

# THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

## Disrupting inequity

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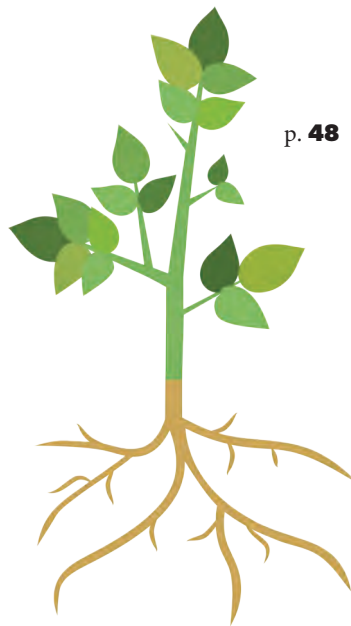
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### ISAY

## Harriet D. Moore

Director of innovation and equity at Sarasota County Schools, Florida



When asked for her advice on navigating resistance to equity work:

“I think that, when we move away from using trigger words and really focus on those things that impact human dignity and self-worth, it's really hard to challenge that. ... If you look at our [district equity] policy, you'll see we very carefully crafted the definitions within that policy to make them almost inarguable. Because to argue against them, you're arguing against the basic human needs of our students, staff, and families.”

— Excerpted from “Living equity in your work” [webinar], November 3, 2022, [learningforward.org/webinar/living-equity-in-your-work/](https://learningforward.org/webinar/living-equity-in-your-work/)



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For more information, contact Sharron Helmke, vice president, professional services, at [sharron.helmke@learningforward.org](mailto:sharron.helmke@learningforward.org) | [services.learningforward.org](https://services.learningforward.org)



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## HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

**To know who our students and colleagues are — what they value, what they hope for and fear, what moves them — we have to listen.**

# LISTENING IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO DISRUPT INEQUITY

**A**s you read the articles in the following pages, it is my hope that you will not think of this as an “equity issue” of the journal. That’s because equity is embedded in every issue of *The Learning Professional*.

According to columnist Baruti Kafele, equity means meeting every student where they are, as they are. We strive to continually provide resources and reflection tools to help you fulfill that vision for all students. And we believe that educators are students, too — lifelong students — so we also strive to meet each of you where you are, as you are.

Looking back through recent issues of the journal, some themes recur frequently about dismantling inequity. One of them, which really shines through in the current issue, is about a seemingly simple but surprisingly complex skill: listening.

This issue’s authors challenge us to step back and really listen to others’ perspectives, especially when their words are hard to hear, and they give us some tips to help us do just that.

Deep listening is essential for the asset-based approach several authors encourage us to take with students and colleagues. An asset-based approach means seeing strengths, rather than deficiencies, and building from them. We can’t do that work without listening and learning. As Kafele said in his keynote at our recent Annual Conference, we can’t meet students where they are and as they are if we don’t know who they are. The same is true for staff and colleagues. And to know who our students and colleagues are — what they value, what they hope for and fear, what moves them — we have to listen.

Discomfort is a common and often necessary part of confronting inequity and redressing it, as many authors in this and previous issues point out. It can be tempting to revert to defensiveness and dismissiveness instead of listening to understand. Jacobē Bell encourages us to avoid that temptation and lean into the discomfort. She shares specific strategies for how to navigate difficult conversations, including receiving student feedback, such as taking an equity pause and using an Oops and Ouch protocol.

Requesting and listening to feedback is an essential part of upending the status quo. Kimberly Hinton and James T. Schwartz describe feedback for growth as one way to engage in deep listening, and they include it as one of four pillars for anti-racist leadership. George S. Perry Jr., Joan Richardson, and Tiffany Shockley Jackson point out that it is an essential strategy for equity-focused professional learning.

Aaliyah Baker and Nina F. Weisling show us how stories and narratives, even hypothetical ones, can help us hone our listening and reflection skills. They provide vignettes with reflection questions designed to help educators develop cultural competence.

Bruce King and colleagues talk about how they have created a space for educators to listen to Indigenous voices about how to tap into cultural wisdom and teach Indigenous history accurately.

On the topic of listening and learning, I want to express the deep gratitude of *The Learning Professional* staff and readers to the 2022 guest columnists — Nader Twal, Jennifer Abrams, and Baruti Kafele. They have opened our ears, minds, and hearts to invaluable perspectives about equity, leadership, growth, and other aspects of professional learning. They have modeled collaboration and commitment to growth and encouraged the same in all of us.

In this issue, they prompt us to keep listening and learning: to seek understanding in the service of “rewriting false narratives” (p. 14), to ask “Am I honoring the experience and wisdom of our African American educators?” (p. 17), and to “stretch at our edges to be in conversation” with one another to ensure humanity in our work (p. 16). We look forward to ongoing collaboration and continuing to learn from them — and all of you. ■

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

# THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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

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Managing editor:

Sue Chevalier

Designer:

Kristina Harrison

At a Glance Designer:

David McCoy

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INSPIRE. EXPRESS. ADVOCATE.

# VOICES



## SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER TO SERVE EVERY CHILD

**"R**egardless of the understandable fears we're facing and the political noise around us, it's vital to stay true to our purpose of serving every child," says Learning Forward CEO Frederick Brown in his column on p. 8. "Many of us have always been champions for equity, even if we haven't used that word or had a framework to describe it. Now we must tap into that longstanding commitment and determine how to move it forward."



**Many of us have always been champions for equity, even if we haven't used that word or had a framework to describe it. Now we must tap into that longstanding commitment and determine how to move it forward.**

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

## CALL TO ACTION

Frederick Brown

# HOW WE CAN SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER'S EQUITY JOURNEY

**A**s educational equity has become a heated topic over the last few years, many educators who are passionate about meeting students' needs have been unsure what to say and do. Aware of the political and cultural battles being waged around them, they are wary of triggering hostile responses to their efforts to honor all students' experiences and backgrounds, teach a full and accurate curriculum, and address each child's strengths and challenges.

I witness these fears firsthand. Before giving a recent presentation to a school district, I was told, "Please don't mention the word 'equity' because it will cause too many problems." Colleagues have shared stories

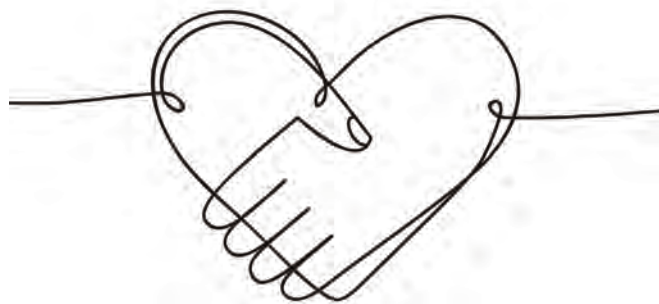
of teacher teams trying to figure out how to talk about slavery without offending anyone or worrying that they will be labeled biased for saying that it was wrong for a society to benefit from the unwilling labor of others.

Regardless of the understandable fears we're facing and the political noise around us, it's vital to stay

true to our purpose of serving every child. Many of us have always been champions for equity, even if we haven't used that word or had a framework to describe it. Now we must tap into that longstanding commitment and determine how to move it forward.

My equity journey started many years ago. A key part of its development came when I engaged with educators around the state of Ohio in a project to strengthen mathematics and science instruction, in part by becoming culturally responsive and aware of the many gifts their children brought to the classrooms. Other major steps included attending conferences of the National Association for Multicultural Education and the National Council of La Raza and becoming a member of my local National Alliance of Black School Educators affiliate. Throughout this journey, my goals have been to provide tools and resources to help educators who are fighting equity battles in small towns, big cities, and suburbs alike to equip teachers and leaders with strategies to meet the individual needs of each and every one of their students, no matter the context.

Each of us who cares deeply about equity has our own individual journey. But we are also on a collective equity journey, and we have the opportunity to learn from and support one another. As I am continually learning from and with others in the field, I offer a few pieces of advice and lessons learned in the hope that they can support your journey.



## UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTEXT

One of the first steps in navigating today's cultural minefields is clearly understanding your local context. Amid a lot of political and public noise, it's important to know the facts. I recently met with educators in a state that had just passed controversial legislation about what educators can and cannot say about aspects of identity. When I asked the group how many of them had read the legislation, I learned that many of them hadn't taken the time or known how to do so. Instead, they had only depended on news articles or tweets to help them form their

understandings of the new policies and requirements. I had read the actual legislation and was surprised to see that many of the fears the educators expressed about what they couldn't say or do were not borne out in the law. Having a clearer understanding might have assuaged some of their fears and given them confidence to move forward with their work. And if the legislation had proved as restrictive as they feared, knowing the specifics could have helped them focus their response.

