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

CALL TO ACTION

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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.

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. ■

