equity. Moreover, equity is the center point of my consulting work, and clients know this when they invite me to work with them. Yet some of them are still afraid to say the “e” word.

By naming equity in three of the 11 revised Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward is encouraging educators everywhere to have bold and brave conversations about how to achieve equity. There is no more important conversation to be had in schools today, and there is no better way to have productive conversations than high-quality professional learning.

As educators embark on this learning and these conversations, one of the greatest challenges we face is that there is no universal definition of equity. Readings, conference presentations, and research offer voluminous perspectives and opinions — so many that I often find my head spinning. In 2021, I wrote *The Equity & Social Justice Education 50*, which offers 50 questions on equity and social justice for educators to reflect on and discuss, with the intent of defining equity and offering strategies to achieve it. I am currently working on developing equity standards for educators to correspond with the definition.

I define equity as I indicated above: *meeting young people where they are and as they are*. However students arrive when they show up at school in the morning — even if it is not how we would hope — it is our responsibility as educators to meet each student right where they are academically, socially, and emotionally.

One of the reasons I use this definition is that it is also a standard of practice. Equity must always be looked upon as a strategy and never the end goal. If equity is the goal, the school is in trouble. Instead, equity is the vehicle or strategy to get every student to success in the classroom and beyond.



Baruti Kafele will be a keynote speaker on Wednesday, Dec. 7, at Learning Forward's Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. For more information, visit conference.learningforward.org.

Baruti K. Kafele (principalkafele@gmail.com) is an education consultant, author, and retired principal.

It takes a lot of work for educators to be able to meet all students where they are and as they are. That’s where professional learning comes in, and the equity standards in Standards for Professional Learning provide helpful guidance. The Equity Practices standard articulates the importance of embracing students’ assets and honoring their identities.

As a practitioner of, and a student of, equity for over 30 years, I have devised what I refer to as three equity nonnegotiables — aspects of equity that must be embraced and addressed if we are to be equity-minded educators: student individuality, student cultural identity, and student voice. I ask educators to reflect on whether and how they are addressing these nonnegotiables.

Student individuality: Visible or invisible? What is it in my role as an equity-mindset teacher that ensures

Equity must always be looked upon as a strategy and never the end goal. If equity is the goal, the school is in trouble. Instead, equity is the vehicle or strategy to get every student to success in the classroom and beyond.

the *individuality* of each of my learners (academically, socially and emotionally) is acknowledged, appreciated, respected, and *visible*?

Student cultural identity: Accentuated or denied? What is it in my role as an equity-mindset teacher that ensures the *cultural / racial identity* of each of my learners is acknowledged, appreciated, respected and *accentuated*?

Student voice: Distinct or obscure? What is it in my role as an equity-mindset teacher that ensures the *voice* of each of my learners is acknowledged, appreciated, respected, and *distinct*?

Using these nonnegotiables, school

leaders can establish expectations for all teachers to create a universal approach to equity across grade levels and content areas. They can also design professional learning around those expectations. This intentionality and coherence is key to each student having an equitable opportunity for success regardless of the specific classroom and teacher in charge. When leaders set the expectations and vision for equity, and professional learning follows the equity standards as well as the other Standards for Professional Learning, all teachers can give all children the opportunities they deserve. ■

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helps you grow more than you could have on your own. When you see the group as a value-add in your life and work, you learn from and with your colleagues on multiple levels, and, in the end, you are better for being a part of the team.

Second is understanding that “I” influences “we.” The old adage often repeated in schools is that there is no “I” in team. That’s a myth. Individuals matter. We all are shaped by those who surround us, and the collective needs to hear many perspectives. When we recognize and value each teammate’s stories, gifts, and diverse ways of seeing the world, it contributes greatly to the fabric of the collective, the learning of its members, and the shared future of a school.

As Stewart Levine writes in

Individuals matter. We all are shaped by those who surround us, and the collective needs to hear many perspectives.

The Book of Agreement: 10 Essential Elements for Getting the Results You Want, “Because all of us are smarter than any one of us, we have come to recognize that the only way we can stay successful is to learn from and teach each other. . . . Our bottom-line goal is to get people to think beyond their own territoriality, to share, and to respect what others have to contribute” (Levine, 2002).

Ultimately, learning from one another makes us better able to serve students. When we follow the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard, we focus on student learning *while* working

on growing our own collaboration skills. It isn’t an either/or but rather a both/and moment.

We are building the skills of collaborative inquiry in the service of better teaching and more student learning.

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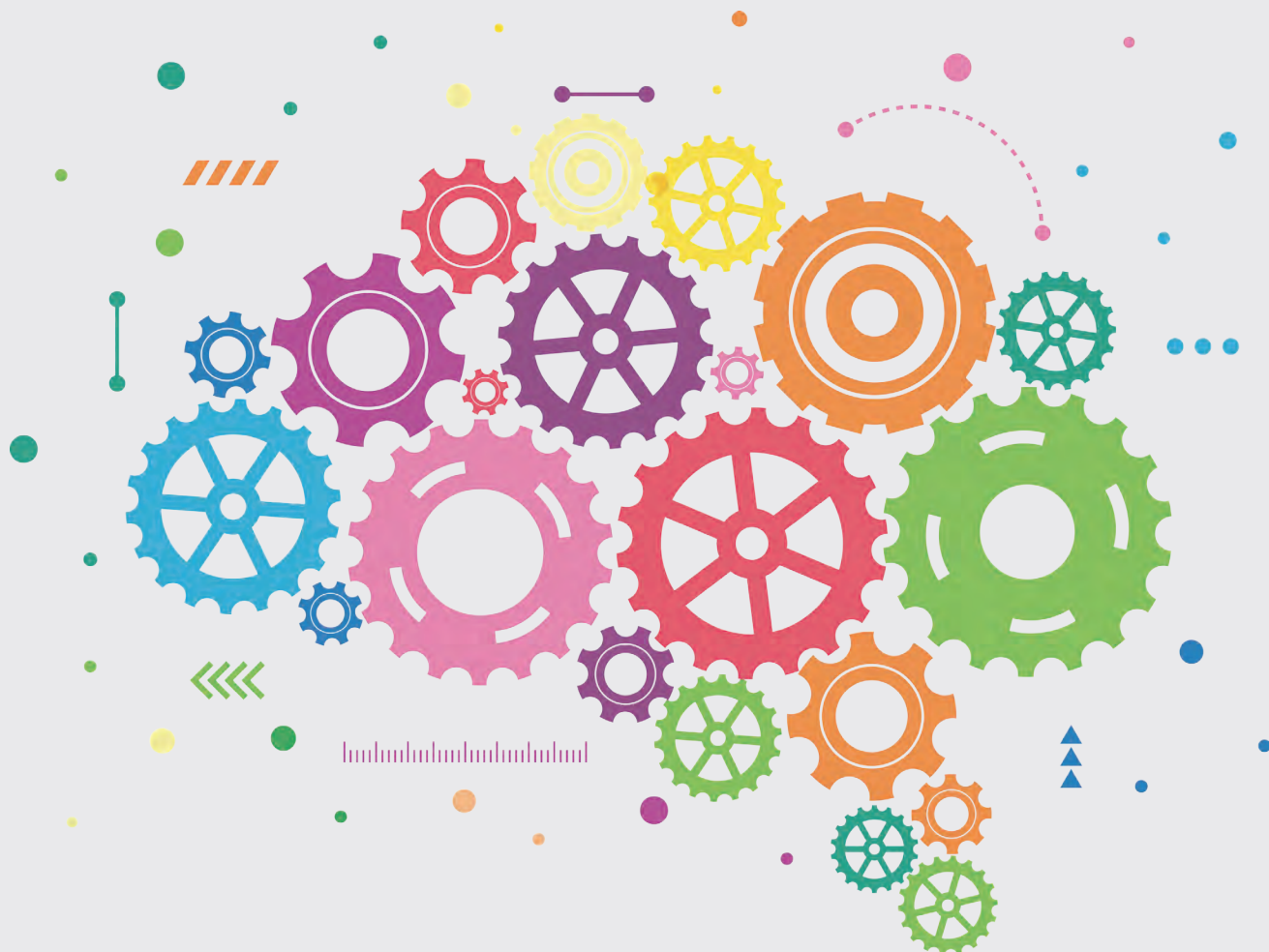
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EXAMINE. STUDY. UNDERSTAND.

RESEARCH



A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

Standards for Professional Learning are grounded in decades of rigorous research about how professional learning leads to improved teaching and learning and about the elements of professional learning that matter most. The latest revision of the standards was informed by a comprehensive review of the literature and a sophisticated analysis of quantitative findings. The results have implications for all educators and systems.



RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

The new standards reflect the latest knowledge and findings, as well as the priorities and key issues for professional learning leaders today.

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.

THE RESEARCH FOUNDATION FOR STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Research has been at the heart of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning since they were first conceptualized and shared with the field in the 1990s. The standards are built on a decades-long foundation of research literature that describes the ways in which professional learning can improve educator knowledge, skills, and mindsets and, in turn, improve educator practice and student learning. Updating that foundation with new research findings is an essential part of ensuring the standards remain relevant and useful.

Along with lessons learned from 30 years of standards implementation and feedback from educators and field leaders, recent research and evidence have shaped the 2022 revision of Standards for Professional Learning. A team of researchers from the American Institutes for



Research, with input from Learning Forward and the Standards Advisory Council Research Working Group, conducted a systematic literature review on professional learning. They paid particular attention to new research released since the previous version of standards was released in 2011. As a result, the new standards reflect the latest knowledge and findings, as well as the priorities and key issues for professional learning leaders today.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH WE REVIEWED

Learning Forward considered many sources and types of studies, ranging from large-scale randomized controlled trial studies to qualitative and mixed-method studies, to case studies focused on a particular professional learning approach or intervention. Each of these types of studies offers its own benefits.

Randomized studies and meta-analyses can help identify measurable, reliable patterns and contribute to our understanding of which factors influence other factors. For instance, a recent analysis of 35 methodologically rigorous studies by the Learning Policy Institute found a positive link among teaching practices, student outcomes, and professional learning when that professional learning is content-focused, collaborative, job-embedded, incorporates active learning and adult learning theory, models effective practice, includes coaching and expert support, includes feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Qualitative and mixed-method studies provide critical, detailed descriptions of professional learning that control group studies often leave unexplored. For example, qualitative studies of long-term professional learning efforts offer rich information about how a comprehensive approach builds the capacity of leaders and practitioners to continuously improve their practice to influence student learning. One such study by Pak, Desimone, and Parsons (2020) analyzes case studies of professional learning systems in five states to draw out the features of contexts that support effective professional learning, including collective participation and what they call

“sustained coherence.”

Findings from studies of Learning Forward’s own partnerships and collaborations provide valuable information as well. One example is the case of Fort Wayne, Indiana, a district that has leveraged the standards in various ways for almost a decade, improving its overall culture and particular leadership practices and garnering important input about the professional learning needs of teachers and coaches (Psencik et al., 2019).

Our research review also intentionally examined research on standards implementation in various contexts. Notably, in 2016, a research team led by Carol Campbell did an extensive review of research literature and survey data from across Canada, resulting in the identification of three key components and 10 features of effective professional learning in the Canadian context that were consistent with features of effective professional learning in Standards for Professional Learning (Campbell et al., 2016). The study provides a look at similarities and differences in the way educators in different countries and provinces focus on inquiry, think about teacher agency, and use evidence.

Not only do the standards represent the best available research, the standards themselves have also been studied. American Institutes for Research led a literature review focused on studies using the 2011 standards as a framework and conducted a meta-analysis of randomized control trial studies that looked at the impact of professional learning aligned to standards on educator and student outcomes. The institute’s findings suggest that the implementation of standards is, indeed, a means to achieve better teacher and student outcomes. The meta-analysis found “consistent evidence that program alignment with the Learning Forward Standards for

Professional Learning is associated with improved teacher instruction and student achievement outcomes” (Garrett et al., 2021). That research is described in more detail in the article at right.

HOW NEW RESEARCH INFLUENCED NEW STANDARDS

New studies and evidence released since the last version of the standards informed the specific concepts and language of the 2022 revision, including the creation of new standards as well as updated language in longstanding standards. Following is a summary of the major themes from the research and how they influenced the 2022 Standards for Professional Learning.

Curriculum and instructional materials. The positive impact of access to high-quality curriculum and instructional materials on educator and student outcomes is increasingly borne out in the research (see for instance, Boser et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2015) and is therefore an important update to the standards. Professional learning focused on implementing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials through instruction is also an equity issue, as research has found that students in low-income schools often have limited access to high-quality academic content, and teachers spend too much time searching for materials that meet their students’ needs, making the implementation of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials an important equity issue (Learning Forward, 2018).

Collaboration processes. Standards have always affirmed the importance of educator collaboration in improving individual and collective educator practice and the culture of the learning environment. While there has long been evidence that collaboration among educators leads to improved

META-ANALYSIS

Study links standards with teacher and student outcomes

BY RACHEL GARRETT,
QI ZHANG,
MARTYNA CITKOWICZ,
AND LAUREN BURR

When Learning Forward approached the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research about partnering on a research review for Standards for Professional Learning, we jumped at the chance. We were excited to apply our expertise in research methods to help build the field’s knowledge about how educators’ professional learning contributes to student success.

As we began to plan for a systematic literature search and review of randomized field studies published since the release of the 2011 standards, we saw an opportunity to add depth to the project by conducting a meta-analysis. A meta-analysis is a rigorous statistical procedure to summarize quantitative findings across multiple studies.

Meta-analysis is a powerful approach because it examines whether two variables appear to be related to each other not just

Continued on p. 25

outcomes for teachers and students (e.g. Goddard et al., 2007), recent research provides critical descriptive detail about collaboration focused on instruction (e.g. Ronfeldt et al., 2015), and educator collaboration in day-to-day practice (e.g. Wilson et al., 2017). Recent research demonstrates how collaborative structures become even more effective when infused with an inquiry approach, address a combination of individual and collective learning, and build capacity for teacher voice and agency (e.g. Timperly et al., 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

School leadership. Research has long affirmed the role of the school principal in successful implementation (Desimone et al., 2002) and confirmed that effective school leadership is associated with better outcomes for teachers and students (Leithwood et al., 2004). And yet recent research supported by The Wallace Foundation reveals that principals have an even greater impact on student outcomes than previously thought and what characteristics and conditions lead to the greatest impact (Grissom et al., 2021) — a major contribution to the field and a critical resource for the revision of the standards.

Equity. Although equity has always been embedded in the standards, emerging research over the last decade highlights the positive effect of professional learning that includes equity-related content and strategies to understand and address educator and student backgrounds and beliefs. Several recent syntheses of quasi-experimental studies on professional learning and culturally responsive teaching reveal that bridging cultures in schools is increasingly becoming a strategy for improving teaching and learning, and the causal evidence related to outcomes for educators and students is developing. These studies describe the features of equity-focused professional learning and offer ideas about how to assess and design for quality (e.g. Bottiani et al., 2017; see also reviews

REFERENCES AND READINGS

This article is adapted from the report *Standards for Professional Learning: The Research* by Elizabeth Foster (Learning Forward, 2022), which is available at standards.learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2022/04/standards-research.pdf. All of the references cited in this article, along with additional related readings, can be found in the report.

by Aronson & Laughter, 2016, and Parkhouse et al., 2019).

Strategies such as culturally responsive teaching, which incorporates students' cultures into instruction, are showing promise in improving students' academic and social and emotional outcomes, affirming their identities, and helping them develop skills to identify and combat inequities. However, more rigorous research is needed to complement descriptive studies, better understand what effectiveness means and looks like, and articulate what components lead to better outcomes for students (Bottiani et al., 2017; Hill, 2020).

Social and emotional learning.

Emerging research also points to the importance of understanding and specifically attending to social and emotional learning (SEL) in professional learning. Several large meta-analyses found that participation in SEL programs improved students' academic performance, social and emotional competencies, and well-being and social behavior (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Research shows that the best SEL approaches focus on concrete, specific, observable, and teachable skills and competencies (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Mahoney et al., 2018) — outcomes that well-designed professional learning can achieve.

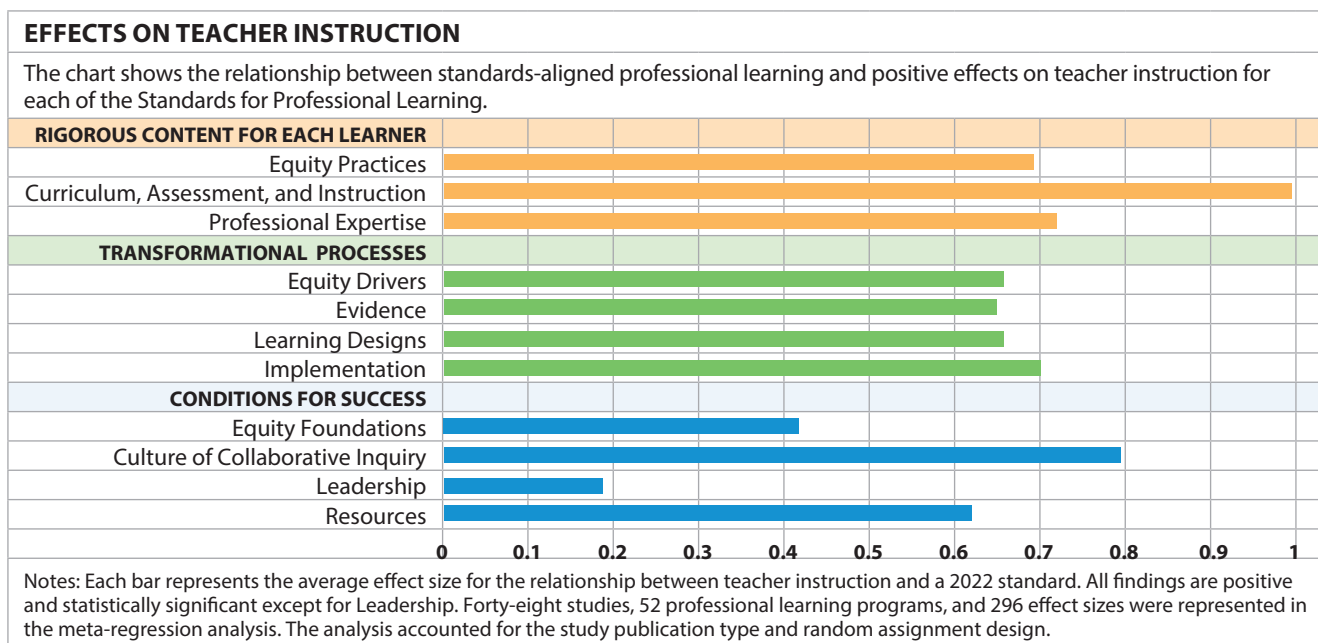
NEXT STEPS FOR STANDARDS RESEARCH

Looking forward, Learning Forward is eager to partner with research organizations and practitioners on research that will provide useful information, especially related to scaling effective strategies and isolating what

leads to improvements in educator and student outcomes. The release of the revised standards is an opportunity to gather baseline data now, then formally study the implementation of professional learning strategies aligned to standards in a variety of contexts.