I encourage educators to read the legislation and then read what trusted colleagues and organizations in the state or province have written about the new rules. Reach out to your state education agency or ministry for support. The key is to become as informed as possible so that you can act accordingly.

## REFOCUS ON YOUR PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

When I was a student teacher in Toledo, Ohio, my supervising teacher gave me some wise advice: You can never go wrong if you always put kids first. It's a simple idea, but one that became my core value and has guided me ever since. For me, the essence of the work is the essence of equity: making sure each child gets the resources and support they need to be successful. To do that, I need to learn about each child, including their background, family history, cultural values, strengths, and challenges.

When I became a principal, and now as the chief executive of Learning Forward, I apply this same core value to my teachers and staff, constantly asking myself, "How can I meet their needs so they can support educators and students?"

The values and beliefs of our organization also guide my thinking and actions about navigating equity challenges. Under the leadership of our board of trustees, the Learning Forward team developed the following values to guide our work internally and

externally:

- Focus on learning.
- Embrace equity and diversity.
- Collaborate for continuous improvement.
- Practice leadership with integrity.
- Demonstrate impact.

Knowing that equity is a key aspect of our organization's values lets our team members know they can be bold when pushing for equitable outcomes for all students and educators, and Standards for Professional Learning provide guidance for how we engage in equity actions. The three equity standards (Equity Practices, Equity Drivers, and Equity Foundations) remind us of the importance of attending to all the gifts students bring, our own biases and beliefs, and the equity structures and policies — written and unwritten — that exist around us. This foundation gives us solid ground to stand on as we face the equity headwinds.

## BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT THE LANGUAGE YOU USE

During a recent Learning Forward webinar (Harper et al., 2022), I shared the work of two organizations that have researched how the words we use can play a role in moving forward an equity agenda. Lake Research Partners conducted a series of surveys about how people of varying political affiliations respond to certain equity-oriented language. Based on the results, they advise not to use the word "equitable" because it is not broadly understood and instead opt for more specific language based on the situation.

For example, instead of saying, "We are providing equitable funding to our schools," get specific and say, "We are providing more funding for schools in communities that need the most help" and avoid vague calls for more funding in favor of specific targets for the funding, such as quality teachers and healthy meals. They also find that it's important to avoid jargon

— for example, people respond more favorably to phrases like "one-on-one attention" than "instructional time."

Framing is important, too.

The researchers recommend saying what you are for rather than what you are against and connecting problems to solutions by centering people and their lived experiences. For example: "Children can't form positive relationships with adults in their school if they don't feel safe or welcome, so let's create learning environments that foster social and emotional development."

Research from the Fordham Institute lends support to the notion that it's important for educators to think about how we describe our work (Tyner, 2021). Although educators often use the term "social and emotional learning," survey data showed that parents and citizens on both sides of the political spectrum disliked it. The term "life skills" resonated more positively. Furthermore, most respondents agreed on the importance of many of the key tenets of social and emotional learning programs even though they disliked the overall label. Although not specifically about equity, this study is a reminder that terminology matters.

## AN ACT OF BRAVERY

Being a champion for equity can be challenging in today's politically charged atmosphere. It is an act of bravery that these times demand of us. As we all move forward, being as bold as our contexts allow, learning and leading together can buoy us and strengthen this work.

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**Learning Forward's equity standards show leaders what an equity mindset really looks like, without the distractions of rhetoric, and steps for helping staff learn about why and how to respect and nurture every child's needs.**

**Paul Fleming (paul.fleming@learningforward.org) is senior vice president, states, standards, & equity at Learning Forward. This column highlights examples of how Learning Forward networks apply Standards for Professional Learning and offers lessons educators can apply in their own professional learning work.**



**NETWORKS AT WORK**

Paul Fleming

## **THE POWER OF EQUITY-FOCUSED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR PRINCIPALS**

**P**rin cipals are a critical lever for implementing schoolwide policies, practices, and mindsets that create equitable outcomes for all students (Gates et al., 2019; Grissom et al., 2021). Yet school systems often overlook the kind of high-quality professional learning that results in leaders' growth and development.

Learning Forward networks are one of the ways we try to fill this gap and ensure continuous improvement for principals and other school leaders, such as assistant principals and heads of school. Our leadership networks bring together school leaders from across buildings and across districts to learn with and from one another. That collaboration helps leaders break through the isolation many of them feel in their buildings. The conversations and action planning we facilitate help them address pressing challenges that they may not even recognize are common across schools.

All of our networks are underpinned by a deep commitment to serving every student, which is articulated in the recently revised Standards for Professional Learning. Three new standards describe the equity practices, drivers, and foundations necessary to develop and support all educators to respect and nurture all aspects of student identity rather than treat them as barriers to learning. These aspects of educator and student identity include race, ethnicity, home language, ZIP code, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, religious or political beliefs, family context, adverse childhood experiences, and other elements of personal or social experience (Learning Forward, 2022).

The intersection of school leadership and equity in the standards provides a path for principals to nurture a staffwide commitment to meeting every child's needs. It can be challenging for principals to implement equity-focused policies, practices, and mindsets, especially amid the political firestorms occurring in numerous states and districts as some stakeholders seek to block equity efforts. The equity standards can help by showing leaders what an equity mindset really looks like, without the distractions of rhetoric, and steps for helping staff learn about why and how to respect and nurture every child's needs. These steps and the importance of equity are reinforced in the Leadership standard.

The Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative, funded by The Wallace Foundation, is one network in which we apply the equity standards (Equity Practices, Equity Drivers, and Equity Foundations) and the Leadership standard to support principals and their systems with the adoption of equity-focused policies, practices, and mindsets. Eight large school districts from across the country — building on the strong evidence that comprehensive, aligned career development pathways can be a feasible, affordable, and effective way to improve student achievement districtwide — are developing principal pipelines with the goal of producing school leaders capable of advancing their district's vision of equity. Currently in year two of this five-year initiative, each district has formed a district partnership team with local community



organizations, two university leader preparation programs, and the state education agency to develop its own definition of equity and define what an equity-centered leader needs to know and be able to do.

The Wallace Foundation chose Learning Forward to design, implement, and evaluate three professional learning convenings each year for these district partnership teams. At the first in-person convening, the teams shared successes, challenges, and ongoing questions in a supportive and engaging environment.

The three new equity standards have shaped how our Learning Forward team designed these convenings in numerous ways, including the use of protocols and structures that ensure equitable access to learning and modeling a culture of support for all district team members.

Each district partnership team is designing a comprehensive, aligned, equity-centered pipeline to translate its vision into reality, provide mentoring and training for aspiring and current principals, and engage in continuous improvement. As the teams engage in this work, we are seeing the following common themes emerge:

- **Ensure equity of voices:** Each team has carefully solicited a diverse group of stakeholders

(principals, teachers, families, and community organizations) when developing its own equity definition and principal pipeline strategic priorities and models.

- **Stay committed to the work of equity:** To allay criticism about equity-based initiatives, each team has developed extensive communication strategies for explaining the importance of and rationale for why equity is important to developing aspiring and current principals.
- **Recognize the importance of equity allies:** Each team has expressed the value of convening with other district teams, often in role-alike conversations, to recognize they're not alone in their equity leadership journeys and share strategies and common challenges.

Columbus City Schools in Ohio is an example of how districts embody these principles. At a recent convening of all eight districts participating in the initiative, the Columbus City Schools team shared why and how it is embedding equity into all departments and services in the district and how it is centering the voices of principals and other stakeholders in doing so. The team has also integrated equity into its board of education goals

and district strategic priorities. This systemwide approach demonstrates to the community that equity must be in the DNA of the district and cannot reside with only one leader, like the superintendent, or in one division, like human resources. They also made sure to include and center the voices of principals when creating the district's definition of equity.

The emerging themes from Columbus and the other seven district partnership teams reinforce Learning Forward's conception of the equity standards and our commitment to infusing equity throughout Standards for Professional Learning. This deep engagement with the standards will in turn continue to inform our work with the Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative and other districts and schools.

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## LEARNING FORWARD'S

# Learning Teams

**Focus your learning teams' efforts on planning instruction that reaches all learners.**

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**Practitioners are the experts to whom policymakers listen most. That is where Learning Forward members and stakeholders come in.**

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

## **POLICY PERSPECTIVE**

Melinda George

# **EVERY EDUCATOR CAN BE AN ADVOCATE. HERE'S HOW**

**F**or five years, Learning Forward has led the “Every Educator Is an Advocate” campaign to encourage all educators to use their voices and expertise to make an impact on policy at all levels of the education system. Advocacy is using an opportunity to share a story or compelling reasons that a decision should be made, resources or funding should be allocated, or a path forward should be shaped in a particular way. While the job description for an educator is already complex, adding advocacy to your toolbox is important because it enables educators to be a part of the decision-making process rather than having decisions made for them.



