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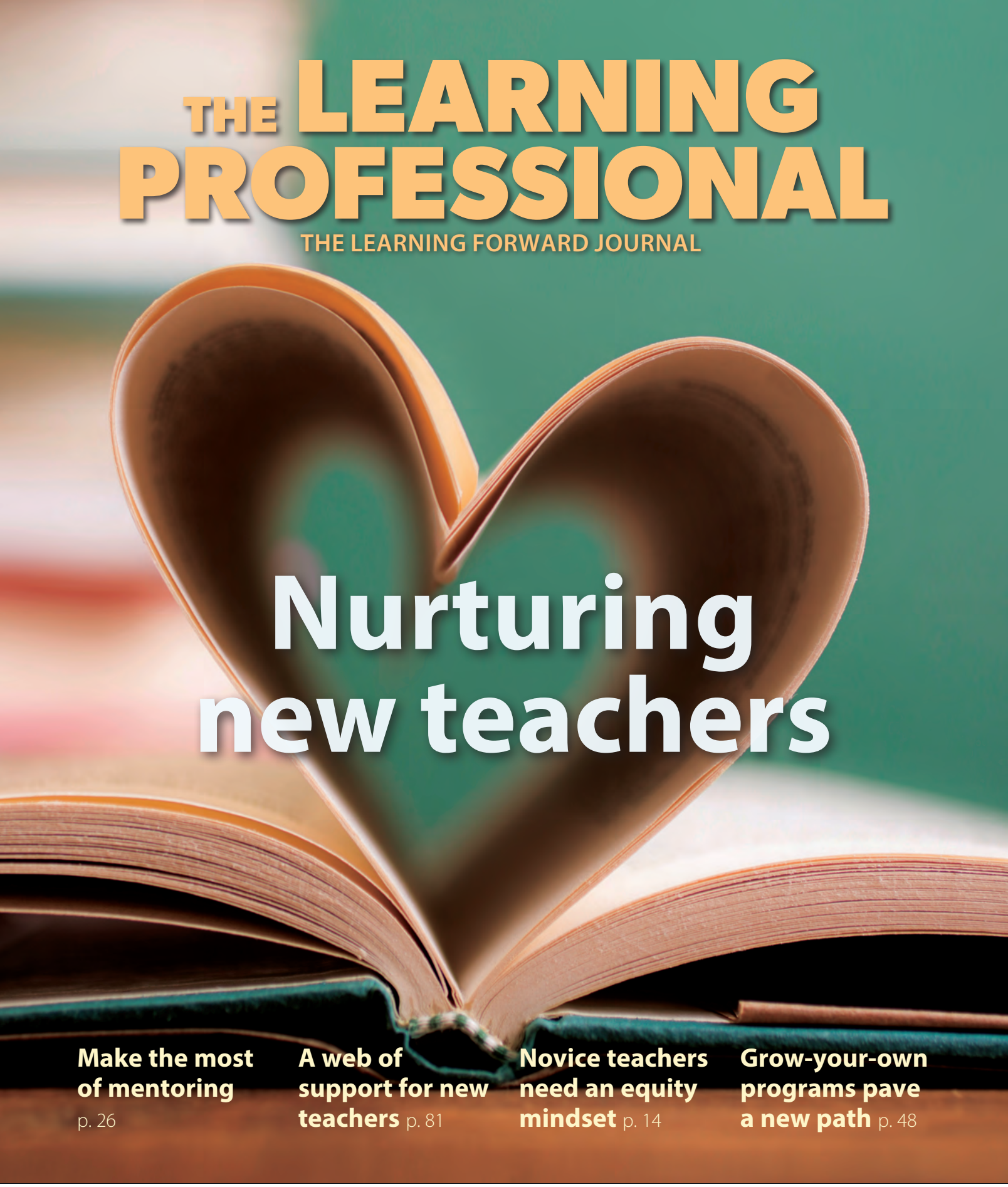

Nurturing new teachers

August 2022, Vol. 43, No. 4

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learningforward.org/the-learning-professional

I SAY

Sarah Fine

Director, San Diego Teacher Residency at High Tech High Graduate School of Education

"As we work with our teacher candidates, we try to make sure that they never lose sight of the whole, even as they practice the parts. … We try never to deconstruct teaching without also reconstructing it. We wouldn't want our students or their students to lose the forest for the trees."

— Source: "Forget no excuses. We need schools where everyone can be whole," TEDxMaplesMetSchool, June 3, 2022, **www.youtube.com/watch?v=qr2xW8HWUsY**

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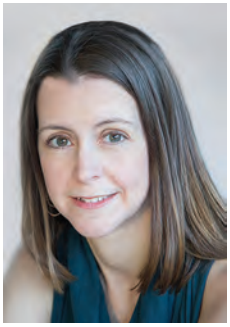
- Understanding mentor roles, responsibilities, and expectations
- Applying an instruction-focused mentoring plan
- Establishing and maintaining trust with beginning teachers
- Leading classroom observations
- Mentoring for classroom management
- Analyzing observation data



Suzanne Bouffard

DON'T JUST PREPARE NEW TEACHERS, NURTURE THEM

Teaching is not just a tough job; it's a complex one that demands ongoing learning, constant recalibration, and flexibility that would stun a gymnast.

Throughout the production of this issue, I have heard outstanding educators lament their first years of teaching. Pointing to their past shortcomings, they blame themselves, saying things like: "I had no idea what I was doing," "My students deserved better," or "I wish I could go back and apologize to those students." One coach said she connects with former students on social media for the express purpose of apologizing.

What's often missing in these stories is the role of the systems that let those new teachers down — and, by extension, let students down. Teaching is not just a tough job; it's a complex one that demands ongoing learning, constant recalibration, and flexibility that would stun a gymnast. Teaching isn't something a person can do perfectly on Day One. And it isn't something a person can do in isolation.

Yet, too often, new teachers are expected to go it alone. After a week of new teacher induction, many are marooned in their classrooms, save for an occasional meeting or a check-in from a buddy teacher. They're left to stew in a soup of questions, wondering whom to ask for advice on which topic.

We know this isn't the best way for new teachers to learn. It isn't how other professionals are expected to grow into their roles. Doctors start as residents, meeting regularly with attending physicians to review their cases. Even after those first years, they engage in frequent clinical rounds to get advice and input. Teachers rarely have that kind of early and ongoing support. And yet they, too, are expected to save lives, sometimes quite literally.

This issue of *The Learning Professional* is grounded in Learning Forward's belief that now is the time to change this pattern and make meaningful, ongoing support for new teachers the norm.

Schools are struggling with teacher shortages and scrambling to hire as many new teachers as they can. Many of those teachers are coming through alternative pathways that provide varying levels of practice and pedagogical support. At the same time, teachers are grappling with students' growing needs and crises brought on by the world outside the school doors.

These trends create major challenges — but also an opportunity to create a systemic approach that ensures every new teacher is encircled by a web of support to become the best educator possible.

As authors in this issue point out, new teacher support should be the beginning of a career-long continuum of professional learning that is grounded in Standards for Professional Learning. Achieving equity and excellence for every student doesn't happen because of a single week at the end of the summer before classes start. Nor does it happen because of one solitary year of job-embedded support.

But high-quality mentoring and induction programs can be the start of years of learning and growth. They can foster habits of collaboration, inquiry, and reflection and help build a culture that honors and expects professional learning and growth. And early career support from peers and colleagues can be cornerstones in an approach to long-term teacher retention.

The theme of this issue is called "nurturing new teachers" for a reason: New teachers don't just need information or modeling of best instructional practices. They need to be welcomed into the profession and honored for who they are and what they bring. They need to be guided and buoyed as they navigate the stresses of teaching today, which include but are not limited to social, emotional, and academic recovery from COVID-19 and political and social divides about what is taught in the classroom and how. They need to be valued and cared for as the people who will journey with our children through tumultuous times and help address the world's challenges, a little bit at a time. ■

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

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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.

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INSPIRE. EXPRESS. ADVOCATE.

VOICES

LEADING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MOVEMENT

"We know that professional learning makes a powerful difference in the lives of students, teachers, and leaders," says Frederick Brown, president and CEO of Learning Forward, in his column on p. 8. "But we need everyone — not just educators — to understand how professional learning is a key vehicle for school improvement and why it deserves broad support.

"We have the positional power and expertise to tap into the hopes and dreams of educators, parents, business leaders, policymakers, and community members and show them how professional learning is essential for those dreams to come true."

Frederick Brown

WE CAN CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS TO CHANGE SCHOOLS

As I begin my tenure as president and CEO of Learning Forward, I am honored to work with all members of the Learning Forward community to collectively achieve equitable and excellent outcomes for all students.

As a member of the Learning Forward staff for the last 12 years, I recognize the unique opportunity this role presents for making meaningful change in the lives of educators, students, and communities. And as only the fourth leader of an organization that has existed for over 50 years, I come to this position on the heels of three outstanding prior leaders who have left their mark and laid the foundation for the work our community will do together in the coming years.

My goals for Learning Forward and the field of professional learning are challenges I am energized to tackle. One of those goals is to advance a professional learning movement. We know that professional learning makes a powerful difference in the lives of students, teachers, and leaders. But we need everyone — not just educators — to understand how professional learning is a key vehicle for school improvement and why it deserves broad support.

As my mentor, Shirley Hord, often said, we have a greater chance of achieving change when our efforts are guided through social interaction and tap into emotions.

We have the positional power and expertise to tap into the hopes and dreams of educators, parents, business leaders, policymakers, and community members and show them how professional learning is essential for those dreams to come true. As my mentor, Shirley Hord, often said, we have a greater chance of achieving change when our efforts are guided through social interaction and tap into emotions. We can change hearts and minds to change schools, and that has never been more important than it is now, when our society is riven by tension and division.

Another goal is to continue and deepen Learning Forward's leadership for educational equity. As we see the urgency of addressing inequity and the alarming backlash to doing so, we recognize that we are the equity leaders we've been waiting for. We can and must continue to take a strong stand for equity and weave equity into everything we do.

That doesn't mean we are alone in this work. To the contrary, Learning Forward is proud and humbled to partner with countless equity champions whose work teaches and inspires us. In the coming months and years, we will build on the equity work we've done internally and externally, the networks we facilitate, the services we provide, and the field-leading voices we amplify to bring an equity lens to professional learning.

At the heart of achieving these goals, and at the heart of everything we do at Learning Forward, are the recently revised Standards for Professional Learning. The new version of the standards does more than any previous iteration to make explicit our commitment to and strategies for equity and demonstrate how professional learning is inextricably linked to instructional improvement and student success. Over the coming months and years, we will continue to roll out tools and resources to help you integrate the revised standards into your work while we advocate for and model standards-driven professional learning and stand with you in a collaborative professional learning movement.

As I pursue these goals with you and with the outstanding Learning Forward staff, I am guided by the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now." Let us move forward together with fierce urgency to make these goals a reality. ■

Frederick Brown (frederick.brown@learningforward.org) is president and CEO of Learning Forward.

Paul Fleming

LEARNING FORWARD AFFILIATES LEAD THE WAY TO ADOPTING STANDARDS

Learning Forward Affiliates play a particularly important role in this ecosystem of building capacity for high-quality professional learning.

Since the release of the revised Standards for Professional Learning in April, Learning Forward has been providing resources and support for educators to adopt and implement the standards in a variety of contexts and roles.

The 2011 iteration of the standards was formally adopted in 20 U.S. states, and 15 additional states adapted or applied the standards to inform state-level policies. With the 2022 iteration, our goal is adoption through a menu of policy options in 50 states, provinces, and countries. But adoption is not enough. Our focus is on achieving meaningful implementation of the standards so that professional learning is high-quality, research-based, and linked to student success.

Achieving deep and sustained implementation is a process that takes commitment, time, and resources, including human resources. Learning Forward cannot do this work alone. We rely on the passion and skill of our partners. Learning Forward Affiliates play a particularly important role in this ecosystem of building capacity for high-quality professional learning.

Affiliates are statewide branches of Learning Forward with extensive local expertise and a commitment to equity and excellence in professional learning. There are currently 30 active Learning Forward Affiliates around the world, from Kansas to British Columbia to India. We partner with them to build capacity to design, facilitate, and assess professional learning that aligns closely and meaningfully to Standards for Professional Learning.

Affiliates are uniquely positioned to lead the way to adoption and implementation of the revised standards. Many affiliate chapters and leaders have longstanding relationships with state and local leaders, organizations, and educators. We know that the people closest to the community are always the best messengers. As our affiliate colleagues have pointed out to us, awareness and engagement are the first steps toward change, and many districts and states either aren't aware of Standards for Professional Learning or do not know if the standards have been adopted into policy in their location. Affiliates are eager to raise awareness and build engagement in their contexts.

> To learn more about your local Learning Forward Affiliate, visit **learningforward.org/affiliates**.

Many affiliates are also well-positioned to partner with school districts, either in collaboration with Learning Forward's professional services and networks or individually but with the support of Learning Forward tools and resources. They are also skilled at facilitating in-person, virtual, and hybrid events that bring together educators from multiple schools and districts to learn together and find mutual support in building standards-

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Paul Fleming (paul.fleming@learningforward.org) is chief learning officer at Learning Forward.

Melinda George

MENTOR SUPPORT CAN EASE THE TEACHER RETENTION CRISIS

We need a more systemic approach to mentoring to guarantee every teacher has the support to be successful.

When I was a new teacher, I spent my day asking questions — from how to use the copier to how to reach a struggling student and everything in between. It was sometimes exhausting. I felt like I was the only one in my building who didn't know how things worked. When my classroom door was shut, I felt cut off from the rest of the world.

When I got a mentor, things changed. My mentor consistently stopped by to check on me and my students and ask how she could help. She offered to observe some of my classes and even, occasionally, to teach a lesson so that I could get some ideas. She was a lifeline I knew I could reach out to — and I did. She supported me and challenged me to grow my practice and connect with my students academically and personally. She was someone to whom I was accountable not for my annual evaluation but because I valued her input and wanted her to see it put into use.

Unfortunately, not every new teacher has that kind of mentoring relationship. We need a more systemic approach to mentoring to guarantee every teacher has the support to be successful.

Education is facing a teacher retention crisis. And while some states and districts have begun to require mentoring, many do not, and the quality of existing mentoring programs varies. Educators can change that pattern by advocating for more mentoring policies and resources.

Local and state policies should include:

- Recognizing mentoring as a high-quality professional learning intervention;
- Providing mentoring for the first three years of a teacher's tenure;
- Hiring full-time mentors to work with new teachers, providing observation and feedback as well as resources and strategies for improving practice;
- Hiring or promoting experienced teachers of color to mentor new teachers of color;
- Building time into the school schedule for mentoring interactions, observations, and reflection; and
- Building in resources for data collection on mentoring efforts to measure impact and make decisions that improve practice.

When advocating for resources and policies, it is always helpful to include examples that have had a positive impact. These two examples provide a starting point.

In 2017, in Norman, Oklahoma, district-level administrators noticed a troubling trend. They needed to hire an increasing number of new teachers each year because new teachers — in whom they had invested resources and training — weren't staying in the profession. The district intensified its professional learning efforts to support and retain entry-year and emergency-certified teachers. This included hiring mentor teachers and classroom support specialists to work with 109 new teachers.

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

In the first year, teacher support specialists logged 270 classroom visits. The results were terrific. Between 2017 and 2019, the number of new teachers that had to be hired dropped from 225 to 168 (Norman Public Schools, n.d.).

In 2019, the New Teacher Center, a national nonprofit focused on strengthening the practice of beginning teachers, released findings from a study of a high-intensity mentor support program for new teachers in urban school districts (Schmidt, 2019). The study found that teacher retention rates after one year were 11% higher in the group that received high-intensity mentoring, compared with a control group of new teachers (78% compared with 67%). The study also found that "although the cost of running the program was high, at $9,223 per teacher, this was significantly lower than the cost of hiring a new teacher, at an average of $17,872" (Schmidt, 2019).

Fending off a shortage of teachers needs attention at both ends of the teaching career spectrum. Mentoring is a proven way to support beginning teachers and increase their tenure in education systems.

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Norman Public Schools. (n.d.). *Norman's Title II professional learning investment cuts new teacher attrition*. learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NormanDataAltsV2_10-6-19.pdf ■

STANDARDS IN PRACTICE / Paul Fleming

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aligned professional learning.

To assist affiliates in this important work, Learning Forward provides ongoing information and support about implementing the standards, facilitating professional learning around the standards, and advocating for their adoption in policy. In July, Learning Forward leaders met with affiliate leaders on a deep dive into the revised standards and the new and emerging tools for implementing them.

Recognizing that leaders need to have deep understanding of the standards to help others, we explored new knowledge, skills, and mindsets that are embedded in and necessary for implementing the revised standards. We also considered policy guidance and examined tools that focus on the awareness, engagement, and implementation strategies necessary for policy adoption. In keeping with the standards and best practices in professional learning, we engaged in structured reflection, small-group discussion, and thoughtful next steps.

We are grateful to the Learning Forward Affiliates for their leadership in communities around the globe, and we look forward to continuing to support them in their role as experts on how the standards can add value to state, province, or district efforts to build comprehensive professional learning systems. And we encourage all Learning Forward members and professional learning leaders to engage with their state or provincial affiliates as we all support each other in creating excellent professional learning for all educators in the service of excellent learning for all students. ■

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Mary Decker

WHY I MAKE LEARNING FORWARD'S CONFERENCE A PRIORITY

Mary Decker is associate director of schools for teaching and learning at Franklin Special School District in Franklin, Tennessee. She is also the host committee chair for the 2022 Learning Forward Annual Conference Dec. 4-7 in Nashville, Tennessee. Her previous roles include curriculum and professional learning supervisor, principal, assistant principal, and teacher.

How she got involved with Learning Forward: Around 2008, when I was a principal in northern California, a mentor introduced me and several of our colleagues to Shirley Hord's work about professional learning communities. It was the first time I realized how impactful professional learning can be. Before that, most of my professional learning experiences were one-size-fits-all, and I realized there's a better way to do it. Then I delved more deeply into the work of [Rebecca and Richard] DuFour. The turning point was when I realized that the best professional learning is directly connected to student outcomes.

How she became a professional learning leader: In 2010, my school's team received the inaugural Shirley Hord Learning Team Award from Learning Forward. We attended Learning Forward's Annual Conference in Atlanta, and that's when it became part of my mission to ensure that everyone I work with has access to high-quality professional learning. When I was a principal, I made sure that any time we got the staff together, we treated it as a professional learning opportunity. The teachers understood that the nuts-and-bolts information would be covered in email so that faculty meetings could be time for learning. I wanted them to walk out saying, "That was worth my time."

Why she joined the 2022 conference host committee: Being on the host committee has been exciting and fun, and it's been an honor to have some input into how this conference will unfold. We had a hand in everything from the conference theme to the proposal scoring process to the conference logistics. I've been gratified and grateful to see how Learning Forward staff have listened to our suggestions.

What she's learned from serving on the host committee: One thing I didn't know is how much Learning Forward likes to highlight the educators in the state in which the conference is being held. Having a little part in that is very affirming. I have also learned a lot from the proposal scoring process, and I've appreciated the chance to have discussions and interactions with thought leaders from around the country. As someone who is responsible for the professional learning of other educators, it's really important to me to have that opportunity to learn.

Advice for conference attendees: After your days of learning, I hope you will spend at least one evening exploring a part of Nashville. Consider branching out from Broadway [entertainment district] — it definitely has incredible live music, but there are so many other cute neighborhoods, incredible restaurants, and things to do. The host committee will give you lots of suggestions of places to go.

Why she encourages learning professionals to attend the conference: So much thought and reflection have gone into ensuring the conference sessions are top-notch. We really want everyone to walk away with a memorable, useful, and actionable experience. ■

So much thought and reflection have gone into ensuring the conference sessions are top-notch. We really want everyone to walk away with a memorable, useful, and actionable experience.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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LEARNING FORWARD'S

Coaches Academy

Empower your coaches to accelerate teacher growth and student learning.

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Implementation of district and campus improvement initiatives requires teachers make changes in their long-established classroom practices. Ensure your teachers receive the just-in-time, differentiated support they need to make meaningful and sustained changes in their practice by investing in the quality of instructional coaching they receive.

Learning Forward's Coaches Academy helps coaches:

- Identify unfinished learning and accelerate teachers' response;
- Capitalize on student strengths to improve initial instruction;
- Guide collaborative inquiry to foster data-informed improvement; and
- Expand the use of effective teaching practice to reach all students.

The quality of instructional coaching on your campus is the quality of implementation support your teachers are receiving. High expectations for change require strong, individualized support for making it happen. Ensure your coaches are prepared for fostering lasting change.

For more information, contact Sharron Helmke, vice president, professional services, at **sharron.helmke@learningforward.org** | **services.learningforward.org**

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DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE

Nader I. Twal

WHAT I WISH I HAD KNOWN AS A NEW TEACHER

I remember my first year of teaching high school English language arts in northern California in fall 1997. I was hired three months before I finished my teaching credential program and only two months into student teaching. The school where I was hired had suddenly found itself with a large increase in enrollment and a need for more sections to balance class sizes. More sections meant more teachers, and that meant my first full year of teaching started sooner than I expected.

Not only was I underprepared, but my course load was incredibly difficult. To address the overflow situation, teachers who had too many students were asked to select a few students from their classes to build out my roster. That process resulted in me inheriting five different course preps in five different classrooms across the campus.

In most of the classes, the students selected to fill my roster were the ones with the highest needs, generally students of color, and mostly labeled "NP," or noncollege prep track. Even then, I knew that label didn't feel right. It undermined my desire to see all students learn and sent a message to those students that we had already written off their educational futures.

Mostly what I wanted to do at that time was to survive my first year, but I knew I wanted all students to achieve, especially those most marginalized or ostracized by the education system. What I didn't know was how to bridge from those intentions to actual impact. The rigorous teacher prep program in which I was enrolled didn't prepare me to teach in culturally relevant and responsive ways, and induction programs were not as developed as they are now.

These days, I often think about how much better I could have done for my students had I internalized an equity mindset and then acted on a few concrete strategies to put those values into action. And I think about how to help today's new teachers do that.