Learning Forward is also advocating for studies of new initiatives to more explicitly address how professional learning was initiated, conducted, and supported over the period of time covered in the research. There are often unanswered questions about the design of the sessions, how facilitators were selected, trained, and evaluated, and how leadership supported professional learning through policy and resources. The field would benefit from a consistent and transparent way of describing professional learning in research studies. Standards for Professional Learning, with the frames of Rigorous Content for Each Learner, Transformational Processes, and Conditions for Success, would be a perfect structure for a uniform description of professional learning in studies focused on teaching and learning.

Learning Forward stands firm in our commitment to help educators understand how to conceptualize, support, implement, and document the impact of professional learning so that it leads to excellent outcomes for educators and students. Therefore, Learning Forward will continue to sustain and strengthen our connection to and investment in research and evidence about high-quality professional learning. ■



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in one sample of data but in many samples with different participants and in different locations. When a meta-analysis finds a positive effect across studies, it provides more robust evidence than one study alone. And unlike a literature review, it provides a measurable effect that can be compared to the effects of other types of interventions. This can be helpful for making decisions about how to invest resources and time.

The goal of our meta-analysis was to examine whether there is a significant relationship between professional learning that is aligned to Standards for Professional Learning and teacher instruction and student achievement. Using a cutting-edge method called a mediation-meta-analysis, we were also able to examine whether changes in teacher instruction brought about by professional learning lead, in turn, to changes in student achievement.

HOW WELL DID THE STUDIES ALIGN WITH THE STANDARDS?

After identifying studies appropriate for inclusion in the meta-analysis, our next step was to examine the professional learning programs in the studies. Specifically, we wanted to know

how well the programs aligned with the 2022 standards. We developed criteria and coded the programs according to whether they aligned with each of the 11 standards.

We found varying levels of representation of different standards. The standards most commonly represented were Professional Expertise (32 out of 48 studies) and Learning Designs (28 out of 48 studies). Only a limited number of studies provided evidence of alignment with the three equity standards or the Leadership standard.

Examining the three frames in Standards for Professional Learning, the professional learning described in the studies was less often aligned with the Conditions for Success frame compared to the other frames (Rigorous Content for Each Learner and Transformational Processes). In light of the paucity of studies meeting the Leadership, Equity Drivers, and Equity Practices standards, we interpret all analyses of these standards with caution.

WAS STANDARDS-ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LINKED TO TEACHER AND STUDENT OUTCOMES?

Next, we looked at how standards-aligned professional learning was

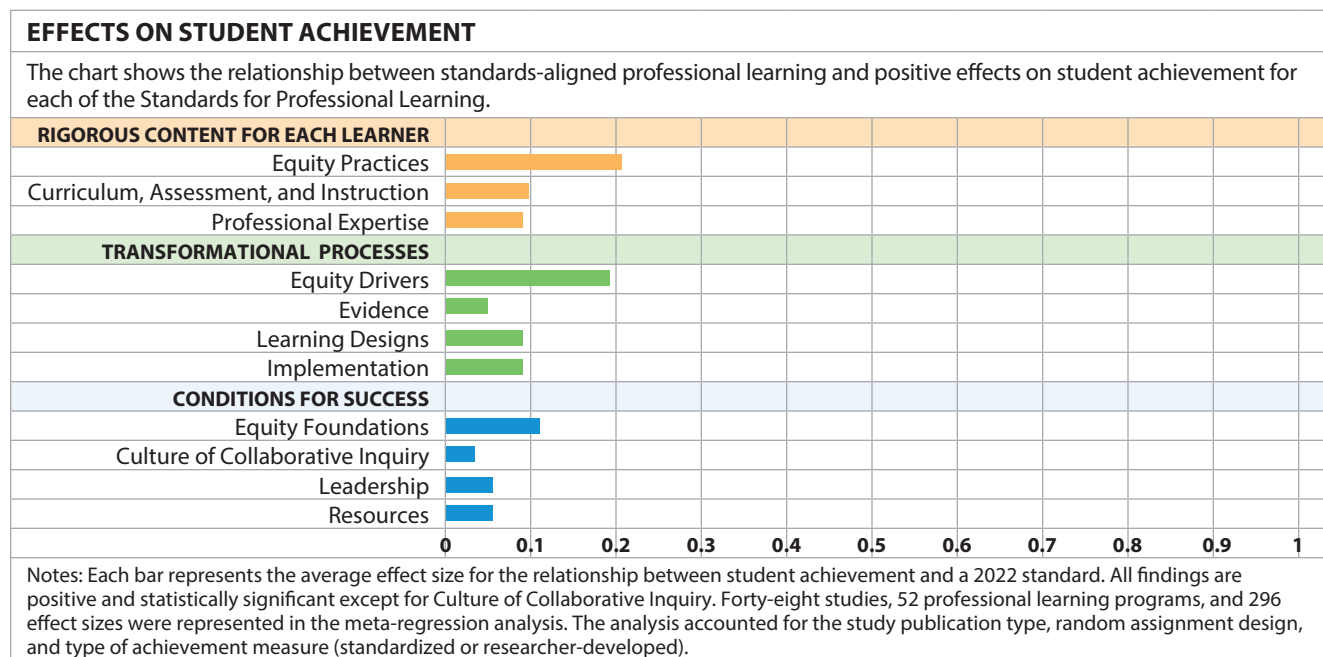
associated with teacher instruction and student achievement outcomes, examining each standard separately. The analyses indicated that alignment with the 2022 Standards for Professional Learning was associated with large, positive average effects on instruction. (See graphic above.) Among the statistically significant effects, the average effects on instruction ranged from moderate in size (Equity Foundations) to large (Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction).

The findings were similar when considering student achievement. Analyses indicated modest but positive average effects for student achievement across all of the 2022 standards. (See graphic on p. 26.) Among the statistically significant findings, average effects ranged from modest in size (among each of the Leadership, Resources, and Evidence standards) to more moderate (Equity Practices).

DO CHANGES IN INSTRUCTION LEAD TO CHANGES IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

Underlying Standards for Professional Learning — and most professional learning practice — is a theory of change that predicts professional learning will benefit teacher

META-ANALYSIS



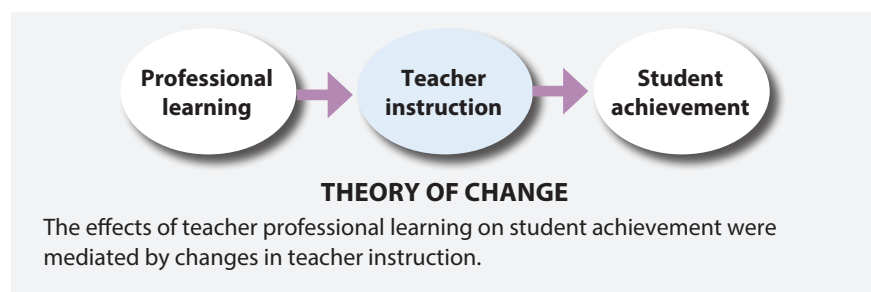
instruction and, in turn, student achievement outcomes. In other words, student achievement improves, at least in part, through the instructional improvements.

Although this theory of change applies to virtually all professional learning studies, research has provided limited information to empirically test it. Our mediation-meta-analysis addressed this gap in the literature. It used all available information across the studies to understand the effects that teacher professional learning has on student achievement and how those effects may be attributed to changes in teacher instruction.

The analyses supported the theory of change, as shown in the figure above. First, improvements in instruction were positively and significantly associated with improvements in student achievement. Second, improvements in student achievement were explained through the improvements in teacher instruction that came from the professional learning.

WHAT NEXT?

The findings of our meta-analysis consistently indicate that evidence of



Improvements in instruction were positively and significantly associated with improvements in student achievement.

program alignment with Standards for Professional Learning is associated with improved teacher instruction and student achievement. By extension, they suggest that investments in high-quality professional learning can yield meaningful improvements in student achievement.

The study also highlighted the opportunity for future investigations that will add even more knowledge to the professional learning field. For example, randomized field research offers limited understanding about

the broader systems and contexts in which professional learning is tested. Expanding that research can help leaders determine what kinds of professional learning to implement, where, and when.

The current findings, and those from studies we hope will build on this one, can make important contributions to the field that will support the efforts of professional learning leaders and advocates to bolster high-quality professional learning for all educators.

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INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

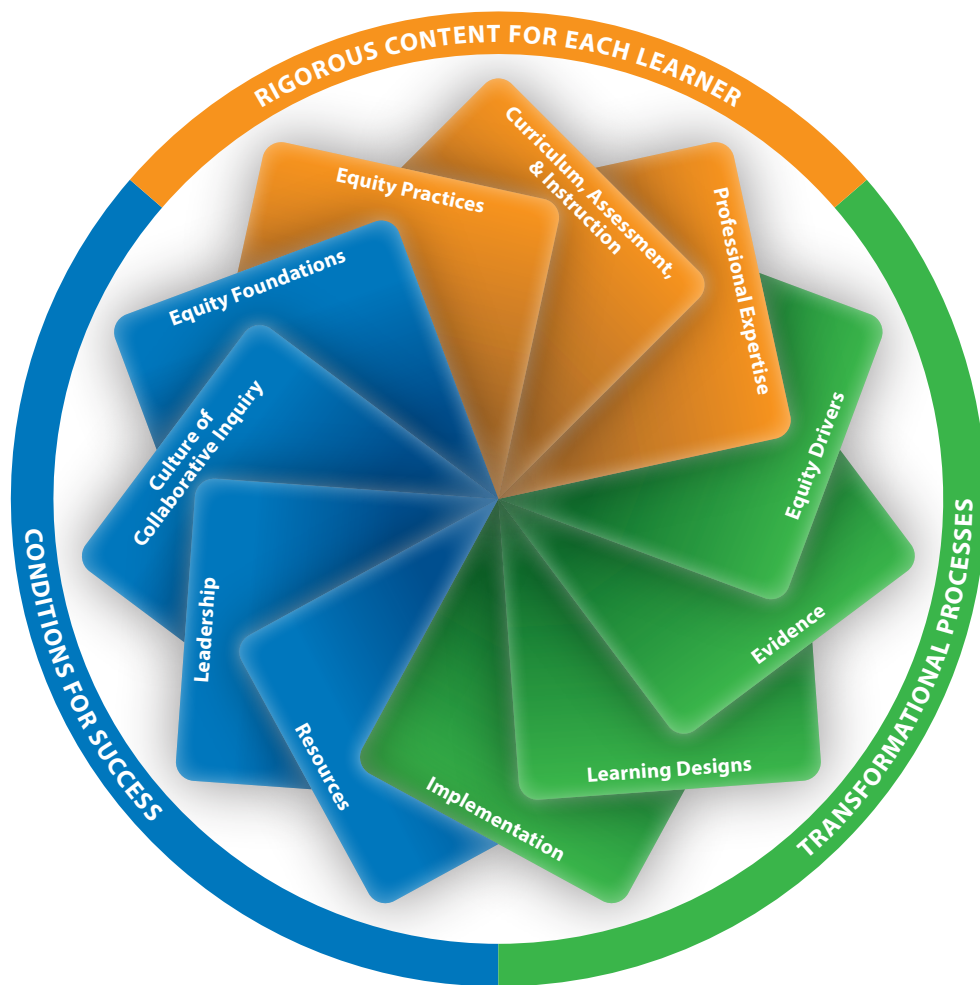
FOCUS

SETTING THE STANDARD

HOW REVISED STANDARDS DRIVE CHANGE

As we celebrate the release of the revised Standards for Professional Learning, organizational leaders explain how the standards have evolved and how new elements can drive change. Leaders in schools, districts, states, and provinces share how they are applying the revised standards and the impacts they are seeing.





NEW LOOK, NEW STANDARDS: As the learning landscape shifts, so do we

BY TRACY CROW

Leaders in North River School District (a fictional district) were disappointed. For two years, they had known their middle grades students were struggling in reading and language arts. They had instituted a range of efforts to improve instruction, such as

longer reading blocks and one-on-one tutoring. But when they looked at end-of-year student achievement results and educator survey data, they recognized that their recent efforts had not been effective. Student achievement had remained flat or, in some cases, fallen. Even more troubling, the declines were

steepest for students from marginalized communities.

The leaders had a difficult conversation about which efforts to abandon, which to continue, and which new paths to pursue to ensure all students would excel in reading and language arts. The directors of

curriculum and professional learning presented research showing the impact of investing in high-quality curriculum and instructional materials. The group agreed that they needed to overhaul their curriculum.

But the superintendent pointed out that a new curriculum would have little impact if teachers and other staff did not have a deep understanding of its content and practices. To vigorous head nods from the professional learning and curriculum directors, she explained that the district would need to prioritize professional learning linked to the new curriculum.

With many decisions and plans to be made, the professional learning director recommended that the leadership team look to Standards for Professional Learning to formulate a strategy that would ensure high-quality, research-based professional learning.

Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning define and describe professional learning that leads to improved educator practices, leadership, and student outcomes. Standards draw on the latest evidence and research about what works in professional learning to help educators implement every phase of the professional learning process. They help stakeholders design, lead, facilitate, support, and evaluate professional learning to advance school and system priorities so that all students learn at high levels.

Wherever they are used, Standards for Professional Learning establish common language, definitions, and expectations for professional learning. They set a high bar for the learning that educators experience, just as student content standards do. While student standards outline what students should know and be able to do, Standards for Professional Learning describe at a high level what educators learn, the processes for educator learning, and the conditions in schools, systems, and other organizations that support powerful learning.

WHO ARE STANDARDS FOR?

Standards for Professional Learning are intended to be used by educators and stakeholders in a wide range of positions within and outside of schools and school systems to clarify what constitutes high-quality professional learning.

- For those educators with daily responsibilities to plan and facilitate professional learning, the standards provide guidance for both short- and long-term planning, implementation, and support, as they did for the directors in the vignette in this article. In addition to directors of professional learning and curriculum, the standards are used in this way by instructional coaches, external assistance providers, principals, and others.
- For educators with leadership responsibilities in systems, such as superintendents and chief academic officers, standards offer insights on how to ensure educators experience equitable access to high-quality professional learning year-round through the provision of sufficient resources and the establishment of supporting structures and visions.
- Policymakers use Standards for Professional Learning so that relevant funds are tied to actions that lead to results for adult and student learners.
- Researchers and those in higher education turn to standards to inform their related work, whether to structure research studies, explore particular concepts in depth, or align preservice education to evidence-backed educator learning.
- Leaders in education organizations and associations align their support for educators in a range of school improvement priorities to standards to improve its efficacy and outcomes.

DRIVING PROGRESS FOR THE FUTURE

In April 2022, Learning Forward released the revised edition of standards. It builds on the knowledge and expertise created through the three earlier iterations (see article on p. 34 for more on the history of standards). The new edition builds on the solid foundation of the past to drive progress for the future.

The latest iteration of Standards for Professional Learning includes 11 standards. Underscoring the need for a systemic approach across levels, Standards for Professional Learning work within a framework of three categories: Rigorous Content for Each Learner, Transformational Processes, and Conditions for Success. The three categories echo earlier versions of Standards for Professional Learning that organized standards by context, process, and content.

This article describes each of

the three framework categories and illustrates how they can look in practice, drawing on the fictional example of North River School District.

RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

Standards within the Rigorous Content for Each Learner frame describe the essential content of adult learning that leads to improved student outcomes. That content will vary depending on the learner and their roles, experiences, and career pathways.

While many of the skills and competencies described in these three standards may seem to apply most directly to teachers, every educator has a responsibility to identify and prioritize their highest learning needs related to each of these standards. For example, while a teacher's connection to the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard is obvious given their daily responsibilities, principals

also study the curriculum carefully to support its use, evaluate teachers' implementation, and, in some cases, lead professional learning.

The three standards in this category are Equity Practices; Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction; and Professional Expertise (see the full list of standards and statements on p. 31). These standards refer to both student and educator learners — while the content for educator learning is what the standards detail, the tight link between educator and student learning is always a high priority.

In our North River School District example, the Rigorous Content for Each Learner standards informed the design of curriculum-based professional learning. A cadre of professional learning leaders, including district and school leaders as well as coach supervisors and the directors of professional learning and curriculum, recognized that the new English language arts curriculum would itself serve as a key text in teachers' professional learning. They had been intentional in selecting a highly rated curriculum in which the materials included embedded support for teachers.

Based on their study of the standards in the Rigorous Content for Each Learner frame, they designed additional strategies for supporting teachers on the new curriculum. They turned to the teacher leaders in each middle school and offered them support in helping grade-level teams identify critical concepts from the student standards and how the curriculum addressed them.

The teacher teams examined student data to understand which concepts students were struggling with, indicating a learning need for educators, and paid particular attention to how student outcomes varied along a range of demographic characteristics including race, gender, and ability. With this information in hand, teachers, teacher leaders, and the professional learning cadre had a clear vision for the content for professional learning for the coming months.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

Standards within the Transformational Processes frame describe process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets. The four standards in this category are Equity Drivers, Evidence, Learning Designs, and Implementation. They address how to plan inclusive professional learning that recognizes learners' identities and beliefs, plan and evaluate learning using multiple types of data, align learning designs with evidence about what works and with learner goals and priorities, and sustain learning over time.

Those responsible for day-to-day professional learning operations and processes will likely engage most deeply with these specific standards, whether they are instructional coaches honing their skills to offer feedback to peers and learning teams or directors of professional learning creating embedded, ongoing learning for a specific initiative or curriculum. But educators at all levels need to understand high-quality professional learning processes, whether to recognize the importance, for example, of investing their time and energy as an individual learner with a coach, to support colleagues in exploring unconscious bias so they can collaborate fully with diverse colleagues, or as a system leader to understand that change takes time as well as long-term investment and support.