To support our campaign, Learning Forward hosted Virtual Advocacy Day in September. The daylong event brought together more than 100 educators to build purpose and excitement for advocacy, share tips and strategies, and prepare for virtual Congressional visits to support funding for Title IIA, the main federal source of funding for professional learning in the U.S. Learning Forward stakeholders participated in virtual visits with U.S. House of Representatives and Senate staff representing 35 states.

Virtual Advocacy Day began with a panel of Learning Forward members and stakeholders who are longtime advocacy leaders: Segun Eubanks, director of the Center for Education Innovation and Improvement at the University of Maryland; Paul Katnik, assistant commissioner in the Office of Educator Quality at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and Barbara Patterson Oden, manager of educational partnerships at the Center for the Collaborative Classroom. These leaders have been on both sides of advocacy conversations, as advocates and as decision-makers. They talked about how they got involved and what strategies worked for them and offered recommendations for other educators.

They highlighted three critical roles in advocacy — lobbyists, education policy advisors, and practitioners — explaining that each brings a different and critical component to making the case for effective education policy.

Lobbyists are professionals whose job is to know and understand the systems of government and how governing proposals are developed. Lobbyists also develop a network of policymakers and their staff members, with whom they connect regularly. The primary job of lobbyists is talking to policymakers to influence policy.

But, as Eubanks noted, “Those lobbyists cannot close the deal on their own.” They need educational policy advisors who understand the research and evidence about the initiatives and changes posed in the policy proposals, including data on whether and how these initiatives have been shown to affect teachers and students. These are researchers, thought leaders, and those who study policy.

Practitioners are the experts to whom policymakers listen most. Educators are leaders in the

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Betty Wilson-McSwain

### 'WHEN WE LEARN BETTER, WE DO BETTER'

*Betty Wilson-McSwain is assistant superintendent for federal programs and testing for McComb (Mississippi) School District and president of Learning Forward Mississippi.*

**The standards create a universal language for best practices and help us set criteria to ensure we are all learning in ways that really make a difference for students.**

**Why she is invested in professional learning:** I became a Learning Forward member in 2006, but I can't remember a time when I didn't have professional learning. Professional learning can't be separated from anything I do. When I became a vocational director (what would now be called a career and technical education director), my staff and I started doing book studies together and then going to conferences together so that I would know how to support what they learned. I also lead our Early Learning Collaborative funded by the state legislature. The accompanying Collaborative Act of 2013 requires that we have professional learning communities that meet once a month. But in our district, we meet twice a month, and sometimes more, because we want continuous learning. When we learn better, we do better.

**How professional learning is embedded in her current role:** A big part of my job is managing federal programs, so part of what I do is look for available professional development dollars. That includes Title IIA, but Title I and Title V also have professional learning components. We use all of these resources to build the capacity of the people who are working with our scholars. We want to be sure that we use them in ways that make a difference. So, for example, when schools submit Title IIA proposals, we review them to make sure they follow Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

**Why she relies on Standards for Professional Learning:** The standards create a universal language for best practices and help us set criteria to ensure we are all learning in ways that really make a difference for students. Otherwise, we could say we were doing professional learning, but it might not be high-quality. That's why the Mississippi Public Schools Accountability Standards, which establish school accreditation policies and procedures, have Process Standard 15, which says that districts must base their professional learning efforts on Learning Forward's standards.

**How Learning Forward Mississippi is building knowledge about the standards:** Our affiliate just partnered with Learning Forward and the Mississippi Department of Education to do a deep dive into the standards because it's important for us to understand the standards to help others apply them. My favorite part was when the Learning Forward facilitators asked us to draw visual analogies of the standards. Each group went about it a different way, but everyone developed a deeper understanding (see p. 77). One thing we're learning is that we use a lot of practices that are consistent with the standards, but we weren't categorizing them this way or using the language of the standards. It's important to become more intentional about that.

**Why Learning Forward Mississippi embodies the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard:** Collaboration is essential for spreading best practices. We have a close relationship with the state department of education, including having board members who work in the department. That helped us get involved in writing the standards into the state accreditation standards and designing processes to monitor their implementation. We also have representatives on our board from higher education institutions. Collaboration helps us highlight best practices across the state. For example, in 2010, we decided to begin the Spotlight Schools award to highlight schools that are making growth and how professional learning is part of that. Another way we are building collaboration is through a preconference we organized at the largest state education conference last summer. We're trying to impact all entities to spread the importance of professional learning. ■



**Not being racist is good but assumes a passive posture to a dynamic threat. Being anti-racist is active and recognizes that a knot cannot undo itself.**

**Nader I. Twal** ([ntwal@lbschools.net](mailto:ntwal@lbschools.net)) is a program administrator in the Long Beach Unified School District's Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development.

## DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE

Nader I. Twal

# IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO NOT BE RACIST

**W**hen I taught high school, I always started my days early. I was usually in my classroom by 6 a.m. to prepare for the students who arrived at 7:30 a.m. for our first-period class. It was a routine that I grew to cherish because I was able to ease into my day and bring the best version of myself to the students.

But, on Sept. 11, 2001, that routine came to a grinding halt as I walked down the hall to my classroom. A colleague of mine, who taught a few doors down and was already in his classroom, glanced at me with horror in his eyes and said, "A plane just went into one of the Twin Towers." I didn't know what to do with the information but knew that it was significant. I rushed to my classroom and turned on CNN, fully expecting to see a propeller plane that had gone off course or lost control lodged in the side of the building. What I found was far more horrific. And as I watched and tried to make sense of it all, the second plane crashed into the second tower.



As the day unfolded, and it became apparent that the terrorists were of Middle Eastern descent, I knew that life would not look the same moving forward. This moment affirmed every representation that I had ever seen of Middle Eastern men on film and in print.

Though born in the United States and raised in the Middle East, I was deeply ashamed of my Middle Eastern descent because representations of my culture seemed riddled with threat and horror. And this moment sealed that shame for me. I felt a need and sometimes a pressure to explain that "not all of us are like this." Then I felt tides of guilt as I considered any potential racism directed at me as insignificant in light of the horror gripping those trapped in the building and their families awaiting any news. That inner conflict riddled my heart and mind for years to come, so I stayed quiet.

When I think back on the significance of that moment in my identity development, what I have come to realize is that it had the profound effect that it did (well into my adulthood) because it confirmed years of imagery and narratives that I had internalized about myself and my culture. Rather than being portrayed as family-centered, joyful, resilient, artistic, and cultured, Middle Easterners were often memorialized as primitive, aggressive, abusive, and hostile.

In *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (2017), Beverly Daniel Tatum likens such cultural racism that assumes the inferiority of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to smog. There are times when the smog is thick and obvious, like the haze that often befalls the Los Angeles skyline; that kind of pollution is easy to name and avoid. But, at other times, pollution takes a more subtle and invisible form; we inhale it unknowingly. This tainted air infects our lungs and affects our constitution. She argues that though "we may not have polluted the air, ... we need to take responsibility, along with others, for cleaning it up" (Tatum, 2017, p. 66). It is not enough to point out or name the pollution. It is not even enough to avoid it. Instead, she argues that we must actively engage in the process of making the air breathable and



healthy again. Left unexamined, we poison ourselves and others.

Therein lies the heart of anti-racism — an active and intentional effort to name, redress, and reconcile issues of racism that have become covertly accepted as the norm.

Never did this idea make more sense to me than when I realized how much pollution I had imbibed about my own culture. As a Middle Eastern man, I have been inundated with messages and representations of my culture as threatening, primitive, and violent. I had internalized it so deeply that I developed subtle behaviors that would cue others to the fact that I was “safe” or to make them comfortable with my Middle Eastern-ness — because my implicit assumption was that they would not be.

Until one or two years ago, I cannot think of one positive representation of someone who looks like me in film or print media. I am sure that they exist, but they have not historically been centered, so finding them comes as the result of an exhausting search. The question I ask myself frequently

is: Should it be that hard? The answer should be no, of course. But we must also acknowledge the reality that if we are to reframe many of the dominant, negative narratives about BIPOC communities that have saturated our culture, we will need to devote substantial energy and intention to the effort.

That’s why it is not enough to “not be racist.” Not being racist is good but assumes a passive posture to a dynamic threat. On the other hand, being anti-racist is active and recognizes that a knot cannot undo itself. We are knotted up in years of history and years of misrepresentation, so undoing the knot will take work and effort. It will not happen without our concerted focus and intentional investment to right wrongs, redress bias, amplify counternarratives, and, to follow Tatum’s analogy, clean the air.