Now that the education field has come to a collective realization that equity is not a peripheral conversation, but the conversation we need to have, district induction and teacher preparation programs need to be part of that conversation. We need to reorient how we prepare our new teachers to meet students where they are and amplify their cultural wealth.

I wish that I had developed an equity mindset in my first years of teaching. Because I didn't know what strengths to mine, I underused the wealth of talent that I had in my classes. That's why today I maintain a deep passion for helping new teachers become equipped to meet the needs of all students. When I think about what I wish I had known and been coached to do

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I often think about how much better I could have done for my students had I internalized an equity mindset and then acted on a few concrete strategies to put those values into action.

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.

Baruti K. Kafele

THE URGENT NEED TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN BLACK MALE TEACHERS

I knew even before I landed my first teaching position that my presence as a Black male educator was going to matter. My main purpose for entering the education ranks was to inform, inspire, and empower the Black male learner. I have always cared deeply for all my students, but my "why" — the purpose that drives me — is disproving the stereotypes about Black boys and proving to the world what they are capable of achieving.

Black men comprise less than 2% of America's teaching force (Borowski & Will, 2021). That means that, for most Black children, the likelihood of learning from a Black male teacher is slim to none. That's problematic for all students, but especially Black boys, because, as the expression says, "I can't be what I can't see."

On top of the invisibility of Black men in schools, scores of Black children go home to households where Mom is playing the dual role of mother and father. That means many Black boys spend their days and nights without direct exposure to positive Black men. Although many mothers are getting the job done on their own with strength and grace, there are countless mothers who are, understandably, struggling, especially with meeting the needs of their boys.

We need to not only recruit and hire Black men, but also value and support them so they stay in the profession and make a difference for the long term.

That's why there is an urgency to increasing the number of Black men in America's schools, particularly where Black boys are enrolled. We need to not only recruit and hire Black men, but also value and support them so they stay in the profession and make a difference for the long term.

As a member of several Black educator social media groups, I read a lot of comments from Black male educators about working in America's schools. I hear the reasons that so many of them want to leave the profession. Salary is a given, because teachers are grossly underpaid. But it's the frequent comments about lack of intellectual respect that stand out to me.

Many Black male teachers say that their administrators treat them exclusively as disciplinarians, calling on them frequently to discipline Black children — even those not assigned to their classes — and ignoring them when they want to talk about curriculum, instruction, and the academic program. The administrators' lack of interest in their professional expertise renders them voiceless, leading to frustration and, eventually, a desire to leave the profession.

We need to think differently about how to recruit, retain, and empower the Black male teacher. The first step, how to recruit Black men into America's classrooms, has been an obsession of mine for over three decades. One of the most important lessons I've learned in that time is that we need to start early. The Black men we are looking for are already in our schools as students. But we fail to identify and prepare them to come back to our schools as teachers. What if we didn't miss the opportunities to bring them into the fold?

One day, when I was a high school principal, I was walking the halls and began to wonder

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

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that first year, five main ideas come to mind. I recommend that all new teachers engage in these strategies and that districts, universities, and everyone involved in new teacher support create opportunities and incentives for them.

Get to know your students deeply. Make an ongoing commitment to learning the students' stories and listen with the intent to mine their cultural and linguistic assets. Students come to us with rich experiences and cultural knowledge, and we can leverage that in service to their learning. Their stories and lives are not monolithic, so we need to create opportunities for them to share throughout the year and not just in the traditional "getting to know you" phase at the opening of the semester.

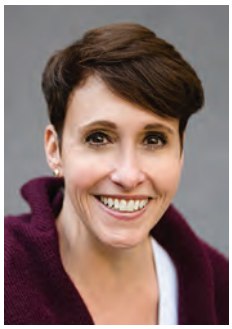
Create asset maps of their communities. Students' cultural and linguistic assets are often embedded deeply in their communities. Take time to study their neighborhoods, perhaps using Google Maps or a similar resource, to understand the resources accessible to them, and consider what you might be able to tap into to activate their learning. Also consider what resources their communities might lack because of historical neglect and how you might work to bridge some of those opportunity gaps in your efforts. If possible, and in accord with your district protocols, visit their neighborhoods and learn what the community members value about them.

Invite members of the community into the classroom. Leverage the cultural wealth in the community to strengthen lessons and anchor new learning in students' current contexts and lives. Using the lived experience of community members as curriculum both honors the various forms of intellectual capital in the world and elevates traditionally minoritized perspectives that can deepen your students' understanding of the world around them.

Find an equity mindset mentor teacher. Principal Baruti Kafele, a friend and colleague who also writes for this journal (see his column on p. 15), often speaks of meeting students where they are, as they are. He advises educators to ensure that students' experiences, voices, and identities are centered in our work. His advice has been invaluable for me, and I recommend all educators find a teacher mentor who embodies this equity mindset. Invite them into your classroom to observe and provide you with feedback. Watch them teach and debrief your observations to surface their instructional moves and how they planned their lessons to be culturally relevant and responsive.

Critically reflect on your practice, often and honestly. Perhaps most importantly, consistently and intentionally reflect on your practice and the impact of your teaching. You can use hard data (e.g. test scores), but also ask for data that taps into students' perspectives (e.g. student interviews, observations, and student written reflections) to determine if your intentions are translating into the desired impact. Our students deserve the best version of us.

Though I cannot go back and change the experience of those students I first taught in northern California, I can honor all that they taught me by sharing these lessons born from my experiences with them. And I can encourage today's new teachers to learn from their own students by approaching them with an equity mindset and a readiness to listen. ■



Jennifer Abrams

ARE YOU MODELING THE COLLABORATION SKILLS NEW TEACHERS NEED?

The best way for veteran educators to help new teachers develop collaboration skills is to model, model, model.

New teacher support is a common part of professional learning, but it varies across states, provinces, and regions. When I was a new teacher coach in California for 16 years, I followed the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, which were applied across my district and the state.

As I travel across the country and the world, I see approaches to content and structure that diverge from the ones I followed. But wherever I go, I see a common thread: New teacher support typically focuses on classroom management, curriculum and assessment design, and instructional strategies. These classroom-level supports are essential for new teachers — but they're not enough.

We also need to support new teachers in their work outside the classroom, especially in learning how to work effectively with other adults. Research shows that when adults collaborate effectively and trust in one another, productivity and student learning increase (Bryk & Schneider, 2004). New teacher induction programs should help a novice teacher — who may well be overwhelmed — learn the importance of becoming an emotionally self-regulated, mature, and respectful colleague.

Whether in a new teacher induction program, a formal mentoring role, or more informal interactions with our junior colleagues, the best way for veteran educators to help develop those skills is to model, model, model. Here are a few ways we can do so and prompts we can use to reflect on whether and how we are engaging in them.

Maintain a commitment to inquiry and reflection. Sharing your continual journey to become a developed human being and educator is a gift to any new teacher who is feeling vulnerable or experiencing imposter syndrome. As you aim to navigate uncertainty and new challenges with greater awareness, compassion, and self-management, articulating that you, too, are a work in progress and demonstrating that we are all stretching and growing is key.

Ask yourself: Am I showing my newer colleagues that part of my work is developing myself so that I can have a greater impact on my school, community, and field?

Work with others to improve your practice. Taking a learning stance while participating in professional learning, attending team meetings, and seeking out collaboration opportunities shows new teachers that we are part of a profession that cares about the collective. We demonstrate this when we willingly participate in experiences that support the group and the development of staff and students.

Ask yourself: Am I collaborating with others, getting input on my work, welcoming observations, extending myself, and maintaining a positive attitude while doing so?

Self-regulate, especially amidst challenges. New teachers need to know that the work is hard and emotions can overwhelm us if we don't learn how to manage our energy. We can model building strength and stamina to manage volatility that comes with our work. We can demonstrate ways to manage anxiety and release grief and disappointment in appropriate ways.

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We can show new teachers that life is full of falling and recovering.

Ask yourself: Am I open to feedback? Have I built the skills to manage myself when challenging experiences happen? Do I have strategies for keeping myself emotionally and psychologically healthy, and am I open about using those strategies?

New teachers are watching us to see what it means to be an educator. While we are providing lesson plan support and little pick-me-ups like a latte cart on Fridays, it is just as important to demonstrate vulnerability, model positive strategies for dealing with challenges, and communicate transparently about our struggles and recovery from them. Those actions should become an ongoing part of new teacher support, too.

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Continued from p. 15

how many students had ever thought of becoming teachers. I got on the PA system, begged my staff to forgive the interruption, and asked any students who were interested in a career in teaching to report to the cafeteria. I could not believe the large number of students who reported, many of whom were Black boys.

As a result, I created a club called the Newark Tech Future Teachers. We met twice monthly for two years and delved into many education topics. We also attended conferences for future teachers in New Jersey. I loved being part of developing the next generation of Black male educators and seeing the impact this could make on those young men and their future students. My biggest regret about my early retirement was missing the opportunity to one day hire my former students. At least 10 of the students from our club are now elementary and high school teachers.

I'm proud of this outcome and these young men. But I also know that a systemic, district-level approach to cultivating future educators would make a bigger impact, especially if conducted in partnership with local universities with incentives for enrollment in teacher education, such as scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for those who commit to teaching after college. Principals can play an important role in these programs, but we can't do it at scale by ourselves.

Retention and empowerment are as important as recruitment and hiring. As Black men are hired to teach in America's classrooms, they must be respected and appreciated as educators from the outset. They cannot be seen as the answer to the school's behavioral challenges. They must feel empowered in their teaching positions. That means administrators must welcome their input about the academic program. Their peers must respect their leadership. Support staff must recognize their nurturing for children. The whole community must show them that they are needed and appreciated.

Teaching is the most important and influential profession on the planet. Black men should and must be part of it. When Black men are appreciated, respected, and given the opportunity to be more than just disciplinarians, they can make a significant difference in the lives of children, especially Black children. They can be positive role models for Black children, serving as examples of manhood and teachers of manhood for Black boys. They can demonstrate leadership and mentorship for Black children so they can grow up to be Black educators themselves. They can be an alternative to the negative and destructive Black male images that so many Black children see portrayed in the media and, in some cases, their own communities.

Empowering Black male educators also brings a vital perspective into schools that serve Black children. When Black male teachers are seen and respected, they can monitor and help address the problems, issues, and concerns that exist within the schools, especially around the teaching of Black children. They bring a personal and professional perspective that can be beneficial for the entire school community. They can also be champions of culturally responsive teaching — for example, by infusing Black history and social justice throughout the curriculum in meaningful ways. And as their careers develop, they can advance into leadership or administrative positions and spread their talents and skills even farther.

I know what it's like to not feel welcomed or respected, and I understand deeply, viscerally, why that drives Black male educators to leave. We have to change that pattern, and we start by changing the environment.

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EXAMINE. STUDY. UNDERSTAND.

RESEARCH

PANDEMIC LEFT NEW TEACHERS FEELING UNPREPARED

Novice teachers whose field placements were disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic felt unprepared for their first year of teaching, especially in instructional strategies, classroom management, supporting families, meeting the needs of special education students, and teaching virtually. A study published in the *International Journal of Educational Research* examined the impact of pandemic disruption on self-efficacy in novice teachers who completed a teacher education program in 2019-20. The findings suggest that new teachers who were educated and hired during the pandemic need additional support to make up for experiential learning they missed. Read the full report at **bit.ly/3PlKImy**.

RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

STUDY EXPLORES MENTORING'S CONNECTION TO NEW TEACHER RETENTION

A recent close study of mentoring in a large urban district offers insights into what components of a mentoring program are related to educators' decisions to stay in teaching.

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Throughout the summer, Learning Forward members have shared with us their stories of teacher vacancies in schools and districts, reminding us that the question of how to keep teachers in the classroom and support them through difficult times is pressing. Recruiting new teachers is a critical priority across the U.S., as it has been for decades.

Retaining teachers is an equally critical need, as teacher turnover or attrition is expensive, detrimental to the culture of schools, and negatively impacts outcomes for educators and students (Carroll, 2007). It is also an equity concern, given that teacher attrition is higher in schools already limited in resources and among teachers of color (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Pearson & Fuglei, 2019).

Many schools and districts have induction programs that support educators through their first, second, and sometimes third years in the profession or in a new school, with the goal of providing support to guide growth and retention. Often, those induction programs include a formal mentoring component. But induction and mentoring programs vary in their scope, quality, content, and intensity. More research is needed about what aspects of mentoring programs are most closely related to improved teacher outcomes.

A recent close study of mentoring in a large urban district offers insights into what components of a mentoring program are related to educators' decisions to stay in teaching. This study also points to some early indicators that leaders can look at to anticipate likelihood to persist in teaching.

▶ THE STUDY

Caven, M., Durodoye, R., Jr., Zhang, X., & Bock, G. (2021). *Variation in mentoring practices and retention across new teacher demographic characteristics under a large urban district's new teacher mentoring program* (REL 2021-10). U.S. Department of Education, Institutes for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands.

METHODOLOGY

Grounded in the research about how mentoring and induction can lead to improved retention and student outcomes, and interested in testing a hypothesis that new teachers who have more intensive, higher-quality mentoring experiences and a closer demographic alignment with their mentor are more likely to stay, this study sought to develop a detailed understanding

of a large urban district's new teacher mentoring program.

The district requires new teachers to participate in the program, which provides 10 hours of mentorship a month. Teacher-mentor pairs determine the format and content of those mentoring conversations.

The researchers analyzed survey data from 192 pairs of new teachers and their mentors, as well as demographic data and one year retention data.

The study addressed three research questions:

1. How much time did the district's new teachers spend with their mentors, and what content did they focus on?
2. Did the race/ethnicity and gender of new teachers align with those of their mentors?
3. What is the relationship between new teachers' retention in the district the following year and the features of their mentoring relationship (amount of mentoring, mentoring content, and alignment between the race/ethnicity or gender of new teachers and their mentors)?

For each of these questions, the researchers examined differences across race, ethnicity, and gender. For example, they examined whether the content of mentoring conversations differed according to gender and race and according to whether the mentor's and mentee's gender and race aligned. They also examined whether mentees' perceptions of effectiveness varied according to those factors. (Note that the percentage of Hispanic teachers in this sample is relatively small, so most of the analyses and findings that talk about race and ethnicity compare white new teachers and Black new teachers.)

This commitment to identifying and weighting the content of the mentoring conversations to examine whether there are significant differences by race is a practice highlighted in the **Equity Drivers** standard of the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2022). Understanding these patterns can be important in ensuring responsive resourcing, planning, and assignments of new teachers to mentors.

FINDINGS ABOUT MENTORING FREQUENCY AND CONTENT

The study found that more than 40% of new teachers reported frequent meetings with their mentor, defined as at least 10 hours a month. But more than a quarter (27%) reported meeting with their mentor fewer than four hours a month.

Most of mentors' and mentees' time together was spent on topics related to instruction. They were most likely to spend "substantial" time on instructional strategies (69%), differentiating instruction (60%), and supporting students with disabilities (59%). Thirty-nine percent of new teachers also reported spending substantial time in mentor meetings discussing family engagement, and almost 30% said the same about record keeping. The most common noninstructional support topic discussed was social-emotional support for the new teacher (54% reported this).

Mentoring frequency was not related to race/ethnicity or demographic alignment of mentor-mentee pairs. However, the content of those pairs' conversations did vary across race. White new teachers reported spending more time than Black new teachers on classroom management. Black new teachers spent more time than their white peers on collecting and analyzing student data, differentiating instruction, teacher evaluation, and professional development (a broad category comprised of traditional workshops and topics not otherwise separated out in the analysis). The reason for these differences remained an open question.

There were also large differences in the frequency with which new teachers with a mentor of the *same* race/ethnicity and new teachers with a mentor of a *different* race/ethnicity spent on noninstructional topics. Pairs differing in race/ethnicity spent more time on family engagement, collecting and analyzing student information and data, teacher evaluations, and professional development.

In contrast, there were no differences in time spent on instructional topics based on alignment between mentors' and mentees' race/ethnicity. The study did not allow for investigation of the reasons behind these differences, but the researchers hypothesized that the increased time on these topics in different-race pairs might reflect mentees' or mentors' perceptions of their partner's strengths and needs based on culture, membership in a community, bias, or other factors.

FINDINGS ABOUT NEW TEACHER RETENTION

About 54% of all new teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The support I have received through the new teacher mentoring program has influenced whether or not I plan to stay at the district next year."

New teachers in the moderate and

A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON MENTORING PRACTICES

It is helpful to balance a look at a close study of one district mentoring program over a short period of time with a look at a large national longitudinal analysis. A recent analysis of several years of data from a national survey of new teachers in the United States examined new-teacher retention and how mentoring practices might predict it.

▶ THE STUDY

Maready, B., Cheng, Q., & Bunch, D. (2021). Exploring mentoring practices contributing to new teacher retention: An analysis of the beginning teacher longitudinal study. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 19*(2), 88-99.

Researchers conducted a secondary analysis of data from the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau from the 2007-08 school year through the 2011-12 school year. This national survey was designed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics to follow educators' career paths and gather data about the reasons they stay, change positions or schools, or leave the profession. (Note that the researchers used prepandemic data, and there is no discussion of the pandemic, school closures, virtual learning, or the impact of any of those factors on educator stress levels, wellness, or intent to stay in or leave the profession.)

Fourteen out of the 23 mentoring practices studied predicted new teachers' retention in the same teaching assignment for a second year. Nine of the practices predicted retention in the teaching profession into the fifth year. Seven practices predicted both.

Practices that were significant for both timeframes included having a mentor who taught the same subject as the new teacher and provided frequent support in selecting and adapting curriculum. In addition, retention was more likely when new teachers reported that the mentor's support improved a variety of instructional methods and classroom management.

Factors that predicted retention only into the first year included having a mentor whose main job was mentoring and who provided frequent supports in subject and grade-level instruction. Factors that predicted retention in the fifth year but not the second included frequent observations by the mentor and frequent support in reflecting on teaching practice.

These findings suggest that high-quality mentoring does make a difference for teacher retention, and they provide insight for making decisions about priorities in program design and resource allocation.

high-frequency groups were more likely than those in the low-frequency group to remain in the district the following year (97% and 94% versus 78%). The fact that retention was highest in the moderate frequency group raises a question about the ideal amount of time for encouraging retention. However, because this was not a randomized study, it is not possible to infer causality of the mentoring program.

For example, teachers who were already likely to stay in the district may have sought more time with their mentor as a way to guide their own professional growth. On the other hand, it is possible that some teachers who met with their mentors frequently did so because they were struggling or unsure about their future in the profession.

The one-year retention rate was lower for new teachers who reported spending substantial time with their mentor on classroom management than for those who did not spend much time on this topic (87% compared to 96%). That finding is reversed when the focus of time spent in mentoring conversations is on lesson and unit planning (94% retained compared to 86%).

Again, it is impossible to infer causality. More time spent on classroom management than lesson planning might indicate less readiness or confidence among those new teachers, or time spent on lesson and unit planning could help teachers feel successful enough to continue in the job.

New teachers were equally likely to remain in the district regardless of race/ethnicity or gender. New teachers with a mentor of the same race/ethnicity were retained at a higher rate than new teachers with a mentor of a different race/ethnicity but, surprisingly, the difference was driven by a high one-year retention rate among white new teachers with a white mentor.

White new teachers were more likely than Black new teachers to report that support through the program influenced their decision to stay in the district, but Black new teachers with a white mentor were more likely than Black new teachers with a Black mentor to report that support through the program influenced their decision. The reasons for these differences are not clear.

The researchers acknowledge that one year is a limited measure of retention and that three- and five-year retention data are needed to more clearly understand the relationship between mentoring and retention.

IMPLICATIONS

Research shows that teachers leave in the first three to five years of teaching in part because they feel unsupported

and disconnected. Mentoring programs attempt to connect and support their new teachers as part of the effort to retain them. This study speaks to the importance of looking carefully at those programs to understand what components and features are valuable, for whom, and why.

In addition to sharing data about factors that mattered in this program, the study can also guide other programs and districts in what to include and investigate in their own contexts. While the data collected on this program may not apply to all contexts, it provides a model of why and how to collect data. Leading indicators of new teacher attrition will serve any district well.

The attention to studying components of the program, content of the mentoring conversations, and the relationships between new teachers and their mentors offers valuable fodder for dialogues about how well the program is serving the needs of new educators and what adjustments and refinements might need to be made to the program in the future.

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Mentoring is critical to developing a system of high-quality, standards-aligned professional learning and laying the groundwork for improving instructional practices, building trust and collaboration among educators as colleagues, and establishing relationships among educators, students, families, and communities.

It is also a promising strategy for improving new teacher retention. Stability of the teaching workforce, in turn, contributes to the conditions for success outlined in Standards for Professional Learning.

For example, the **Culture of Collaborative Inquiry** standard affirms the importance of educator collaboration, such as the relationships that develop in a mentoring pair and through a district's commitment to mentoring as a pillar of a learning culture. The **Equity Foundations** standard emphasizes the importance of establishing trust among staff, students, and community members and the need to determine what factors contribute to creating trust. This kind of trust is very hard to build over time if teacher turnover is high, meaning that focusing on determining which mentoring practices might best lead to retention and professional growth among new teachers is an especially good investment of time and resources.

Both reports highlighted here can contribute to the implementation of the **Evidence** standard, which notes that evidence is crucial at all stages of planning, monitoring, and assessing professional learning. The standard calls for educators to use a variety of evidence to make decisions about professional learning policies, resources, plans, and goals.

These examples illustrate how Standards for Professional Learning can inform new teacher mentoring and how mentoring can, in turn, reinforce a culture of standards-aligned professional learning. Research can further illuminate the potential and value of mentoring by incorporating the standards intentionally and consistently.

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DATA POINTS

3 PERCENTAGE POINT INCREASE IN MATH WITH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Passing rates increased 3 to 4 percentage points for Chicago Public Schools middle schoolers when their teachers participated in extensive professional learning around the Common Core State Standards, according to a study by the Chicago Consortium for School Research. The professional learning, which included coaching, professional learning communities, and workshops, had a larger impact on teachers' instruction and student learning than adopting a recommended math curriculum or using resources in the district's online Knowledge Center.