In North River, system- and school-level leaders reflected on all the knowledge they had gathered so far and discussed how to ensure that the professional learning structures they had established followed best practices for adult learning. They looked to the standards in the Transformational Processes frame to ensure they put the key pieces in place.

First, they examined their existing processes. The district had previously contracted with a vendor to support curriculum implementation during

the summer, but a survey of teachers indicated that while they found the workshops engaging, they hadn't actually used any of what they learned. Recognizing the need for a more sustained and job-embedded approach, as outlined in the standards, they decided to integrate professional learning into educators' workdays. They made a plan to leverage the instructional coaches that supported each school, sustain learning implementation throughout the school year, and support coaches and teacher leaders in using relevant learning designs in this work.

With the effective implementation of new curriculum and instructional resources as their strategic priority, professional learning leaders recognized that teachers would benefit from using the materials just as students would use them, so they helped coaches learn how to incorporate activities and lessons from the curriculum as part of their work with teachers. They also discussed the importance of creating learning that would include every educator's voice and recognize each educator's identity and assets, given the diverse makeup of the workforce in the system.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Standards within the Conditions for Success frame describe aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning. The standards that address conditions are Equity Foundations, Culture of Collaborative Inquiry, Leadership, and Resources. Within these standards live the actions that establish guiding visions for professional learning tied to excellent and equitable outcomes for students, as well as the importance of educators learning in collaboration and having the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. Conditions standards address the importance of leadership across all levels of schools and systems and the intentional use and allocation of resources.

Standards in this category apply most directly to system and school

Standards for Professional Learning

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...

EQUITY PRACTICES

... understand their students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts, embrace student assets through instruction, and foster relationships with students, families, and communities.

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION

... prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

... apply standards and research to their work, develop the expertise essential to their roles, and prioritize coherence and alignment in their learning.

RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...

EQUITY DRIVERS

... prioritize equity in professional learning practices, identify and address their own biases and beliefs, and collaborate with diverse colleagues.

EVIDENCE

... create expectations and build capacity for use of evidence, leverage evidence, data, and research from multiple sources to plan educator learning, and measure and report the impact of professional learning.

LEARNING DESIGNS

... set relevant and contextualized learning goals, ground their work in research and theories about learning, and implement evidence-based learning designs.

IMPLEMENTATION

... understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...

EQUITY FOUNDATIONS

... establish expectations for equity, create structures to ensure equitable access to learning, and sustain a culture of support for all staff.

CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

... engage in continuous improvement, build collaboration skills and capacity, and share responsibility for improving learning for all students.

LEADERSHIP

... establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, sustain coherent support to build educator capacity, and advocate for professional learning by sharing the importance and evidence of impact of professional learning.

RESOURCES

... allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize equity in their resource decisions, and monitor the use and impact of resource investments.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS



WHAT THE CIRCLE REPRESENTS

Standards for Professional Learning are represented in a circle for several reasons:

- Educators may approach high-quality professional learning through any one of several pathways, depending on their role, a critical team or individual learning need, or strategic improvement priority.
- The way all standards meet at the center represents the way they converge, connect, and integrate when used with integrity.
- The circle shape suggests a cycle. Cycles of continuous improvement are embedded in many of the standards and essential to their effective use and implementation.

leaders with positional authority and responsibility to create visions and systems for professional learning and establish cultures across teams, schools, or the district, not to mention those with power to determine resource use. Yet educators at every level are responsible for the effective use of learning time, for example, when it is allocated for team learning, or for exercising leadership in their contexts when they demonstrate the impact of their learning or speak up for what they need. Every educator has the responsibility to engage as an active and skilled collaborator and recognize the direct links between their learning and that of their colleagues and students.

In our North River School District example, Conditions for Success helped create a culture and climate in which high-quality professional learning could thrive.

The team-based cycles of continuous improvement at North River did not happen in a vacuum. They were supported and motivated by leaders' deep dive into the Conditions for Success frame of the standards. Through that process, the professional learning cadre articulated and cultivated a culture of shared, high expectations for each learner, both educators and students. They also engaged all educators in discussion about their commitment to

establishing professional learning as a lever to address inequities in students' and educators' access and opportunity for powerful learning.

North River's system and school leaders also recognized that high-quality, curriculum-based professional learning relies on creating connections among colleagues and departments, including the department of curriculum and instruction and the department of teaching and learning. They realized that close collaboration among those departments would result in alignment and common priorities for resource allocation. The common vision to connect educator learning with the drive for rigorous and equitable student outcomes was essential to forward progress.

With a plan to continue cultivating these conditions for success while deepening implementation of the processes and content, the district's leaders felt well-positioned to make positive changes in teaching and learning.

WHERE DOES A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SYSTEM START?

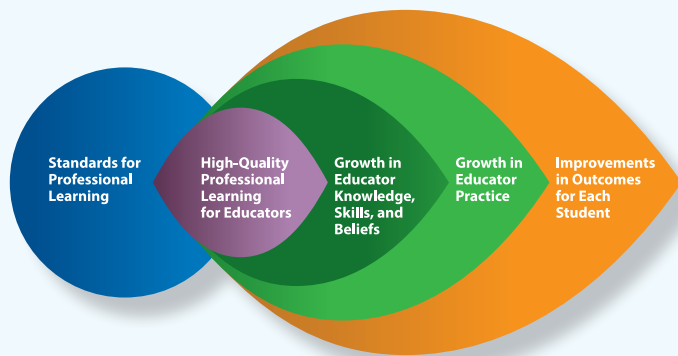
To create high-quality professional learning that results in improved educator practices and improved student results, educators apply all

standards in concert. In contrast, when educators focus on one or several standards to the exclusion of others, they will be less likely to achieve the ambitious results they seek.

At the same time, educators don't learn about or use all the standards at once. They need to have an entry point to begin developing a full understanding. "Which standard should we start with?" is a common question for educators new to standards. It's a tough question to answer because the only true response is, "It depends."

To decide where to begin, educators could identify a known area of high need. For example, if educators know that the problem they need to address through professional learning is ensuring that students of color experience rigorous teaching and learning, they might look at the Equity Practices standard and learn that the content of educator learning can emphasize how to take a wide range of student assets and aspects of identity into account.

Or perhaps educators know they have time set aside for collaborative learning but that they aren't using team time effectively, so they decide to study the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard. If they know their district or school is lacking an intentional



DESIGNING FOR IMPACT

The graphic at left shows the connections between standards, educator learning, and student outcomes. When implemented intentionally and well, Standards for Professional Learning lead to high-quality professional learning, which leads to advances in educator knowledge, skills, and beliefs, which lead to improved practices and ultimately to student learning. The process is not linear, and each stage informs the others. For example, successes achieved from changes in practice inform educator knowledge and beliefs.

systemwide context for professional learning, they might start with the Conditions for Success frame.

Educators might also enter standards through an area of strength or to continue an ongoing initiative. For example, educators engaged in learning cycles may wish to strengthen how they're using data and evidence to inform planning and thus explore the actions associated with the Evidence standard.

A school leader may recognize that the professional learning associated with implementing a new language arts curriculum has helped teachers make significant strides in using high-quality materials and wish to take that learning up a notch in the coming year, so they study the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard and the Learning Designs standard, as did the educators in the North River system depicted throughout this article.

Whichever standard an educator or team of educators begins with, they will then connect to other standards to best achieve the results they seek. For example, if looking in depth at a standard in the Rigorous Content for Each Learner frame, such as Professional Expertise, is the starting point, a good next step would be considering how to design learning

around that content.

This would take educators into both the Conditions for Success and Transformational Processes frames, which would spur educators to think about questions such as “How will that learning be designed?” and “How will the learning fit into a larger system for supporting other educators over time?” Step by step, this is how a high-quality system for professional learning is built.

CONNECTING THE DOTS TO LEAD TO IMPACT

After their first year of professional learning focused on curriculum implementation, the professional learning cadre at North River School District reflected on their progress. They noted several successes and identified a handful of lessons grounded in ongoing use of Standards for Professional Learning to inform future planning

First, as they looked at preliminary evidence from middle grades classrooms, they recognized that most classrooms advanced on most of the concepts identified as focus areas for improvements. However, they didn't see all classrooms advance and hypothesized that not every teacher had enough support to engage in the collaborative structures that support collective impact.

Next, they shared notes from several focus group conversations that coaches had conducted with teachers. They learned that most teachers had a high level of satisfaction with their learning and reported ongoing implementation of new practices. In one building, however, the teacher responses indicated that their schedules hadn't given them enough time for practice and reflection. They made a plan to work with the school leader to adjust schedules accordingly.

As they considered these and other lessons, grounding their reflections in the standards, the professional learning cadre determined that most essential for the next year of learning was a more intentional emphasis on the vision for learning and improvements to creating coherence in learning across the district. With this priority and several other specific steps in mind, the cadre knew Standards for Professional Learning would continue to help them shape a high-impact learning system to support every educator and student in their district.

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THE EVOLUTION OF STANDARDS



FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

BY STEPHANIE HIRSH

Standards for Professional Learning are forward-looking by nature because they drive continuous improvement in educator practice. But taking a brief look at the history of the standards is important for understanding their impact on the field and their role in today's professional learning.

As the field has shifted philosophy from staff development to professional development to professional learning, and as our organization has grown from the National Staff Development Council to Learning Forward, so, too, have the standards evolved. Over the last 30 years, we have regularly revised the standards to reflect emerging research, new knowledge about best practices, and

policy shifts. But we have also retained core elements, continually building on the foundation of the first version of the standards from the 1990s.

I invite you to take a look back as we move forward to see how we have embodied the process of learning and continuous improvement that is so central to high-quality professional learning and educational improvement.

THE EARLY DAYS OF STANDARDS

In the early 1990s, Hayes Mizell, foundation officer for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, took an interest in the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). Dennis Sparks, then the executive director of NSDC, has referred to Mizell as the first “angel investor” in the organization because of his commitment to funding our work and lending his field-shaping insights. Both men imagined that staff development would soon play a bigger role in school improvement — and they were right.

To shape that future, Mizell challenged Sparks to codify the characteristics of high-quality educator learning into standards for staff development. This effort initially focused on the middle grades, in keeping with the focus of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

The idea of standards wasn’t necessarily a popular one. For many years, staff development had been driven by teachers’ interests and was presented as a benefit of employment that school systems used to attract new teachers entering the profession. High degrees of participant satisfaction were the sole measure of success.

However, things had begun to change after the release of the widely cited report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983, which alerted the country to challenges in schools. A new focus on improving teaching and raising student achievement gathered momentum into the 1990s, continuing with the passage of the Goals 2000 Act, which required states to develop clear and rigorous standards for student learning as a necessary step in improving student achievement.

For the first time, staff development was seen as having a role to play in

LEADING THE WAY TO STANDARDS

Standards for Professional Learning have remained relevant and useful for four decades in large part due to the talented individuals who were able to translate their importance to the educators and stakeholders who put them into daily practice. Early editions were overseen by Dennis Sparks and Joellen Killion. This most recent revision was led by a team including Denise Glyn Borders, Tracy Crow, Elizabeth Foster, Paul Fleming, and Machel Mills-Miles. It was no small task for these field leaders to combine the intentions of advisory panel members, guidance from research, and feedback from hundreds of individuals. We are grateful to them for their contributions.

improving teaching and learning. Goals 2000 led the U.S. Department of Education to define principles of professional learning, and field leaders like Mizell began calling on educators to make professional learning more intentional and focused on student learning.

NSDC accepted the challenge and, in collaboration with educators from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, created the first set of standards, which were released in 1994. The standards detailed content priorities, such as shifting attention from stress management workshops to adolescent development, as well as learning strategies that emerging evidence were showing to be most effective in improving teaching. The first set of middle grades standards was a success in driving changes in the field, and it led to partnerships with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals to offer standards for the elementary and secondary grades in 1995.

REVISIONS TO THE STANDARDS

It was always our intention to update and revise the standards as the field evolved, and we found ourselves creating a pattern of releasing new standards about every 10 years. It took about a decade for our implementation

tools and research studies to be fully developed, for the standards to get traction, and for states and other governmental entities to put them through an adoption cycle. And it turned out that 10 years was about the amount of time it took for new knowledge and research to emerge and key education issues to shift, justifying a need for revising the standards.

Toward the end of the 1990s, state and federal governments were paying closer attention to professional development (as it was now known). This interest translated into increasing expectations for educators to demonstrate the impact of professional development investments. As the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 accelerated the new era of accountability, professional development, like other education initiatives, was asked to document its return on investment.

Simultaneously, NSDC stakeholders were asking for a single set of standards that educators could use to promote the professional development essential to improving their practice. In response, in 2001 NSDC revised the standards into its first full single edition. These standards’ focus on evaluating the impact of educator learning on educator practice and student learning was a direct reflection of policy changes as well as our own

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING		
Standards for Professional Learning	Professional learning priorities	Key developments in U.S. education policy
1990s		
<p>1994-95: Standards for Staff Development released for three grade levels: elementary, middle, and high school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking staff development to teacher change. • Establishing learning organizations and professional learning communities. • Evaluating staff development. • Recognizing professional growth as professional responsibility. • Leveraging school leadership and culture to impact student learning. 	<p>1994: Goals 2000: Educate America Act and Improving America’s Schools Act passed.</p> <p>1996: The U.S. Department of Education’s National Awards Program for Professional Development established.</p> <p>Mid-1990s: Growth of the standards-based reform movement and development of voluntary content standards.</p>
2000s		
<p>2001: Revised Standards for Staff Development released as a single set for all levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking professional learning to student data and student learning. • Providing time during the workday for professional learning. • Expanding the use of school-based coaches. • Expanding opportunities for teachers to collaborate. • Evaluating the impact of professional learning. 	<p>2001: No Child Left Behind Act passed.</p> <p>2009: American Reinvestment and Recovery Act passed and Race to the Top initiative established.</p>
2010s		
<p>2011: Standards for Professional Learning (third iteration of standards) released.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating continuous improvement cycles. • Demonstrating impact of professional learning on teacher and student learning. • Linking teacher evaluation with student learning. • Elevating the role of leadership in improving student outcomes. • Professionalizing role of professional developers. • Increasing focus on governing bodies (e.g. state education agencies) adopting Standards for Professional Learning. 	<p>2010: Common Core Standards released.</p> <p>2013: Next Generation Science Standards released.</p> <p>2015: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed, including Learning Forward’s proposed definition of professional learning.</p>
2020s		
<p>2022: Fourth edition of Standards for Professional Learning released.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevating the role of professional learning in achieving educational equity. • Emphasizing curriculum materials and curriculum-based professional learning. • Facilitating learning networks and improvement science. • Creating professional learning systems. 	<p>2020: COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to shift to online and hybrid learning.</p> <p>2020: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund created.</p>

recognition of the importance of demonstrating impact.

In 2010, a coalition led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the Common Core State Standards, which articulated in detail what students at each grade level should know and be able to do. Within a matter of months, more than 45 states had endorsed them. Policymakers now looked to professional learning as a way to prepare teachers to support students in meeting the new and more demanding standards.

As professional learning leaders and our organization (which had been recently renamed Learning Forward) responded to that call, three key questions drove planning for the next set of professional learning standards: What are students expected to know and be able to do? What do the adults need to know to support students with their learning? What conditions will ensure adults acquire these essential skills and knowledge?

The 2011 edition of the standards — renamed Standards for Professional Learning — signaled the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous improvement and placed an emphasis on ongoing learning. The standards focused on educators as part of learning teams and introduced the ideas of data-driven decision-making, long-term implementation, and assessment of impact on student outcomes.

As we neared the beginning of the 2020s, Learning Forward recognized the need to revise the standards once again to reflect research findings from the last decade and address the most imperative issues in education now. Substantive research and the state of our schools had elevated the importance of three key issues that laid the foundation for this revision and the important work that lies ahead: equity, curriculum, and leadership. (More detail about each of these components can be found throughout this issue of *The Learning Professional*.)

A CONSISTENT FOCUS FOR LEARNING

Despite the shifts over time, the standards have relied on a consistent focus and some enduring qualities. The foundation of the standards has always been an understanding of and expertise in designing and executing adult learning. As the history of education and more specifically professional development shows, effective professional learning depends on more than tips and tools for engaging adults — it depends on effective learning designs, conditions for learning, and content.

The concepts of equity, evidence-based or research-driven practice, system and individual change management, continuous improvement, impact, and content knowledge have always been central, even though some elements could have been more explicit than they were at certain times.

Another key thread throughout the history is that standards have always been a collaborative effort. While the standards always carried the NSDC/ Learning Forward name, the intention was never to develop or release them alone. We have always been committed to ensuring there is only one set of professional learning standards shared by the whole field, and this meant ensuring any organization with an interest in professional learning was at the table during the standards' development and dissemination. The collaboration among many diverse perspectives has been central to the robustness of the standards and their uptake and use.

The use of the word standards has remained consistent — even though it was viewed from the beginning as somewhat controversial. Over the years, there were occasional arguments made for shifting to principles or other related terms, but the word standards offered a unique way of combining the aspirational with the practical.

We have also placed a consistent focus on what educators need to support implementation of

the standards. Each edition was followed by tool kits that included needs assessments, planning guides, implementation rubrics, case studies, training materials, and more.

Effective execution depends on the understanding and support of school systems and individual educators.

While states could be found adopting, adapting, or endorsing the standards, meaningful and large-scale implementation has always depended on clear leadership and support from multiple entities, including Learning Forward state and provincial affiliates, school systems and schools, and technical assistance organizations.

AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT

As the standards have evolved over time, and as their use in states, districts, and schools has increased, so has the recognition that professional learning must be viewed as an essential component of the ongoing work of all educators, not as a one-off event or an add-on to an already busy workday. This shift toward meaningful, sustained, job-embedded professional learning is perhaps the standards' most important contribution to the field.

If teachers are working as hard as they can every day and giving all they have to offer to their students, then the only thing that closes the learning gap is when teachers themselves gain the knowledge, skills, and subject expertise that are essential to helping their students. The only way for teachers to gain this expertise has always been through ongoing effective professional learning. As we move into the next era of revised standards and improved teacher practice, I challenge anyone to find a different answer.