We need to personally and collectively reclaim the narratives that shape people’s perceptions of our cultures. The stories are ours to tell. The culture is ours to share. To do the real work of anti-racism, we need to

dig into our own histories and critically reflect on how they shaped us, our perceptions of others, and our place in the world. We need to actively learn about other cultures, naming those attributes of culture that challenge our preconceived notions. Most importantly, we need to engage in meaningful dialogue and learning with people who are different from us. This is the type of soul-based professional learning that undergirds the process of rewriting false narratives.

Ultimately, it is up to each of us to assume an active anti-racist stand, as ambassadors of reconciliation, in a world fraught with hurt and division. And my hope in this final installment of my District Perspective column is that we would have the constitution to take that stand. Our students, our community, and our world need it. May we have the personal and collective courage to step into it.

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## POLICY PERSPECTIVE

 / Melinda George

*Continued from p. 12*

field who will be impacted directly by the policies. Importantly, they are also constituents and voters to whom policymakers are committed to listening. That is where Learning Forward members and stakeholders come in.

After the panelists spoke, Learning Forward staff shared tips and strategies for advocates to consider in meeting with policymakers. For many Learning Forward stakeholders who participated in individual and small group meetings with Capitol Hill staffers, this was their first such meeting, so Learning Forward shared a virtual meeting protocol. We discussed how to kick off a meeting, make specific asks, follow up with a thank-you, and keep in touch. As a result, advocates were prepared to

share stories and data and discuss the importance of high-quality professional learning and specific asks in support of Title IIA.

Feedback from the meetings was exciting and encouraging. Several Congressional staffers said they have family or friends who are educators, so they understand the need for high-quality professional learning. This helped one staffer and advocate engage in a productive discussion about job-embedded professional learning, instructional coaching on high-quality curriculum materials, the science of reading, new teacher induction support, and National Board teaching initiatives.

Another advocate said that the staffer she met with “expressed her commitment to educators and

education and shared her belief in the impact of high-quality professional learning. She also asked to connect further to learn more about the impact of professional learning.”

However, not all the staff reported support for Title IIA. One staffer said that, even though the senator she works for supported the legislation and increased funding, the senator was unwilling to vote for it because it was viewed as politically polarizing.

Many of the advocates told us that they valued the experience and would do it again. They and all Learning Forward stakeholders will get the chance when we host another Virtual Advocacy Day in spring 2023. Stay tuned for details, and keep up the great advocacy work. ■



**As we work to create environments in which everyone is acknowledged, feels a sense of belonging, and is treated justly, we need to put in the work, personally and professionally.**

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

## **GROWTH & CHANGE**

Jennifer Abrams

# **TO STRIVE FOR EQUITY, WE NEED TO PUT IN THE WORK**

**A**s educators, we must always recognize the need to continue to develop ourselves in a multitude of ways, including becoming ever more culturally aware, equity focused, and justice seeking in our work. We live in a society and work in school cultures shaped by colonialism and rife with systemic and institutional racism that create inequities in and outside of our school buildings.

Regardless of our specific roles, we as educators need to stretch at our edges to be in conversation on these important topics. This is challenging on many fronts, but unlearning and learning new mindsets, practices, and skills is part of ensuring humanity in our work. As Felipe Fernández-Armesto said in *Humankind: A Brief History* (2004), “If we want to go on believing we are human and justify the special status we accord ourselves — if, indeed, we want to stay human through the changes we face — we had better not discard the myth (of our special status), but start trying to live up to it.” This means recognizing what we don’t know and learning as much as we can.

In his book *Nuance: Why Some Leaders Succeed While Others Fail* (2018), Michael Fullan says if we are “relentlessly committed to changing systems for the betterment of humanity,” we can do so, in part, through our own personal and professional development.

As we work to create environments in which everyone is acknowledged, feels a sense of belonging, and is treated justly, we need to put in the work, personally and professionally. Our ability to engage with the work of creating schools and a society of racial equity asks nothing less. In my work, I find the following questions to be helpful for encouraging personal reflection and doing essential internal work about racial equity:

- Do I know the many ways I see the world differently than others might and do see it?
- How do I seek more information about how others see the world differently than I do so I have a fuller picture?
- Am I comfortable communicating about challenging topics?
- Do I respectfully share my perspective with someone who says something emotionally insensitive or disrespectful about another person or a group of people?
- In moments of discomfort, can I continue to let in information? Can I make informed, nonreactive choices and keep myself centered?

The work we are tasked to do in our schools as we become more equity focused asks us to willingly move ourselves from isolation and separateness to a connection to and concern for *all* in our community. Our ability to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with all in our schools means that we engage in professional learning experiences that stretch us and that we reflect on the answers to these questions and so many others.

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## LEARNING LEADERS

Baruti K. Kafele

# LISTEN TO THE TRUTHS OF YOUR AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEAGUES

**Many of my African American colleagues — and many of yours — have chosen to teach not solely for the joy of teaching but also out of a sense of responsibility to empower and educate students like the ones we were as children.**

**M**ost teachers pursue education as a career because of a desire to help children grow academically, socially, and emotionally. But some of us come to this work for additional reasons and look at it through particular lenses. Race is one of those lenses. We shouldn't deny that, but embrace it and learn from it. Before I sign off from my final Learning Leaders column, I want to shed some light on the perspective that I — and many African American educators — bring to this work.

Before I even thought about becoming a teacher, I was a student of African American history, and that shaped how I thought about my future as an educator. I knew I wanted to teach Black children. I understood the racism they were enduring because I was enduring it as a 28-year-old Black man and had endured it my whole life. I wanted to bring the spirit of all the freedom fighters I had studied over the years into my classroom and prepare my students not only to succeed in school and work, but also to navigate the challenges, obstacles, and pressures of racism and oppression we as Black people face. I wanted to teach them how to overcome and how to help others do the same.

I am not alone in this. Many of my African American colleagues — and many of yours — have chosen to teach not solely for the joy of teaching but also out of a sense of responsibility to empower and educate students like the ones we were as children. From the day I started this work, I have characterized it not as a job or profession, but as a personal duty. The classroom is my front in the battle against racism.

Although I do not attempt to speak for all African American educators, I believe that I speak for many of them when I say that teaching is more than a profession. I believe that many of them do this work for the same reason I do. And I know from experience that many of them see the classroom as an important place to ultimately defeat racism through the children.

These are serious times for African Americans, including children. But many people do not comprehend how serious and how much the political climate affects students in classrooms and schools. African American teachers do. They navigate it in and out of the classroom — in meetings, in conversations, and yes, in professional learning.

My ask of non-Black educators is this: When you see your African American colleagues, know that their world is different from yours, that the battles they navigate are different. They are descendants of the institution of enslavement and are therefore a product of a lineage of 400+ years of oppression. They also possess a depth of life experience and wisdom that are vital for our schools and our children.

So when your African American teacher colleague speaks, listen. When this teacher writes, read. When this teacher shares a perspective, instead of challenging it, learn from it and grow



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

from it. Whether you are a peer or an administrator, appreciate the teacher for having the willingness and the courage to speak their truth to colleagues, rather than leaning into your discomfort to ostracize or isolate.

Professional learning is about growth and change so that all educators and students can improve and be their fullest selves. In that spirit, I challenge

each of you to learn as much as you can about and from your African American colleagues. That doesn't mean expecting them to speak on every race issue or take more responsibility for Black children than other educators. It means making space and really listening. Ask yourselves: Am I honoring the experience and wisdom of our African American educators? Am I giving


them a seat at the table and a voice in decision-making?

As an educator of Black students, a key ingredient to meeting my objectives with and for students has always been to teach my students to have a great sense of pride in who they are as individuals and collectively as African Americans. We need to do the same with our Black teachers. ■



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# RESEARCH

## EXPLORING THE DIFFICULTIES IN TALKING ABOUT RACE

In a recent study, researchers sought to better understand the connections between teachers' beliefs and skills and their confidence and intentions about engaging in conversations about race. Their findings are helpful for thinking about the design, planning, and evaluation of professional learning. See Elizabeth Foster's Research Review column on p. 20.



## RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

**Supporting educators who are interested in increasing their skills and capacity to have dialogues about race is an important step toward more equitable professional learning systems and schools.**

Elizabeth Foster ([elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org](mailto:elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org)) is vice president, research & standards at Learning Forward. In each issue of *The Learning Professional*, Foster explores recent research to help practitioners understand the impact of particular learning practices on student outcomes.

# IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

Conversations about race are increasingly at the forefront of debates about education, teaching, learning, and how to achieve excellent outcomes for each adult and student in a successful learning system. Research is emerging about the benefits of building the capacity of educators to engage in conversations about race and identity, amongst themselves and with students. Substantive discussions about race in the classroom have been shown to improve students' relationships with other students, their perceptions of races other than their own, and their own ability to talk about racial and cultural issues (Milner, 2017). Acknowledging race and culture contributes to students feeling accepted and valued as learners. And, engaging in conversations with students and colleagues about race — their own or in



general — expands teachers' knowledge and beliefs, which can in turn shift their teaching practices to be more responsive and inclusive (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

For educators to engage in these conversations, they must not only believe that conversations related to race are important and feasible, but they must have the skills, mindsets, and confidence to engage in those conversations. Research shows that many educators feel ill-equipped or hesitant to facilitate conversations about race, even when they believe it's important to do so, with white educators being particularly avoidant.

A recent study by Tropp and Rucinski (2022) sought to better understand the connections between teachers' beliefs and skills and their confidence and intentions about engaging in conversations about race. The study highlights two specific aspects of teachers' mindsets — implicit bias and concerns about appearing racist — both of which can act as psychological barriers to teachers engaging in conversations or practices related to race in their classrooms. Although there are situations in which teachers are prevented from discussing race due to local political contexts, this study specifically addresses factors that hinder teachers who recognize the benefit of discussing race in schools and would like to do so. Supporting educators who are interested in increasing their skills and capacity to have dialogues about race is an

important step toward more equitable professional learning systems and schools.

Recognizing professional learning as a way to address the potential barriers and build capacity for race conversations, the researchers also considered strategies that can support and empower teachers to engage in conversations about race in their classrooms and schools.

#### ► THE STUDY

**Tropp, L.R. & Rucinski, C.L. (2022, July 5).** How implicit racial bias and concern about appearing racist shape K-12 teachers' race talk with students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 25, 697-717. doi. org/10.1007/s11218-022-09715-5

#### ► METHODOLOGY

The study looked at two factors that may affect whether teachers intend to have conversations about race and how confident they feel about facilitating those conversations: implicit racial bias and concern about appearing racist.

Implicit racial bias is defined as the unconscious associations people hold about certain racial groups, and previous research finds that it can impact teachers' disciplinary practices and instructional practices, and therefore student outcomes. In this study, teachers' implicit racial bias was assessed using the Implicit Association Test hosted by Project Implicit. The Race Implicit Association Test measures bias by asking participants to sort stimuli and seeing how quickly and accurately they sort images of Black and white faces and positive and negative words. (This test and

**For educators to engage in these conversations, they must not only believe that conversations related to race are important and feasible, but they must have the skills, mindsets, and confidence to engage in those conversations. Research shows that many educators feel ill-equipped or hesitant to facilitate conversations about race.**

a number of others related to other categories and factors are available free at [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/))

The researchers defined concern about appearing racist as teachers feeling awkward about openly discussing race and racism in the classroom and worrying that their intentions would be misconstrued or misunderstood. They measured it using three survey questions designed for this study based on focus groups with teachers.

The study included other related self-report measures as controls, such as social desirability, motives for wanting to behave in unbiased ways, perceived support from the schools, and prior diversity training.

The researchers acknowledge that other contextual factors, such as grade level, the socioeconomic makeup of the school, and years of teaching experience, also factor into teachers' approaches to race talks, but their aim was to better understand the influence of teacher mindsets.

The researchers examined the relationships among these variables in two different samples: a national sample of 1,300 K-12 teachers who had engaged with materials from Learning for Justice (a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center) and Perception Institute and 1,000 K-12 teachers from a large urban school district. The first sample was 70% white, 7% Black, 5% Latinx, 5% multiracial, and 2% Asian, with 12% of respondents not reporting their race; the second sample was 50% white, 10% Black, 8% Latinx, 5% Asian, 3% multiracial, 1% other, and 23% not responding. Although the teachers were racially diverse, the bias measures in this study were related to attitudes about white and Black people.

#### ► FINDINGS

The researchers found both implicit racial biases and concerns about appearing racist play meaningful roles in influencing teachers' approaches to talking about race, but those roles differ.

Across both samples, teachers with higher implicit pro-white/anti-Black biases reported lower intentions to engage in race-related discussions with students. This held true even when teachers were internally motivated to be unbiased (that is, when they said that being unbiased is an important personal value) and when they were externally motivated to be unbiased (that is, when they reported that they did not wish to be seen as biased).

However, implicit racial bias was not related to teachers' feelings of confidence in their ability to facilitate race conversations. This is an interesting, and potentially troubling,

finding because, as the researchers acknowledge, implicit biases might very well impact the content and quality of race conversations, yet teachers may not recognize it.

In contrast, concern about being perceived as racist was related to both intentions and confidence about engaging in race conversations. It's notable that this is more of a factor in teachers' confidence than implicit bias is, though perhaps not surprising, because concerns about how one is perceived are conscious and explicit, whereas implicit bias occurs largely subconsciously.

One limitation of the study is that the findings rely on self-report measures, although the researchers sought to control for factors that might have biased the teachers' reporting of their intentions and confidence with regard to talking about race (such as how they felt about admitting mistakes). In addition, the bias measures were only related to Black/white perceptions, meaning that there were no measures and therefore findings or learnings related to other races and cultures.

### ► IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

These findings are helpful for thinking about the design, planning, and evaluation of professional learning. The researchers point out that there are multiple ways professional learning

can be helpful in supporting educators to talk about race, including: explicitly examine feelings related to how important race talks are, discuss fears of engaging unsuccessfully, and address concerns about bringing up race in a constructive way.

They also make a valuable distinction between addressing relational concerns and addressing the content and facilitation skills needed to be successful in race conversations. Professional learning to build educators' capacity to successfully facilitate conversations about race needs a defined intended outcome focused on mindsets or skills and knowledge to talk about race in a respectful and productive way.

This study speaks to several Standards for Professional Learning, including all three equity standards — **Equity Practices**, in its attention to the classroom interaction and teacher-student relationship level; **Equity Drivers**, with its focus on professional learning content and access and call for educators to identify and address their own biases and beliefs; and **Equity Foundations**, because of the discussion of school contexts and supports for building educator capacity to engage in conversations about race. The **Equity Drivers** standard in particular invites educators to examine how our own mindsets and backgrounds impact the assumptions we make when entering into conversations with colleagues

and students, especially conversations about race and equity, and to “seek out discussions with colleagues and students to learn more about the ways in which their identity has impacted their own learning” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 35).

This research also illustrates a key sentence in the **Learning Designs** standard: “Learning designers understand how beliefs, mindsets, and practices change, as well as what educator practices are likely to be influenced by professional learning” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 45). Understanding the specific learning goal to increase educators' abilities to start and facilitate race conversations, and then planning the professional learning accordingly, can increase educators' capacity and willingness to engage in these important, relationship-building conversations with students and colleagues.

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# DATA POINTS

## 90 MINUTES IMPROVES TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENTS

Professional learning focused on teachers' social perspective taking — “understanding the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of others” — can improve teacher-student relationships, according to a recent study. About 100 teachers from a K-9 charter school network participated in two 90-minute sessions to learn about cognitive biases and social perspective and apply it to “their most vexing and perplexing students.” Teachers worked in pairs to practice taking the perspective of a challenging student, coming up with hypotheses about why the student engaged in challenging behaviors, reflecting, and planning for collaborating with students proactively. The study found significant increases in teachers' efforts to understand these students and improvements in teachers' and students' perceptions of their relationships with one another and students' academic competency. [edarxiv.org/yvcdb/](https://edarxiv.org/yvcdb/)

## 22% OF MATH TEACHERS HAVE NO CURRICULUM-ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators have more high-quality math curriculum materials to choose from than ever before, according to an analysis from EdReports. However, teachers' use of these materials and engagement in professional learning on the materials lag behind. Of note, “nearly a quarter of mathematics teachers receive no curriculum-aligned professional development,” with almost two-thirds of teachers having less than five hours of learning about how to implement the materials. The authors warn that, “given how important professional learning is for the successful



implementation of high-quality materials, these numbers indicate a definitive need for states and districts to invest in ongoing professional development to support teachers with their curriculum.”

[bit.ly/3PxvSKH](https://bit.ly/3PxvSKH)

## 40% MORE ANXIETY AMONG TEACHERS THAN HEALTH CARE WORKERS DURING COVID

Using a large national data set, researchers examined teachers' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and compared it with the mental health of other professionals. A press release from the American Educational Research Association summarized the findings: “Teachers were 40% more likely to report anxiety symptoms than health care workers, 20% more likely than office workers, and 30% more likely than workers in other occupations, such as military, farming, and legal professions.” The study also found that educators teaching remotely were significantly more likely to report depression and isolation than those teaching in person.