Math grade point averages increased by about 0.13 points more in schools with extensive professional learning than schools with limited professional learning, and math course pass rates increased, especially for students with low baseline test scores. A combination of workshops and collaboration with peers was the most effective form of professional learning.

bit.ly/3OhqlG4

5 COACHING CYCLES IS BETTER THAN 8

A federally funded study of an evidence-based coaching model found that teachers got the most benefit from five cycles of coaching per year compared with either no cycles or eight cycles. The study examined video coaching provided by Teachstone coaches to teachers in 100 elementary schools. In the coaching model, teachers and coaches identified a focus for each cycle, reviewed short video clips of the teacher's instruction, reflected together using a set of coach-provided prompts, and determined strategies to try.

Five coaching cycles improved students' achievement, including for new teachers and struggling teachers. In contrast, eight cycles did not appear to be effective. The researchers hypothesized that these cycles were too short and did not allow sufficient time for reflection and changing instructional practices. Teachers who received no coaching did not have as much opportunity for constructive feedback.

bit.ly/3OfwAtP

2X THE OBSERVATIONS = MORE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

A program to train principals and other administrators how to give effective feedback to teachers came up short overall, according to a districtwide randomized control study published in the *American Educational Research Journal*, with 49% of teachers saying they received actionable recommendations and 27% saying their instruction improved because of the feedback. However, more frequent feedback and discussion made a difference.

Teachers who said the feedback helped them improve "a tremendous amount" were observed twice as many times and had more than twice as many post-observation meetings compared with teachers who did not feel that feedback helped at all. They also met with their supervisors for discussion sooner after observation. Teachers who reported the feedback was useful said their conversations provided actionable feedback and time for reflection and was delivered in the context of a trusting relationship.

The researchers noted "far more variation in average feedback quality across evaluators than we would expect by chance, suggesting there are real differences in evaluators' ability to provide high-quality feedback." They also noted numerous implementation challenges, including administrators having large caseloads and struggling to find time to meet with teachers, resulting in an average of spending only 40 minutes per year with each teacher.

bit.ly/3uYL7n8

52% OF TEACHERS OF COLOR PLAN TO STAY IN THE CLASSROOM

Although 86% of white teachers said they planned to spend their whole careers in the classroom, only 52% of teachers of color said the same, according to the survey *Voices From the Classroom 2022*. When asked what they thought would keep teachers in the classroom, 78% of the total sample named higher salaries, but only 22% of teachers of color agreed. Among the latter, 82% named professional support (41%) and leadership opportunities (41%) as most important.

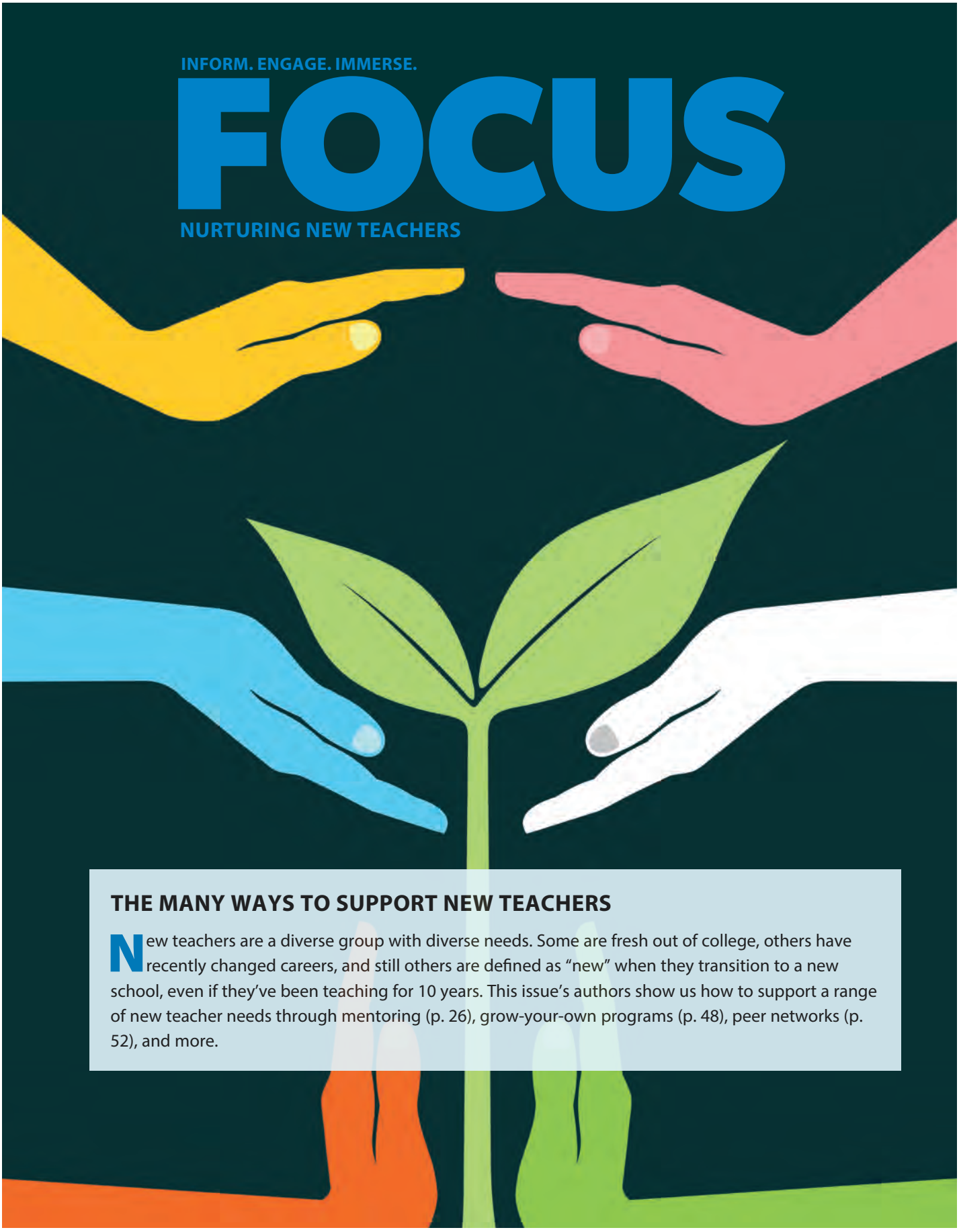
Perceptions of unions' effectiveness in securing professional supports also varied across race. A majority (70%) of teachers of color believed their unions are doing a good job supporting new teachers, while only 41% of white teachers agreed. Overall, teachers believed unions could do more to provide or support professional learning, with only 42% saying they are doing a good job.

bit.ly/3OjsJfe

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

FOCUS

NURTURING NEW TEACHERS



THE MANY WAYS TO SUPPORT NEW TEACHERS

New teachers are a diverse group with diverse needs. Some are fresh out of college, others have recently changed careers, and still others are defined as "new" when they transition to a new school, even if they've been teaching for 10 years. This issue's authors show us how to support a range of new teacher needs through mentoring (p. 26), grow-your-own programs (p. 48), peer networks (p. 52), and more.

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR EVERY STUDENT, GIVE EVERY NEW TEACHER A MENTOR

BY SHARRON HELMKE

I still cringe when I remember my first year as a special education teacher at a suburban high school. I met my assigned mentor during the whirlwind week of meetings leading up to the start of school and learned that she was also mentoring two other teachers in addition to having a full teaching schedule of her own. In those early weeks, her time was stretched thin, and I was lucky to get a five-minute conversation with her during hall breaks. As fall wore on, I saw even less of her, and by Halloween, my mentoring was effectively over.

On my own, without guidance, I struggled just to get through each day. That was not a recipe for successful instruction, and it left no opportunity to learn by reflecting on my occasional successes. The year was less a learning

When I lead a Learning Forward Mentor Academy session, I stress to the mentors that they aren't just helping new teachers get through their first year. They are building habits that will stay with those teachers throughout their educational careers, and through that, they are impacting every student those teachers will ever serve.

experience than a sheer test of perseverance.

I wish I could say my story is unique, but over years of facilitating Learning Forward's Mentor Academy, I've heard countless stories that are similar to mine. Even stories of more involved and interactive mentoring rarely include the kind of collaborative partnerships that Standards for Professional Learning describe as integral to continuous improvement (Learning Forward, 2022).

Learning Forward is committed to changing that pattern by working with states, districts, and schools to develop strong, instructionally focused mentoring initiatives that result in better teaching and learning for everyone involved. Through our customized Mentor Academy, we help systems shift away from traditional "buddy" type mentoring to a program designed to foster instructional growth from the first weeks of school. With teacher growth as the expectation from Day One, everything improves, from training and support for mentors to the learning culture of the school to the outcomes for new teachers and their students.

WHY MENTORING MATTERS

Mentoring is often the first form of professional learning a teacher receives. Because it is formative to the educators new teachers will become, I encourage state and local education agencies to think carefully about its design and implementation. I also encourage mentors to understand the scope of their impact.

When I lead a Learning Forward Mentor Academy session, I stress to the mentors that they aren't just helping new teachers get through their first year. They are building habits that will stay with those teachers throughout their educational careers, and through that, they are impacting every student those teachers will ever serve. I remind them: "You are developing the colleagues you want to learn and teach beside."

I also point out that mentoring should introduce and welcome new teachers into a culture that values a holistic and ongoing approach to professional learning. Mentoring can and should be an entry point to a system of relevant, high-quality learning and professional growth. Ultimately, a mentorship based on a collegial, growth-focused partnership gives rise to a cadre of educators who expect their colleagues to be supportive, collaborative, inspiring, and continually seeking to improve their own practice. Over several years and cadre after cadre of such like-minded folks, this eventually becomes the institutionalized culture of the campus and district. Collaborative growth becomes the expectation of administration, teachers, and the institution itself (Muhammad, 2009).

The participants in the academies I lead respond to the call to shape their profession, and they rise to the challenge. Over the first few sessions of the academy, they begin to see themselves as modeling the spirit and practices of collaborative inquiry and the dedication to lifelong learning necessary to become a highly effective teacher of all students. They learn to build supportive relationships with colleagues based on trust, respect, and recognition of strengths. They deepen their own practice, too. I often hear surprise in the voices of even experienced mentors as they talk about how mentoring is leading to changes and growth in their own classroom teaching.

LEARNING FORWARD'S MENTOR ACADEMY

Learning Forward offers its instructionally focused mentoring program in a variety of formats to meet the needs of districts large and small.

We can come to your school or district with a custom-designed mentor training program and mentoring support specifically designed to meet your needs, fit into your existing professional learning structure, and enhance the growth of your novice teachers.

If you are in Louisiana or Texas, we offer state-approved mentor preparation programs that can be facilitated virtually or in your district. Ask us about the options to meet your state's requirements.

Do you have only a few mentors or want to experience the difference for yourself? Try our open enrollment, virtual mentoring course that brings together mentors from across districts and states.

Read more about the Learning Forward approach to mentoring at **services.learningforward.org/services/mentor-teacher-academy**. For more information, contact Sharron Helmke, vice president of professional services, at sharron.helmke@learningforward.org or 800-727-7288.

LEARNING FORWARD'S APPROACH

Beginning in 2016, Learning Forward designed a mentor training program for Louisiana Believes, a statewide education reform initiative that includes teacher and leader preparation as one of its main pillars. The mentor training program is based on decades of experience designing and facilitating effective professional learning that honors the needs of adult learners in all stages of their career as well as a deep knowledge of the systemic conditions necessary for instructional improvement.

For three years, our team of designers worked closely with the Louisiana Department of Education to craft a program to train and support mentors who work closely with new teachers in their first through third years of teaching. The goal was to foster a deep understanding of the relational and instructional skills a mentor needs to have to accelerate new teachers' instructional effectiveness (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Louisiana mentors engaged in extensive professional learning, including group and individual support, from Learning Forward (Manning & Bouffard, 2020). They demonstrated implementation and effectiveness of their newly acquired skills by satisfying the requirements needed to earn a microcredential issued by BloomBoard (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.), and they put these skills into practice with new teacher mentees in their schools or districts.

As a result of the program, 95% of participating mentors felt prepared and confident to mentor novice teachers and apply for the state mentor teacher designation. In addition, over 90% reported they would be able to apply what they learned in their own classroom teaching (Learning Forward, 2020). The original Learning Forward program and its subsequent 2022 revisions now form the basis of the mentoring programs taught by all Louisiana Believes-approved mentor training providers.

Since completing our work with the Louisiana Department of Education, we at Learning Forward have continued to revise and offer our own Mentor Academy based on the experiences and feedback of the organizations with whom we have partnered. Working in collaboration with states such as New York and Texas and districts such as South Bend (Indiana), Lansing (Michigan), and Jefferson County (Kentucky), we customize our program to help mentors and those who oversee mentoring programs integrate best practices into their existing professional learning and induction programs. We make the learning immediately applicable so that mentors can prepare novice teachers for a seamless transition to full participation in the professional learning culture of the campus and district.

Our Mentor Academy is grounded in an instructionally focused approach to mentoring. This approach is designed to support mentors in coaching novice teachers through their first cycles of continuous improvement based on a reiterative cycle that includes:

- Data-informed goal-setting for both student learning and mentee learning;
- Learning new teaching behaviors through observation, practice, and refinement; and
- Gathering and assessing evidence of impact that is most indicative and proximal to the change expected (Manning, 2018).

Through the school year, this cycle is repeated with a gradual release approach that instills the cycle at the heart of the mentee's teaching practice while also fostering the skills needed to sustain collaborative relationships with colleagues, first with their mentor and later with their professional learning communities (PLCs), instructional coaches, and peers.

Within this cycle, mentors guide mentees to develop key teaching behaviors that include instructional design that considers the needs and strengths of all learners; attentive and responsive classroom interactions with students; and consistent engagement in reflection, using relevant data to assess the impact of their teaching behavior and adapt practices accordingly (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

KEY ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

A mentor training program like Learning Forward's Mentor Academy

is a key piece of a larger mentoring and induction system. Such a system requires intentional planning and structures at the district and campus levels. Most importantly, it requires a state-, district-, and campus-level commitment to shift away from traditional mentoring to a program that leads to instructional growth and fits within a comprehensive induction approach.

Next, it requires planning for ongoing professional learning for mentors that provides support throughout the school year and just-in-time learning as they meet the challenges of guiding a novice teacher to instructional improvement. As all educators know, starting a cycle of improvement is the easy part; learning our way to new, sustainable practices that improve student learning is the difficult part. Mentors need support and additional resources when both mentors and mentees begin to feel the stress of sustained effort toward change.

An equally important consideration is identifying relevant criteria for choosing effective mentor teachers. As both a district mentor program coordinator and a Mentor Academy facilitator, I've learned that it's important to seek out those individuals who know how to inspire others through example, whose manner fosters trust and communicates acceptance, and whose commitment to lifelong learning makes them unashamed to admit they don't yet have all the answers to the teaching puzzle (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Of course, they must be passionately committed to teaching, mentoring, and the success of all students (Oregon Department of Education, n.d.).

These are the individuals who can best create collegial, guiding partnerships with mentees, inspire the trust necessary for adults to admit to not knowing, and are willing to let others find their own teaching style rather than trying to impose their own preferences and teaching style on the mentee. In one of the final sessions with last year's New York mentors cadre, I asked the mentors what they would look for in colleagues they would encourage to pursue mentoring. Nonjudgmental attitude, patience, and dedication to being there when needed were some of the most common responses.

The work of ensuring that novice teachers develop habits that support teacher and student growth shouldn't fall solely on the shoulders of mentors, however. Wise leaders build a web of support so novice teachers can always find someone available to talk, listen, or support their learning. Mentors are certainly central to this web, but instructional coaches should be there as well, as should department chairs, team or grade-level leads, evaluators, and even school psychologists.

In his description of four types of teachers, educator and author Anthony Muhammad (2009) calls novice teachers "tweeners" — they are as yet undecided about whether to settle comfortably into the status quo or commit to changing their own practice for the benefit of all students. By building a web of available support for mentors, you can increase the odds of the latter happening and ensure that novice teachers will find counsel with someone who supports their growth and fosters a growth mindset.

MAKING THE MOST OF MENTORING

Here are actions you can take right now to improve the quality of mentoring.

Secure ongoing, high-quality professional learning for your mentors. This professional learning should foster implementation of growth-focused relationships, adult-learning theory, and frequent, instructionally focused reflection conversations. Even if existing structures and schedules won't allow every element of an instructionally focused mentoring program to be enacted this year, the improved mentoring relationships and conversational focus will foster a growth mindset in novice teachers they will carry into future PLC work and change initiatives.

Learning Forward's Mentor Academy has served as the exemplar of this type of mentoring for numerous states and school districts. It fully integrates Standards for Professional Learning and can be customized to tie seamlessly into a district's existing high-quality professional learning structures.

Make time for collaboration. Once the focus of the program is in place, collaboration time is the most important resource. Ensure that mentors and mentees have designated and protected time to engage in learning-focused activities such as observation with data collection, modeling, and co-teaching, as well as planning and reflection conversations.

Through our work in states across the U.S., we've learned that some states, districts, or union guidelines restrict who can observe teachers in action. Research what's possible within your local guidelines and begin designing schedules that provide time for mentor-mentee collaborative planning and reflection as well as time for whatever reciprocal classroom observations and co-teaching those local guidelines allow.

Develop a web of support map. New teachers need to know to whom they can go for support, on what topics, and how. Too often, they have to learn this information informally or by currying favor with a specific individual. Instead, this information should be widely available and teachers should be encouraged to reach out.

Start by identifying the needs of new teachers and the names of individuals who are willing to make themselves available to support those needs and questions. See the table on p. 30 for examples of the needs and roles you might consider to fill them. Then use the tool on the following pages to begin constructing your web of support map.

CREATE A WEB OF SUPPORT FOR NEW TEACHERS

Being a new teacher is stressful and often overwhelming. New teachers need a web of support to cope with all of the challenges. They need to know on whom they can call for what kinds of support and how to get in touch with them. Here's a list of some of the needs to consider when constructing a web of support for new teachers, along with suggestions of professionals in the school or district you might consider to fill those roles.

Support need	Purpose	Potential roles or people to consider
Emergency emotional support	Coping with feelings of stress or overwhelm. Many new teachers don't know to whom they can turn in these situations.	School psychologist, social worker, other mental health professional, SEL coach
Instructional strategies	Addressing a variety of student needs, abilities, and learning paces. New teachers need advice from an educator with deep understanding of learners and how to meet diverse needs.	Instructional coach, experienced teacher in the same grade level or content area, content specialist, mentor
Content and subject matter	Teaching content and implementing curriculum. Even teachers well-trained in their subject areas encounter new challenges.	Content specialist, department chair, instructional coach
Classroom management/ SEL	Building a positive classroom climate and supporting students with challenging behaviors or emotional issues. This is one of the most important and difficult topics for new teachers, so support should be readily available and intentional, not driven by an educator who happens to be nearby.	SEL or behavior coach, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports specialist
Family relationships and communication	Learning to have positive and proactive relationships with families and handling challenging situations with parents. In addition to general guidance, teachers sometimes need to know legal guidelines, such as what information is confidential and how to handle communication in families where a parent has restricted access to a child.	School counselor or social worker, assistant principal
Grading processes and policies	Explaining how to assign, record, and submit grades. Procedural tasks like grading can be confusing even for experienced teachers when they are navigating a new school or system.	Coach, mentor, assistant principal
Maintenance and housekeeping	Responding to urgent needs for cleaning or repair, such as when a child gets sick in the classroom. This information is often shared by word of mouth among teachers rather than through formal channels. It can save new teachers a lot of stress.	Custodian
Technology	Supporting technology use, including integration for effective instruction and troubleshooting hardware.	Technology specialist, district IT office
Other_____		
Other_____		

After you've considered the list, create your own web of support using the following tool.

Task/need	Name	Role	Phone number	Email
Emergency emotional support				
Instructional strategies				
Content and subject matter				
Classroom management/ SEL				
Family relationships and communication				
Grading processes and policies				
Maintenance and housekeeping				
Technology				
Other_____				
Other_____				

By carefully constructing this document and sharing it with all new teachers — including those who have previous experience but are new to your campus — you assure them they have joined a supportive community and are not being thrown into a classroom alone. (You can also see a visual representation of the web of support in this issue's At a Glance feature on p. 81.)

FROM TEACHER SHORTAGES TO TEACHER SUCCESS

Now is the time to take action to ensure the teachers you are hiring will be the teachers creating strong student outcomes in the future. Schools are grappling with a teacher shortage, a large cadre of new teachers, and a need for more stability in the workforce. These trends can be seen as a problem or as an opportunity to cultivate the next generation of highly effective teachers and leaders and shape a culture of job-embedded, instructional improvement.

With a strong mentoring program, a teacher shortage doesn't have to mean that teaching effectiveness and student outcomes will drop. It establishes the foundation for new

PLAN NOW FOR NEXT YEAR

No matter where you are in your mentoring efforts for the current school year, it is vital to begin now to consider your induction and mentoring structure, processes, and schedules for 2023-24's cadre of new teachers.

Planning and implementing a strong, instructionally focused mentoring program takes time and collaborative effort. For example, you want to make sure you have time to tackle action items like rewriting (or creating) an appropriate job description and application process for mentor teachers; deciding on content-based vs. general mentoring; gathering data about the number of expected vacancies and the number of mentors needed; and identifying funding sources to cover released time for mentors and mentees to engage in observation, co-planning, and co-teaching.