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STANDARDS
AT THE
SCHOOL
LEVEL

A standards-driven culture of learning thrives at Georgia high school

BY NIA THORNTON

When I became an assistant principal at Central Gwinnett High School in Georgia seven years ago, part of my charge was to lead professional learning for our school staff. The other members of the leadership team and I were ready to

engage our staff in meaningful, day-to-day learning. We knew that our work needed to be rooted in current research and best practices to get buy-in and engage all staff.

Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning provided a framework for doing just that. The standards have given us a foundation for

visualizing, planning, and monitoring our professional learning efforts, and they have become part of the culture of learning at the school.

In Gwinnett County Public Schools, schools develop annually a local school improvement plan that is aligned with district priorities and is also responsive to local needs. The

district, the largest in Georgia, includes 141 schools.

Central Gwinnett High School serves about 2,500 students in grades 9-12. At that scale, it's not surprising that we have a great deal of diversity across our schools and variation in students' needs. The local school improvement plan is key to meeting those needs, with support from and alignment with the district central office and other schools.

USING DATA TO SET GOALS

At Central Gwinnett, we see the school improvement plan as inseparable from our professional learning plan, so we ground it in Standards for Professional Learning. Each spring, we examine several types of data to assess our students' and school's needs.

Based on that, we develop specific goals, design implementation steps to meet those goals, and establish monitoring and evaluation steps so we can assess progress and make course corrections. We can't achieve the goals without a clear implementation design in place, and the focus of that plan is capacity building for teachers and staff so that all the educators in the building will know what to do, how, and why.

Throughout this process, the standards play several roles. In our data review, we use results from the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI), Learning Forward's tool for educators to assess how well their systems are addressing each of the standards in their professional learning efforts. (See sidebar on p. 40.) These results help us understand areas of strength and challenge in our support for teachers.

At Central Gwinnett, we see the school improvement plan as inseparable from our professional learning plan, so we ground it in Standards for Professional Learning.

We then look to the standards to guide the professional improvement plans and action steps we develop. This has helped us make professional learning more responsive to our staff's needs as well as best practice.

For example, a few years ago, an in-depth examination of SAI data helped us see the need to structure capacity building differently and ultimately led us to change our master schedule to prioritize collaborative professional learning.

At that time, a lot of professional learning took the form of whole-group sessions in our school theater. Those of us who are passionate about professional learning wondered whether this was the best structure, but it wasn't until we saw the SAI data that we realized teachers were wondering the same thing. The results showed that our educators preferred small-group settings for professional learning.

That stuck out to us so much that we changed our master schedule to accommodate standards-aligned, job-embedded professional learning, which we know is the most effective form of learning because it meets people where they are and allows things to play out in real time.

We restructured the schedule so that all teachers in core academic

areas would have common planning time twice a week with others in their area. This planning time is set up so that course teams can engage in collaboration to determine what their students need.

In the past, teachers created identical lesson plans for the whole week, but now we foster collaborative learning. We facilitate conversations about the actions teachers need to take to get to the goals for students, the student outcomes they expect these actions to produce, and ways to know whether students have learned the material.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

To build this culture of collaborative learning, we use a trickle-down or train-the-trainer model. Each assistant principal meets regularly with the department chairs for one or two curriculum areas. Then we add the course team leads.

Those chairpersons and course team leads then develop the skills to act as facilitators during the common planning time. This approach to shared leadership, like the focus on collaborative learning, is aligned with and guided by Standards for Professional Learning.

The standards have also been helpful for engaging in team development work. When we restructured our schedule and our professional learning approach, we found that we needed to do some team strengthening to get buy-in from all staff. We knew we would be more successful if we rooted ourselves in

ABOUT THE STANDARDS ASSESSMENT INVENTORY

The Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) is a web-based teacher survey that provides leaders with data on the quality of their professional learning as defined by Standards for Professional Learning. SAI results help schools and systems focus on the particular actions that contribute to higher-quality professional learning. The results can be used for improvement planning, benchmarking, evaluation, and reflection. When schools administer the SAI, Learning Forward helps leaders analyze results, identify areas for improvement, and help determine next steps.

Learning Forward is pilot testing and gathering feedback on an updated version of the SAI that is aligned to the revised Standards for Professional Learning. This updated version is scheduled for release in late 2022.

what the research says about how team processes lead to student outcomes.

Sharing that body of research with our teachers and teacher leaders helped us gain support for the work.

And as we move forward, when we hit bumps in the road to collaboration, such as educators taking feedback personally rather than constructively, we keep going back to the standards to recalibrate around our “why.”

It’s especially important now, as students and educators are coping with the stresses and setbacks of the pandemic, to keep revisiting our why, recalibrating around everyone’s evolving needs, and communicating the why and how to our educators. That includes not only current staff but potential recruits.

Our school has teacher vacancies we never filled this year, and vacancies going into the next school year, so recruitment and retention are major priorities. In our recruitment efforts, we emphasize the professional learning we offer and our commitment to growth and development.

Teachers are professionals, and they deserve to have the chance to grow in their careers. The beauty of our profession is the ability to learn and grow every day, and we are communicating that to our teachers and our new recruits.

A DISTRICTWIDE EFFORT

It’s important to note that our school is not doing this professional learning work on our own. Across the 141 schools in the district, every school has a designated staff development

contact person. We come together on a regular basis, at least once quarterly, to discuss best practice related to implementing, monitoring, and evaluating professional learning. The district Department of Staff Development facilitates these meetings and provides ongoing support and communication to encourage sustained, high-quality professional learning.

As we move forward with this work, we are excited about the recently revised standards, which are timely and responsive to the needs of schools like ours. The new standards align closely with our district priorities, especially around equity and rigorous curriculum. They will also help us recover from pandemic-related disruptions — for example, as we look to the Learning Designs standard to improve our differentiation.

The last two years have been like no other for educators and students. We are grateful to be able to lean on the layers of support and expertise embedded in Standards for Professional Learning. Developed by educators and for educators, we rely on them to support our teachers.

Nia Thornton (Nia.Thornton@gpsk12.org) is an assistant principal at Central Gwinnett High School in Georgia. ■



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STANDARDS
AT THE
DISTRICT
LEVEL

How Alhambra is building a learning system around the standards

BY ANGELA FRANKENFIELD

The Alhambra Elementary School District in Phoenix, Arizona, has recently begun to dig deep into implementing Standards for Professional Learning across our

18 schools, which serve over 10,000 students in preschool through 8th grade. Our experience shows how the standards can drive a comprehensive approach to professional learning across a system so that all educators engage

in high-quality learning and improve practice for the benefit of all students.

Our journey with the standards began in 2017, when I and other district leaders attended Learning Forward's Annual Conference

and learned about designing and implementing a districtwide comprehensive professional learning system. As I got more involved with Learning Forward and participated in the Learning Forward Academy, I discovered how the standards can drive the design of a professional learning system and be used to monitor and evaluate the impact of that system on staff and ultimately student learning.

Since that time, Standards for Professional Learning have become a critical component in Alhambra's direction for professional learning and in improving teaching and learning. We use the standards to shape and guide our planning and professional learning design, and we embed them in meetings and learning opportunities for district-level directors, specialists, and coaches to ensure they integrate them throughout their work across the district.

Our experience suggests steps districts can take to implement standards and improve professional learning for all educators — and that these steps pay off.

STANDARDS INTEGRATION IN OUR DISTRICT

In Alhambra, continuous improvement processes drive the growth and development of our schools. We use cycles of planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating in all of our work, including professional learning. Standards for Professional Learning help us articulate how those cycles work and what components they include.

Our planning process begins with intentional learning designs based on research, educational theories, and proven models. We recognize that professional learning is a critical component in this process, and we use the standards to ensure we have designed learning outcomes and opportunities that research and best practice show impact teacher efficacy and student learning and are matched

We use the standards to shape and guide our planning and professional learning design, and we embed them in meetings and learning opportunities for district-level directors, specialists, and coaches to ensure they integrate them throughout their work across the district.

to the needs of our staff.

As our district leadership begins to outline and plan our professional learning plan for each upcoming school year, we reflect on our current reality, goals, and needs. The Standards for Professional Learning Innovation Configuration maps, which specify high-leverage, role-specific actions educators can take to implement the standards, are a critical tool in this process.

At the implementation stage, the standards help us facilitate effective professional learning communities (PLCs), which are central to our professional learning strategy. The professional learning communities allow our educators to reflect on their practice while building collective ownership of student learning through a cycle of continuous improvement. The standards provide the direction for job-embedded PLCs and the criteria for monitoring their impact on adult behavior and student learning.

We use multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data to assess student and adult impact. As we develop any program or initiative in Alhambra, it is imperative that we ensure the program is evaluable, so our team at the district level identifies a process for measuring impact as soon as the plan for the initiative is designed.

Learning Forward's standards, and the Innovation Configuration maps that accompany them, provide

guidance on the outcome goals and how to reach them, across roles and across the progression of learning for educators, from preparation programs to leadership development. Having clearly defined outcomes provides the clarity to monitor where the district is in the standard and provides direction as to where additional touchpoints should be applied. (See sidebar on p. 43 for an example of how this process works.)

GETTING STARTED AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

While implementing a comprehensive professional learning plan is complex, starting to implement districtwide use of the standards doesn't have to be. Think about starting small. Based on our district's experience with the standards, I recommend the following steps and strategies.

First, make the standards visible in your district — for example, by adding the standards to your district website, listing the salient standard or area of focus to meeting agendas, and sharing Learning Forward's standards resources with your professional learning and administrative leaders.

Second, build capacity around the standards in small but significant ways. This starts with building your own awareness of the standards and then communicating it to others. You might build a five-minute standards update into professional learning, label the standards as you integrate them into professional learning communities, and take other steps to help your staff understand and use the standards.

Third, apply the standards to your specific projects and initiatives. Every new initiative requires some form of capacity building and professional learning. You can use the standards to develop a sound framework for those development opportunities. You can also use the standards in shaping criteria to evaluate the project or initiative.

CASE STUDY: ALHAMBRA MENTORING AND INDUCTION PROGRAM

One of the ways Standards for Professional Learning have shaped professional learning in our district is in the evolution of Alhambra’s mentoring and induction program for new teachers. I examined this program through the lens of the standards as part of my participation in the Learning Forward Academy, a 2½-year learning experience dedicated to providing leaders with opportunities to progress through a problem of practice model.

As I examined the program and my chosen problem of practice to see which standard it was most aligned with, I focused on the Implementation standard. By going into depth about this standard with my peers and Learning Forward Academy coaches, I realized that we had a lot of work to do to improve the program’s implementation.

I examined the Innovation Configuration map for the Implementation standard, which spells out action steps for each of the standard’s desired outcomes and allows the user to assess their level of progress toward each outcome.

I realized that, for many of the desired outcomes, our implementation level was lower than it needed to be because I had not built my staff members’ capacity

sufficiently, for example, in the outcome of understanding research on change processes. However, I did notice an area of strength outlined in the Innovation Configuration map: constructive feedback.

Based on this review and reflection, my next step was to incorporate capacity building into our professional learning plan for everyone involved in the program, including new teachers, mentors, and administrators. I also recognized that I needed to look beyond the two years of implementation I had planned for the Alhambra mentoring and induction program and expand the plan for capacity building to an additional three years. In addition, I came to see a need to improve the support we offered to our coaching staff about how to support new educators.

These changes have made a difference for the program, and we are now more prepared to welcome new educators to the district in a way that will have long-term impact. The assessment and reflection of the program’s implementation through the use of the standards and Innovation Configuration maps has been critical in this process.

BUILDING STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION

To make the most of the standards, districts should collaborate not only with their local schools but also with state-level leaders and entities. The state of Arizona has adopted Standards for Professional Learning, which positions districts like ours well to work closely with the state Department of Education to implement and advocate for high-quality professional learning as a lever for change in our school systems.

Districts in states that have not yet adopted the standards might consider reaching out to contacts in the state education agency to discuss the opportunities the standards create for improving teaching and learning.

Learning Forward’s state-level affiliate organizations are also a valuable resource. They can help districts and schools build knowledge about the standards and capacity to implement them, as well as introduce educators to leaders from other districts who are

To make the most of the standards, districts should collaborate not only with their local schools but also with state-level leaders and entities.

engaging in this work.

Networking and events hosted by Learning Forward Arizona, our state affiliate, have been very helpful for us in Alhambra. Every networking event was developed with a salient standard guiding the learning, which helped us see examples of how the standards are applied and continued to build our awareness of the specifics of each standard. The affiliate has also been instrumental in providing explicit learning opportunities about the standards themselves.

A PRESSING NEED FOR GUIDANCE

Implementing a systemic approach to high-quality, job-embedded

professional learning guided by Standards for Professional Learning is more important than ever. Over the last two years of the COVID pandemic, educators have faced overwhelming challenges and needs for new learning.

During this time of uncertainty, many educational leaders and systems have struggled to keep up with those learning needs — or, conversely, have unintentionally added to the burden with fragmented or ineffective professional learning. As we all strive to move forward from the stress and trauma of the pandemic, the standards provide the guidance and direction to create relevant and high-impact learning for educators of all levels.

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STANDARDS
AT THE
STATE LEVEL

Delaware sets a vision for professional learning

BY KATHY KELLY, NICOLE MARSHALL, AND AMY BAKER-SHERIDAN

State education leaders and entities play vital, if not always highly visible, roles in establishing high-quality professional learning. Through legislation and regulations, resource allocation, leadership support, and more, they establish a vision of professional learning and support its implementation in districts and schools.

In particular, state education agencies have the reach and leverage to foster a comprehensive, sustained system of professional learning for all educators. But creating that coherence is a complex undertaking.

At the Delaware Department of Education, we navigate this complexity by grounding our work in Standards for Professional Learning. The standards

have helped us understand how to implement meaningful learning processes and foster the conditions necessary for learning to thrive.

Most recently, they have supported shifting our state's definition of high-quality professional learning to be content-specific and curriculum-focused. As our work evolves to reflect changes in the field, the evolution

of the standards is instrumental in developing the knowledge and credibility to change our policies and practices so that every educator can help every student succeed.

ADOPTING THE STANDARDS

Standards for Professional Learning have been an official part of education policy in Delaware since 2012, when they were incorporated into regulation 1598 of the state administrative code and thereby adopted as the state's professional learning standards. It is written into the regulations that Learning Forward's standards "shall serve as the foundation for professional development for all Delaware educators, and as indicators that guide the learning, facilitation, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning. The standards make explicit that the purpose of professional development is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels" (State of Delaware, n.d.).

One of the benefits of adopting the standards is the way they have helped us build a coherent approach to professional learning across the state and across levels of the system. As we shift and improve our professional learning practices, it is crucial to have leadership involvement from up and down the organizational spine of our system.

Professional learning takes place via teams engaged in cycles of continuous learning, driven by student, educator, and system data, and there must be intentional alignment among educators and their teams to keep everyone moving in the same direction toward progress. The removal or exclusion

Standards for Professional Learning have been an official part of education policy in Delaware since 2012, when they were incorporated into regulation 1598 of the state administrative code and thereby adopted as the state's professional learning standards.

of a section of the team's vertical organization significantly impedes deep implementation.

The standards-aligned tools also bring value to our system as we move toward higher expectations of educator learning coupled with coaching and other forms of workplace support for implementation. For example, our recent shifts ask educators to assume some new roles in professional learning, and the Innovation Configuration maps, which spell out role-specific actions educators can take to implement each standard (see this issue's tool on p. 69), help us articulate these new roles and provide a clear vision forward for each one. They also serve to identify gaps in the system that could derail the learning efforts.

SHIFTING TO CURRICULUM REFORM

In 2021, we became aware that Learning Forward was in the process of revising the standards, just as we were embarking on our own shifts in professional learning. Because we were used to seeing and leveraging alignment among our work, the standards, and

current knowledge about research and best practice, we were not surprised to discover that we were moving in the same direction as the new standards, especially in recognizing the importance of content-specific, curriculum-focused professional learning.

We and our colleagues at the state Department of Education had begun a deep dive into curricular reform. Drawing on recent research, we recognized that ensuring equitable access to rigorous learning for every student required universal access to vetted, high-quality curricular materials aligned to student learning standards. We also recognized that implementing such curricula effectively required that educators' professional learning be grounded in that high-quality content and materials.

We soon learned that this shift was in direct alignment with the draft of Learning Forward's revised standards. As the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard became solidified, it provided reassurance that we were on the right track. It also provided credibility for our work, as we shared our evolving professional learning definition and plans with our colleagues in the state Department of Education and in local entities throughout Delaware.

When we invited Learning Forward representatives to speak at our annual professional learning summit in spring 2021, we were able to introduce the revised standards and the accompanying rationale to district and school leaders from across the state.

During this time, our leaders were in the process of developing their own professional learning plans for the upcoming school year. These

CASE STUDY: DELAWARE'S REIMAGINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANTS

Using federal School Improvement funds, the Delaware Department of Education allocates Reimagining Professional Learning innovation grants, which support the work of districts and schools to improve the quality and efficacy of professional learning for educators.

When the grant program was established in 2016, the primary goal was to provide financial incentives to districts and schools to implement professional learning grounded in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning and the Common Core State Standards.

In 2021, we began honing the grants' focus to support the adoption and implementation of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials — a shift that is closely aligned with the addition of the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment standard in the 2022 revision of Standards for Professional Learning. This shift in the grants is one of the ways we are encouraging local education agencies to move away from cookie-cutter professional learning toward content-specific learning that builds the capacity of every teacher, school administrator, and district administrator.

Local education agencies that wished to apply for the grant submitted a professional learning plan, with training and support from our staff and using a template and reflection questions developed by our office that include prompts for a needs assessment and evaluation strategy. Grantees are expected to engage in a continuous improvement process that includes collaborative learning throughout the grant cycle.

In addition to hosting an annual professional learning summit during the launch of the grant cycle, we provide technical and consultive support during the drafting of the professional learning plans. Each grant awardee is assigned

a liaison who meets with the local education agency at prescheduled times throughout the year to review progress, consider evidence, and act as a thought partner for midcourse adjustments.

The projects we funded for the 2021-22 school year include professional learning plans grounded in specific curricular resources that strategically attend to educator training, collaborative planning, and group and team coaching. Two examples of professional learning goals include educators using effective scaffolding to support all learners in accessing grade-level text in English language arts and strategically planning for and implementing National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' effective mathematics teaching practices in their lessons on a daily basis in mathematics.