[bit.ly/3PrjSdR](https://bit.ly/3PrjSdR)

## 1/2- WAY THROUGH ESSER, DISTRICTS LOOK TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The consulting firm McKinsey & Company examined why many U.S. school districts have not yet spent much of their federal ESSER money, which must be spent by September

2024. More than 90% of surveyed administrators said they have run into challenges and obstacles in deploying the funds, which has resulted in only a small percentage of the money being spent halfway through the program.

When asked how they plan to spend the money going forward, administrators indicated shifting away from immediate mitigation measures toward dealing with unfinished student learning and staffing challenges. Those goals include “meaningful acceleration” in teacher professional development and “moderate acceleration” in teacher recruitment, teacher compensation, and substitute teacher compensation.

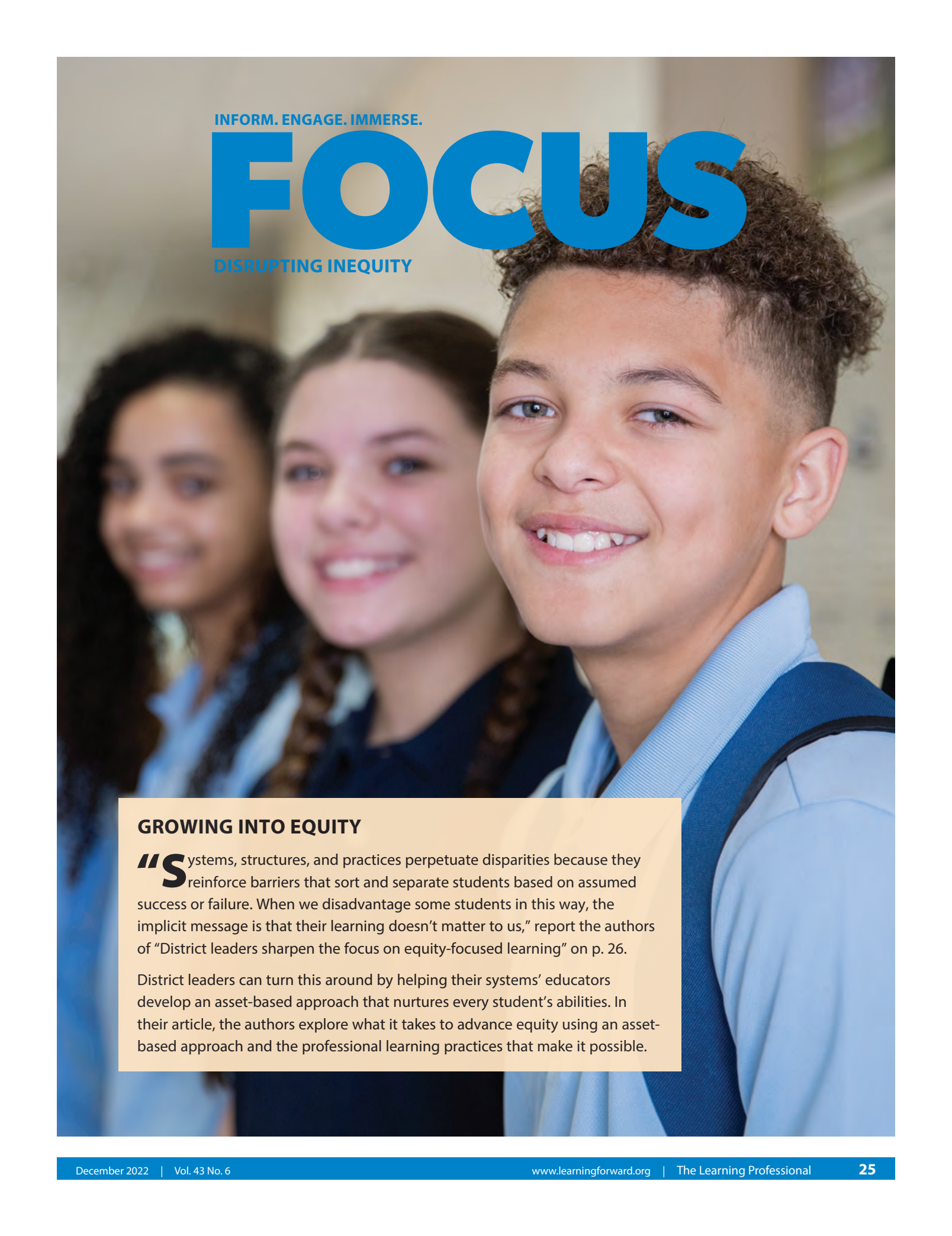
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## 2X INCREASE IN TEACHER RESIDENCIES IN FOUR YEARS

The popularity of teacher residency programs is growing, according to the annual report of the National Center for Teacher Residencies — from 792 graduates in 2018 to 1,140 in 2021 and about 3,500 candidates in 2018 to about 7,000 in 2021. 57% of candidates are people of color — a much higher percentage than the 18% of teachers of color currently employed in the U.S. An article in *The 74* describes intensive residency programs as “a far cry from other certification programs run by organizations which sometimes provide just weeks of training before new teachers are responsible for their own classrooms, and often result in higher turnover.” The article shares examples of teacher residency programs in the U.S., and the annual report includes findings about host principals' ratings of teacher candidates' effectiveness, contributions to school climate, and contributions to student achievement — all over 90%.

[bit.ly/3YsEPZK](https://bit.ly/3YsEPZK)

[bit.ly/3BEIDhU](https://bit.ly/3BEIDhU)

A photograph of three diverse middle school students in school uniforms, smiling and looking towards the camera. The student in the foreground is a young man with curly hair, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark blue backpack. Behind him are two young women, one with dark hair and one with braided hair, also smiling.

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

# FOCUS

DISRUPTING INEQUITY

## GROWING INTO EQUITY

**"S**ystems, structures, and practices perpetuate disparities because they reinforce barriers that sort and separate students based on assumed success or failure. When we disadvantage some students in this way, the implicit message is that their learning doesn't matter to us," report the authors of "District leaders sharpen the focus on equity-focused learning" on p. 26.

District leaders can turn this around by helping their systems' educators develop an asset-based approach that nurtures every student's abilities. In their article, the authors explore what it takes to advance equity using an asset-based approach and the professional learning practices that make it possible.



# District leaders SHARPEN THE FOCUS on equity

BY GEORGE S. PERRY JR., JOAN RICHARDSON, AND TIFFINY SHOCKLEY JACKSON

**G**enerations of leading educators have shared a compelling vision of educational equity: to ensure that the learning of every student matters. However, despite the efforts of these leaders, from John Dewey to Ron Edmonds to Paulo Freire to Bettina Love, achieving that vision has been elusive. Across

geographic locations, historical eras, and even varying levels of resources, we have ensured learning matters only for some students, not all. Why?

Simply put, some of what we believe and what we do based on our beliefs doesn't lead to success for all students. Systems, structures, and practices perpetuate disparities because they reinforce barriers that

sort and separate students based on assumed success or failure. When we disadvantage some students in this way, the implicit message is that their learning doesn't matter to us.

The counterpoint to these discriminatory systems is an asset-based approach. We define an asset-based approach as one that helps students and adults identify their strengths and use

knowledge of those strengths to support their learning. An asset-based approach cultivates the gifts, talents, and interests of each and every student regardless of race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual identity, ability, primary language, age, and citizenship.

How do district leaders lead and nurture an asset-based approach among their systems' educators? By engaging in and encouraging reflections on the way to knowing ourselves and our students as learners. These reflections are often painful, difficult, and scary, and engaging with others around them is complex. As much as it troubles us to admit it, large-scale, district-level professional learning systems have been largely ineffective in this complicated work of helping adults examine their beliefs and biases. This is partly because of the difficulty of leading and managing change when it requires people to leave behind something that they have thought or done for years (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004).

Choosing the right improvement strategy, with continuous, meaningful, and effective professional learning at the center, is critical. We judge professional learning to meet those criteria when practices and processes align with district objectives, recognize and honor context, leverage existing resources, and, ultimately, meet district and individual needs.

Based on our work with partner districts around the U.S., we have identified a set of conditions for such professional learning, examples of successful professional learning practices, and recommendations for district leaders.

## **CONDITIONS FOR EQUITY-FOCUSED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

District leaders create the conditions for equity-focused, asset-based professional learning in three ways: embedding professional learning in the district culture or ways of working, motivating and encouraging everyone to engage in professional learning, and creating structures where schools direct professional learning.

### ***Embed professional learning in district culture.***

We agree with Edgar Schein, an organizational development expert, who said that, although leaders are responsible for creating, managing, and sometimes destroying cultures, culture is the result of complex group learning that leaders can only partially influence (Schein, 1992). Changing organizational culture depends on engaging all levels and aligning those efforts over time.