I recommend starting now with these steps:

- Consider the role of mentoring and mentor training within your larger induction program and professional learning structure. Be intentional about connecting this plan with your school improvement plan.
- Investigate providers of instructionally focused mentor learning and support like Learning Forward. Seek their advice for reframing your existing structures of induction and mentoring.
- Survey current mentees about where the current support system met their needs and where it fell short. Explore the gap they might have experienced between their preservice preparation and the realities of a classroom full of diverse learners.
- Survey current mentors about the challenges they are facing and support or changes they would recommend. Probe for systemic barriers at the district and campus levels.
- Survey administrators and teacher evaluators about the progress they observed (or didn't observe) in novice teachers and their perceptions of why.
- Develop a plan to collect baseline data on mentors' and mentees' practices so you'll know if the changes you initiate are having the desired impact.
- Advocate for changes in state, union, or district guidelines that create barriers to effective mentoring. Speak from experience and with the needs of students centered. For more information on how to be an effective advocate, visit **learningforward.org/advocacy**.
- Consider applying a three-year, gradual release model of mentoring. Create a system that releases a teacher from mentoring only when the mentor, mentee, and the mentee's evaluator feel that the teacher has become a self-directed learner and teacher practitioner.

teachers to progress rapidly, improving student outcomes and their own practice at the same time.

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3 STRATEGIES to upgrade your mentoring program for new teachers

BY JOSHUA H. BARNETT

Investing in high-quality, effective mentoring programs is a key, research-based strategy to increase teacher retention and new teachers' effectiveness (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). But not all mentoring programs are created equal. In fact, too many of these programs operate as little more than a buddy system in which mentors play informal, poorly defined roles and receive little training or supervision. Fortunately, this trend can change — and it must do so quickly, as districts hire a large number of new teachers to address staffing shortages, including many teachers who are learning on the job in alternative certification programs.

A survey of new teachers in three states found that although 78% of new teachers were provided mentors, only a little over half of those teachers reported having at least three conversations with their mentor over the course of the

year. Only 41% were observed teaching at least once by their mentor during the year, and a majority of the new teachers were not provided a mentor who taught the same subject area or grade level. These patterns were most pronounced for new teachers working in high-poverty schools (Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

Given the widespread prevalence of these underdeveloped mentoring programs, perhaps it is not surprising that new teacher attrition remains high. Recent data indicate that more than 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching, often before they fully develop the skills to be effective in the classroom (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

The culprit to attrition is not mentoring per se, but ineffective mentoring. In fact, research shows that new teachers who have participated in high-quality mentoring programs score higher on measures of effective classroom practices, including student engagement and differentiating lessons to meet student needs, and new teacher mentoring is associated with increases in student achievement on reading and math assessments (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Further, mentorship from a highly effective teacher consistently ranks highest in surveys asking teachers which supports are most helpful (Behrstock-Sherratt et al., 2014).

High-quality mentoring programs also benefit the mentors, thereby making a positive impact on multiple generations in the teaching workforce. When experienced teachers are thoughtfully recruited and selected to become mentors and supported to fulfill their potential in the role, they advance their own expertise and career development without having to leave the classroom. This offers a new career path that keeps highly effective teachers in the classroom and provides an alternative for the many teachers who do not want to become administrators but want to continue developing in the profession.

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Research highlights key elements of successful mentoring programs, including selecting mentors with proven know-how and similar grade and subject-area expertise, providing high-quality training and support for mentors to develop their knowledge and coaching skills, providing a sustained time frame for mentoring, and setting aside time for observation and collaborative learning. Yet these elements of a more comprehensive approach have been difficult for districts to put into practice.

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching is working with districts across the U.S. to redesign their mentoring programs. In 2021, the institute released a report, *Why New Teacher Mentoring Falls Short, and How to Fix It* (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021), that outlines strategies that are leading to greater success in supporting new teachers. The report focuses on three key strategies that work, which we outline here.

We developed reflection questions to assist district and school leaders in assessing how well they are implementing these three strategies so they can consider how to strengthen new teacher mentoring. These questions can be used to identify areas where the mentoring program is already strong as well as areas for potential improvement.

If you have a mentoring program in place, we recommend you use these questions to guide a review of your program and consider engaging district-level leaders, school leaders, mentors, and new teachers in the process. If you are developing a new mentoring program, these questions can facilitate a discussion as you design a program based on your specific needs and context.

1 Focus mentoring on instructional improvement.

High-quality mentoring focuses on teachers' pedagogy and practice and is therefore connected to systems for improving teaching and learning. Mentors should be excellent models of instructional practice and should serve mentees in an instructional coaching capacity. For many schools and systems, this is a shift, and it requires intentionality.

One important tool is the use of a research-based instructional framework or rubric that defines strong teaching practice across multiple domains and indicators of practice. The instructional rubric creates a common language for mentors and mentees to use to discuss teaching practices. Many districts already have such a framework in place, and it is a matter of making an explicit connection to the mentoring initiative.

Structural changes can also help strengthen the focus on instruction in mentoring, including allocating dedicated released time for mentors to meet with mentees. Building this time into the schedule sends a message about the importance of mentoring and it also creates the time and space for the mentors to be effective.

A key part of the shift to instructionally focused mentoring is intentional staffing. This includes creating a clear job description and

expectations for mentors that describe the instructional leadership role and establishing a process for recruiting and selecting master teachers who are skilled in coaching other adults. Districts should also provide sufficient compensation to attract effective teachers to the mentoring role.

Reflection questions

- To what extent do your mentoring efforts focus on instructional practice and improvement?
- How is the focus on instructional improvement communicated to mentors, mentees, and school leaders?
- How are you selecting mentors to ensure they are models of high-quality instructional practice?
- How are mentor teachers and new teachers paired? If a new teacher is not paired with an educator in their same grade or subject, how is the new teacher supported in the content and pedagogy of that grade or subject?
- How does mentorship support or supplement other instructional feedback and content-focused professional learning for new teachers?
- How much released time is allocated for mentors to observe and support new teachers in their classrooms? How do coverage and compensation for that released time work?
- What data or student work can be used to determine whether new teachers' instructional practices are improving and whether a mentor's support is having an impact?

2 Support mentors to be more effective by providing training, tools, and protocols for the role.

Mentors need to be equipped and empowered to serve as instructional leaders for their mentees. Even when mentors are selected with intentionality, most need additional training and support in how to work with new teachers. Ongoing support will help them address questions and challenges that arise and provide opportunities for reflection and growth so that mentors become the best leaders they can be.

Support for mentors should address some or all of the following topics: grounding coaching in student work and student data to be responsive to the needs of teachers and their students; how to get to mentees' needs through reviewing and discussing lesson plans, observing teaching, watching and discussing a video of an expert teacher, and other strategies; and engaging in guided reflection to help mentees develop awareness of their practices and improve them.

Reflection questions

- How do you develop a shared understanding of and language for instructionally focused mentoring practices among mentors and mentees?
- How often do school leaders or coaches observe mentors and provide feedback on their own instruction and their support to mentees?
- What opportunities do mentors have to collaborate and grow their capacity and skills as instructional leaders?
- What resources need to be in place to enable all of the above, and to what extent are they currently in place? Consider funding, time, tools, handbooks, trainings, and other types of resources or supports.

3 Align the mentoring program with district and school initiatives.

Mentors can also have a larger impact on schoolwide improvement efforts if empowered to do so. One way is through helping mentors understand and connect their work to district systems and priorities, such as new curriculum implementation. Seeing their role as advancing these initiatives provides mentors with a greater sense of involvement and impact at the school and district levels. District leaders and principals can facilitate such alignment and collaboration by holding districtwide mentor meetings and other opportunities for mentors to collaborate and form professional connections, as well as by inviting mentors to learn about and collaborate on districtwide or schoolwide improvement initiatives.

In addition, including mentors on a school or district leadership team elevates their role. It brings their experiences working with new teachers into the school and district's decision-making process while also empowering the mentors to be part of decision-making and take their learning about district or schoolwide priorities into their mentoring work.

Reflection questions

- In what ways is the work of mentors designed to advance district and school priorities or initiatives such as the introduction of a new curriculum?
- How do mentors learn from school or district leaders about those key goals and priorities and how they connect to the mentoring program?
- In what ways is the work of mentor teachers integrated with school leadership structures and school systems such as professional learning or leadership teams?
- What opportunities do mentors have to develop leadership and be involved in school or district decision-making processes?
- In your school or district, how could the work of mentors strengthen a current priority or initiative?

SHIFTS TOWARD SUCCESS

By shifting the purpose of mentoring to focus on teaching and learning, providing high-quality

training and support for mentors, and integrating mentoring into existing school and district initiatives, districts can better support new teachers to be successful earlier in their career. That success can include increased effectiveness and retention of new teachers, increased effectiveness of the mentor teachers, and improved student achievement. Given the growing number of new teachers in the profession and the challenge of staffing classrooms with effective educators, improvements in new teacher mentoring are long overdue. Fortunately, we have increasing amounts of evidence showing improved approaches are possible.

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To support new teachers of color, build communities, not committees

BY JAY GARVEY SHAH, SARADA HANUMADASS WEBER, ANTONIO HOYE, MARISA FLOWERS, AND HEATHER LOTT

The Dane County New Teacher Project, a consortium of 17 school districts in Wisconsin, believes that new teacher induction is everyone's responsibility. To that end, the group pools resources from member districts to ensure support for new educators as they improve their effectiveness with students, find joy and purpose in their careers, and continue in the profession.

In keeping with our decades-long partnership with the New Teacher Center, our work aims to strengthen multiple roles that support new teachers — mentors, coaches, and principals — as well as supporting the new educators themselves. Within this work, a new dimension of support has emerged over the last two years that is showing promise as a practice for supporting and retaining new teachers of color through a project called Partners for Racial Inclusion, which pairs experienced teachers with novice teachers of color.

The need for such a project became clear as the COVID-19 pandemic amplified existing racial disparities in educational experiences. Locally, the Dane County Equity Consortium explored root causes and sought insights from students throughout the county

From left: Jay Garvey Shah, Marisa Flowers, Sarada Hanumadass Weber, and Antonio Hoye are lead partners in the Partners for Racial Inclusion project in Wisconsin. Photo by Heather Lott.

during a forum on social justice.

One finding from that forum was clear: There was a significant disparity in racial diversity among staff and students, and this disparity factored greatly in how students of color experienced school. Students told of microaggressions, including misrepresentation and underrepresentation in curriculum and among their teachers. Students who could see themselves represented among the school staff were more engaged.

When we looked at data from 25 Dane County Equity Consortium districts (including urban, suburban, and rural communities), we saw that 31% of students identified as people of color, but only 6% of educators did. (See charts on p. 40.)

This pattern was particularly troubling because research shows that students of color benefit when they have teachers who look like them. For example, a Black student's likelihood of graduating from high school increases by 7% and of enrolling in college increases by 13% when that student has just one Black teacher by 3rd grade. The likelihood of college enrollment jumps to 32% higher when that student has two Black teachers by the same age (Gershenson et al., 2018).

With this knowledge, the members of Dane County New Teacher Project and Dane County Equity Consortium recognized that we needed to do more to recruit and retain teachers of color. A group of educators from various roles, districts, and racial backgrounds collaborated to design a pilot project called Partners for Racial Inclusion.

The project called for hiring four lead partners — full-time educators who would work an additional six to eight hours per week, each supporting four novice educators of color from across the county. Project leaders invited experienced teachers to apply and hired the lead partners in July 2021. Outreach to new educators began in August 2021.

DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIPS

A racially diverse group of educators and leaders from several districts in Dane County formed a design team. The team felt it was important to honor the well-developed instructional mentoring work already existing in districts.

They agreed the focus of conversation would be to process the experience of living as an educator of color in a vastly white-majority district, county, and state, and that the agenda for each partnership meeting would be determined by the new educators, not the lead partners.

Even more important to designers was that all hierarchies be eliminated — all four experienced lead partners and their 16 new educator colleagues would be equal learners and supporters. To honor this collaborative status, new educators were paid for participating at the same hourly rate as the lead partners.

WHAT THESE LEAD PARTNERS SAY

Antonio Hoye: "I have a deep appreciation for the opportunities out of my own district that have opened doors for me to experience this with others. … It has helped me continue to find my value in supporting our students."

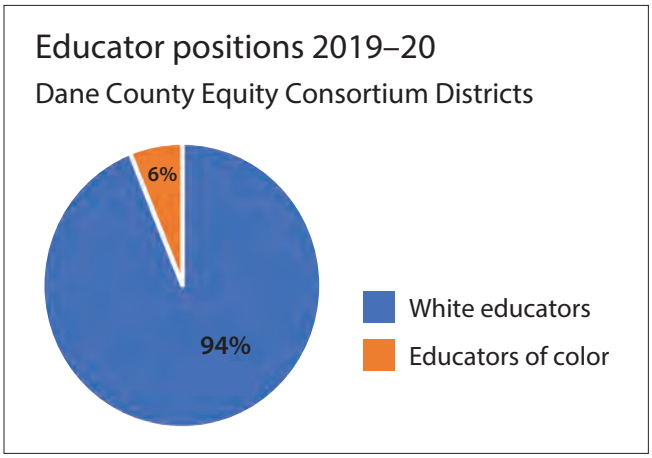
Jay Garvey Shah: "… [T]he level of discrimination and systemic racism and the universality of some of those things are surprising. I don't know if I didn't predict it or if I wasn't thinking about it, but some of the things were unfortunate and came as a surprise."

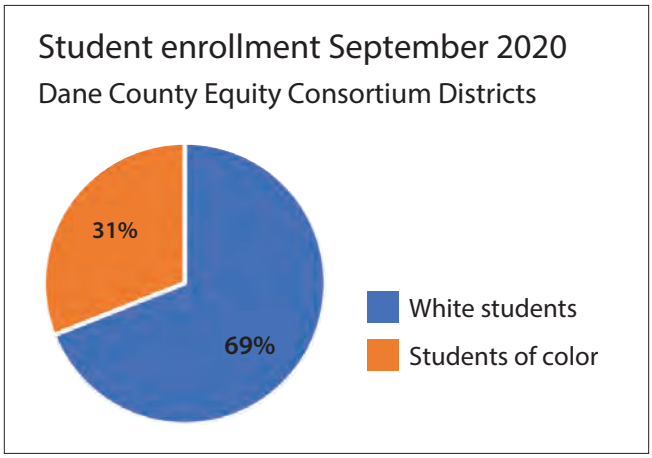
Sarada Hanumadass Weber: "What does it mean to be the 'only' in my department? The design of this program took the burden of judgment away and freed us to have these conversations."

Marisa Flowers: "Community is the primary appreciation. We're all teachers of color, but the backgrounds we all have with experiences, cultures, and ages are all varied. It is a true community with a sense of belonging and a feeling of being heard."

STUDENT AND EDUCATOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The charts below show the percentage of students and educators in the 25 Dane County Equity Consortium districts who identified as white or people of color.





Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Lead partners and new educators met twice monthly for one-on-one conversations. They also organized monthly small-group gatherings made up of a lead partner and three to four new educators. Additionally, all lead partners and new educators joined a quarterly lunch meeting. During these meetings, conversations focused on the experience of working within a majority-white community and how to navigate that community both inside and outside of schools.

Although partners hope and want each other to be successful educators, they recognized that support for the whole person is important and will ultimately lead to success in teaching. They asked: How are you? How are you showing up? How are you navigating the community? The conversations provided a space to talk about teaming, conflicts about race, and things beyond school. They may have led to some discussion of instruction, but that is not their specific purpose.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

As the one-year pilot program came to a close, lead partners and new educators felt they had achieved much of what they set out to do. They gathered in May to reflect on the year and completed a year-end survey, which revealed several insights highlighted here. Most participants indicated they will choose to remain in their districts, and the overwhelming majority are looking for ways to continue as members of the Partners for Racial Inclusion community.

Lead partners expressed particular appreciation for the experiences with new educators and the potential to share their learning to inform systemic changes in the future. This speaks to the value of the work accomplished this year.

The lead partners and new educators involved with the pilot realize that, although this project's main goal was to provide direct support to educators of color, it also has the potential to effect systemic change by providing feedback to school and district leaders and the larger educational community. Here are key takeaways that they hope will inform school districts as they work to support new educators of color.

Some of the structures and strategies districts have already implemented have been supportive for the educators of color in this pilot by providing a community of other professionals who care about each other's work. For example, partners express appreciation for collaboration with their teams to share and receive ideas, materials, and curricula during regular and more informal meetings.

Some of the most powerful support has come from administrators and mentors who are responsive and provide intentional, authentic, and meaningful check-ins. Additionally, it has eased the burden for new educators of color when some districts have recognized and provided resources to help with the very real burden of navigating licensing issues with the state.

Through their year-end reflections, partners have also identified some challenges and barriers that need to be addressed.

New educators in the pilot reported that they frequently faced micro- and macroaggressions. They bore the disrespect expressed by colleagues who questioned their legitimacy in the school and criticized their accents and cultural differences. A feeling of isolation persists as some of the new educators struggle to navigate racism and suspicion from the community on top of the stresses of being new to

the profession. When they are the only educator of color in their school or district, the sense of isolation is even more pronounced.

They also bear what has been called the "invisible tax" on teachers of color (Modan, 2022). These educators of color sit on committees on equity and racism, advise student clubs and affinity groups, and feel pressure to speak on all things related to equity and culture. But there is a lack of compensation for those sometimes-invisible extra tasks.

In addition, those who were hired before receiving their license faced the barrier of the state license certification process, which is expensive and time-consuming. At least 50% of new educator partners this year were simultaneously tending to coursework, passing tests, and applying for their licenses while working as new teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Partners for Racial Inclusion believes recruiting and retaining more teachers of color is an urgent social justice issue that cannot be delayed because students deserve teachers of color while those students are still in school. After working together for a year, lead partners and new educators have outlined short- and long-term steps that would help school systems. They believe these steps will communicate belief in educators' potential as well as providing instrumental support.

Reduce isolation. Districts that hire educators of color could consider placing them in schools and teams with peers and administrators who are also people of color. Offering a system or structure, such as Partners for Racial Inclusion, that supports mentorship and collaboration with other educators of color to discuss conflicts about race and things beyond school will meet the needs of finding community and belonging in an otherwise lonely place.

Compensate professionals for their work. Districts must address the "invisible tax" right away by acknowledging and legitimizing the extra tasks our educators of color take on and awarding additional compensation for those responsibilities. In this pilot, all partners received compensation to participate, and we recommend implementing similar strategies more broadly.

Give ongoing feedback and support. An administrator who checks in both formally and informally sends a message of commitment to and investment in an early-career professional. Peers and mentors can also provide encouragement and support. It is important for colleagues to communicate that they see and recognize both the skills educators of color bring to their work and the stress they shoulder of being new and often isolated.

Cultivate leadership. Many of the tasks beginning educators of color are engaged with are decidedly leadership activities (for example, participating and leading equity teams, working with student clubs, and specifically supporting both colleagues and students of color). We recommend school systems and leaders formally recognize this type of leadership as an official role with pay and professional learning. This would legitimize and formalize the work often being done behind the scenes. Absent that recognition and support, this work is accomplished voluntarily and adds to the extra burden influencing new educators to leave their positions.

Prioritize professional learning for all staff to become conscious of systemic racism and take action to repair it. All colleagues are responsible for this systems work. The work on equity and inclusion needs to strengthen its focus on teaching adults to collaborate within a diversifying workforce alongside the continued focus on students. Ideally, this will support all colleagues to welcome and include those professionals who may be the only (or one of the few) persons of color within their school or district.

A SENSE OF BELONGING

If hiring and retaining more teachers of color is a priority, we must commit to building *community* rather than launching a siloed initiative such as a committee charged with hiring more teachers of color. In our Partners for Racial Inclusion work, we find that building a sense of belonging and caring for one another has meant partners can collaborate in a safe place, generate joy, and find the support to continue forward in the profession. For everyone involved, it has been rewarding and enjoyable to know we are having an impact on one another's well-being through a trusting community.

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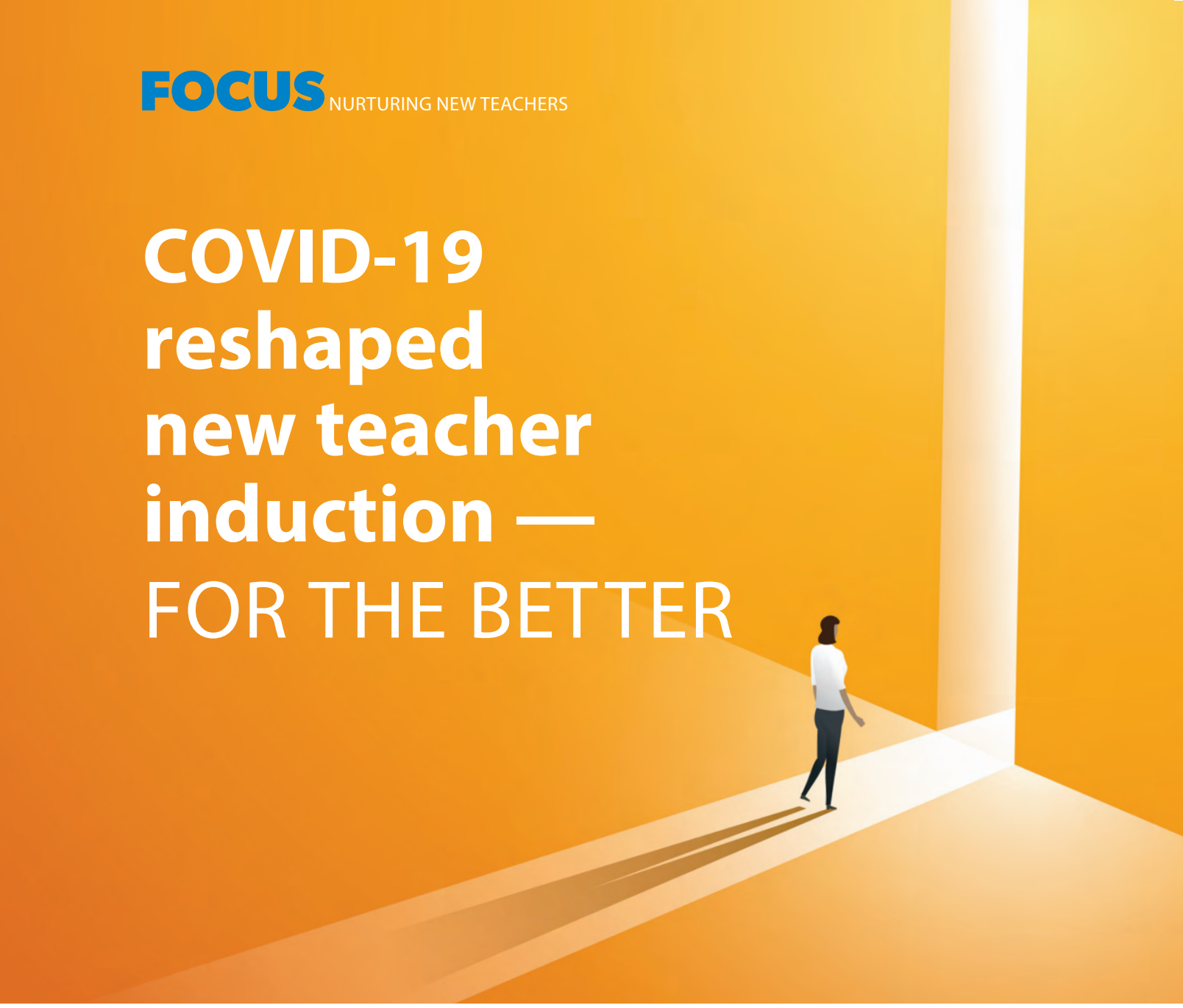
COVID-19 reshaped new teacher induction — FOR THE BETTER



BY ELIZABETH SIMONS, SHEILA B. ROBINSON, AND MARGUERITE DIMGBA

Each August, Greece Central School District, in northern New York, hosts a new teacher induction program for all new hires, designed by the director of professional learning and a large, diverse committee. The district's longstanding new teacher induction model suddenly changed when the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close abruptly in March 2020.