As a result of these and other grant projects over the past few years, we have observed a faster, more immediate impact on student outcomes in classroom work. We have also observed that the adjusted professional workflow and processes have grown across other content areas in the system, not just the content area that was awarded the grant. The most successful outcomes have occurred where there has been enduring change at the systems level. Some of these systems and strategies are featured in a virtual tour of schools in the Brandywine school system made by the Knowledge Matters Campaign. You can view the virtual tour at www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbxHL68RLik

To learn more about the Reimagining Professional Learning grants and our other professional learning work in Delaware, visit www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/4473 or email reimaginingpl@doe.k12.de.us

new standards provided a practical scaffolding tool to reframe the building of their plans with the adjusted considerations of content, conditions, and processes.

As we have put this shift toward curriculum-based professional learning into practice, it has taken teachers some time to adjust. Some teachers say, "I thought you were just going to train me on how to use the materials" and express some resistance to the work involved in going deeper with the content.

But as they look at student work and engage in the collaborative learning structures, they find themselves

understanding the content in a more in-depth way and developing a deeper relationship with the curriculum than they had previously. They say, "Oh, you're teaching me how to be a better English teacher!" They're finding at the end of it that they have learned more and improved more than they expected.

PUTTING THE FOCUS ON TEACHERS

Another shift we have made, informed by the standards, is making teachers the subject of the goal statements in professional learning planning. In the past, educators

typically wrote these plans with student-focused goals like improvements in achievement. Although student learning is, of course, the outcome we are ultimately targeting, teachers need to change their practice before we can see changes in student outcomes.

In the past, we would often see educators create professional learning plans with extensive and ambitious goals, and then become frustrated when they revisited their goals at the end of an inquiry cycle. The lag time between professional learning and student outcomes is often too long for teachers (and those who supervise them) to see

whether professional learning is making an impact and, just as importantly, identify needed shifts.

We now encourage local education agencies to focus on goals related to teachers' learning and growth and make inquiry cycles short and sweet so that they can assess what's working quickly and make necessary changes. This emphasis is reflected in the standards, specifically in the Learning Designs and Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standards.

We have found this to be especially important during the pandemic because online and hybrid teaching required teachers to learn so many new skills. This new context required a nimbleness in processes to meet the ever-evolving instructional demands. With shorter, teacher-focused inquiry cycles, local education agencies were able to quickly recognize what their educators weren't yet able to do or understand and adjust accordingly.

COMMITTING TO ONGOING INQUIRY

One of the most important ways the standards have shaped professional learning in Delaware is by facilitating the development of an ongoing inquiry cycle mentality. Ongoing engagement with the standards has helped everyone from administrators to content specialists to coaches recognize that

professional learning must be more than workshops; it must be a sustained process of identifying needs, engaging in learning that addresses those needs, assessing progress, and making adaptations as needed. At the state level, we have encouraged these shifts through our planning, grant-making (see p. 46), assessments, coaching processes, and more.

For example, the inquiry mindset has been helpful in building a statewide content leader program for English language arts and mathematics over the past two years. In these programs, we facilitate three or four content-specific inquiry cycles with selected coaches and teacher leaders from different local education agencies around the state.

Inquiry questions in these cycles help coaches go into depth about teaching and learning strategies. For example, "How does building knowledge and appropriate scaffolding support students in effectively communicating ideas through writing?" While engaging in these inquiry cycles, these content leaders also practice using observation tools and protocols for examining student work, developing action plans, and identifying continued problems of practice. The goal is to provide every local education agency with at least one content leader equipped to

lead this work at the classroom or professional learning community level.

As our efforts to build a robust professional learning system across the state continue to evolve, Standards for Professional Learning will continue to play a vital role. In the spirit of inquiry, we will continue to dive deep into the standards and develop our understanding at the state level so that we can support educators at other levels to apply them and implement high-quality professional learning.

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THE VIEW FROM CANADA: Different terminology, but a shared commitment to professional learning

BY BEATE PLANCHE WITH AUDREY HOBBS-JOHNSON, SUE ELLIOTT, AND CAROL CAMPBELL

As colleagues representing two Canadian provinces and with a long-standing association with Learning Forward as affiliate members, we share a distinctly Canadian lens on the launch of the revised Standards for Professional Learning.

First, a little context: In Canada, there is no federal department of education, nor is there a national system of education. Education is the responsibility of provinces and territories (which operate similarly to U.S. states), and provincial education ministries lead the organization, implementation, and assessment of

education within their jurisdictions.

However, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, which is made up of ministers who represent the education interests of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories, defines the Canadian priorities for elementary and secondary education. The council's goal is to ensure that



all students in our country can access learning opportunities that are inclusive and result in the acquisition of strong literacy, numeracy, and science skills (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2008).

What this means for professional learning is that each province and territory establishes its particular agenda for professional learning based on provincial goals. As a result, Canada has a “mosaic of professional learning experiences, opportunities, promising practices, and challenges” that are differentiated to educators’ and students’ needs (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 73). In Canada, “there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to professional learning nor should there be” (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 73).

Another important piece of context is that we do not use the term *standards* in Canada. A 2017 study of professional learning in Canada uses the wording “key components and features of effective professional learning” instead of standards (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 8). Despite this difference in terminology, we concur that the research and foundations of the standards match our own understanding of the importance of high-quality, high-impact professional learning as one important tool for improving schools, empowering

educators to meet students where they are, and serving them effectively.

Similarly, the term *professional learning systems*, which appears throughout Standards for Professional Learning, does not fit in our context because “systems” implies a centralized approach that is not applicable in Canada.

For example, although school boards across the province of Ontario take direction from the Ontario Ministry of Education regarding overall curricular and professional learning priorities, individual school boards decide how to integrate the provincial priorities with board- and school-specific priorities to chart a plan for continuous improvement and fuel professional learning in their jurisdiction.

Furthermore, individual teachers and administrators also chart their own growth plans. This localized approach to learning is why many individual Canadians are members of our provincial Learning Forward affiliates as well as Learning Forward itself.

GUIDING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Although we use different terminology, we embrace the sentiments in Standards for Professional Learning. The standards align with

our own thinking about high-quality professional learning elements. As Learning Forward affiliate leaders in Ontario and British Columbia, we can use them as guiding principles in our planning of professional supports for teachers and leaders aimed at local needs.

For example, in Ontario, a focus on equity issues is a provincial priority, and thus the revised standards align strongly in this area. During this past school year, we organized online network learning about anti-oppressive pedagogical approaches in literacy instruction and invited speakers to discuss how to develop more inclusive teaching approaches. We also organized a panel discussion on how destreaming secondary mathematics better supports learners. All of these efforts support more equitable outcomes in our settings.

In British Columbia, the latest standards align with ongoing efforts to build and sustain a professional learning culture, which is an active and collaborative process among all the professional organizations in the province as well as the Ministry of Education. A 2017 case study, *The State of Educators’ Professional Learning in British Columbia*, outlines some of these processes in the province. The case study describes effective professional

learning as purposeful in its design, content, process, and application stages and strives to attain balance between personal, community, school district, and provincial priorities and needs (Brown et al., 2017).

EQUITY IS A PRIORITY

If there is one area of professional growth that stands out above all to us in the revised Standards for Professional Learning, it is the emphasis on equity both as an outcome and a vital focus of professional learning. Reaching more equitable outcomes through valuing and promoting student identity is very much a priority for us in Canadian education.

Although our public schools have proven to be highly successful according to provincial and international assessments, improving equity outcomes stands out as a vital area for improvement and is therefore central in professional growth and learning. This work is guided, in part, by provincial policies and expectations and by directives from the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was convened to redress the painful legacy of Canada's residential schools for Aboriginal children that, for over 100 years, separated Indigenous children from their families and cultures and aimed to indoctrinate them in Euro-Christian Canadian society.

The final report of the commission articulated a commitment to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. It outlined 94 specific calls to action, many of which address the roles of educators in clarifying history and language we have used and will use in our curriculum and learning processes (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

As we work to help our affiliate members respond to those calls to action and cultivate equity in their

As we work to help our affiliate members cultivate equity in their schools, Standards for Professional Learning's three equity-focused principles (and the whole framework's emphasis on equity) align with and support our work.

schools, Standards for Professional Learning's three equity-focused principles (and the whole framework's emphasis on equity) align with and support our work. Learning Forward has defined equity as the outcome of educator practices that respect and nurture all aspects of student identity rather than treat them as barriers to learning (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 8).

In Ontario, we follow a similar definition. As a part of the provincial Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy 2009, equity was first defined as "a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). That strategy went on to state: "Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences." In more recent strategy developments, a broader equity goal was introduced: "All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 3).

To meet our broad equity goals in British Columbia and Ontario, we have specific goals for recognizing and supporting marginalized groups who historically have not had the same opportunities for success as their peers, including our Indigenous, LGBTQ, and two-spirit students. (Two-spirit is a modern, pan-Indian, umbrella term used by some Indigenous North Americans to describe Native people in their communities who fulfill a traditional third-gender ceremonial and

social role in their cultures.)

For example, in British Columbia, the Equity in Action Project addresses the directions education partners are taking in a co-constructive approach to review practices and policies that may be creating obstacles for learners who come from a variety of cultures, races, and ethnic backgrounds.

Each district does an equity scan that then guides a collaborative decision-making process for school districts to enter into a self-assessment dialogue about the experience of education for Indigenous learners and respond in strategic ways to create conditions for success.

Equity as a driver in our work includes multiple facets. One, which reflects Standards for Professional Learning, is being sensitive to culturally responsive curricula. We also need to help teachers and administrators become attuned to their individual communities and set high standards for all stakeholders, as the standards specify. Another facet, which we would add to the standards, is putting student voice and agency at the center of our decision-making and planning regarding equity goals.

COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALISM

Standards, or key components, are also a starting point to building a culture of collaborative professionalism, which is central to the work of the Canadian Learning Forward affiliates. Collaborative professionalism, a term coined by Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (2016), refers to a culture where professional expertise and knowledge are nurtured through purposeful, persistent inquiry, practice, reflective feedback, and commitment to continuous learning and improvement. This concept maps closely to the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard of Standards for Professional Learning.

As Carol Campbell (2021) highlighted, professional learning work in Ontario has shown that purposeful

collaborations that meet the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry criteria have proven highly effective in terms of teacher and leader development to support improvement efforts.

For example, integrating with school board efforts to move professional learning forward from 2003 to 2013, ministry representatives worked with representatives from teacher unions to reform teacher development policies at partnership working tables.

From 2014 to 2018, the Ministry of Education in Ontario, working with education partners including teacher unions, fleshed out the concept of collaborative professionalism, which solidified our focus on a shared responsibility for educator growth. Collaborative professionalism took on intentional priorities for equity and well-being in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

The lesson of reform in Ontario is that genuine collaboration between and among education partners and stakeholders is needed to develop a robust and shared understanding of appropriate strategies and practices. Collaborative professionalism is vital to build a healthy workforce committed to equity goals through learning networks and communities.

Collaborative inquiry has also been a driving force for success in British Columbia. As one example, Changing Results for Young Readers was a collaborative inquiry project to increase the number of children who are engaged, successful readers.

Teachers in participating districts met with a facilitator each year to explore inquiry questions they chose. This included two provincial sessions per year where facilitators shared resources. This led to strong results, including increased literacy skills in 96% of vulnerable students (Brown et al., 2017, p. 56).

LEARNING IS THE WORK

Despite differing contexts, as Canadian affiliate members, we come

to the table Learning Forward offers us as education partners and colleagues. Learning Forward's revised Standards for Professional Learning have reminded us through their renewed and clear articulation that learning is the work.

The revised standards and supporting documents and processes can help us focus on effective collaboration, collaborative inquiry, and co-learning as educators lead learning for themselves and others. In our quest for researched evidence, the standards as a key research component can help educators continue to change the culture in schools, districts, and provinces to one that values well-researched high-quality professional learning.

Our collective work concerns harnessing our efforts and moving forward, especially as we refocus during a pandemic and in uncertain times (Planche & Erdmann, n.d.). We know that the work of improvement needs many hearts and minds working together. A partnership approach, working with Learning Forward as well as other provincial groups and organizations, is most authentic for us as Canadian affiliates.

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EQUITY STANDARDS

GIVE US THE POWER TO TRANSFORM OURSELVES AND OUR SCHOOLS

BY AMY B. COLTON AND VIRGINIA R. WINTERS

At a time when it is unpopular to publicly stand up for equity, diversity, and inclusion, Learning Forward demonstrated its unwavering commitment to ensure equitable outcomes for all students by centering equity in its newest iteration of

Standards for Professional Learning. The standards articulate the foundational truth that “equity is both an outcome and aspect of professional learning” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 8). Together, the standards challenge us to think of professional learning as a vehicle for transformation.

The three equity standards push

professional learning facilitators to re-examine the the content (Equity Practices), the learning processes (Equity Drivers), and the conditions for learning (Equity Foundations) of effective adult learning. The equity standards, in conjunction with the other eight standards, bring to the forefront the key concepts that drive

any diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Full implementation of all 11 standards is a vehicle for systemic transformation that results in learning environments where all educators and students gain a sense of agency, belonging, respect, and engagement.

OUR STORY

The Learning Forward Foundation and the Learning Forward Affiliates established a community of practice in January 2022 to collectively deepen our understanding of the underlying concepts and goals of the equity standards and learn how to enact them in our work.

Affiliates are local branches of Learning Forward that build the capacity of educators in their states and provinces to design, facilitate, and assess high-quality professional learning. The Learning Forward Foundation provides grants and scholarships to support the development of individual educators and systems through high-quality professional learning. Both entities align their work closely with the standards and use them to define high-quality professional learning.

The placement of equity at the center of the standards not only drove our shared inquiry, but also led the two of us, as facilitators of the community of practice, to shift our practice as we attempted to answer this question: How might the three equity standards impact the work of those responsible for designing and facilitating professional learning?

We met with the community of practice for three collaborative sessions to construct new understanding of relevant content to help individuals become more aware of their social identities and how those identities

The placement of equity at the center of the standards led us to shift our practice as we attempted to answer this question: How might the three equity standards impact the work of those responsible for designing and facilitating professional learning?

influence their daily practice.

Between sessions, community members reflected on their insights, paid attention to how the ideas play out in their everyday lives, and then shared their reflections and insights at the next session. We developed the learning so that sessions built on one another.

While our primary focus was on understanding how to enact the three equity standards, we relied on the other eight standards to guide our design of high-quality professional learning for the community of practice.

For example, a first step in designing professional learning is to determine the outcomes of the learning. As the Professional Expertise standard articulates, educators “identify content for learning that both advances their practice and their abilities to collaborate to continually strengthen their shared power to excel” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 30).

The identified outcomes in turn dictate the necessary conditions for success and the transformational processes to employ. We believe it is the embedding of each equity standard within the categories of a professional learning system that provides an opportunity for transformative thinking and learning for educators.

Very quickly, we came to a general understanding of how the equity standards impact how professional learning is designed. We also became clearer about the capabilities required to lean into equity work. That’s not to say that the work is easy or quick. Rather, it is to say that we developed a vision of what it will take going forward to live up to and into the equity standards and a plan for steps to get there.

We invite you to reflect on three key insights, which we’ve organized around the three equity standards, consider their implications, and engage in generative thinking to drive your own practice.



Enacting the Equity Practices standard requires educators to develop the capability of cultural competence.

The Equity Practices standard calls for educators to understand their students’ historical, cultural, and societal contexts. In our opinion, cultural competence is a necessary capability for living into this standard.

In the book *We Can’t Lead Where We Won’t Go: An Educator’s Guide to Equity*, Gary Howard defines cultural competence as “the will and skill to form authentic relationships across distance” (Howard, 2015).

Cultural competence requires one to see difference and embrace the truth that difference makes a difference when trying to attain excellent educational outcomes for all students. Engaging in critical self-reflection about one’s social identities and its interface in

classrooms must become a regular part of educators’ practice.

We recognized that community of practice members needed to first increase their knowledge of themselves and recognize the presence of patterns of privilege and power, historical biases, and institutional racism within their educational settings. We refer to this as the inside-out approach.

The first session allowed community of practice members to recognize what occurs when differing backgrounds converge in the classroom. Cultural competence is the capability that helps educators draw on students’ historical, societal, and cultural differences and use that knowledge as a scaffold for student learning as opposed to becoming overwhelmed by the differences being presented. It provides a rich reservoir from which to develop multiple ways of learning, doing, and being.

Cultural competence is an emotionally charged topic that often creates discomfort. However, it is not to be avoided, as it is a central ingredient of equity work. If members were to deepen their awareness of the relationship among their social identities, implicit bias, and their behavior, we needed to scaffold the learning to allow for critical self-reflection and dialogue.

As participants explored their own and others’ experiences (via the sharing of personal narratives), feelings of discomfort surfaced. As facilitators, we created the space for participants to lean into and work through the dissonance. Leaning into the discomfort is part of excavating tacit beliefs that can result in harmful behaviors.

Another way the Equity Practices standard influences the design and implementation of professional learning is the content within the standard itself. Educators do not necessarily have knowledge of social justice and equity concepts as a regular aspect of their preservice preparation or inservice professional learning.

In other words, asking educators to take a deep dive into clarifying

how who they are impacts how they teach, relate to students, and handle curriculum is the essence of *equity-focused* professional learning. The equity standards expand the professional learning content by embedding equity concepts into the professional learning framework, thus elevating teaching and learning as instruments of social justice and equity.



The Equity Drivers standard expands the educator’s ability to recognize the role that the system plays in inequitable educational outcomes.

The Equity Drivers standard is in the standards frame labeled Transformational Processes. This frame describes “process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 10).

Using this category as the foundation for the Equity Drivers standard offers the possibility for educators to experience new paradigms in how they think about themselves, the students they serve, and the choices they make in their daily practice.

The Equity Drivers standard widens educators’ examination to include their social identity, its interface in the classroom and school, and the wider sociopolitical context. Historically, our schools have been socialized by a dominant culture of society.

The Equity Drivers standard not only challenges educators to understand their own biases but also clarifies how their own socialization connects to institutional arrangements of power and privilege that create and perpetuate systemic inequities.

Additionally, the Equity Drivers standard acknowledges the role that school systems historically play in

marginalizing diverse students. It expands educator knowledge beyond the self to recognize patterns of privilege and power, historical biases, and institutional racism. The Equity Drivers standard challenges us to understand that inequity is incubated within systems.