Our partner districts have focused on building organizational cultures in which everyone is expected to be a learner and everyone applies their learning to their work. Integrating learning into workstreams works very well for this purpose.

For example, school board meetings or quarterly retreats can include blocks of time for board member learning. Superintendents can engage board members and staff in examples of the work — such as restorative justice circles — to deepen their understanding of their purpose and promise. District leaders can reserve time for weekly, biweekly, or monthly book studies. Sharing responsibility for learning sessions can lead to deep discussions of

beliefs, systems, and practices as well as commitments to apply learning to educators' work.

Once a culture of professional learning begins to take hold, individuals will create structures for learning with others that fit their time and interests. When one district established a districtwide focus on reading, schools began buying classroom sets of books, and district leaders responsible for middle schools organized book clubs to discuss adolescent literature. They became familiar with the nuances of the genre and developed questions to discuss with students during their visits. The district's culture changed.

To cultivate a culture of learning and growing into equity, district leaders should begin by naming a specific purpose that serves the needs of the district's specific student population. Defining the direction helps district and school leaders set parameters for their initial professional learning. The importance of purpose can't be overstated. Adults are more successful when they understand why they are learning and what success looks like.

In addition, we have learned that processes and content need to be simplified. In our work with district leaders, we design simple processes and protocols that do not require much time to learn. We have found that the energy spent on learning processes decreases energy available to apply the protocol. For example, district leaders are more likely to implement professional learning communities consistently if they focus on critical questions that define the work rather than expecting educators to follow prescribed models that focus on membership, meeting protocols,

schedules, communications strategies, and other ways to operationalize the model. Similarly, we've learned that schools respond better when each school clarifies its own objectives and designs its own models rather than being expected to work with others' detailed models.

**Motivate everyone to engage in professional learning.**

To reflect on beliefs and biases, adults need motivation to question their practices and be uncomfortable as learners. Simply requiring attendance at professional learning sessions doesn't always work, especially because district-directed professional learning often runs counter to an asset-based approach in which the goal is to know ourselves — and those we are attempting to influence — as learners. Professional learning must embody an asset-based approach by setting the conditions and expectations that encourage self-reflection and learning and help educators see the benefits of doing that internal work.

Research on human motivation suggests that true motivation comes from having a greater purpose, exercising autonomy, and striving toward mastery (Pink, 2009). Applying this to professional learning, district leaders should provide opportunities for adult learners to:

- Connect personal visions to a shared district vision around goals worthy of commitment (purpose);
- Exercise voice and choice in their learning — for example, in tasks, time, technique, or accountability structures — while aligning it with district priorities (autonomy); and
- Become their best selves through risk-taking, feedback processes, and continuous learning (mastery).

Developing a critical mass of leaders who are self-motivated, reflective learners takes time. But opportunities for district leaders to facilitate

motivation for learning abound. An important first step is for leaders to help educators find and remember the purpose of the learning by reinforcing in word and deed that the learning of every student matters, not only for students themselves, but for their communities and our collective future.

Leaders can also encourage educators to engage in self-directed professional learning, drawing on readings, conferences, and the resources of professional organizations. Self-directed learning gives educators more control so they can pursue learning that they decide is most relevant to their students, classrooms, and school situations.

We have also seen many of our district partners create voluntary professional learning for middle-level district leaders that leverage collective expertise and the power of collaborative learning. Collaboration and connection can be highly motivating and rewarding, in addition to providing valuable insight and opportunity for reflection.

**Create structures for schools to drive professional learning.**

The effectiveness of any strategy, particularly those targeted at improving teaching and learning, depends on the human and social capital of the school where teaching and learning lives. Therefore, district leaders must create and maintain structures that enable educators to know their students, identify disparities and barriers to student success, and engage in high-quality professional learning. (We define structures as how people are organized, who has responsibility and accountability, who makes and influences decisions, both informal and formal.) In other words, district leaders create structures to help clarify and prioritize their needs, understand their current capacity, set learning targets, and plan professional development.

In our work, we have helped district leaders create reciprocal and horizontal structures to alter top-down

relationships between district and school leaders. Our intention has been to empower school leaders to meet their staffs' and students' needs. At the same time, we have aimed to foster an organizational culture in which school leaders are concerned about the success of other schools in the district, not just their own.

**EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICES AND PROCESSES**

In our book, *Equity Warriors: Creating Schools That Students Deserve*, we examine what it takes for district and school leaders — working together — to advance and sustain equity (Perry, 2022). We offer 69 moves for school and district teams to consider as they assess their assets and investigate opportunities shown to make a difference. The moves include examples from our partners — over 30 districts and more than 100 schools. Here, we offer two examples of how district and school leaders are making changes to learn about and grow into equity.

**Build school-level capacity.**

In an effort to learn from each other and improve the learning for every student, high school administrators in one of our partner districts committed to multihour blocks of professional learning. An administrator from each school volunteered for one of two groups, one focused on English language arts or one focused on mathematics. The groups met monthly with central office curriculum/professional development leaders in their content area. The groups' objectives were to learn about the curriculum and bring questions and concerns from department heads and teachers as well as requests for support.

Over the months and years that the groups met, school administrators deepened their content knowledge and understanding of trends and proposed changes in state and district policy. Administrators could share their walk-through observations at the meetings and learned to identify strengths and

challenges in meeting the needs of students and effective peer coaching techniques in a professional setting. School and district leaders discussed and collaboratively developed priorities for district-level support for professional learning.

Exchanges between school and district leaders were occasionally heated. But it was through these dialogues over time that school leaders helped district leaders design and provide supports that were better aligned with student and teacher needs. The dialogues also helped district leaders test receptivity to policies and curriculum changes before making final decisions.

#### **Learn from other leaders.**

Another district asked us to support 13 middle schools identified as needing assistance. At the time, schools that did not make annual progress on state growth targets had five years to improve or face sanctions. Some of the schools were new to the list, others in their third or fourth year. As part of our support, we asked the 13 principals and the district curriculum/professional development leaders to meet with us once a month. Principals from these schools were not happy about being on the list or receiving support and, in particular, chafed at being called together once a month to meet with district leaders.

We brought them together because we wanted to create a dialogue so schools could learn from each other. We also wanted to create a chance for district leaders to learn from the school leaders, believing that would inform district leaders' decision-making. We knew the schools had strengths as well as challenges in meeting students' needs. We also knew district leaders were pushing programs, supports, and resources on schools to show they were doing their part to help schools make adequate progress across student groups and escape the list. Everyone had assets to offer, as well as something to learn.

The start was rocky. Each principal

shared a rosy description of her school's English language arts and mathematics programs. Everything was going well. Nobody needed district support! Over time, though, the dialogue became more honest, open, and real. Principals had a lot of questions, brought challenges, engaged with each other, raised complaints, and vented. Initially, principals mostly asked questions and took notes to bring back to their schools.

But real change started to happen when principals asked to bring a teacher leader and a vice principal with them to one of the content meetings. Principals who traveled with the colleagues reported that they used their travel time to prepare and plan together, which helped shape next steps. Discussions were sometimes heated. More than once, the district's chief academic officer introduced a draft policy and recommendation for a new instructional program and heard strong opposition from the principals. But, over time, these meetings deepened principals' knowledge of, and support from, district leaders.

When school leaders can share with and feel valued by district leaders for their knowledge of their schools and the assets of their teachers and students, the result is a valuable professional learning opportunity for everyone involved. School leaders gained a deeper understanding of the resources available to them and the outcomes they can expect from using those resources effectively.

When school leaders have a platform to engage with colleagues and voice their opinions about the professional learning they need to support students, they are more likely to take ownership and responsibility for the work. District leaders learned that they can be effective by ensuring that those who work directly with students use an asset-based approach to know their students, they are supported as they direct their professional learning, and they retain responsibility for student learning.

## **BE EQUITY WARRIORS**

We use the term "equity warriors" to reflect our commitment to advance equity and our sense of urgency. To ensure that the learning of all students matters, confronting systemic inequities and dismantling racism requires us to be committed, eager, and strategic. It comes as no surprise that professional learning is foundational. Schools and districts — together — must be places where adults learn alongside and from students and families.

No school, district, or community is immune to the need to eliminate inequities based on race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual identity, primary language, ability, age, and citizenship. We all need to examine how these factors affect teaching, learning, resource allocation, engagement, and assessments of progress. In aspiring to make the learning of every student matter, we can use an asset-based approach to learn about what works from each other — adults and students — and achieve greatness for ourselves, our communities, and our future.