Initially, we faced questions about how to prepare a remote program if we weren't able to meet in person and how to support new teachers as they navigated a hybrid teaching model. When schools reopened, these challenges shifted, and new ones emerged.

The national teacher shortage that had been predicted for years began to impact our students directly, and experienced teachers began retiring or leaving in increasing numbers. We had a pronounced need for new teachers and faced the challenge of scaling our support to larger numbers.

As a result of these shifts, we rapidly transformed the way we support our new and novice teachers. Positive changes in how our district supports, develops expertise in, and retains highly qualified and satisfied new teachers are here to stay.

UNDERSTANDING OUR TEACHERS

The first step in adapting our support was understanding the teachers we are serving and how that has changed. "New teachers" is a bit of a misnomer. Our new hires come to Greece CSD with a wide variety and level of experiences, especially now.

Some are new to teaching, having just completed their college degrees. Since the pandemic, even this group has diverse needs because some have had in-person student teaching experiences, while others engaged in virtual classroom student teaching, and still others were unable to serve as student teachers at all.

Even if they have had student teaching experience, some new teachers are hired so late in the summer that they miss new teacher induction, teach an entire school year with us, and attend new teacher induction the following summer.

Other new teachers have had experience as long-term substitutes who have taught from a few weeks to nearly a full school year. We also hire experienced teachers from other districts, other states, and sometimes other countries, and these teachers have a wide range of teaching experiences, too.

COVID created another group of new teachers. New York State implemented an Emergency COVID-19 Certificate, which allows teacher candidates seeking certain certifications and extensions of existing certificates to work in the state's public schools for two years while taking and passing the required exam(s) for the certificate or extension sought.

It is challenging to address all of these diverse experiences and needs. Making matters more challenging, the bulk of our new teacher induction program planning occurs before the end of the school year in June, while hiring continues right up through (and often past) the first day of school in September. Therefore, we don't necessarily know about all of the individuals who will attend new teacher induction while we are organizing it. We factored all of these situations and needs into our planning as we considered how to modify our support going forward.

HOW WE DESIGN THE NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM

In an effort to be inclusive and provide a rich experience for new teachers (along with counselors, psychologists, and social workers who are new to our district), planning for new teacher induction has long been a highly collaborative undertaking that takes advantage of multiple sources of input to inform each year's program.

We engage a large, diverse planning team that includes the director of professional learning, administrators, curriculum leaders, mentor teachers, an instructional technology teacher, and staff and community members of the professional learning committee.

To shape the program's content and structure, we look to program evaluation data from previous years' programs and pay close attention to best practices for professional learning based on published literature and ongoing learning during monthly committee meetings.

Based on these sources of information and input, we engage in a cycle of collaborative input and feedback with departments in the district. To start the new teacher induction planning process, the professional learning committee reviews evaluation data and drafts a plan.

This draft moves on to district leaders who oversee student and staff learning and support for review and input. The updated draft then goes to the superintendent's cabinet for additional feedback and review. This strategy ensures representation from the majority of district instructional leaders. The draft then comes back to the professional learning committee for further refinement and finalization.

RECONSIDERING THE STRUCTURE

The need for virtual and hybrid models during the height of the pandemic spurred us to get creative about how we support new teachers, and that creativity has opened up new possibilities. At the same time, what is clear is that the most important thing is to be intentional about planning participants' experiences so that, regardless of the method, our presenters are modeling best practices for instruction.

In August 2020, we hosted new teacher induction as a three-day hybrid professional learning program for 58 new teachers. We were in-person, socially distanced, and masked for the first two days, and we flipped Day Three and had everyone log in from home.

We started the day with a live synchronous streaming session, followed by a series of short asynchronous prerecorded sessions representing a mix of required and choice sessions. This hybrid model allowed us to be in person while limiting contact and following health guidelines.

The process of planning a hybrid model helped us to see that some content is more amenable to virtual than others. For example, for new teacher induction 2020, we abruptly shifted the content of Day Three that was appropriate for asynchronous instruction to become just that.

Much of this content was technology-related anyway, including familiarizing new teachers with

the district's learning management system and navigating the district website to find curriculum resources and everyday teacher applications (attendance, IEPs, communications, etc.). A data-based decision-making process that included feedback from previous attendees, stakeholders, and the planning committee helped inform such decisions.

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

While planning virtual and hybrid components, we reached out to experts in technology integration. We learned a lot about the opportunities and challenges of educational technology and how to — and how not to — apply technological solutions.

For example, our technology integration teacher, Lynn Girolamo, taught us to think differently about how remote professional learning is different from our usual approaches. She said, "Technology provides an opportunity beyond the traditional sit-and-get workshop that crosses over, allowing more choice around pace, place, path, content. It really offers the opportunity for more differentiation than what we have traditionally been able to provide. So use technology to leverage opportunities for the choice and differentiation around asynchronous as well as synchronous opportunities."

She also reminded us to always start with the learning goal instead of starting with the technology. She recommended asking ourselves: What problem can technology help us solve?

Moving forward, we see new teacher induction as a way to help teachers learn about the tools that are accessible and available to them and an opportunity to model how to use those tools in their classrooms. We also recognize that it is important to use only the technology that is available in the school district, even if these tools are not the latest and greatest. The new teachers need to grow savvy with the tools provided to ensure consistency across the system.

TEACHER CHOICE

Another important lesson we've learned during the pandemic is that teachers want and appreciate choice in professional learning. During the hybrid model we implemented in 2020, we created small-group options and choices among multiple asynchronous activities. Teachers responded positively, and we came to realize that teachers want choice not only in content, but also in time, place, and pace.

With this recognition, we are now able to meet the needs of a diverse new teacher cohort by offering them more choice options and effectively meeting them where they are, while at the same time preserving the required content we know they will need for success in our district.

For example, in the past, we brought in multiple speakers to share important regulations and initiatives with the new teachers. Instead, we invited these stakeholders to create videos and leverage technology in a way that provides the critical content while allowing for more choice in when and where this is accessed. New teachers found this more engaging and relevant, making these sessions meaningful learning experiences.

EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

We have also learned how to be nimble and flexible, preparing as much as we can but pivoting when necessary. As one might expect, our hybrid plan incorporated a tremendous amount of technology, and with that came the inevitable glitches. But all the work we had done to be flexible paid off.

In one case, at the last minute, one of our speakers scheduled for a live presentation was forced to switch to a streaming presentation from her home due to health protocols that required family members of infected persons to quarantine. Since we were already set up for the hybrid presentation, we fairly seamlessly switched gears without losing much time.

Another incident did not work out as smoothly. We had to operate a session using a backup generator due to an emergency in the area. During the power outage, the scheduled session topic was culturally responsive teaching, and the heaviness of the atmosphere was exacerbated by the dimmed emergency lights and poor audio quality. This didn't feel ideal.

Participant feedback indicated that this part of our program was important but that they had difficulty staying focused due to the audio and video problems associated with being on emergency power.

From this, we learned that we need to consider how particular content might make new teachers feel and make decisions about logistics accordingly. We already knew which topics were important to include in our new teacher induction agenda, but we learned to think differently about how to share these topics with people new to our organization and how to structure the environment to prepare for this.

We also learned to anticipate how to handle it when things go wrong, especially when working with a sensitive topic area. This thinking led us back to reflect on the purpose for every lesson and how to present it intentionally and supportively.

MOVING FORWARD

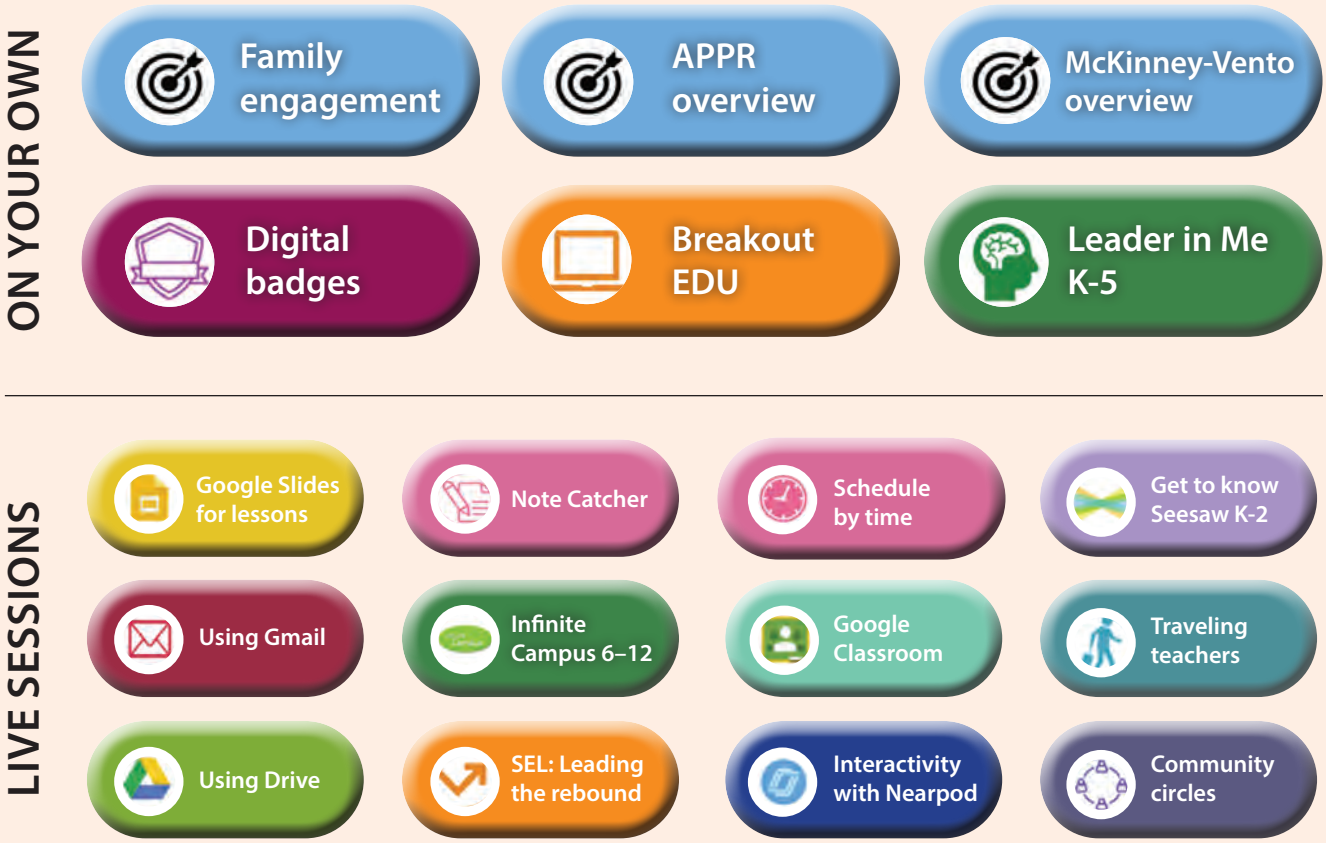
By August 2021, we had learned a lot from a year of dealing with COVID. With those lessons, and with updated pandemic restrictions and guidelines, we were able to create an intentional and effective approach to new teacher induction.

We offered three days of professional learning in person for 42 new teachers. For the first two days, things looked fairly normal (teachers sitting in table groups, working in pairs, live presenters), much the way new teacher induction had looked for years.

Everyone wore masks, but we were able to provide more opportunities for socializing than we did in 2020 because we now had the safety equipment to do so (plastic shields on

A HYBRID MODEL FOR NEW TEACHER INDUCTION

Participants in Greece Central School District's new teacher induction program select learning options from a choice board that looks like the one below. Activities above the line (larger buttons) are required, while participants have the option of choosing topics below the line. Each button links to a video, screencast, or other directions for participants to follow.



tables, cleaning supplies readily available, and increased knowledge of COVID-19 protocols).

Day Three, however, was where we leaned into our new learning from the previous school year's hybrid experience and featured both asynchronous and synchronous opportunities. Where possible, we made sections more flexible and incorporated choice. We created a type of choice board for participants to complete throughout their remote day. We designed it in a way that a participant would engage with some required topics and also have some measure of choice. (See figure above.)

Content that was not conducive to asynchronous learning was preserved as synchronous sessions. For example, we offered a synchronous session on how to be a traveling teacher assigned to multiple schools that was specifically offered to new teachers in those positions. This session was offered in two places at times throughout the day that would not conflict with any required sessions on the choice board.

The result of these adaptations was increased engagement among new teachers. The first year using the choice board, new teachers worked well beyond their summer academy day, digging into the plethora of materials and resources provided. This was unexpected and completely by teacher choice. The second year, similar results ensued. Evidence suggested that new teachers were able to access and dive deeper into the materials provided because we took away the limits of time, place, and pace.

Our program worked so well that, in one instance, a new teacher was COVID positive and at home but well enough to log in virtually on a district-issued device. A mentor teacher carried this

new teacher around on their device throughout the day so that the new teacher would be able to participate and complete the new teacher induction program, a contractual requirement for employment in our district.

DOUBLING DOWN ON SUPPORT

As the 2021-22 school year came to a close, a core new teacher induction planning team continued the work to flesh out the content and logistics of the program for fall 2022, drawing on the lessons we've learned over the past two school years.

This includes more tailored support. For example, when we discovered that the district had hired five new speech language pathologist teachers, we collaborated with the special education director to implement tailored learning opportunities for those new staff members during the three-day new teacher induction along with follow-up support during the school year.

This kind of collaboration with colleagues outside our department, both within and outside the district, is a high-leverage change that has come about because of the pandemic. Incorporating virtual meetings into our new normal has increased opportunities for collaboration between departments that traditionally have not had an opportunity to meet.

Never before had a problem of this magnitude rallied all members of our system in a way that forced collaboration and forged new connections. We were all learning new ways to meet people's needs and found ourselves enthusiastic about sharing understandings.

These and other adaptations have helped our teacher retention rate continue to rise year over year, cumulatively by over 16% in the last five years — no small feat, given the wide range of experiences our new teachers bring and the major stresses they, and all teachers, have been facing.

At a time when many districts dropped their new teacher induction plans amid chaos and confusion, we were able to double down on our commitment to supporting new teachers. As we move forward, the lessons we have learned from the pandemic are preparing us to tackle future challenges, whatever they may be.

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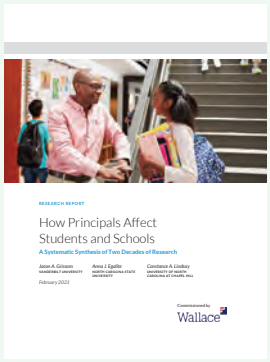
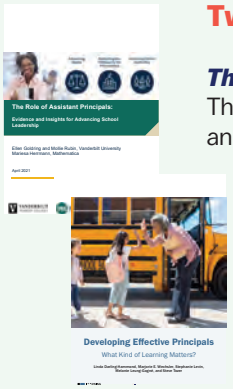
THE POWER OF INVESTING IN PRINCIPALS:

Cultivating effective leaders can improve outcomes for students, teachers, and schools

Join us for a thought leader session on December 5 to learn why the researchers who wrote ***How Principals Affect Students and Schools*** conclude, "It is difficult to envision an investment in K-12 education with a higher ceiling on its potential return than improving school leadership." Find out which skills and practices among principals the researchers found are linked to positive outcomes for students and why diversifying the leadership pipeline is vital to achieving educational equity.





Two additional syntheses on school leadership to check out:

The Role of Assistant Principals: Evidence and Insights for Advancing School Leadership
This Vanderbilt University and Mathematica report based on two decades of research sheds light on an increasingly prevalent but often overlooked role. Learn how assistant principals could become a more powerful force in advancing equity, school improvement and principal effectiveness.

Developing Effective Principals: What Kind of Learning Matters?
A Learning Policy Institute report highlights the positive impact high-quality preparation and ongoing support can have on school leaders. High-quality principal preparation programs are linked to improvements in school culture, teacher satisfaction and retention, and student achievement.

Download all three reports without charge at
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With grow-your-own programs, new teachers find job-embedded support

BY KRISTIN TROMPETER AND STEPHANIE GARCIA FIELDS

Like many districts across the U.S., Miami-Dade County Public Schools is experiencing a large number of open staff positions due to higher-than-normal numbers of retirements and resignations in the face of COVID-19 coupled with enrollment declines in local universities' education departments.

Recent data show that the district has many openings not only in the traditionally hard-to-staff areas of math, science, and exceptional student education, but even in English language arts.

The district, in partnership with New Teacher Center, has been working to address this gap through grow-your-own teacher recruitment pathways. Grow-your-own programs are pathways into the teaching profession for individuals who do not have a background in education but aspire to teach and who live or work in the neighborhoods in which a school is located.

Our grow-your-own programs

When new teachers receive support from a team of leaders and experienced educators working together to help them learn and grow in a way that helps them meet their students' needs, they are more likely to stay in the field.

provide pathways into education for prospective teachers from multiple backgrounds, including paraprofessionals, individuals employed in clerical roles, and college students who are noneducation majors but have an interest in shifting into teaching as a career.

Most recently, the district has also begun exploring how to recruit high school students who are interested in becoming educators through a renewed commitment to expand and grow its Florida Future Educators of America program as another grow-your-own pathway. Florida Future Educators of America includes a program called Project REDI (Recruiting, Empowering, and Developing Inclusive Male Teachers of Color) that focuses specifically on inspiring male high school students of color to consider a career in teaching.

The grow-your-own approach to recruiting, preparing, and supporting new teachers has many benefits for students. It can improve the demographic match between students and teachers, which research has shown to improve outcomes for students of color (Gershenson et al., 2018).

Grow-your-own programs also involve increased alignment and coordination between educator preparation programs and school districts, which can lead to teachers who are better prepared to meet students' academic and social and emotional needs (Muñiz, 2020). Ideally, grow-your-own programs reduce teacher turnover in hard-to-staff schools by recruiting and supporting teachers who are committed, invested, and well-supported.

TACKLING TURNOVER

Creating more stability in the workforce is vital because research shows that turnover "disrupts relationships with students and other teachers, undermines professional learning, and impedes collaboration, all of which are critical to creating the supportive environments students need after nearly two years of disrupted learning" (Carver-Thomas, 2022).

The problem of turnover comes down to a lack of support for teachers. Just as students need access to supportive and nurturing learning environments that will help them thrive, so do educators. Underprepared teachers leave their schools at two to three times the rate of those who enter with comprehensive preparation (Carver-Thomas, 2022).

Conversely, when new teachers receive support from a team of leaders and experienced educators working together to help them learn and grow in a way that helps them meet their students' needs, they are more likely to stay in the field.

For example, when Miami-Dade County Public Schools partnered with New Teacher Center on a federally funded new teacher induction program, the district saw an increase of 14% in retention of teachers in study sites — about 300 teachers or the equivalent of fully staffing three middle schools with an average enrollment of 1,400 students.

Grow-your-own programs are another way to provide the kind of new teacher support educators need and deserve to a broader group of educators.

INCREASING TEACHER DIVERSITY

In addition to boosting retention rates, one of the major benefits of the grow-your-own approach is that it has helped the district increase the number of teachers of color. Students of color make up the majority of students in the district, and studies have shown that learning from teachers of color can have a powerful impact on student achievement. For example, Black students who have at least two Black teachers by 3rd grade are over 30% more likely to attend college, and students of color who have teachers of the same race or ethnicity show higher academic achievement, attendance, enrollment in advanced coursework, and high school graduation rates (Gershenson et al., 2018).

To date, the Paraprofessional to Teach pathway is supporting 189 participants. Of those, 88% are individuals of color: 57% are Black, with 9% Black males and 48% Black females; 31% are Hispanic, with 4% Hispanic males and 27% Hispanic females.

In the Clerical to Teach program, 89% of participants are individuals of color: 39% are Black with 2% Black males and 37% Black females; 50% are Hispanic with 6% Hispanic males and 44% Hispanic females.

In the Temporary Instructor Preparation and Support program, in which college students work as temporary teachers while exploring

a career in education, 98% are individuals of color: 52% are Black, with 40% Black females and 12% Black males; 45% are Hispanic with 29% Hispanic females and 16% Hispanic males; 1% are Asian females.

Project REDI, within the high school pathway, specifically focuses on encouraging and supporting young men of color to become educators. A new program, it will ultimately support these young men from high school into their first three years of teaching and then into leadership roles in schools or elsewhere in the district.

Additional pathways that are being considered because of the desire to increase potential hires of men of color are school security personnel, 42% of whom are male, and custodial staff, 58% of whom are male.

SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR NEW TEACHERS

Filling vacancies is just the beginning of the grow-your-own pathways. The deeper work comes from how districts support and nurture these new teachers once they have been recruited.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools intentionally identifies and leverages the unique strengths each educator brings based on their backgrounds, experiences in their current roles, and membership in the shared community of the school.