As we moved into the second and third sessions, we provided opportunities for members to expand their knowledge, skills, and capabilities by exploring their social identities. As social justice scholar Bobbi Harro explains, “Our social identities — our gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, cultural group, age, and ability status — come to bear in the roles we are socialized to play throughout our lives” (Harro, 2000).

We engaged community of practice members in two learning experiences, one around social identity and the other around implicit bias. Our intention was to help members recognize the influence identity and bias exert on their daily decisions.

First, we asked educators to name their social identities, identify patterns of interaction with students and colleagues, and articulate what barriers might surface in the teaching and learning process due to the social structuring associated with their identities. Members started by highlighting the multiple dimensions of identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age) that make them whole. Next, they paired up to consider the ways their identities gave or denied them freedom and ease to move around society.

By naming their social identities, community of practice members uncovered what social privileges were or were not given to them. A question that resonated was: How did having or not having social privilege impact your ability to address and remove barriers to students’ learning? We noticed that empathy for one another increased as they shared their personal narratives.

To clarify how our beliefs and assumptions operate unconsciously,

we presented another opportunity for community of practice members to understand and explore their own implicit biases. Implicit bias refers to the automatic and unconscious stereotypes that drive people to behave and make decisions in certain ways. It is the mind's way of making uncontrolled and automatic associations between two concepts.

Community of practice members worked in pairs to answer questions about their colleague, their country of origin, home language spoken, neighborhood where they reside, favorite food, leisure activity, and fantasy vehicle. Their discussion was about the accuracy or inaccuracy of their perceptions, giving them greater insights into how implicit bias operates to promote inequity. Their willingness to explore their biases demonstrated a willingness to flex their cultural competency muscle.

In the third session, we examined critical consciousness. As Radd and Macey noted, "For professional learning to be transformative, it must have critical consciousness at its core" (Radd & Macey, 2013). It is a precursor to taking action to dismantle inequities in our educational system.

Critical consciousness is defined as "an active and persistent curiosity and awareness that examines beliefs, practices, assumptions, and norms to detect how power and privilege operate to contribute to inequality and oppression" (Friere, 2000). It is this capability that allows educators to recognize and grapple with issues of inequity embedded in system policies, practices, and structures.

We provided community of practice members with a brief introduction to critical consciousness and an opportunity to analyze ways in which the system sustains inequitable environments through its policies, practices, and structures. Central to this exploration are three important questions educators must answer: What are the assumptions undergirding my practice? Who benefits and who is

disadvantaged from these assumptions? What can I do differently to ensure that all students benefit?

As Brookfield wrote, "Thinking critically requires educators to check the assumptions that we, and others, hold by assessing the accuracy and validity of the evidence for these and by looking at ideas and actions from multiple perspectives" (Brookfield, 2012).



The Equity Foundations standard illuminates the complexity of enacting equity by articulating access points for transformative work. It holds the greatest promise of actualizing equity systemically.

The Equity Foundations standard is about the conditions necessary to achieve equity and the deliberate attention to context that is required for change. It challenges us to create a vision and expectation for equity and establish an inclusive and supportive culture where all voices are heard. To do so, we must recognize that equity work is both complex and multileveled.

We realized that professional learning for equity requires reimagining the structures and processes for adult learning, especially in our situation, where individuals were in different places along the continuum toward cultural competency. We came to understand that high relational trust is one condition that is critical when adult learners engage in inside-out work associated with centering equity in professional learning.

The Equity Foundations standard revealed several decision points around the design and facilitation of these learning sessions that helped in our planning, including scaffolding of the content, pacing, opportunities for dialogue, allocation of time, and grouping configurations.

The allotted 90 minutes once a month was our greatest challenge. Community of practice members hungered for time to share their narratives and explore ideas. To make the most of the time available, we limited small groups to pairs and triads. The smaller the group, the more airtime everyone was given. We also established working agreements that described supportive behaviors so people would feel safe and comfortable in being vulnerable.

GOING FORWARD

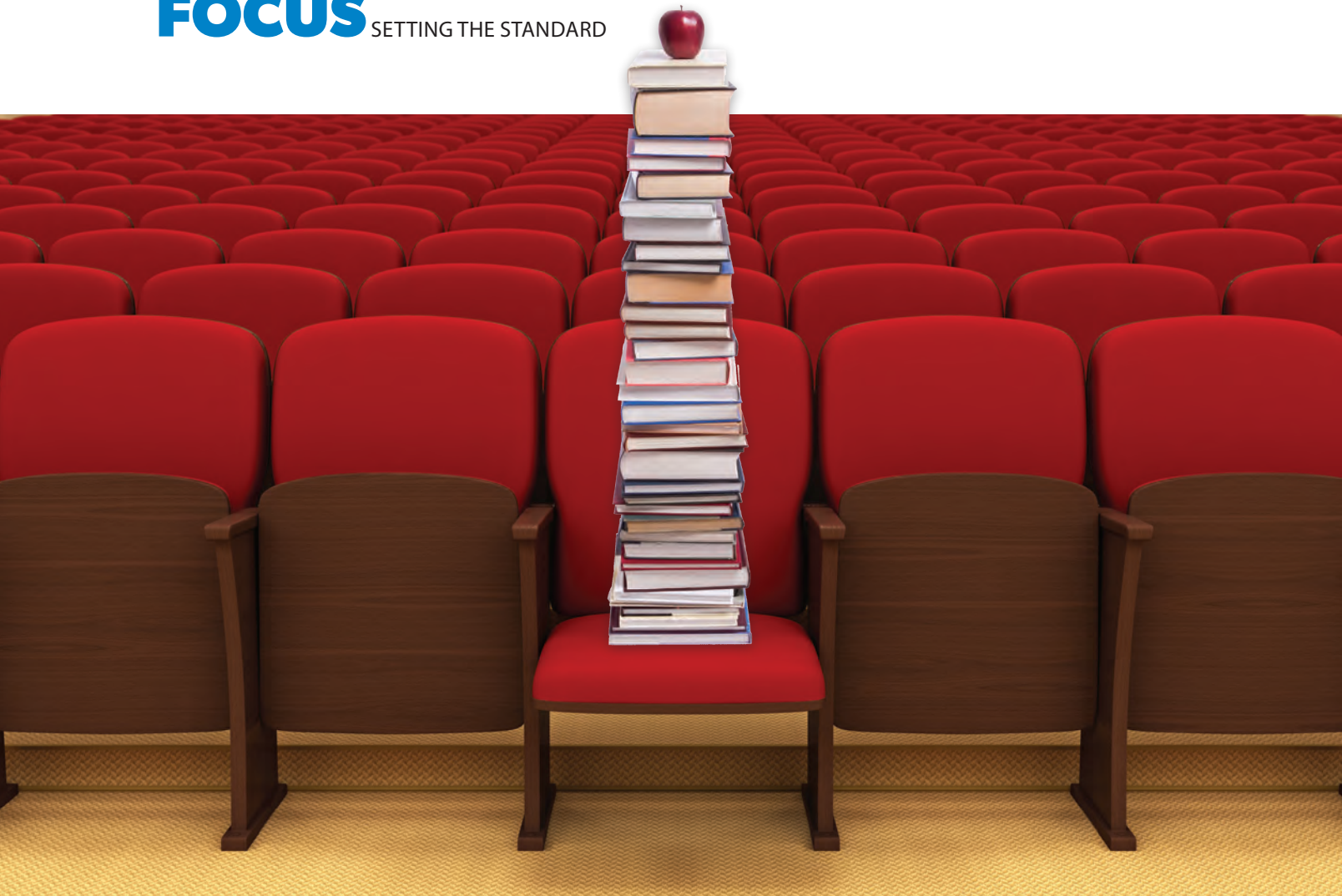
As facilitators of these professional learning sessions, we recognized that we, too, are learning. We learned the importance of breaking free of static notions of how professional learning must proceed, especially when centering equity.

We had to be intentional in our planning, conscious of the movement of the learning as evidenced by the questions, wonderings, and stuck points of learners. We were conscious that different beliefs systems and multiple perspectives were present and interacting in the process. We had to hold the interactions among members with humility and care as they shared stories of their lived experiences. During our debriefing sessions, we needed to be vulnerable with one another as we grappled with our own social identities and their impact on our decisions.

This was a dynamic learning space — full of possibility and full of hope. Everyone from the community of practice now knows more about themselves and about the system of inequities and how they work. The next phase is for each of us to take what we have learned and act on it. We need to spread the learning to others and use what we've learned in service of providing equitable learning experiences for all children.

Equity work is both complex and countercultural. It requires dismantling and interrupting oppressive practices,

Continued on p. 60



Curriculum and instruction take a front seat in professional learning

BY JESS BARROW AND ERIC HIRSCH

Curriculum is an essential but often underemphasized factor in quality teaching and student learning. One part of the problem is that teachers have few opportunities to learn about and practice with curriculum even when their districts have selected high-quality materials.

Nearly a third of teachers have access to less than five hours of curriculum-related professional learning per year, and a quarter of teachers say they have no access to such learning at all (Doan et. al, 2021). This is shocking, considering the improvements curriculum developers have been making to instructional materials in recent years

and the fact that teachers need support to leverage that content.

Learning Forward, which since 1994 has created and supported the use of comprehensive professional learning standards, is encouraging education leaders to change the longstanding pattern of ignoring curriculum and instead put curriculum at the center of

Including curriculum, assessment, and instruction as integral to professional learning matters more now than in the past, given where we are with our understanding of the role instructional materials play in preparing all kids for college and career.

teacher learning and support.

The recently revised version of Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2022) includes an important shift toward centering rigorous content for each student, including a foundational focus on curriculum, assessment, and instruction. (See box on p. 58.) This shift reflects the current landscape of academic standards, available high-quality instructional materials, and the wealth of research that indicates the impact of quality content in the hands of great educators.

This shift aligns closely with the work of our organization, EdReports. Since 2015, EdReports has provided independent reviews of K-12 instructional materials to support educators to identify, select, and demand the highest-quality curriculum. We also partner with districts and states to encourage best practices for curriculum adoption and implementation. We see professional learning as a critical factor for achieving the full potential of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.

EdReports' executive director, Eric Hirsch, has been involved with multiple revisions of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, most recently as a Standards Advisory Council member for the recent fourth iteration. Hirsch shared his thoughts on the importance of content in professional learning standards with Jess Barrow, EdReports managing editor. Hirsch explained how the curriculum field has changed over the past decade, how that informed the new standards, and how educators can get access to the resources they deserve.

Why are professional learning standards, especially those tied to curriculum, assessment, and instruction, important for student learning and success?

Academic standards allow us to be clear about what a student needs to know and be able to do. Professional learning standards support educators, districts, and states to understand how teachers should learn and grow in the profession and best practices for helping them develop that knowledge.

Standards for Professional Learning help answer two interrelated questions: What does it look like to build a system that ensures teachers are able to learn from each other to do their best work and therefore put student learning first? And what does it take to invest in professional learning for adults — not just financially, but in terms of capacity?

Including curriculum, assessment, and instruction as integral to professional learning matters more now than in the past, given where we are with our understanding of the role instructional materials play in preparing all kids for college and career. That's why the instructional core (Elmore, 2008) is now placed directly into the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment standard. The focus is on the content students are learning, the teachers who are conveying that content, and the resources, supports, and strategies guiding instructional choices.

How has the curriculum field evolved since the last iteration of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, and what does this mean for educators?

So much has changed over the

past decade since the last version of Standards for Professional Learning. That's one of the reasons I appreciate Learning Forward's commitment to continuous growth and learning as an organization, including regularly revising the standards.

Among the things that have changed, there is a wealth of published research that conveys the impact of high-quality instructional materials on student learning (EdReports, n.d.a). In addition, almost every U.S. state has adopted college- and career-ready standards. Over the past seven years, materials have improved to meet those standards. EdReports has documented the availability of dozens of quality, aligned programs (EdReports, 2021).

Given the improvements we've seen, materials are strong enough now to be a foundation for professional learning in a way that was impossible a decade ago. We have the kinds of resources that teachers deserve and should be using. That means professional learning should help educators with content and pedagogy while providing guidance on how to apply them within the scope and sequence of a strong curriculum.

How has the standards revision process made Standards for Professional Learning more relevant for today's classrooms?

I think one of the biggest and most meaningful shifts we've seen with the revision and development of the new standards is prioritizing what a teacher should know. The previous standards primarily emphasized how to create systems that support teachers to learn and improve, including aligning staff schedules to allow for collaborative

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...

Equity Practices

... understand their students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts, embrace student assets through instruction, and foster relationships with students, families, and communities.

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction

... prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.

Professional Expertise

... apply standards and research to their work, develop the expertise essential to their roles, and prioritize coherence and alignment in their learning.

learning and providing resources and leadership for professional learning.

All these components that are about the *how* are important. But the *what* of the learning is also important, and the previous standards didn't necessarily elevate the content of what a teacher should know or the materials they should use effectively.

Through this revision process, the standards designers were able to preserve critical elements of the *how* while adding a significant emphasis on the *what*. The new standards incorporate what we've learned about curriculum content, the quality of curriculum in the market, and the impact great content has on teachers and students.

As a result, these standards are more relevant for today's classroom because they talk about what teachers do in the classroom — building students' content knowledge. Ultimately, school is about putting a teacher and students together and engaging students in learning and growing. The standards in the Rigorous Content for Each Learner category (see box above) speak to that most essential learning bond and the role that professional learning plays in helping teachers develop it.

What recommendations do you have for district leaders who want**to implement quality professional learning connected to curriculum learning?**

We know that even though high-quality instructional materials are available, not nearly enough teachers have access to them. While over half of English language arts materials meet EdReports expectations for alignment with college- and career-ready standards, only 27% of English language arts materials used by teachers in classrooms are aligned (EdReports, 2022). In mathematics, 45% of materials meet our expectations for alignment, but less than a third of materials used by teachers in classrooms are aligned (EdReports, 2022). The discrepancies between what's available and what's in use are a clear signal to school, district, and state leaders selecting and implementing curriculum that better choices can be made.

Districts must invest in high-quality instructional materials and select them through a comprehensive adoption process that engages educators and plans for implementation, including assessment and professional learning (EdReports, n.d.b). Selecting quality materials is time-intensive and involved, but curriculum leaders have a variety of resources to support a choice that will align with a district's instructional vision, the professional needs of

teachers, and, most importantly, the learning and cultural needs of students.

It's easy to assume that the tough part is over once a new program has been selected; however, establishing access to curriculum-specific professional learning has the potential to make or break the hard work that a district has done to improve the instructional materials available for its students.

If teachers are to "understand curriculum and implement through instruction," as the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard specifies, district leaders have just as much responsibility to provide support on how to use rigorous content as selecting the rigorous content itself (Learning Forward, 2022).

What about recommendations for instructional coaches, principals, and others who facilitate professional learning?

Involvement and support from principals and instructional coaches is critical. Recent data suggests that when teachers have the encouragement of school leadership, they are more likely to use high-quality, aligned materials (Doan et. al, 2021). The same is likely true for upholding professional learning standards. A supportive environment can go a long way toward shifting culture and practice.

My first piece of advice is for leaders to prioritize the voices and needs of educators in your materials selection process and the professional learning communities implementing curriculum. It all starts with really listening to teachers because they are the ones using the curriculum.

They need to understand why the materials are (or are not) high quality, what adaptations and supplements may be needed, and how assessments can inform their instructional decisions as they strive to reach students at all levels of learning. This is emphasized in the Professional Expertise standard.

Coaches play an integral role in understanding and supporting teachers' needs, too. Coaches know when and how to lean in (or lean out) and can work closely with teachers on how the materials help all kids to meet the demands of student academic standards. Where the curriculum hasn't given enough support or guidance or where students may face unfinished learning, coaches can step in to facilitate teacher learning that fills those gaps.

Second, principals and coaches have the benefit of seeing how materials are used across classrooms, and they can use that knowledge to fill gaps and build consistency. They also have a deep understanding of school-level data and academic standards that can be applied to support teachers to use the curriculum and ensure students are receiving the right content at the right time in the right amount.

In fact, the importance of prioritizing coherence and alignment is built into Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2022). Rather than expecting teachers to piece together that kind of coherence lesson by lesson and classroom by classroom, a supportive environment helps ensure all students are accessing the content they need — not just on a daily basis, but year after year.

Third, instructional leaders should support teachers to problem-solve and address student-specific needs. Students have individual needs and

arrive in classrooms at different levels of learning. Instructional leaders can be great thought partners and facilitate educator collaboration to support teachers with questions like: What can you do differently if a student is struggling with the content in the curriculum or if a student is excelling and needs more challenge? Standards for Professional Learning remind leaders to use evidence and data from multiple sources to plan and monitor their learning and assess its impact on students to make the most of classroom content (Learning Forward, 2022).

What role can teachers play in the process of adopting and implementing high-quality curriculum?

My first piece of advice to teachers is, if you have access to a high-quality curriculum, use it. Instructional materials matter. If all teachers are using high-quality curriculum, then all students have access to the content that can make a difference for them in school and beyond. Plus, teacher time is freed from searching for or creating materials and redirected to inspiring a love of learning for every student.

But sometimes teachers don't see these benefits. For example, some may see district-provided materials as a script that leaves no room for autonomy. That's where professional learning comes in. Professional learning can and should highlight why materials matter, the hallmarks of a strong curriculum, and resources that support teachers in identifying the strengths and gaps in their materials.

Standards for Professional Learning spell out these expectations, not just in the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard, but in the Professional Expertise standard, which specifies that professional learning should support teachers to understand what makes a program or practice high quality. This is also true of the Equity Practices standard, which can help educators consider whether and how instructional materials represent the diversity of voices, perspectives, and

experiences of the students they teach.

Second, I recommend that teachers advocate for high-quality materials and curriculum-specific professional learning if their district has not invested in them. It's the school district's responsibility to provide all educators with high-quality, aligned materials and ongoing professional learning to implement those materials well. But we know this doesn't always happen.

Educators without access to district-provided high-quality instructional materials can focus on building their collective capacity to strengthen what they have, adapt free resources they identify as high-quality, and create curriculum materials as needed to ensure student access to essential content. But these solutions are not only challenging to develop and implement well — they are also temporary.

For long-term, sustainable change, teachers must advocate for the materials and curriculum-focused professional learning they deserve. The standards can help teachers make the case by pointing out that conditions for success include a commitment to systems and supports that build individual and collective capacity. Once teachers develop their professional expertise around curriculum, they'll be in a better place to effectively propose changes when materials or professional learning don't meet the mark.