In partnership with New Teacher Center, we have worked to design meaningful and personalized adult learning experiences based on these strengths and tailored to each grow-your-own pathway. This has helped ensure that these emerging teachers feel nurtured and supported from the beginning and their practice can be accelerated so that they can effectively meet the diverse needs of the students they serve.

Nurturing teachers means working to ensure that they have the optimal working environments they need to thrive and stay in the profession and also be able to successfully create optimal learning environments for their students. The learning experiences and support we provide are grounded in New Teacher Center's optimal learning environment framework. This work focuses on cultivating learner-centered environments that are emotionally, physically, and intellectually safe; implementing equitable, culturally responsive, and standards-aligned curriculum and instruction; and effectively meeting the diverse needs of every learner.

One of our approaches to support that is grounded in this framework is an instructionally focused teacher mentoring program, through which grow-your-own teacher candidates receive targeted and strategic support from an experienced teacher. These relationships can provide opportunities for thought partnership, modeling of best instructional strategies, and even co-teaching opportunities to develop their teaching craft before they become a teacher of record.

To ensure that mentors are well-prepared to support their teaching partners, we work with the veteran teachers on how to collaborate and differentiate their supports based on the candidates' backgrounds and experiences. These teachers attend a professional learning course that enables them to understand not only the needs of adult learners, but specifically the needs of individuals coming into the profession with varying levels and types of experiences in education.

For example, paraprofessionals are in classrooms working with students every day. They have seen and often supported instruction before. Mentor teachers can build on this strength by helping their mentees identify pedagogical strategies with which they are already familiar and assisting their mentees in taking ownership of them.

These veteran teachers are also immersed in professional learning focused on centering students in the conversations they have with paraprofessional mentees. This helps ensure that the paraprofessional teacher candidates will have the preparation they need to create emotional and intellectual safety in their future classrooms, with an emphasis on the importance of listening to students about what they need to thrive.

Those in clerical positions at a school site are vital liaisons between the school, caregivers, and the community at large. They already have so much knowledge of students from day-to-day interactions, including historical information, home dynamics, and even academic and social-emotional strengths and needs. Veteran teachers can help their mentees see how this knowledge can be built on to implement classroom procedures and routines that create optimal learning environments.

College students participating in grow-your-own programs are working in positions as temporary instructors while they explore a career in teaching through the district's Temporary Instructor Preparation and Support program. Professional learning for veteran teachers in this program integrates much of the same knowledge as the other programs plus an added layer of how to provide mentees with embedded classroom support.

This job-embedded support helps the mentees immediately apply new knowledge and skills in the classroom to both accelerate the mentee's growth and enhance student learning growth. It also allows the veteran teachers to address real-time classroom concerns in a way that impacts mentees' understanding of what it means to serve as the teacher of record for any student in their classroom and how to meet the diverse needs of each of their learners.

The veteran teachers are not only developing the next generation of teachers, but also developing their own skills, professional growth, and leadership. They have opportunities to engage in self-identity work and then encourage their teacher candidate to engage in this same type of reflection. This helps cultivate leadership and provides a space for educators to engage in equity-centered, anti-bias work in

the service of creating optimal learning environments and equitable learning spaces for all educators, mentees, and students.

FULFILLING THE PROMISE WITH GROW-YOUR-OWN PATHWAYS

Since the need for more teachers will continue to pose a significant challenge to schools, especially those serving marginalized students, finding innovative ways to recruit and support teachers is vital. U.S. schools were short at least 100,000 teachers even before the pandemic drove many educators out of the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2022).

Students cannot wait for these vacancies to be filled. They need someone supporting them who understands how to leverage their strengths and meet their needs during every year of their education. That means districts must identify, train, and continuously support new educators to provide the highest-quality education.

These new teachers must be seen and nurtured for who they are. We must leverage their strengths and address their needs. The same principles that apply to honoring students' identities and needs apply to new and prospective teachers. Through grow-your-own programs, districts can tailor supports to new teachers' backgrounds and experiences to cultivate a strong and stable teacher workforce.

Our multiple grow-your-own pathways are a key strategy through which the district will continue to nurture the humanity of all teachers, especially those entering the profession, so they can fulfill their promise and students can fulfill theirs.

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Novice teacher Jennifer Clark posts her feedback about the School-University Resource Network's Novice Teacher Academy. Photo by Zachary McCoy.

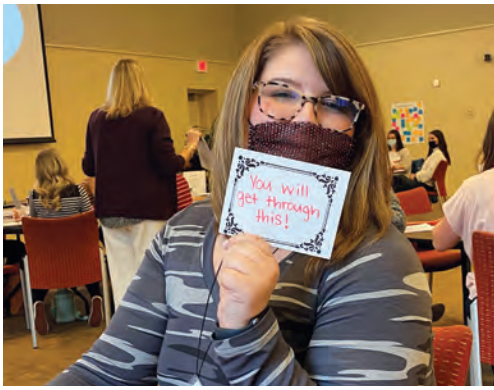
For small districts, a regional network holds the key to new teacher support

BY SARAH P. HYLTON AND AMY C. COLLEY

Many school districts struggle to retain early career teachers, but the challenge is particularly pronounced in small and rural districts (Frahm & Cianca, 2021). The School-University Resource Network, a university center at William & Mary School of Education in Virginia, discovered this firsthand through a community of practice we facilitate with assistant superintendents who work in districts with 10,000 or fewer students.

During regular meetings to share best practices, leverage support and resources, and wrestle with the perplexing problems of education in context, teacher retention quickly rose to the surface as a significant challenge in the participants' districts. Assistant superintendents reported that larger, more resourced districts often wooed away early career teachers with incentives such as signing bonuses, higher salaries, and the promise of more





Above, left to right: Novice teacher Evan Stone and master teacher LaTanya Clark share ideas during a "swap meet" on how to foster student beliefs about belonging, effort, and teacher credibility; master teachers Jennifer Blamy and Sarah Gladwell guide a group of novice teachers at one of several storytelling stations, designed to encourage cross-division relationships among the cohort; novice teacher Ashley Walton shares her self-affirmation with her table group at the close of Session 4. Photos by Zachary McCoy.

support, leaving these smaller districts in a seemingly endless cycle of hiring new and often inexperienced teachers. District leaders in the School-University Resource Network wondered what our university center might do to help stop that drain.

Those organic conversations gave rise to the Novice Teacher Academy, a program that supports novice teachers (those with up to three years of teaching experience) from small districts across the state (systems that serve fewer than 10,000 students). The Novice Teacher Academy is a yearlong experience designed to support early career teachers through in-person workshops and mentoring, online coaching, and supplemental teaching tools and strategies.

Since the academy's inception in 2019, we have supported and worked with 111 novice teachers and 11 master teachers from 13 districts across four superintendent regions. Early data indicate that academy teachers have remained in their districts, and anecdotal reporting from both teachers and district leaders is positive. Participating teachers consistently report that the Novice Teacher Academy has empowered them to adopt a positive, optimistic view of teaching and learning and that the academy promotes the retention of novice teachers.

HOW THE ACADEMY BEGAN

To develop the Novice Teacher Academy, we worked with a steering committee comprised of School-University Resource Network leaders, William & Mary faculty, and assistant superintendents from six Virginia school districts. Working from a positive, appreciative inquiry model (Cooperrider et al., 2008), the group envisioned a program that would complement existing local mentoring programs.

Mindful of the principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1984) and of teaching as developmental (Pitton, 2006), we designed a program that gives novice teachers opportunities to explore their pressing concerns and challenges. We founded the Novice Teacher Academy with the following goals:

- To establish supportive relationships among novice teachers and master teachers, both within and across districts, that foster growth and learning;
- To create a safe space for novice teachers to learn and share;
- To empower novice teachers to adopt a positive, optimistic view of teaching and learning;
- To address just-in-time needs of novice teachers;
- To model effective teaching;
- To promote the retention of novice teachers; and
- To provide leadership opportunities for master teachers.

District leaders select novice teachers who indicate their willingness to participate and learn in a regional community of practice that meets five times over the course of a school year. These participants are grouped according to grade level or content area, and each group is facilitated by master teachers in the same or similar grade levels or content areas. This cross-district grouping has been especially helpful for teachers from small school districts who do not have colleagues in their building who teach a similar course.

From the beginning, we knew that master teachers would be the backbone of the program. Master teachers are

those recognized as leaders with strong content knowledge and pedagogical practice as well as potential skill in mentoring other teachers. Not only do they provide quality mentoring and coaching for our novice teachers, but they also provide meaningful feedback and suggestions to us for future sessions.

We rely on district leaders to nominate master teachers across the K-12 grade level and content continuum, including both general and special education teachers. To guide their work, we provide master teachers with written facilitator guides for each session as well as share details via email and phone. We also use a huddle approach, meeting 15 minutes before and after each academy session to share information and coaching resources.

ACADEMY SESSIONS

The academy consists of five full-day sessions over the course of the school year, with each session following a similar flow and structure. The first three sessions occur monthly throughout the fall to provide support as early in the school year as possible. The fourth and fifth sessions occur during the second semester, with the fifth closer to the end of the school year.

These sessions are designed to be conducted in person, but we pivoted to an online format during spring 2020 and the 2020-21 school year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fall 2021, we returned to the in-person structure but retained online, small-group coaching between sessions.

Initially, we anticipated that the academy content would focus on issues around curriculum, instruction, and assessment, but we quickly found that the relational aspects of teaching needed to be the foundation for each session. As a result, experts from both the field and the university present on topics such as building relationships with students, classroom management, classroom culture, family engagement, co-teaching, conflict resolution, and assuming positive intent.

Participants value these opportunities to connect with peers who face similar challenges, particularly because new teachers from small and rural districts often feel isolated and may not have such opportunities routinely.

To help teachers think critically about these topics and how they can be applied in their own classrooms, we implement varied learning activities such as sort cards, brainstorm carousels, jigsaws, gallery walks, case studies, and scenarios, all of which support the academy's focus on deeper learning for transfer.

We also use several protocols for collaborative problem-solving throughout the sessions. Participants value these opportunities to connect and think with cross-district peers who face similar challenges, particularly because new teachers from small and rural districts often feel isolated and may not have such opportunities routinely.

Framed by learning agreements and intentions, sessions begin with participants considering what they hope to get out of their day at the academy as well as what they hope to put into it. "We're asked to think about how our day will go and how we can approach it positively," one participant said.

Empowering novice teachers to adopt an optimistic view of teaching and education means ensuring they have relational supports, so sessions intentionally attend to participants' social and emotional needs. Activities such as storytelling centers, stokes (e.g. icebreakers, brain breaks, energizers), and frequent table talk encourage relationships among colleagues.

Participants' feedback highlights the value they place on establishing these trusting relationships with their peers. As one participant noted, the academy is a place "to find validation and camaraderie. It's important to know that, as a new teacher, you are not alone in your difficulties, challenges, and successes."

Committed to helping develop reflective practitioners, we build multiple opportunities for participants to pause and consider the various learning activities in which they engage throughout the day. "Unpack the process" is one of our standing mantras, as we urge teachers to consider what each activity entails and how they can transfer it to their own context.

Among the materials greeting participants at each session is an idea catcher, a simple organizer printed on card stock, which we encourage our novice teachers to use to capture learning activities and instructional strategies that we model throughout the day.

One of the hallmarks of the academy's commitment to reflective practice (and one of the highlights of our closing session) is an activity called Highs, Lows, and Lessons Learned (Rodgers, 2022). Each teacher writes their year's high (on a green note card), low (on a blue note card), and lesson learned (on a yellow note card).

They share these with their table groups and then clip them to three parallel clotheslines, with highs on the top line, lessons learned on the middle line, and lows on the bottom line. After having time to peruse each other's reflections, teachers return to their table groups to discuss what takeaways they've gained and how they will act on those in their praxis moving forward.

Following each session, we share all presentations, slides, and resources as well as any responses, brainstorms, or teaching ideas participants generated during the session. We also send links to additional resources that we think may be beneficial for continued professional learning and growth.

This serves multiple purposes. First, our work is designed to complement the in-school mentor support required in Virginia school districts. Beyond that, it is designed to stretch and

expand the novice teacher's skills, knowledge, and abilities, which is particularly helpful if a district is unable to provide more than minimal support.

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

After the final session, participants complete an online survey, giving them a final opportunity to share their assessment of the program with us along with feedback and suggestions. To date, 90% of respondents have indicated their overall rating of the program was good or excellent. Based on their responses and our own impressions and learning, we have identified the following themes and lessons.

Novice teachers need safe spaces to explore and even fail. Teachers in the academy appreciate the opportunity to work with their peers in a space that fosters trust and allows them to be vulnerable. They particularly value being able to share with colleagues outside of their own districts, noting that this cross-district community of practice is one of the keys to their being able to share their challenges, fears, and frustrations without fear of judgment or recrimination.

Novice teachers have a lot on their minds. In addition to routine feedback from master teachers about how novice teachers are feeling, we also collect data through activities such as I Liked; I Learned; I Wish; I Wonder, teacher wish lists, and exit tickets.

One of the most powerful exercises each year is an activity we refer to as "What keeps a novice teacher up at night?" Participants have quiet time to generate as many responses to this question as they'd like, committing each one to a sticky note. (See sample responses in the sidebar above.)

They take turns sharing these with their table groups and then spend time sorting them into categories, which they label. The activity concludes with a gallery walk and table talk to synthesize what they're noticing across the full cohort. By viewing one another's concerns, they discover that they are not alone in their struggles and feel more empowered to tackle them.

Broadly speaking, our novice teachers stress concerns about time, student behaviors and progress, work-life balance, and the expectations of others, and they consistently ask, "Am I enough?" We have discovered that their forthright, transparent responses are a mark of both their need to share and their need for a safe space in which to do so.

By articulating these concerns, participants are engaging in reflective practice and thus taking the first steps in resolving — or at least working toward resolving — their concerns. The qualitative data generated during this activity has been helpful in guiding our decisions about future content and learning activities for future cohorts.

Novice teachers are hungry for meaningful engagement. Participants report how valuable it was to learn and think in the company of other novice teachers and have the support of veteran teachers and experts. Hearing varied perspectives generates options and ideas for novice teachers to consider, something that proves especially beneficial as novice teachers work collaboratively to problem-solve the specific challenges they face in their classrooms.

We *all* keep learning. Our master teachers routinely share how much the academy has contributed to their own continued professional growth, both through their work as mentors and as participants in the academy itself. As one of our master teachers noted, "Even as a master teacher, I find the presentations engaging, relevant, and incredibly valuable to me as I reflect on my best practices as a teacher."

Furthermore, our district leaders have indicated their learning, from both the model and the collaboration. We routinely share experiences and feedback from the academy with district leaders so that they have clarity about what the newest teachers in their districts are experiencing and learning.

WHAT KEEPS A NOVICE TEACHER UP AT NIGHT?

Each year, we ask novice teachers at the academy: What is keeping you up at night? Here are some of their responses:

- I worry about my students' lives after they leave school.
- I would like to occasionally leave my work at school.
- Am I doing the right thing?
- What if I'm not good enough?
- What if I make a mistake?
- Am I reaching every student?
- How long will my grandma and grandpa let me live here?
- I worry about everything I have yet to do that I know should already have been done.
- I want to be a good mentor for my students and worry about saying the right things to help.
- There just aren't enough hours in the day.
- I worry about sounding like I don't know what I'm talking about.
- I feel unprepared and am scared to leave school feeling that way.
- When do I plan ahead?
- Kids talking. All. The. Time.
- Knowing what to say when I have to call a parent.
- I think I'm hitting a wall.
- Are they learning?
- I'm doing things not 100% in order to complete 100%.
- I worry I'm not doing enough for my students.
- I worry about letting a kid go under the radar.

These leaders have particularly noted the value they place on the opportunity for novice teachers to work with colleagues from across multiple districts as well as their appreciation for being able to pool resources with other small districts to make the academy possible.

LOOKING FORWARD

Meaningful coaching and mentoring of novice teachers contribute to their persistence in the profession (Portner, 2003; Radford, 2017). Our goal was to create a regional community of practice that would enhance teacher retention in small or rural school districts. Three years into this tailored, job-embedded, and ongoing professional learning experience, the Novice Teacher Academy is realizing retention of novice teachers, with reporting districts indicating a 94% retention rate for academy teachers.

The academy also routinely receives positive feedback from participants, including comments that indicate teachers might like to return for a second year, an option we are currently exploring.

Because our small partner districts often turn to hiring teachers from alternate paths to licensure, recruiting second-career teachers, and developing staff who have not taught before, we are also exploring other iterations of the academy geared toward supporting new teachers from nontraditional pathways.

As more teachers leave the field of education and districts increasingly look to such alternative hiring practices (Woods, 2016; Grossman & Loeb, 2012), induction and mentoring programs that support novice teachers will become even more imperative. Our experiences with the Novice Teacher Academy create a foundation on which we can build to meet those emerging needs.

Our work with novice and master teachers over the past three years suggests that collaborative efforts between districts and university centers is one means of creating a well-supported, more stable teacher workforce. The unique regional, multidistrict partnership found in the School-University Resource Network's Novice Teacher Academy provides a model for other districts and elevates the benefit of collaboration and sharing resources to tackle the persistent problem of new teacher retention.

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REACH. INVESTIGATE. DISCOVER.

IDEAS

FLIPPED LEARNING

Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa, a keynote speaker at Learning Forward's Annual Conference in December, explains why she uses a flipped approach to professional learning in her interview on p. 58. Before the conference, attendees will view a short video and submit questions that she will use to shape her presentation.

"If I give a presentation without knowing your specific needs, it's like throwing spaghetti at a wall. Something is going to stick for somebody at some point, but I'm not meeting the majority's needs. … Our life's work in education is to differentiate instruction. We try to treat our students as individuals. Why don't we treat our teachers that way?"

What do YOU need to learn from ME?

A Q&A with Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa

BY SUZANNE BOUFFARD

Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa is an expert in neuroscience and the science of learning, and the founder of Connections: The Learning Sciences Platform, which provides evidence-based support for educators in over 40 countries. She will be a keynote speaker at the 2022 Learning Forward Annual Conference Dec. 4-7 in Nashville, Tennessee. Hers will be the first Learning Forward conference presentation to use a flipped format: Before the conference, attendees will be encouraged to view a short preview video and submit questions and reflections. Tokuhama-Espinosa will use that feedback to craft her presentation to meet the audience's interests and needs.

What is a flipped presentation, and why do you prefer it to a traditional approach?

In a flipped approach, the audience's needs become the presentation. Before the conference, I make a short video with a taste of what's to come, and the audience members begin to explore that further and think about their own needs and

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FLIPPED KEYNOTE

To learn more from Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa, join her at the 2022 Learning Forward Annual Conference Dec. 6 in Nashville, Tennessee. All registrants will have access to her prepresentation video and will be encouraged to submit questions to inform her flipped keynote presentation in the weeks leading up to the conference.

To register or learn more about the conference, visit **conference.learningforward.org**.

Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa

questions. They share those questions beforehand and then the content that is most interesting and relevant to them gets baked into the presentation.

If I give a presentation without knowing your specific needs, it's like throwing spaghetti at a wall. Something is going to stick for somebody at some point, but I'm not meeting the majority's needs because people haven't taken the opportunity to self-assess what they need.

Learning from a conference works best if the participants select carefully what they need, they attend the sessions that are most important to them, and then they follow up on what they've learned. That's also the idea behind the flipped presentation.

I believe this approach is an essential shift for professional learning. One of the reasons a lot of educators find professional learning to be a drag is that it doesn't meet their specific needs. It is often dictated from on high that everyone needs to learn the same thing in the same way at the same time. But our life's work in education is to differentiate instruction. We try to treat our students as individuals. Why don't we treat our teachers that way?

How did you start using the flipped approach?

I teach a course at Harvard that is completely flipped. In 2016, the university approached me and some other faculty members about teaching a course online. Originally, it was a hybrid in-person/online approach. It wasn't really working because the teacher tends to pay more attention to one group or the other, usually the people in the room. And the in-person students started shifting to online anyway because it's more convenient. By the third class, most people were attending online, even if they lived next door.

So when the university offered a handful of faculty the opportunity to go fully online, with support to shepherd us through a redesign process, I decided to do it. Very few of the participating faculty were willing to do flipped, but I said let's go for it because I thought I'd have a chance to go much deeper with students.

The way it works is that I get out the core concepts in the preclass video. Students respond to a discussion board prompt, and I select a handful of those as jumping off points for discussion in the live class. It's like having three classes in one because we address the content knowledge, then we get to explore what others in the class are doing, and then we get to do a deep dive into the information together.

When we started doing this, the ratings went way up. People said this is the way learning should be. We got such great feedback that, when COVID-19 hit midway through the

semester in 2020, the students asked me for an extra class on teaching online. Some of them were professors or leaders of professional learning, and they said, "We don't know how to continue our work during COVID, and we need help." I helped them learn how to use the flipped approach. There was one student who ran professional development for medical professionals who had a conference coming up, and I suggested she flip the whole conference.

Since then, I have done flipped presentations for all my keynotes, and sometimes fully flipped conferences. It has been a hit everywhere I've done it. I find that participants are more engaged because it is about them and their needs. It's impossible not to pay attention if you are the center of attention. And it's impossible not to learn something if it is based on your questions.

In that spirit, can you give us a preview of the theme of your presentation?

The talk is called, "How Time and Tools Have Changed in Education Forever Thanks to COVID." As bad as COVID has been, a lot of wonderful things have come out of it. Our forced adaptation due to the pandemic has opened our eyes to a lot of the things that have been problematic for years. And it has provided the impetus to finally change some of the things we've been unhappy with for a long time.

For example, we are rethinking the time and priority that we put into certain educational components. Before, we would hope there was a 1-1-1 ratio of preparing, giving, and evaluating a lesson. But when COVID hit, we realized there was so much more involved in giving the right kind of feedback so that students can learn. So now, the ideal is more like a 3-1-3 ratio: three hours of preparing, one hour presenting, and three hours of reflecting and gearing up for the next lesson.