Having the knowledge and skills to advocate for the materials their students need can make a difference in getting access to these resources (Arabo, 2019). A few important questions that teachers should ask are: What are we selecting next? What will the process look like? Why aren't we selecting now? How can we use our Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSR) funds to procure quality curriculum for all (Hirsch & Weisskirk, 2021)? What does our implementation and professional learning plan look like? What standards are we holding our professional learning to?

With more options available than ever before, educators can harness their

power and expertise to move states and districts in the right direction for their school community (Lebel, 2019).

A STEP FORWARD

The revised Standards for Professional Learning are an important step forward for ensuring all students have access to rigorous content and that all teachers know how to teach it. A recent paper released by the Carnegie Corporation of New York argues that innovations in professional learning have not been keeping pace with evolving expectations for teachers, the instructional materials they are using, and the rigorous content standards teachers are responsible for helping students meet (Short & Hirsh, 2020). The revisions in Standards for Professional Learning aim to address that gap by meeting the needs of teachers as they strive to inspire a love of learning and prepare all students for college and career.

The body of research and data on the impact of high-quality instructional materials is clear: Curriculum choices matter. But how teachers use curriculum matters even more.

Access to professional learning and the standards for ensuring that these

are high-quality learning opportunities have never been more important. Teachers deserve these resources. Studies tell us that it makes sense to provide curriculum at scale and that professional learning is key to successful implementation. Only then can we hope for impact to reach all classrooms.

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Equity standards give us the power to transform ourselves and our schools

Continued from p. 55

policies, and structures in a system that was designed to create and perpetuate inequity. The journey toward equity requires persistence and a willingness to be self-reflective and critical in our examination of our beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes, both individually and collectively. It demands we understand that we must enact equity on multiple levels simultaneously.

Embedding the equity standards in a comprehensive framework not only provides us a road map to systemic transformation but helps us center our most effective weapon against systemic racism: professional learning.

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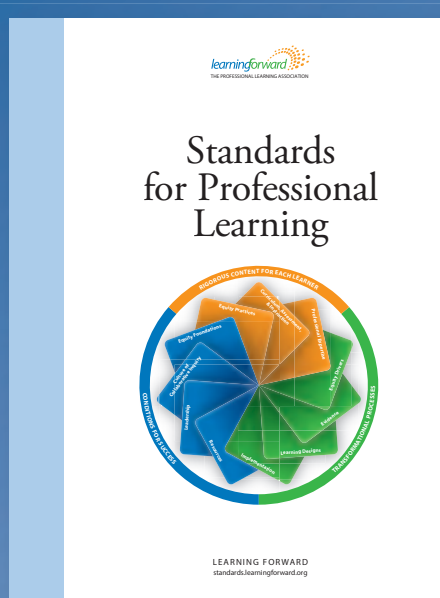
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We are pleased to announce the official Standards for Professional Learning book!

“From inside every school building, to central offices, to state departments, to our colleagues in Congress and at the federal level, we need to embed these standards into the daily lives of our educators and into the practice that they’re engaged in each and every day.”

– Segun Eubanks, Learning Forward Board President; director, Center for Education Innovation and Improvement at the University of Maryland

Includes

- Full explanation of each standard
- History and foundations for standards
- Crosswalk to the previous version
- The latest knowledge and insights to design, implement, and sustain high-quality professional learning

Support your individual and team studies, ongoing discussions, and in-depth explorations. This book is a must for educators committed to long-term implementation.

The *Standards for Professional Learning* book is \$20 for Learning Forward members/\$25 for non-members, with volume discounts available.


THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION
learningforward.org/store





Aligned standards keep students, teachers, and leaders moving in the same direction

BY JACQUELYN WILSON

In the many roles I have filled as an education leader, standards have always played an influential part, guiding my decisions and serving as a road map to the destination I am trying to reach. While serving as a principal, a leadership coach, and the director of a center that supports school leaders, my goal has always been to ensure that all areas of my work are focused on the learning, achievement, development, and well-being of each student. Aligning with standards is essential for achieving that goal because the journey is complex

and multidimensional, and it takes a clear, collaborative instructional focus to succeed.

To ensure we're all moving in the right direction, we must align standards for students' expected knowledge and skills, teachers' practices, and leaders' actions and processes. Standards for Professional Learning are a key part of that alignment because they shape the preparation and support that ensure teachers and leaders fulfill the expectations.

When educators engage in professional learning that is standards-

based and led by an administrator who engaged in a standards-aligned preparation program and works in a state that has adopted standards for school leadership, there is greater potential for everyone in the system to develop the beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills to improve their practices and, in turn, student results.

For school leaders, the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders are essential links in creating a chain of aligned knowledge and support. When



they are integrated with Standards for Professional Learning, the whole chain is stronger, and the result is improved teaching and learning.

As a member of Learning Forward's Standards Advisory Council, I saw how the revised standards were developed with those linkages in mind (see box on p. 66). Here I offer a window into that alignment process to help other school leaders create a coherent, systemic approach to implementing standards.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) is a national alliance of major membership organizations committed to the advancement of school and school system leadership. Member organizations represent the educational administration profession and collaborate to improve the preparation and practice of educational leaders at all levels.

The organization's mission is to lead standards-based and research-informed policy, preparation, and practice for school and school system leaders. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards reside with the policy board.

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders provide guideposts that help school leaders make a difference every day in the learning and well-being of students (NPBEA, 2015). Grounded in current research and the real-life experiences of education leaders, they articulate the leadership that schools need and students deserve.

As an education leader, I must have a vision and goals for the work I want to accomplish. I must make decisions that are inclusive and ethical. I also know that I cannot do the work independently.

They are student-centric, outlining foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of education leaders so they can move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes. The standards were designed to ensure that education leaders are ready to meet challenges of the job today and in the future as education, schools, and society continue to transform.

The standards are foundational and provide direction for my work in schools. As an education leader, I must have a vision and goals for the work I want to accomplish. I must make decisions that are inclusive and ethical. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders provide guidance on these aspects of the work.

I also know that I cannot do the work independently. I need talented individuals to help me with the various components of school improvement. This often requires new knowledge and skills for the entire team of educators, and these standards guide how leaders can work with and support their team's development.

The National Educational Leadership Preparation standards, aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, serve a

different but related purpose, and provide greater specificity around performance expectations for beginning-level building and district leaders (NPBEA, 2018). Whereas the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders define educational leadership broadly, the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards specify what novice leaders and preparation program graduates should know and be able to do after completing a high-quality educational leadership preparation program.

The National Educational Leadership Preparation standards were developed with building and district leaders in mind and are used to review educational leadership programs by the National Educational Leadership Preparation Specialty Professional Association of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. There is one set of National Educational Leadership Preparation standards for candidates preparing to become building-level leaders and a second set of standards for candidates seeking to become district-level leaders.

In my work with novice assistant principals, it is important to know that the preparation program where they recently completed their administrative certification aligned its curriculum and clinical requirements to the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards. This knowledge gives me confidence that these principals have a foundational understanding of and skills in the areas most relevant for a beginning assistant principal or principal.

Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning provide specificity on how education leaders in many

HOW THESE STANDARDS WORK TOGETHER

This table shows how the three sets of standards intersect and align with each other and with the four drivers of effective school leadership.

1. ENGAGING IN INSTRUCTIONALLY FOCUSED INTERACTIONS WITH TEACHERS

Standards for Professional Learning	Professional Standards for Educational Leadership	National Educational Leadership Preparation standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of Collaborative Inquiry • Resources • Learning Designs • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSEL 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel • PSEL 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff • PSEL 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community • PSEL 9. Operations and Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 4: Learning and Instruction • Standard 5: Community and External Leadership • Standard 6: Operations and Management • Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity

2. BUILDING A PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Standards for Professional Learning	Professional Standards for Educational Leadership	National Educational Leadership Preparation standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Foundations • Culture of Collaborative Inquiry • Leadership • Equity Drivers • Learning Designs • Implementation • Equity Practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSEL 1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values • PSEL 2. Ethics and Professional Norms • PSEL 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness • PSEL 4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment • PSEL 5. Community of Care and Support for Students • PSEL 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel • PSEL 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff • PSEL 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community • PSEL 9. Operations and Management • PSEL 10. School Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Improvement • Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms • Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness • Standard 4: Learning and Instruction • Standard 5: Community and External Leadership • Standard 6: Operations and Management • Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity

different roles — including building-level leaders — can develop professional learning communities, commit to a specific learning design, use student data to inform instructional practices, allocate resources in an equitable manner, and improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.

As an instructional leader, I have depended on Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning to provide a framework for my work with teachers and support staff that aligns

with leadership goals and standards. And in the professional development center I lead at the University of Delaware, the standards ensure that the professional learning experiences we provide to educators are based on effective, research-informed practices for professional growth and development.

Using professional learning communities, learning designs, and data inquiry processes are major steps to interact with teachers and build a collaborative school and district culture

that is conducive to teaching and learning.

These three sets of standards were not designed to work independently, but in concert with one another. A principal who has been prepared in a standards-aligned program (National Educational Leadership Preparation) and works in a school system where their performance evaluation, professional learning, and support are aligned to professional school leadership standards (Professional

3. FACILITATING PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES		
Standards for Professional Learning	Professional Standards for Educational Leadership	National Educational Leadership Preparation standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity Foundations Culture of Collaborative Inquiry Leadership Resources Equity Drivers Evidence Learning Designs Implementation Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Equity Practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSEL 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values PSEL 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness PSEL 4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment PSEL 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel PSEL 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff PSEL 9. Operations and Management PSEL 10. School Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Improvement Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness Standard 4: Learning and Instruction Standard 6: Operations and Management Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity
4. MANAGING PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES STRATEGICALLY		
Standards for Professional Learning	Professional Standards for Educational Leadership	National Educational Leadership Preparation standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity Foundations Leadership Resources Equity Drivers Evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSEL 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values PSEL 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness PSEL 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel PSEL 9. Operations and Management PSEL 10. School Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness Standard 6: Operations and Management Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity

Standards for Educational Leaders), and who applies Standards of Professional Learning (Learning Forward) to improve educator effectiveness and results for all students has a great probability of success in leading school improvement.

A CROSSWALK OF LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS

To understand how Standards for Professional Learning, National

Educational Leadership Preparation standards, and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders work together, I find it helpful to view a crosswalk of the specific standards from each. I have organized this crosswalk based on a set of leadership drivers identified in an influential study commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, *How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research* (Grissom et al., 2021). This influential report found that four types of skills,

expertise, and leadership behaviors drive the principal’s impact on the school:

Engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers.

This includes forms of engagement with teachers that center on instructional practice, such as teacher evaluation, instructional coaching, and the establishment of a data-driven, schoolwide instructional programs to facilitate such interactions.

Building a productive school climate. Practices in this category

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING REVISION PROCESS

The revision of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning has been a collaborative process with national and international representation. As a member of the Standards Advisory Council, I was excited by the process, which included opportunities for collaboration, discussion, and consensus building on topics related to the research and best practices associated with professional learning.

Thinking about how we grow and develop our professional practice to better serve students was at the center of every discussion. There were opportunities to think about the standards from various perspectives, including how the standards might be interpreted by educators in a school, district, or state or national policy perspective.

I found myself taking off my national policy hat and thinking like a teacher participating in a professional learning community or my principal cap when thinking about the professional learning my staff would need to lead classroom instruction that is culturally responsive. The revision of these standards reminded me of how important Standards for Professional Learning are to all educators.

encourage a school environment marked by trust, efficacy, teamwork, engagement with data, organizational learning, and continuous improvement.

Facilitating productive collaboration and professional learning communities. Strategies that promote collaboration have teachers working together authentically, along with systems of support, to improve practice and enhance student learning.

Managing personnel and resources strategically. This includes strategic staffing and thoughtful allocation of other resources.

The table on pp. 64-65 shows how the three sets of standards intersect and align with each other and with the four drivers of effective school leadership.

HOW LEADERS CAN USE THE STANDARDS

It’s important to remember that professional standards provide the direction but not a how-to manual for school leaders. They tell me what work is important based on empirical research and feedback from practitioners, but they do not tell me how or when to do the work or warn me of the barriers I will confront.

It is up to individual leaders to use the standards to guide decision-making

based on our experience, the context of the school and district, and the specific needs and expertise of our teams. Implementing standards is like using a GPS device: It will tell the user how to get to your destination, but you choose whether to take the fast or slow route, whether to pay or avoid tolls, and how to navigate around detours.

The decisions we make and the work we do in schools are hard. There are no quick fixes, easy solutions, or magic formulas that we stir up to solve the complex problems we face. But we have a greater chance of success if leaders and organizations work together on these challenges and share resources. Shared work leads to creativity, problem-solving, and improved processes. When I have participated in collaborative projects, I have found myself more motivated and committed to the work because I collaborated with partners who were equally as enthusiastic and focused on results and more open to finding innovative and effective solutions.

This was true in the process of developing Standards for Professional Learning, and it will be true in implementing them. Education leaders should work together to decide how to apply the professional learning

and leadership standards in ways that complement one another. Finding ways to align and strengthen our system is a continuous improvement process that requires all of us to commit to collaboration in the service of students.

A system that is aligned to professional standards provides educators with a research foundation for the work in schools. National Educational Leadership Preparation standards inform preparation, Professional Standards for Educational Leaders guide school leader practices, and Standards for Professional Learning provide direction for developing and growing the instructional capacity of staff. It is this alignment that provides the direction for leadership practices and professional learning to work in harmony.

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DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

TOOLS

PUTTING STANDARDS INTO ACTION

Learning Forward's tools for implementing Standards for Professional Learning are a vital part of our commitment to guiding the field toward high-quality professional learning for all.

We have created a robust set of role-specific tools for understanding and applying the standards at all levels of education systems. We will be featuring several of these tools in *The Learning Professional* over the coming months.

In this issue, we start with a sample Innovation Configuration map. To see more maps and other tools, log in to **standards.learningforward.org**.





IC maps paint a picture of standards in action

BY MACHEL MILLS-MILES

Translating the vision of Standards for Professional Learning into daily practice can be challenging. To guide educators through the process, Learning Forward has created Innovation Configuration (IC) maps to show what it looks like for stakeholders

to implement the standards within their specific roles and responsibilities.

IC maps are valuable tools that describe the major components that need to be in place for an innovation to succeed, acknowledging that individual stakeholders adapt new practices as they implement them and grow into

full implementation (Hall & Hord, 2010; Hord et al., 2006). Innovation Configurations were born out of the recognition that stakeholders typically implement innovations in a variety of ways and stages of development, so the maps show a progression of specific behaviors from the early

stages of implementation to ideal implementation.

The IC maps for Standards for Professional Learning bring detail and specificity to the concepts presented in the standards and describe actions for educators in roles such as system/central office leaders, principals, coaches, and external providers. They are not intended to prescribe every move educators should make to ensure high-quality professional learning; rather, they present high-leverage actions and behaviors that are most likely to lead to improved outcomes.

IC maps can be used to guide the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of professional learning. When used collaboratively, they foster dialogue around best practices and provide direction for growth related to professional learning.

We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the IC maps through the sample we have included here, which goes into depth about how central office leaders can address the Implementation standard. Then we invite you to explore the interactive IC maps specific to your role on our website by going to standards.learningforward.org and clicking on “Action Guides.” You’ll see the Action Guides for several roles, and IC maps included with the guides for system/central office leaders, principals, coaches, and external providers.

Once you’ve selected the role you want to explore, take the following steps:

- Select the “IC maps: Levels of implementation” button.

- Next, select one of the 11 **standards**.
- Continue by choosing one of the three **constructs** for that standard. Each standard covers three key constructs or concepts in depth; for the IC maps, those concepts serve as a means of breaking down the standard into further detail to allow educators to investigate specific actions.
- Then, select a **desired outcome** for that construct. The desired outcome is an observable impact.
- Finally, you’ll see a table with the **levels of implementation** listed for that outcome. The levels progress from ideal to entry, and therefore outline a possible path of progress over time. Note that some outcomes have more levels of implementation than others.

IC maps have been a powerful tool for implementing Standards for Professional Learning for many years. As you delve into the newly revised standards, we look forward to hearing from you about how they are informing your work and making a difference for your educators and students.

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Hall, G. & Hord, S. (2010). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.

Hord, S., Rutherford, W.,

WAYS TO USE IC MAPS

There are many ways to use this and other IC maps, including:

- Conduct an informal self-assessment of your progress, individually or with a team, in addressing the standard by circling your current level of action;
- Choose one or more IC maps and engage in reflective journaling about your short- and long-term goals and progress toward meeting them;
- Facilitate a discussion with your team about your current implementation of the standards and your goals; and
- Show your colleagues and leaders what it means to implement the standards and how taking the specific actions listed will help move your system toward strategic goals and, ultimately, higher-quality teaching and learning.

Huling-Austin, L., & Hall, G. (2006). *Taking charge of change*. SEDL.

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UPDATE



EXAMPLE OF AN IC MAP FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION STANDARD

This Innovation Configuration map below presents descriptions of behaviors that central office leaders and staff can take to implement one concept, or **construct**, of the Implementation standard: engaging in feedback processes.

This IC map zooms in on one of the three **desired outcomes** for that construct: facilitating systemwide feedback processes to accelerate and refine implementation of professional learning. The **rows** of the table represent specific behaviors or actions educators should take to meet that desired outcome.

For each behavior (row), the IC map details **four levels** of action. The columns represent those four levels. In contrast to many progressions, the highest degree of impact is level 1 (ideal implementation) and is listed at the left of the progression. The degree of impact descends to level 4 (entry-level implementation) from left to right.

SYSTEM/CENTRAL OFFICE			
<h2>Implementation Standard</h2> <p>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.</p>			
Construct: Engage in feedback processes.			
Desired outcome: Facilitates systemwide feedback processes to accelerate and refine implementation of professional learning.			
Level 1 (Ideal)	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4 (Entry)
Identifies and makes available, to all schools , in-person, blended, and technology-based strategies and tools to support feedback processes.	Identifies and makes available, to select schools , in-person, blended, and technology-based strategies and tools to support feedback processes.	Identifies and makes available, to select departments , in-person, blended, and technology-based strategies and tools to support feedback processes.	Identifies in-person, blended, and technology-based strategies and tools to support feedback processes.
Uses in-person, blended, and technology-based strategies and tools to support feedback processes.	Uses in-person and blended strategies and tools to support feedback processes.	Uses in-person strategies and tools to support feedback processes.	
Exchanges, with diverse internal and external stakeholders , perspectives and data on implementation of professional learning using tools and strategies for feedback processes.	Exchanges, with internal AND external stakeholders , perspectives and data on implementation of professional learning using tools and strategies for feedback processes.	Exchanges, with internal OR external stakeholders , perspectives and data on implementation of professional learning using tools and strategies for feedback processes.	Exchanges, with select individuals , perspectives and data on implementation of professional learning using tools and strategies for feedback processes.
Shares, with internal AND external stakeholders , knowledge gained from feedback processes about implementation of systemwide professional learning.	Shares, with internal OR external stakeholders , knowledge gained from feedback processes about implementation of systemwide professional learning.	Shares, with select individuals , knowledge gained from feedback processes about implementation of systemwide professional learning.	

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UPDATES

FREDERICK BROWN IS NEW LEARNING FORWARD PRESIDENT & CEO

Frederick Brown will succeed Denise Glyn Borders as Learning Forward's new president & CEO, effective July 1. Brown, who most recently served as Learning Forward's chief learning officer/deputy, said that the opportunity to lead Learning Forward in its work to bring high-quality professional learning to every educator is an honor.

"Learning Forward's unique and essential focus on creating evidence-based systems of support for all educators has never been more important for our students' futures," Brown said. "I am deeply committed to the work and the people of this organization, and I am grateful to the board of trustees for this opportunity."

Since joining Learning Forward in 2010, Brown has held multiple leadership roles and co-authored *The Learning Principal: Becoming a Learning Leader* and *Becoming a Learning System*.

Borders retires from Learning Forward at the end of June.

Photo by Lee Ann Baker | LABphotography

UPDATES

Congratulations to 2 Learning Forward leaders

Denise Glyn Borders



Denise Glyn Borders, Learning Forward's CEO since 2019, retires on June 30. Borders has been a valuable addition to the Learning Forward team. Despite facing an unprecedented global pandemic after only six months on the job, her extensive experience and steady leadership guided the team to excel under ever-shifting circumstances. She has helped the organization transition to virtual platforms as needed, offer timely networks,

programs, and courses, and meet the field's evolving needs through services, publications, and more. We are fortunate to have had her lead Learning Forward for the last three years and wish her the best.

Borders will be succeeded by Frederick Brown, who most recently served as Learning Forward's chief knowledge officer/deputy.

Tracy Crow



Tracy Crow, longtime Learning Forward leader, will retire on June 30. In her 17 years with Learning Forward, Crow has made countless contributions to our organization and the field of professional learning.

Most recently, she served as chief strategy officer, a role in which she helped to guide the organization's goals, major initiatives, communications, and staff development and support. Previously, she served as director of communications, director of publications, and editor of *JSD* and online resources.

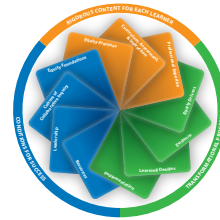
From 2019 to 2022, she oversaw the team that led the revision of Standards for Professional Learning, and for many years, she has been a tireless champion for standards implementation, practice, and policy.

Crow has authored or edited numerous books for Learning Forward, including the popular book, *Becoming a Learning Team*, which she co-authored with Stephanie Hirsh.

An expert editor and writer, she oversaw the journal (formerly called *JSD*) for many years and has mentored new authors and shepherded experienced authors through the publication process. Her longtime session at the annual conference, Writing for Publication, has been a valuable learning opportunity for many educators.

Learning Forward members and partners have come to know Crow for her steady leadership, collegiality, and warm presence during Annual Conferences, webinars, learning networks, and ongoing collaborations.

Staff members past and present have a deep appreciation not only for her skills in communications and facilitation but for her mentorship and support, creativity, humor, and grace. We wish her all the best in her new adventures and pursuits.



REVISED STANDARDS BOOK AVAILABLE

Standards for Professional Learning is available in Learning Forward's store. The book includes the full explanation of each standard, an introduction to the history and foundations for the standards, and a crosswalk to the previous version. Using the book supports individual and team study and ongoing discussions for educators committed to long-term implementation.

The price is \$20 for members, \$25 for nonmembers. Orders of 25 or more qualify for a large-order discount. Call 800-727-7288 or visit learningforward.org/store.



VIEW STANDARDS WEBINARS

Learning Forward celebrated the release of the revised Standards for Professional Learning with webinars featuring professional learning leaders discussing the research base for the standards, application of the standards at all levels, implications for policy, history and evolution, and more. The recorded sessions are available at learningforward.org/webinars. To be notified about future standards webinars and events, follow us on social media or sign up for our email list at learningforward.org.

NEW ACADEMY COHORT BEGINS IN JULY

After a pandemic-related hiatus, Learning Forward welcomes a new cohort of the Learning Forward Academy. The Academy is Learning Forward's flagship deep learning experience where members spend 2½ years working together on problems of practice and learning about best practices in professional learning from coaches and other field leaders.

The kickoff for the new cohort, the Academy Class of 2024, will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in July. Coaches for the Class of 2024 are Ashley Helms, executive director of pre-K-12 academics in Whitewright ISD in Texas, and Nadira Singh, professional learning and coaching coordinator in the Office of Staff Development at Gwinnett County Public Schools in Georgia.

For more information on the Learning Forward Academy, visit learningforward.org/academy

Members of the Class of 2024 are:

- Karen Allard, Santa Clara Unified School District
- Jennifer Allen, NWEA
- Erin Beard, NWEA
- Jerad Beckler, Batavia Public School District 101
- Juliane Berquam, Peoria Unified School District
- Gwendolyn Best, Petersburg City Schools
- Rachelle Burmside, Santa Clara Unified School District
- Miladys Cepero-Perez, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Michelle DellaFortuna, Glen Rock Public Schools
- Rory Dippold, Falls Church City Public Schools
- Matt Dunbar, Franklin County Public Schools
- Molly Dunne, Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization
- Tony Dutra, Broward County Public Schools
- Rachel Fainstein, Santa Clara Unified School District
- Diana Federman, The School District of Palm Beach County

- Linsey Hawkins, Florida Virtual School
- Alyson Hill, Florida Virtual School
- Alicia Himes, Los Lunas Schools
- Vivian Holcombe, The School District of Palm Beach County
- Rebecca Ingram, Jefferson County Public Schools
- Javier Jimenez, South Bend Community Schools
- Kurt Johns, Lyons Township High School District 204
- Gretchen Lawn, Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio
- Amy MacCrindle, Huntley Community School District 158
- Jenny Maehara, Santa Clara Unified School District
- Linda McDaniel, Sioux Falls School District
- Machel Mills-Miles, Learning Forward
- Wendy Owens, Special School District of St. Louis
- Sara Perez, Santa Clara Unified School District
- Janith Rhodes, Gwinnett County Public Schools
- Diamond Robinson, South Bend Community Schools
- Kristen Rulison, School District of Palm Beach County
- Amy Shaver, Franklin County Public Schools
- Ming Shelby, Batavia Public School District 101
- Angela Simmons, Special School District of St. Louis County
- Kristin Skogstad, Sioux Falls School District
- Janie Stach, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD
- Elizabeth Stavis, Santa Clara Unified School District
- Sharron Stroman, NWEA
- Tiffany Tommasini, Florida Virtual School
- Dorina Varsamis, Broward County Public Schools
- Collin Voigt, Lyons Township High School District 204
- Kai Walker, Broward County Public Schools
- Brenda Ward, Lafayette School Corporation
- Karen Weaver, Franklin County Public Schools
- Regina Wimberly, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Webinar shares leadership research

Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's incoming CEO, recently facilitated a webinar organized by The Wallace Foundation to share new research about principal preparation and support.

Researchers from the Learning Policy Institute and RAND shared highlights from two recent studies, *Developing Effective Principals: What Kind of Learning Matters* and *Redesigning University Principal Preparation Programs: A Systemic Approach for Change and Sustainability*.

Following the presentations, Brown moderated a panel discussion with field leaders about the implications of the research and next steps for schools, districts, states, and universities in strengthening pathways to successful school leadership.

For resources related to the webinar, visit www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership. The webinar is available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsHGy7ICZLA.

Coaches Academy opens July 21

Learning Forward's Virtual Coaches Academy will launch a new cohort on July 21. This 12-week virtual academy provides instruction and practice opportunities designed to enhance new and veteran coaches' effectiveness in leading coaching conversations, professional learning design, and facilitation skills. Designed for individual and teams of coaches, this academy empowers coaches to provide the support new and returning teachers need. For more information and to register, visit learningforward.org/online-courses.

UPDATES

Mentor Teacher Academy begins Aug. 24

Learning Forward will launch a virtual Mentor Teacher Academy on Aug. 24 for individual mentors or districts seeking to provide new teachers with an experienced, knowledgeable mentor. The program is for skilled teachers who are ready to mentor colleagues in their first three years in the classroom by applying a mentoring framework to support beginning teachers in growing their practice. For more information and to register, visit learningforward.org/online-courses.



CHECK OUT THE CAREER CENTER

Looking to strengthen your staffing this year? Check out Learning Forward's Career Center at **careers.learningforward.org**. Learning Forward members and Academy graduates are able to badge their profiles, making it easy for you to find the right talent for your open positions.

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The Learning Forward Foundation has named its 2022 scholarship and grant award winners.

Dale Hair Affiliate Grant

- Learning Forward Ontario: Co-chairs Laura Callaghan and Brian Weishar

Learning Forward Foundation Academy Scholarship

- Alicia Himes, Los Lunas Schools, Los Lunas, New Mexico
- Juliane Berquam, Peoria Unified School District, Glendale, Arizona
- Amy MacCrindle, Huntley Community School District 158, Algonquin, Illinois

Patsy Hochman Academy Scholarship

- Gwen Best, Petersburg City Public Schools, Petersburg, Virginia

Stephanie Hirsh Academy Scholarship

- Miladys Cepero-Perez, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida

Visit foundation.learningforward.org to learn more about this year's awardees.

#TheLearningPro

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Follow us on social media. Share your insights and feedback about *The Learning Professional* by using [#TheLearningPro](https://twitter.com/TheLearningPro).



Noline Martin
@noline_martin

Every leader needs a coach! A principal needs a coach to help align district priorities while balancing the unique dynamics of each school community. There is no effective "one size fits all" coaching! [#TheLearningPro](https://learningforward.org/?p=807532) learningforward.org/?p=807532 via @LearningForward



learningforward.org
Coaching Practices To Stem The Looming Principal Exodus: ONLINE EXCLUSIV...
Job-embedded coaching provides the support that many principals lack.



Julie Glazer
@DoctorGlaz

[@LearnForwardNJ](https://twitter.com/LearnForwardNJ) spring meeting today. Amazing colleagues and great conversations around equity and the new [@LearningForward](https://twitter.com/LearningForward) Standards for Professional Learning. Stay tuned for more information! In the meantime, check out learningforward.org [#stand4PL](https://twitter.com/stand4PL)



ABOUT LEARNING FORWARD

Learning Forward shows you how to plan, implement, and measure high-quality professional learning so you and your team can achieve success with your system, your school, and your students.

We are the only professional association devoted exclusively to those who work in educator professional learning. We help our members effect positive and lasting change to achieve equity and excellence in teaching and learning.



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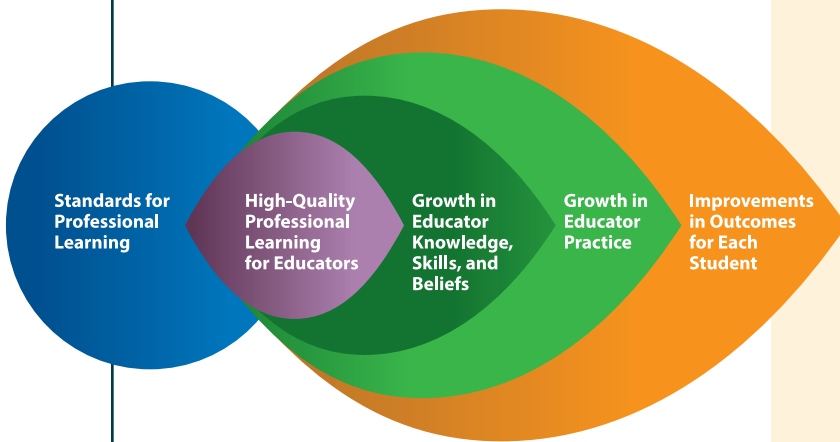
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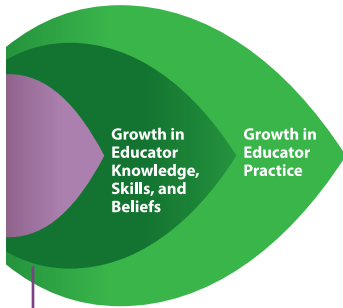
AT A GLANCE



How Standards for Professional Learning lead to improvement for all learners

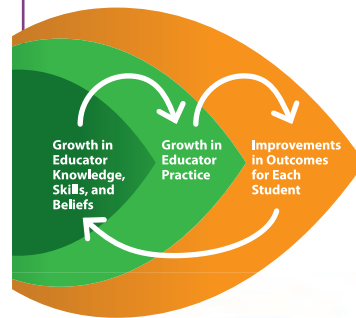
The graphic at left illustrates how professional learning leads to change for teachers and students and how Standards for Professional Learning ground that process. It is designed to help educators think about the connection among high-quality, standards-based professional learning and improvements for educators and students.

As you use this graphic, keep in mind:

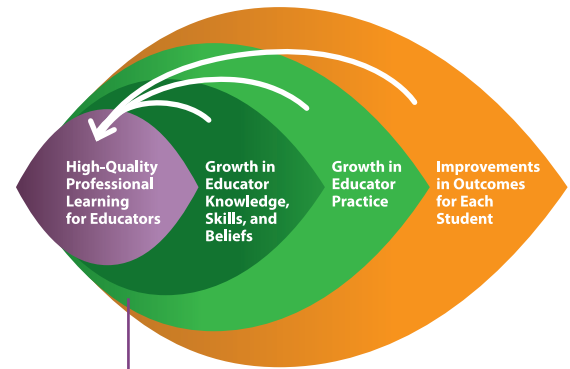


Although improved student outcomes are the ultimate goal of professional learning, evidence of changes in educator learning and growth are important steps in the process and valuable indicators of success.

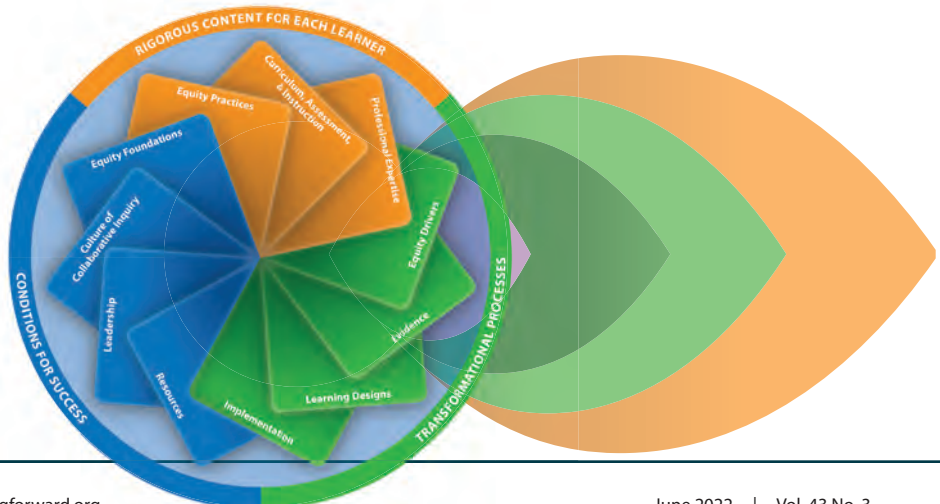
Educator growth encompasses many different components, including knowledge, skills, beliefs, and practices. The relationships among these components are reciprocal and not always linear. Sometimes, changes in practice lead to improved student outcomes, which in turn change educator beliefs.



Change is not a one-way process. In addition to professional learning driving improvement, educator learning and student outcomes should inform the design and evolution of professional learning.



As learning leads to constant evolution, standards continue to ground the entire system.



What inspires you about revised Standards for Professional Learning?

Here are insights field leaders shared during recent webinars.

“The great thing about the standards is the wealth of information that’s operationalized so you’re not just given an encyclopedia of professional learning stuff. I am thinking about my earliest work as a principal, and I wish I had an Action Guide in hand as I was working with teacher leaders and they were asking me questions that I didn’t have the vocabulary for.”

— Marlon Williams, principal, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams School of the Arts Middle School, New York

“I cannot say enough about the amount of research that has gone into every standard. If you drill down into the Action Guides, [you’ll] find out about not only what that standard means, but case studies, specific articles, [and other resources that] are rooted in research. You’re not just trying something without knowing a history behind it.”

— Tara Isaacs, director of professional development & learning, Jefferson County Public Schools, Kentucky

“The equity lens that is overarching excites me because high-impact professional learning is definitely a practice of equity. The more learning systems we have — ones that are filled with curiosity, inquiry, implementation, monitoring, and support — the better chance we have in reaching our students so they thrive.”

— Leilani Scott, director of staff development, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia

To view the kickoff webinars from which these quotes are excerpted, visit learningforward.org/webinars/

“What I am the most excited about is the focus on the role of curriculum and assessment and instruction — the role that professional learning can have in helping teachers teach their content. Part of this is through the role that high-quality instructional materials play [when] supported with curriculum-based professional learning.”

— Jim Short, program director, Carnegie Corporation of New York

“I want to acknowledge Learning Forward’s unrelenting commitment to equity and excellence. It takes courage and commitment, especially in the times that we’re living in, to speak up and out about the importance of equity in education. ... The three [equity standards] do an excellent job in laying out the equity landscape as we understand it.”

— Amy Colton, executive director, Learning Forward Michigan

“At the heart of our learning profession is the capacity for us to continually learn and develop expertise that is required in order to achieve the outcomes we want for all young people. That is the story we have locally, that is the story we have nationally, and that is the story we have globally. ... [The standards help us] ensure that our profession is adequate to the challenges that we have in promoting learning for all young people.”

— Anthony Mackay, CEO, National Center on Education and the Economy

What about you?

Share your own insights and inspirations with us @learningforward #Stand4PL



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