Educators' use of certain types of tools is also changing. Before COVID, teachers often ignored educational technology. But during COVID, they started to try things and came to see them in a different light.

For example, one math teacher told me that, before the pandemic, he didn't use apps like the Photomath app, which allows you to take a picture of any math problem and then shows you how to solve it. He felt like he was cheating or not doing his job if he used it. But when he saw that his explanation and the app's explanation were slightly different and that seeing multiple approaches to the problem was beneficial to students, he started to appreciate the app and think differently about using ed tech.

How are those shifts likely to have a long-term impact on education?

If you break down learning into its smallest parts, you have knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Rethinking time and tools can help us fundamentally rethink the way we address each of these.

With regard to knowledge, we got hooked for a long time on a certain kind of content [discrete math and reading knowledge], in part because of the legacy of No Child Left Behind. During COVID, we realized that what you have to prioritize are thinking processes and helping kids to be good critical thinkers throughout their lives, instead of just regurgitating content. As a result, we started to rethink how we present and assess content. For example, we know low-stakes testing is a great way to enhance memory, so some teachers are now offloading knowledge assessment with self-graded quizzes worth zero points. The message is, "We don't care about your score; we just want you to know the content so that, when we are together, we can work on skills."

The way we are working on skills and attitudes is changing, too. For example, during COVID, we realized the need to prioritize relationship skills and mental health. After about 15 years of researchers and educators talking about the importance of social and emotional learning, it finally bubbled to the top. Teachers are starting to realize that if they use ed tech tools for certain tasks, they are able to have more time for being human, for the important relational aspects of learning, including encouragement, motivation, and diagnosing students' needs.

How can educators make sense of all those shifts in their day-to-day work?

I like to think about education as having holons. A holon is something that is part of a whole but is also a complete entity in and of itself. For example, your hand is a complete entity, but it's also part of your body. A leaf is its own thing but it is also part of a tree.

Learning is comprised of holons, but we don't always see the whole. We're good at breaking things down into their smallest parts, but we're terrible at putting the whole back together again.

I think this is one of the main reasons many teachers give professional learning low ratings. Those of us who are running the professional learning aren't helping them put all the pieces together into a whole. So when teachers are presented with a new concept or way of doing things, they think, "Now the administrators want us to stop what we're doing and do this new thing instead," instead of understanding that the new information is part of the puzzle, not a replacement for another piece.

Professional learning should help educators create their whole. My hope is that COVID, and the changes it has brought, will be a catalyst for that, and for a new form of education that meets educators' and students' needs better than we have done in the past.

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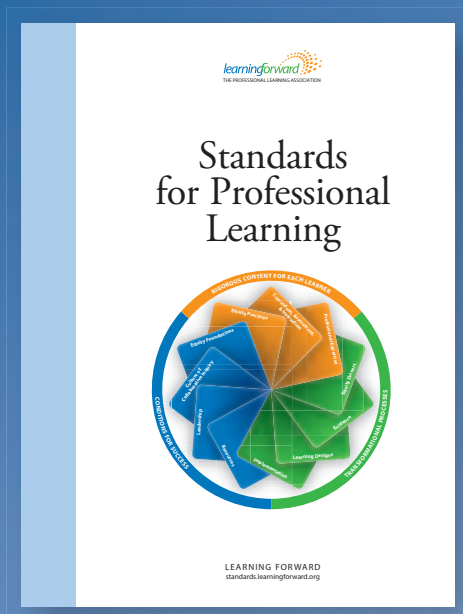

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Plan, but be prepared to pivot

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

BY JODY SPIRO

The last couple of years have brought unprecedented challenges to us all, especially to the dedicated educators who lead and teach our children. For all educators, change has been constant and the issues to address are many, including student health and safety (physical, emotional, and mental), educator well-being and burnout, shifting policies and politics, and community relations. To address them effectively, schools should adopt this mantra: Plan, but be prepared to pivot.

In unpredictable times, building intentional flexibility is important — but so is having foundational goals and strategic plans because you need a starting point and an initial path. Although it might seem paradoxical, it is important to think through the goals and strategies several steps in advance and also be prepared to pivot as circumstances change.

Part of this process of adapting is reflecting on the lessons we are learning

from change. Amid the stress, loss, and grief for students and staff, there has also been progress and much learning about how to lead through such difficult and ambiguous times.

This learning has been evident in a learning community of leaders from 78 large and medium school districts across the U.S. that has been meeting monthly throughout the pandemic. About 120 district leaders and 100 school leaders have been coming together to discuss supporting current school leaders (principals, assistant principals, and principal supervisors) and planning for the bench of future leaders.

They have voluntarily met for the past two years to learn together, share, and brainstorm approaches to common difficult problems in real time. Each year, they have taken stock collectively about what they were learning from this — including initial learning after one year that was revisited the next. Among the questions the community has been addressing are: Can we learn lessons from these difficult years to leapfrog us forward? Can we keep what has worked and incorporate that into our new normal?

This article summarizes lessons and examples from this learning community that other educators might apply to their work as they continue to navigate difficult and ambiguous times. Although no one would want to be in the position we have been in these last couple of years — and still are — we can use this opportunity to reassess what we want to get done and how this circumstance might help us do even better than we were previously.

After two years, our learning community members have identified three main learnings, each of which has its roots in what experts in the discipline of change management would advise (Spiro, 2018):

- Keep what has worked in the past combined with what has worked well these last two years;
- Pursue and celebrate early wins, both big and small; and
- Communicate early and often.

Keep what has worked in the past combined with what has worked well these last two years.

Participating leaders told us that they are staying focused on their goals but making necessary changes. For example, one said, "The way we do things may have changed, but our beliefs and values have not. We are still 100% committed to our mission." Another said, "Our North Star is always student achievement [but] now balanced with the emotional well-being of staff."

There is a great comfort and strength in following that North Star and knowing it is unchanging. This has underpinned all strategies used by our learning community members. With this assurance of purpose and direction, there comes freedom to use this moment to break the mold of "this is how we have always done this." As one of the leaders in our learning community said, "We have taken the opportunity to concentrate on what is most important and what is extraneous."

Some of the activities districts added required creating new structures, but most have kept the existing structures with a twist necessitated by the pandemic, such as turning in-person meetings into virtual ones. Now the challenge is to think through what former or adapted structures should be kept and which new structures should remain. For example, many districts have learned that meetings can be more frequent and less disruptive when they are virtual, but find that certain meetings are more effective or appropriate to hold in person. It takes thoughtful consideration to decide what works best for each situation.

Examples of things that district leaders say they intend to keep in the new normal include:

- **Coaching teachers in classroom visits**. Such activities might seem optional given the urgency of pandemic protocols, but, in fact, they have become more important. In many districts, for example, principal supervisors support and coach principals with one-on-one sessions at least once a week.
- **Mentoring new teachers and leaders**. Even though these sessions may have become virtual, it has been important to keep them going for real-time support and development, especially given growing staff vacancies and the need for many new teachers and leaders.

REFLECTIONS FROM LEADERS

"The pandemic has taught us what we are capable of doing and that our commitment to serving our students and communities allows us to do the impossible."

"We need to be innovative and creative in finding ways to keep our focus on setting high expectations for student achievement moving forward while taking care of all of the people who play a large role in educating our students."

- **Internships for aspiring teachers and leaders** to prepare them for their next positions and ensure they are ready on day one so their students benefit.
- **Developing relationships with community partners**. Districts and schools should not be trying to do everything themselves. Partnerships are key to a thriving community of learning for students. As one leader said, "Getting our partners to take action has been transformative."

Pursue and celebrate early wins, big and small.

Pursuing an early or quick win is an important strategy to inspire confidence and move forward to achieve larger and longer-term goals. Early wins are tangible and observable, achievable, perceived as having more benefits than costs, symbolic of a desired shared value, publicized and celebrated, used to build momentum, and nonthreatening to those who oppose the strategy (Spiro, 2012).

Setting a short-term, observable strategy that is seen by all as important for advancing their shared values helps set momentum and inspire confidence. It is important that early wins are a commitment that produce results and data — and that they are accomplished within the time frame and publicized when that happens.

Many of the districts in our learning community engaged in strategies designed to achieve early wins to help set a path forward during the pandemic and as schools returned to in-person learning. Here are a few examples of what they did.

Professional learning. Many districts used professional learning and study groups to help teachers navigate the pandemic and develop their skills in a timely way. A frequent refrain we hear from teachers and leaders is that little or nothing in their past work prepared them for the situations in which they now find themselves. Professional learning goes a long way to address those needs and also to make visible concrete and observable achievements. These investments in professional learning showed teachers that leaders still valued adult learning, cared about staff needs, and could maintain a normal routine.

Some of the leaders in our group recognized that they had made a mistake by initially suspending professional learning at the beginning of the pandemic, thinking that teachers and leaders would appreciate the dispensation from nonclassroom responsibilities. In fact, this delivered a detrimental message, suggesting that leaders did not value people's learning. Through dialogue with their colleagues, they came to understand that keeping the professional development was important and brought it back.

Tools and protocols. To demonstrate the continued commitment to student achievement, leaders have found it useful to develop and use observation protocols for such activities as classroom visits and coaching, professional learning communities, and faculty meetings. Part of achieving this early win was providing opportunities for educators to share their experiences using these tools. This furthered the conversation and led to the revision of protocols that are still in place.

Partnerships with local community organizations. Meeting with local community partners, seeking and incorporating their input and feedback, and calling on their on-the-ground perspectives and expertise has helped districts serve their students. Whether it is churches that support families, nonprofits that provide after-school programs, the business community that leads fundraising, or other local organizations that can provide assistance in getting the word out to parents, partnerships are crucial.

Several districts are calling on local organizations to help them further their goals around equity — for example, by recruiting diverse people into the education profession. One district reported an early win when attendance at a meeting with members of a local organization jumped to 200, thanks to the district's committed engagement attempts, compared to 30 participants prepandemic. That concrete early win is building momentum in that it is visible that more people are involved — a symbolic indication of better inclusion. Of course, they must now capitalize on this.

Streamlined administrative procedures. Another ripe area for early wins is reducing administrative burden on teachers and leaders. Small changes can make a big difference in staff perceptions of how things are improving. For example, one district stopped sending numerous emails to principals each day and, instead, consolidated all nonurgent messages into a single email each Friday. Principals appreciated having their inboxes uncluttered so they could attend to those messages of most importance.

Standards for principals and principal supervisors. Since leader standards are a focal point in many districts, developing revised standards that reflect the new reality and aspirations is important. Revised standards can provide timely and helpful guidance and lead to other early wins, such as professional leaning and coaching that were cited earlier.

New student programs such as pre-K, individual tutoring, or after-school programs. As districts develop and implement new programs for students to support emerging needs, those should be heralded as wins. Districts should show how these programs are linked with the goals referenced earlier to aid student achievement and well-being and communicate that they are not just another siloed program.

Of course, you can't only stay with early or quick wins. You need to capitalize on the momentum to create longer-term strategies. But starting small with achievable outcomes is a great way to get going. Recognizing

these — and all — wins is important. Don't forget the celebrations, which are good for momentum and morale, but often skipped over. As one participant put it, "We should not lose sight of the small and big wins that serve as momentum for our work."

Communicate early and often.

Our learning community leaders have found that communication, transparency, and sharing the "why" for decisions are key components to success. They say they have learned the value of transparency and discovered new ways to achieve it. One participant said, "It's not that we weren't communicating before, but now we're using all different approaches such as embracing social media. We've also done work with the principals to help them communicate with parents and communities."

Some of the effective strategies leaders have reported include increased communications over multiple platforms; having a dedicated hotline for parents; posting on Instagram for students; hosting town hall meetings; and providing frequent updates internally and externally. Leaders plan to continue many of these strategies. As one said, "Communication was the key throughout the pandemic and continues to be the main area of focus today."

'WE CAN DO THIS'

As one of our learning community participants put it, "The work in the current circumstances is challenging and well worth the effort. ... Doing this requires courage, intentionality, and focus. We can do this, but need a plan, evaluation, and feedback to make it happen."

In the pursuit of accelerating learning for all students, while also being mindful of students' and adults' well-being, the leadership skill of most urgency is the ability to plan and be prepared to pivot. If we can learn from the heroic job educators have done these past two years and use that knowledge to continue what's working and learn how to adapt, we can accelerate our vision for excellent and equitable education for all students as we move forward.

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NO PRINCIPAL IS AN ISLAND. Leaders need a solid base of support

BY GAIL PAUL

School principals are a vital but sometimes overlooked ingredient in education reform. Principals are schools' chief improvement officers — leaders uniquely positioned to strengthen classroom instruction, build cultures of high achievement, cultivate leadership in others, and support teachers and other educators to boost student performance (Grissom et al., 2021). But extensive study into principal preparation and professional learning demonstrates the need for more intentional and systemic support for these leaders.

A suite of newly published reports supported by The Wallace Foundation reveals the features and outcomes of high-quality principal learning and exposes disparities in principals' access to strong learning opportunities, especially in high-poverty schools.

These reports demonstrate how collaborating institutional partners — universities, school districts, and state and federal agencies — can address the

gaps to strengthen principal pipelines, and experts on a recent webinar offered insight about how to make those improvements sustained and systemic (The Wallace Foundation, 2022).

INCREASING DEMANDS

Recent research on school leadership articulates what many educators already know too well: The school principal position is increasingly demanding, and most university-led training doesn't fully prepare candidates for all of the position's challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problems. "Almost three years into COVID, it's a different world," said Daniel Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators. "So many things are changed so drastically. Whatever we were doing to train principals three years ago is out the window. It's a whole new ball game today."

Many university-based principal preparation programs have struggled with how to make the fundamental changes needed to prepare principals for today's schools and align leadership development to school districts' needs. A looming mass exodus of principals predicted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2021) provides greater impetus for districts to examine and refine the structures and processes that pertain to the leadership pipeline.

The new reports offer insights about how to address those challenges and strengthen the pipeline, drawing on years' worth of investment and study.

In 2016, The Wallace Foundation launched the University Principal Preparation Initiative, a multiyear initiative to support seven universities to upgrade their principal preservice training programs in line with research-supported practices.

Wallace enlisted RAND Corporation to evaluate the effort in its fifth year and broadly share findings through an independent study. In 2022, RAND released a report and three related briefs that distill the report's key takeaways to areas of specific interest to university, district, and state agency audiences (Gates et al., 2022; Herman, Wang, & Gates, 2022; Herman, Wang, Woo, & Gates, 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

Another Wallace-supported study brought into greater focus the common elements of high-quality principal preparation and development programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). The study, conducted by Learning Policy Institute, finds that universities, districts, and states all play vital roles and should work together in developing strong programs and making them more accessible.

Together, these two reports highlight the specific roles of each of those entities and how collaboration among them can make a difference. And the responsibility for collaboration should not fall entirely to universities.

For districts considering how to engage with university preparation programs to support quality school leadership, the University Principal Preparation Initiative provides insights on the commitment required to optimize mutual benefits from the relationships. Districts have to be prepared to share their expertise and insights into a program's leadership framework, coursework, instruction, and clinical experiences and partner on recruitment and selection (Wang et al., 2022).

For state education policymakers, the initiative demonstrates how states effectively used policy levers to enhance systems to develop and support principals. In sharing their experiences with RAND Corporation, policy leaders described the importance of offering clear state leader standards and then using those standards to promote coherent state policy (Gates et al., 2022).

RAND Corporation's Susan Gates, a senior economist and director of the Office of Research Quality

A MULTIPRONGED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING PRINCIPALS

The University Principal Pipeline Initiative is one arm of a multipronged approach to develop the principal profession supported by The Wallace Foundation.

In 2011, Wallace launched a six-year Principal Pipeline Initiative, which equipped six participating school districts from across the U.S. to improve the ways they identify, train, hire, support, and evaluate principals.

The Principal Supervisor Initiative, launched in 2014, helped six districts refocus the supervisor role on helping principals support high-quality instruction.

In 2016, Wallace launched the University Principal Preparation Initiative based on the previous research and fieldwork, adding an emphasis on how preservice training at universities can foster it.

Assurance, said RAND's study of the initiative drives home the importance of engagement and collaboration among states, programs, and districts and also of ensuring coherence across policies that are grounded in standards. "Principal preparation is not something that happens discretely within the university. Rather, it is a process that extends across the entire pathway to the principalship in a district before an aspiring leader even enters a program," Gates said.

UNIVERSITIES UPEND TRADITIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Wallace Foundation designed the University Principal Preparation Initiative to provide a model for collaboratively redesigning university principal preparation programs with space for tailoring to context. As a group, the selected universities and their partners participated in a common process and had access to supports coordinated and funded by The Wallace Foundation that defined the initiative, including: Quality Measures, a research-based self-assessment tool and process; standards alignment; mentor programs; logic model development; technical assistance; and professional learning communities.

The program redesign journeys were different for each participating university, but they all focused on core components proven to matter most, including coherent curriculum, integration of theory and practice, active learning, supervised clinical experiences linked to coursework, active recruitment and selection, and cohort structure. They prioritized most-relevant content areas school leaders need now, such as instructional leadership, leading and managing school improvement, shaping teaching and learning conditions, and meeting the needs of learners.

While universities led the work, it was largely informed by district needs and bolstered by expanded efforts at the state level to support strong development of leaders. Each team was paired with a mentor program partner providing technical assistance according to the needs of the university and its stage in the redesign.

Florida Atlantic University, a 30,000-student public university in south Florida, participated in the initiative. Daniel Reyes-Guerra, associate professor in that university's Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology, said his institution went back to the basics evaluating every aspect of its programs. "New standards for leadership were coming out that were replacing the old national standards, and there was a movement toward looking at the role of the principal in schools, which has changed significantly in the last 15 years," Reyes-Guerra said. "One of the things that we've seen is the move toward instructional leadership."

The university brought together four districts representing over 523,000 students for the redesign work and began with a comprehensive assessment of leadership standards, then asked the districts to develop their own. The result: "Our programs became very district-specific," Reyes-Guerra said. "(We are) meeting the ed leadership needs of the district's context, as opposed to providing generic learning that meets the requirements of ed leadership but not necessarily ed leadership in a specific place."

The structures and culture of higher education can make revamping principal preparation challenging. Reyes-Guerra said redesigning and resequencing coursework in collaboration with districts required disrupting traditions in which professors are used to having autonomy.

North Carolina State University associate professor Anna Egalite agreed. "It requires some work and also some courage to redesign programs to meet the needs of what the districts tell us they need," Egalite said.

Despite the challenges, universities saw improvements. The evaluation report noted the following:

- Intentional collaboration with districts led to more targeted improvement;
- Curriculum and instructional changes improved program coherence;
- Clinical experience became more authentic, intentional, and personalized;
- Collaborative partners played an active role at all stages of the redesign process;
- Partnerships evolved to support implementation; and
- Teams took steps to institutionalize redesign features, as well as partnership and process of continuous improvement.

DISTRICTS' ROLE

Districts played active roles in the university preparation program redesigns. They co-created curriculum, embedded district administrators within university systems as adjunct instructors, engaged as peers in steering and working groups, and co-created the development of leader tracking systems to catalyze continuous feedback.

The evaluation found that districts experienced key benefits from their collaboration with universities. Not only did districts anticipate higher-quality principals as a result of the increased communication with the universities, the initiative inspired districts to apply the principles from the redesign to improve their own policies, such as leader standards and evaluation. Partner districts reported creating new programs and professional learning for district staff aligned with the initiative's program content, including courses for teachers, teacher leaders, recent program graduates, or principal supervisors.

Leader tracking systems played an important part in the university-district collaborations. Such systems had emerged as a key component of a previous Wallace-supported initiative. Districts participating in the Principal

Pipeline Initiative found that, as they compiled extensive data on principals and schools, they needed a system to automate data gathering and retrieval.

Wallace supported the development of leader tracking systems to turn raw data into useful information that addresses issues of school leadership, including selecting the right principal for a vacancy, improving on-the-job support, and improving pipeline components (Anderson et al., 2017).

Partner districts in the University Principal Preparation Initiative also employed these leader tracking systems, and the RAND evaluation found that they had a deep impact on the participating districts. Overall, the leader tracking systems helped districts and universities in five ways: preparation program continuous improvement, applicant and candidate support, hiring and placing principals, leadership development, and leadership pipeline planning.

Representing five school districts, Green River Regional Education Cooperative served as the district liaison within Western Kentucky University's University Principal Preparation Initiative partnership that also included superintendents, Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, and Kentucky Department of Education. Priorities for their leader tracking system included creating a leadership pipeline at the district level and supporting data collection on leaders' and aspiring school leaders' experience, performance, competencies, and professional growth. The district unveiled the leader tracking system in 2018.

Valerie Bridges, superintendent of Edgecombe County Public Schools in North Carolina, said the district's leader tracking system serves the district as a succession planning tool. "Oftentimes in school systems, that's not something that happens. We process and we move day to day, putting out those daily fires. Succession planning is helping you think two or three moves down the road."

State education agencies reinvigorated their professional learning for aspiring principals, principals, preparation program faculty, clinical coaches, and mentor principals by providing new funding streams, creating new programs, or developing resource guides.

Each of Florida Atlantic University's three partner districts created its own district-based leader tracking system, and the university also built its own university-based leader tracking system to share information more easily between the districts and university. Reyes-Guerra said Florida Atlantic University's leader tracking system helped his institution assess data on principals' progress and performance, which led to changes in preparation programs. "It provided a real avenue for data exchange between the university and the district," he said.

STATE AND FEDERAL POLICY

State policy contributes to the overall environment that affects how school principals emerge, develop, and lead their schools (Manna, 2021). The Wallace Foundation has explored the effectiveness of legislation to support school leader development as well as informal tactics states employ to broaden support for it.

RAND reported that the four most-activated policy levers promoting university program redesign during the initiative were principal leadership standards, principal licensure, program approval and oversight, and professional development (Gates et al., 2022).

During the University Principal Preparation Initiative, states strengthened their leadership standards, including Kentucky and Georgia, which adopted or adapted national standards. To boost coherence across policies grounded in leader standards, Kentucky took a multiagency approach to creating standards guidance protocols and expanding requirements for university preparation programs to demonstrate alignment between their coursework and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

State education agencies reinvigorated their professional learning for aspiring principals, principals, preparation program faculty, clinical coaches, and mentor principals by providing new funding streams, creating new programs, or developing resource guides.

Reyes-Guerra said the initiative was effective at exposing policymakers to the ground-level needs for pipeline development that effected change. "In Florida, this led to creating a whole new set of educational leadership standards and educational leadership program approval standards for both the universities and the districts," Reyes-Guerra said.

Peter Zamora, director of federal relations and policy at the Council of Chief State School Officers, said that Florida, Illinois, and Kansas have leveraged federal COVID-19 relief funds to support school leaders outside of the initiative, but in fundamental alignment with its core principles.

"The research described today will inform ongoing efforts to promote effective principal pipelines, including federally funded initiatives, and will serve to influence future federal policy development," Zamora said. "As Congress considers legislation to strengthen educator pipelines such as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we will encourage it to learn from the research and from the practical experience in the field as it considers making changes in this space. We really need to build on these improvements moving forward."

THE EQUITY FACTOR

In *Developing Effective Principals: What Kind of Learning Matters* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022), Learning Policy Institute reported that access to high-quality learning for principal candidates and principals has measurably improved over the past decade. Over two-thirds of principals surveyed had access to important content areas associated with leadership, including instructional leadership, staff development, managing change, creating collaborative work environments, and helping teachers improve and meet the needs of all learners.

In addition to the content, the format of these learning opportunities is important. Especially critical are applied learning opportunities, such as inquiry and field-based projects that take place in schools, internships where preservice principals take on leadership responsibilities, access to expert coaches and mentors, and participating in cohorts or peer networks.

However, opportunities for principals and aspiring principals to access authentic job-based training are not readily available to all. Only about one-third of principals have experienced peer observation at least three times in the previous three years. A little over half participated in a principal network three or more times in the previous three years, which is not a high rate of intensity, according to Linda-Darling Hammond, Learning Policy Institute president and CEO.

Principals' access to high-quality learning varies across states and by school poverty level. "Strong principal preparation is not equitable," said Marjorie Wechsler, principal research manager at Learning Policy Institute. "And it's critical that we as a field, as practitioners, as policymakers, as university faculty, as researchers, pay attention," she said.

Expanding access to high-quality learning for all principals and aspiring principals requires commitment to robust partnership and access to tools that support program design, implementation, and continuous improvement.

"Thanks to two decades of research, we now have a much better idea about content and learning approaches that are especially effective for developing excellent school leaders," said Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's president and CEO. "A strong learning community has many partners, and, as a collective, we must expand access to excellent learning opportunities for all who aspire to lead our schools into a brighter future."

UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL PREPARATION INITIATIVE PARTICIPANTS

The Wallace Foundation selected university programs in states with policies supportive of improved principal development and had district partners that served a high-need population. Participants include:

- Albany State University (Georgia)
- Florida Atlantic University
- North Carolina State University
- San Diego State University
- University of Connecticut
- Virginia State University
- Western Kentucky University

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DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

TOOLS

MORE TOOLS IN THIS ISSUE

The Learning Professional is committed to providing you with hands-on, actionable resources for planning, implementing, and evaluating professional learning. That's why you'll find tools embedded throughout this issue.

- Create a web of support for new teachers (Focus section, p. 30).
- Action steps for implementing Standards for Professional Learning (Tools section, pp. 72-74).
- A network of support for new teachers (At a Glance, p. 81).

ACTION STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING **Standards for Professional Learning**

BY LEARNING FORWARD

Standards for Professional Learning set the vision for high-quality professional learning by defining the content, processes, and conditions that lead to great teaching and learning for all students and educators.

When states, provinces, 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. And when policymakers are convinced by compelling evidence that standards strengthen outcomes in schools, they adjust policy to reinforce their use.

Learning Forward believes that all educators have a role to play in advocating for Standards for Professional Learning adoption and implementation, no matter their role or positional authority. This tool is designed to help you plan the action steps that make sense for your role and stage of implementation.

For more information on standards policies and practices, visit **standards.learningforward.org**, where you'll find Action Guides by role, an explanation of how standards lead to change, and many more resources. More detailed guidance for adopting standards into policy will be available soon.

ACTION STEPS FOR SYSTEMS THAT HAVE ADOPTED THE STANDARDS

Adoption of Standards for Professional Learning creates alignment and coherence across the system. At the state level in the U.S., state boards of education adopt Standards for Professional Learning in formal policy. In some states, the standards are written into state regulations and code, either with the full list of standards or referencing the publication and website. Districts may also adopt the standards.

If your state, province, or district has adopted the standards, you can use them as a catalyst for immediate action. Review the following action steps and note which you have already done, are beginning to do, should consider doing, or are not ready to consider.

Action step	Already done	Beginning to do	Consider doing	Not ready to consider
Convene a panel of leaders from education associations to build their understanding of Standards for Professional Learning and endorse their use with their stakeholders.				
Launch a statewide professional learning academy for staff from the state education agency, institutions of higher education, educator associations, and the regional education agencies.				
Establish a protocol for annual review of professional learning statewide, using the standards as the framework, with an opportunity for an open comment period.				
Use the standards as a tool to align the use of federal funds for implementation and monitor high-quality state and district professional learning initiatives.				
Deploy the Standards Assessment Inventory to gather data about how well district and school activities are aligned to the standards to identify professional learning priorities, successes, gaps, trends, and growth areas.				

OTHER ACTION STEPS FOR STATE AND PROVINCIAL POLICY

In addition to adopting Standards for Professional Learning as policy, states and provinces can use and embed the standards into policy in other ways. Review the following actions and mark whether your state or province has already done this, is beginning to do this, should consider doing this, or is not ready to consider this.

Action step	Already done	Beginning to do	Consider doing	Not ready to consider
Align educator and school leader professional standards and evaluation processes to Standards for Professional Learning.				
Ensure that regional service centers map their programs to the standards.				
Use the standards as a framework for grants to districts and schools to incentivize a systemic approach to improving professional learning.				
Use the standards as the framework for a statewide professional learning advisory committee.				
Embed the standards in state recertification requirements or evaluation systems.				
Inform any formal or ad hoc legislative or state agency committees about the importance and impact of the standards.				

OTHER ACTION STEPS FOR DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

If Standards for Professional Learning have not been adopted at the state or province level, there are still many ways to embed the standards within systems. Review the following actions and mark whether your district, state, or province has already done this, is beginning to do this, should consider doing this, or is not ready to consider this.

Action step	Already done	Beginning to do	Consider doing	Not ready to consider
Develop a professional learning plan to delineate how educator capacity building will align to and support the district or school strategic plan.				
Define how district central office leaders, school leaders, and coaches will build their capacity to lead, facilitate, and monitor professional learning for others.				
Embed standards into all district policy regarding professional learning.				
Focus a collective review of standards by all staff to inform the articulation of short- and long-term school-based professional learning needs and goals.				
Provide common language and expectations across district departments and programs, and ensure consistent ways of designing, implementing, and measuring outcomes across all professional learning.				
Require that external providers align their contracts and services to the standards.				
Design professional learning modules aligned to the standards for school principals and instructional coaches, who in turn build the capacity of all teachers.				

ACTIONS EDUCATORS CAN TAKE AS POLICY LEADERS AND ADVOCATES

If formal policy is not within their sphere of influence, educators can still use Standards for Professional Learning as frameworks and guidance in a variety of ways and advocate for their adoption. Classroom educators, team leaders, and coaches can increase the likelihood of standards adoption by reaching out to policymakers with documentation of their impact. Review the following first steps and consider where you stand with each of them.

Action step	Already done	Beginning to do	Consider doing	Not ready to consider
Familiarize yourself with the standards enough to feel comfortable talking about them and integrating them into your own practice.				
Choose professional learning that aligns to the standards.				
Provide feedback to supervisors about whether the professional learning available to you reflects an understanding of and alignment to the standards.				
Identify examples of standards-aligned professional learning from your own experience, reading, peer networking, and other sources.				
Document the impact of standards-aligned professional learning on your practice and share it with supervisors and decision-makers.				

CONNECT. BELONG. SUPPORT.

UPDATES

LEARNING FORWARD ACADEMY AT WORK

Members of the Learning Forward Academy gathered in person in July for the first time since the start of the pandemic. Three Academy cohorts met in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to examine problems of practice that can be solved using the cycle for continuous improvement and tools aligned with Standards for Professional Learning.

Pictured here are members of the Academy Class of 2022. Clockwise from back left: Laura McDuffie, Houston (Texas) ISD; Shenita Bolton, Fort Wayne (Indiana) Community Schools; Becky Odajima, Midway ISD in McLennan County, Texas; and Natasha Grey, Concord Road Elementary School in Ardsley, New York.

THERE'S STILL TIME TO ADVOCATE FOR TITLE IIA FUNDING

Fall 2022 is sure to be busy on Capitol Hill, but don't expect fast action on education appropriations. While the House Appropriations Committee passed a Labor, Health, Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, the full House may not vote on this bill until after the August recess. Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations Committee has not made any progress toward moving its own version of the appropriations bill.

Even if the House and Senate are prepared in September to negotiate a final compromise of funding for fiscal year 2023, it is likely that Congress will opt to pass a continuing resolution to keep the government functioning and defer final appropriations votes until after the November midterm elections.

What all of this means is that a final decision on overall education funding and on the $100 billion increase for Title IIA in the House's bill will be delayed for at least another three to four months. It also means that Learning Forward advocates still have time to influence final funding decisions.

Mark your calendars for a virtual professional learning Capitol Hill advocacy day Sept. 14. Please plan to join us. For more information, visit **www.poweredbytitleii.com**.

Academy classes move forward

After pausing the Learning Forward Academy during the pandemic, three Academy classes gathered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in July for a deep dive into continuous improvement. Careful planning and execution by Learning Forward staff, Academy coaches, and Academy alumni ensured meaningful learning experiences for participants.

The Academy Class of 2021 worked on unpacking how to assess impact of their work. Participants are solving problems related to professional learning in their systems and schools. Through careful analysis of their organizations, they developed a problem of practice that can be solved using the cycle of continuous improvement. They analyzed their learning plans, determined outcomes, and dove into the new Standards for Professional Learning with Learning Forward's standards team. Between now and their graduation in December, each Academy member will evaluate the implementation of their project and determine what impact their work had on educator and student learning.

The Academy Class of 2022 met in person for the first time. The group initially began virtually in 2020, but we quickly realized the format was not ideal for this work and paused until we could resume in person. The Class of 2022 used its collaboration time to dive into Standards for Professional Learning, theory of change, KASAB, logic models, and creating teachable points of view. When the Class of 2022 meets in December, the group will focus on evaluating implementation with guidance from Joellen Killion, author of *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Professional Learning* (Corwin & Learning Forward, 2018).

For the Academy Class of 2024, the gathering in July was the first session. Class members dug into assessing their current state and designing their problem of practice. The coaches centered the learning around Standards for Professional Learning. The group refined its problem of practice, gave and received feedback on potential projects, and explored how to use evidence to uncover inequities in their systems. The group will convene virtually in September to apply what class members have uncovered in their data. When they convene in December, they will explore implementation and assessing impact.

We look forward to watching these educators make positive impacts on professional learning within their systems.

NEW ONLINE COURSES ADDED

Gain guidance from Learning Forward's top practitioners and consultants, previously only available to districts, as they lead the highest-quality online learning experiences. Visit **learningforward.org/online-courses** to see which classes start soon. Here are the courses we offer:

- Relationally Skilled Leading
- Powerful Practices for Professional Learning
- Student-Centered Pedagogy
- Coaching for Content Literacy
- Introduction to Standards for Professional Learning
- Virtual Coaches Academy
- Virtual Mentor Teacher Academy
- Powerful Communication Skills for Coaches
- 8 Dimensions of Educator Wellness
- Designing Professional Learning for the Virtual World

HAVE YOU UPDATED YOUR PROFILE LATELY?

Updating your profile with Learning Forward means more than updating your mailing address. You can also choose which emails you get from Learning Forward. In less than three minutes, you can complete or update your account profile and select which emails you want to receive to ensure that you only get information relevant to you and your role. Go to **learningforward.org/login > My Account** to get started.

Oklahoma affiliate leaders support statewide teacher induction program

Recognizing the imperative of supporting early career educators, Learning Forward Oklahoma leaders worked with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to support a statewide teacher induction program aligned with Standards for Professional Learning.

The teacher induction program matches first-, second-, and third-year teachers with site-based mentors and virtual instructional coaches to guide them as they begin their teaching careers. First-year teachers are matched with site-based mentors who provide support in classroom management, instructional practices, and community engagement.

Second- and third-year teachers work with virtual instructional coaches to engage in coaching cycles focusing on instructional practices. The virtual instructional coaches are experienced teachers who want to develop their skills in leadership and coaching.

Technology serves as the conduit connecting teachers and coaches across the state in collaborative relationships. A digital coaching platform allows a secure space for coaches and teachers to share videos, lesson plans, and feedback for continuous asynchronous learning.

The program is founded on the Equity Drivers standard of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning to help new teachers meet the needs of all students. The program also aligns with the Evidence standard by incorporating data collection and analysis at each stage of planning, implementing, and evaluating the program.

After mentors and instructional coaches engage in synchronous, virtual professional learning and implement new knowledge and skills in their classrooms and coaching sessions, participants reconvene to share insights with cohort colleagues. A data scientist leads the design and analysis of participant surveys, focus groups, and feedback from teachers, mentors, and coaches.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education is committed to building skilled, early career teachers who will serve in the teaching profession for the long term, effectively contributing to teacher shortage reduction. Aligning with Standards for Professional Learning is a key part of ensuring the professional learning makes a difference.

2023 themes for *The Learning Professional*

Here are themes for the 2023 issues of *The Learning Professional*:

- February 2023: **The retention challenge** (due Nov. 1, 2022).
- April 2023: **Continuous improvement in schools** (closed to submissions).
- June 2023: **Accelerating learning** (due Feb. 1, 2023).
- August 2023: **About time** (due April 1, 2023).
- October 2023: **Supporting students with special needs** (due June 1, 2023).
- December 2023: **Taking the next career step** (due Aug. 1, 2023).

To learn more about the themes and view submission guidelines, visit **learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us**.

JUSTIFY YOUR CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

We've created a Justify Your Attendance kit to help you build a persuasive argument for attending Learning Forward's 2022 Annual Conference with your supervisors and colleagues.

Inside the kit, you will find:

- Talking points;
- Sample letter requesting approval;
- Instructions for how to personalize your request;
- List of benefits to your district;
- Pricing information; and
- Potential funding sources.

Download your copy from **conference.learningforward.org/justify**.

Illinois district renews commitment to learning

We may never be back to normal, but many districts are finding now is the perfect time for program resets — a chance to bring role-alike groups together to reaffirm their role and purpose, re-establish shared practices and vocabulary, and commit to the work that lies ahead.

St. Charles Community Unit School District 303 in Illinois recently partnered with Learning Forward for just such a reset, bringing together content and support specialists with a wide variety of titles and roles but united in supporting teachers through a coaching model of improvement. Together they learned about and practiced the language of coaching, ways of supporting teachers within coaching cycles focused on accelerating student learning, and coaching for the implementation of subject-specific, high-leverage math and English language arts strategies. Administrators from across the district also joined us for a morning focused on maximizing principal-coach partnerships.

Many thanks to the district's superintendent, Paul Gordon, for a high-energy and inspiring kickoff to the week and to Pam Jensen, director of instruction, and Christine Igoe, assistant superintendent for educational services, for their planning and support during a week of engaging and fun learning.

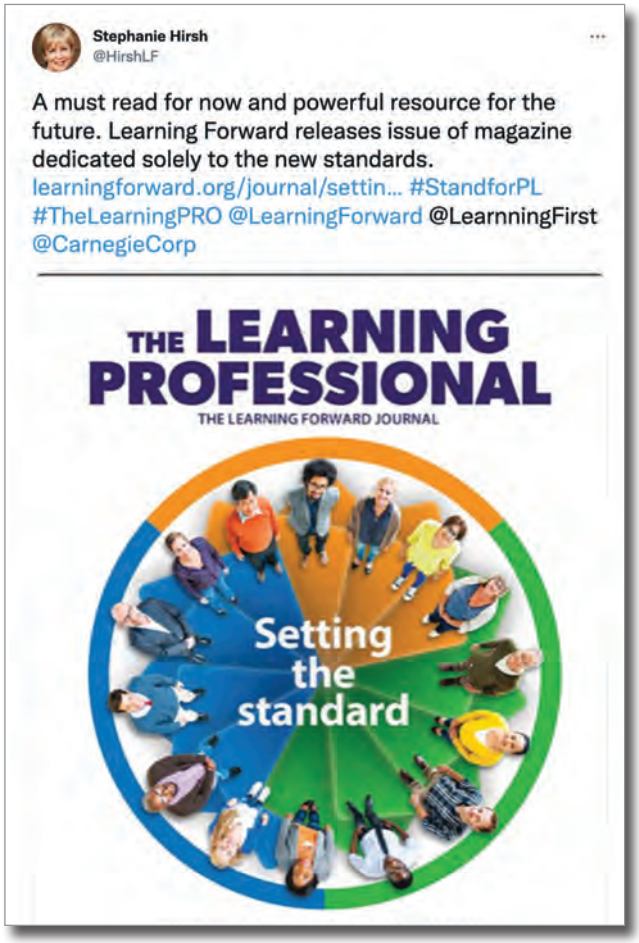
STAFF PROMOTIONS

Paul Fleming has been promoted to chief learning officer. He previously served as senior vice president of standards, states, & equity.

Suzanne Bouffard has been promoted to senior vice president, communications and publications. She will continue to serve as editor of *The Learning Professional*.

#TheLearningPro

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



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

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THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

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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THROUGH THE LENS

OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Standards for Professional Learning describe the content, processes, and conditions of high-quality learning that makes a difference for students and educators. They are organized in a framework of three interconnected categories. Understanding each category and each standard can help learning leaders build systemic professional learning.

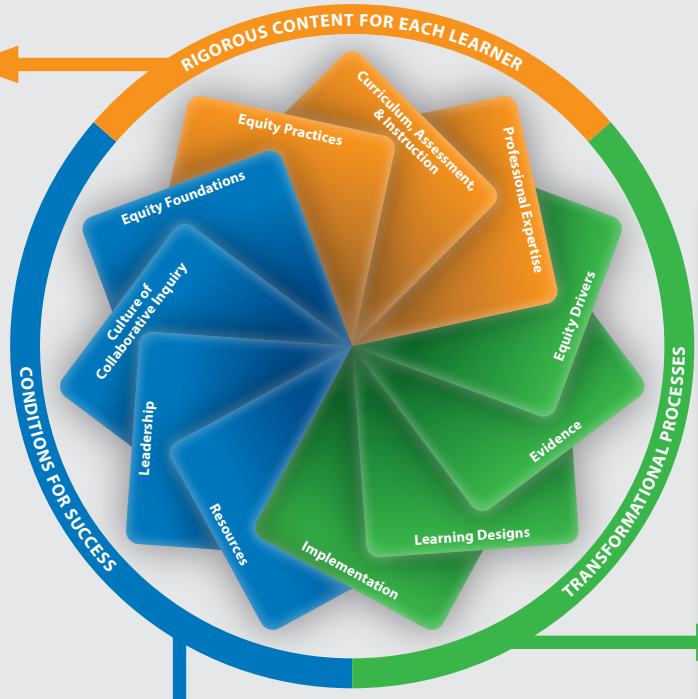
To help you deepen your understanding, this tool provides reflection questions that draw on articles from this issue of *The Learning Professional* and connect to standards from each category. You can use these questions to guide your reading of the articles or you can use them in conversations with colleagues — for example, during professional learning communities, observations, or planning discussions.

The page numbers after each question will take you to the article that corresponds to the question.

HOW TO EMBED STANDARDS IN NEW TEACHER MENTORING

Rigorous Content for Each Learner

- How is new teacher mentoring and induction aligned with your district's **curriculum, assessment, and instruction** approaches? (p. 34)
- How can you establish mentoring as the beginning of a career-long development of **professional expertise**? (p. 26)



Transformational Processes

- What is the theory of action behind your mentoring program? What **learning designs** do you employ and why? (p. 26)
- What opportunities do new teachers have to examine **equity drivers**, including the impact of their own identities, values, and beliefs? (p. 14)

Conditions for Success

- Why is it important for new teachers to engage in **collaborative inquiry** and peer support? (p. 52)
- How are you cultivating mentors' **leadership** while attending to mentees' growth? (p. 38)

Learn more about Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning at **standards.learningforward.org**

AT A GLANCE

A network of support for new teachers

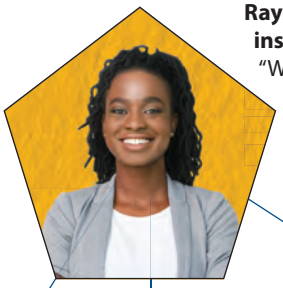
New teachers need a web of support to cope with all the stresses and challenges of leading a classroom, whether it's their first time teaching or their first year in a new school. They need to have multiple colleagues to reach out to for questions about a range of topics and know how to reach them.

As you plan how to support new teachers, look at the web of support surrounding Jordan, a fictional first-year teacher. Consider the roles of the educators in her network and the examples of questions she asked each of them in the first quarter of the school year.

You may also wish to further your planning with with the tool on p. 72 of this issue.

Meet Jordan

7th-grade math teacher, first year



Rayschell, math instructional coach
"Why aren't students understanding how to convert ratios to percentages?"

Ben, school social worker
"Some days, I'm so overwhelmed I cry in my car. Am I a failure?"

Vivienne, mentor and veteran teacher
"How do I submit grades?"

Jake, 7th-grade team lead
"I think one of my students needs special services. What's the next step?"

Margot, SEL specialist
"One of my students is saying disrespectful things to me. What do I do?"

Maria, technology specialist
"How do I access and use the online curriculum resources with my students?"

Parker, assistant principal
"I can't reach a student's family. Can you help me connect with them?"

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