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**George S. Perry Jr. (gperry@perryandassociatesinc.com) advises school and district leaders. Joan Richardson (joan.richardson@comcast.net) is a veteran education journalist. Tiffany Shockley Jackson (tiffanyjackson@mac.com) is a classroom teacher in San Diego, California, who supports adults at schools and in district offices. ■**



# Don't ignore emotions in equity work — embrace them

BY JACOBÈ BELL

Imagine you're an instructional coach reviewing student perspective data with teachers. As part of a schoolwide survey, students have answered questions about their experiences with their teachers, such as: How respectful is your teacher toward you? How much do you matter to others in this class? How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?

This data affects students and teachers on a personal level — and the results for many of the teachers are upsetting. One teacher is in tears because, despite her hard work, only 38% of her students responded favorably to this question: Overall, how interested are you in this class?

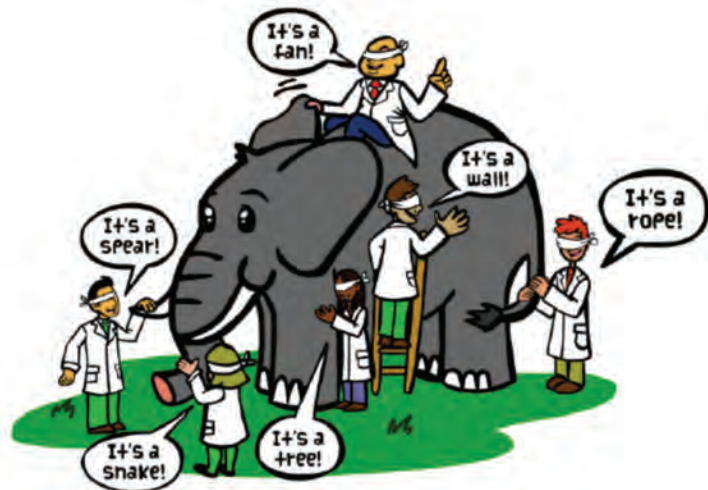
Seeing the teacher's distress — and feeling some of his own — a school administrator soothes the teacher and her colleagues by saying, "We have a

good school. We're doing right by the kids." As teachers begin to nod, he goes on: "This data isn't accurate. It doesn't reflect what students really think."

As the facilitator of the meeting, you're troubled by his comments and concerned that they undermine the goals of the discussion. What do you do?

As a coach, I've been in this situation multiple times, and it's never easy to navigate. Sometimes my inner





voice tells me to be quiet to keep the peace and not alienate the staff. Other times I feel like screaming. Of course, neither of those options is constructive.

Instead, I take inspiration from the late Congressman John Lewis, who said, “Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.” Challenging the administrator’s denial and helping the teacher face her distress constitute necessary trouble. Our students are worth that trouble.

Cultivating inclusive classrooms, where all students are heard, affirmed, and validated, is an equity issue. As an instructional coach and a supervisor of coaches, I have a moral obligation to work against the system that was designed to and continues to oppress some students and benefit others.

This work often brings up difficult emotions, for me and for the educators I work with. Those emotions are an important part of the work, so I have found and developed strategies to help teacher teams and my team of coaches metabolize, or work in and through, the emotions, rather than ignoring them. I find them useful in conversations like the one described above and in many other situations.

## ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS

First, I acknowledge that we are all in different stages of our equity journey

and different emotional places, and that’s OK. To reinforce the point that we all have different perceptions, I like to use the analogy of approaching an elephant while blindfolded and trying to determine what it is by feeling only one part of the animal. (For more information on this strategy, see [www.theblindelephant.com](http://www.theblindelephant.com).)

Using the image above, I explain that each person has access to information based on their lived experiences and, as a result, their perception of the situation is different. Based on where they’re standing, one person assumes the thing in front of him is a wall, while others think it is a spear or a rope.

When we walk into new situations in the real world, we enter them from a specific angle and based on our lived experiences. Our past experiences and beliefs shape our perceptions of what we’re seeing and hearing. Like the blindfolds in the elephant story, they can keep us from seeing and understanding the whole picture.

I find that this analogy helps educators feel more comfortable with the fact that they all come to the conversation from different places. This creates a foundation of psychological safety and helps educators take risks a little more easily.

## PRACTICE OOPS AND OUCH

To cultivate psychological safety,

I find that clear norms or protocols help participants productively engage in difficult conversations. I learned the Oops and Ouch protocol (James Madison University Tutor Resources, n.d.) from one of the schools I previously supported. This protocol helps participants address and acknowledge offenses that occur. It also asks people to apologize for the impact of their words, whether or not the harm was intentional. The beauty of this technique is that it provides a tool to acknowledge, reflect, and shift.

For example, when someone says, “I don’t believe this student perception data is accurate. The students were just trying to make us look bad,” I can use the protocol and say, “Ouch, can you expand on that some? It seems like you might be saying student opinions aren’t valuable or that students are lying about how they feel.”

They then have the opportunity to clarify and say, “Oops. What I meant to say was ...” or to reflect and say, “Oops. Maybe I should rethink that assumption.” The protocol provides language to help people acknowledge their missteps and try a different approach. When this becomes a norm, it becomes easier for people to engage in difficult conversations.

## DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY

Demonstrating empathy is an important part of coaching.

**STUDENT FEEDBACK TOOL**

<p><b>What are your students telling you?</b></p> <p>Answer in student's voice.</p>	<p><b>What does that mean they are asking you to do?</b></p> <p>Answer in student's voice.</p>	<p><b>How might you address their ask?</b></p>

Demonstrating empathy builds trust and helps people feel safe or vulnerable enough to push beyond their emotions and dig into the work of creating more inclusive classrooms.

The place I generally start to demonstrate empathy is to share a story of challenge and growth from my own career. For example, when looking at the student perspective data, I might tell the story from my time as a teacher when my students told me I treated the boys in the class differently than the girls. I felt annoyed and insulted and was in denial. But I chose to listen with my heart rather than leaning into my desire to dismiss my students’ thoughts. I had a conversation with my students to learn more and tried to be open to their feedback. I heard that the boys believed I was giving the girls more chances for self-correction. I apologized and actively worked to change my ways. Working through this with them was difficult, but it made me a much better teacher.

A second way I demonstrate empathy is by making space for everyone to share their emotions. Sometimes, I find myself wanting to shut down conversations about emotions to keep the discussion

moving and drive toward action, but I’ve found it leads to more productive outcomes when I stop and make time to facilitate an open conversation about what people are feeling. I might ask, “Let’s do a whip around to share what’s bubbling up for you right now. In one sentence, what is top of mind for you?” By having open conversations about emotions, I give people the chance to feel heard and to hear each other.

**HUMANIZE THE DATA**

After I establish the foundations and norms, I focus on humanizing the work we are doing together — that is, helping everyone remember the people behind the data and the discussions. In the example of the student perception data, I like to engage teacher teams in examining the data through the lens of students. Our partner, Panorama Education, which developed the student feedback surveys we use, suggested that we have teachers summarize the data findings in the voices of their students. I use the tool above to help with the exercise.

In the first two columns, the teacher writes out what the students are trying to tell her with their feedback and what they are asking her to do as a result.

They write these summaries using the words and sentiments that students might use. In the third column, they reflect and write (in their own voice) ways they might address the students’ feedback. After teachers fill out the chart, I ask them to share, with a partner or the whole group, the story of their classroom as seen through the eyes of their students.

I’ve found that this strategy can work wonders. It puts teachers in students’ shoes, so to speak, and gets them out of their own perspectives. It also provides a much-needed opportunity for some lightheartedness. For example, when a teacher sums up her student feedback with a sentence like, “Hey, miss, you boring!” it makes teachers chuckle and helps them work through the difficult knowledge that kids find their class uninteresting.

**CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION**

Critical reflection increases critical consciousness and provides a pathway to personal and professional growth and, ultimately, more culturally responsive practices. Bravely focusing on the system and our own contributions to inequity helps us

## REFLECTION

Based on what we've learned from our students, how has it changed how you think about benchmark or state test data results? Teaching? Students?

Name	I used to think ...	Now I think ...
DK	Students who did not work/slept in class had no motivations.	Students feel motivated by the teachers in the room even if they are not being interactive. Motivations are not clear but should be used to help improve.
RW	Reading longer text would create stamina and the students would be more ready for future text.	Now I realize smaller text and cultural connection is just as important for students to relate to and respond to.
HN	I used to think more so the "what" of teaching.	Now I am more alert to the "how" — mindful of the marriage between what and how — how do I make learning accessible while fulfilling the standards.
WJ	I used to think that students would enjoy reading the material presented.	Now I am more aware that the content needs to be more geared toward them and their interests.

identify what is in our locus of control and how we can target improvement efforts to make a difference for students.

Equity pauses are a great way to encourage educators to stop and reflect. In an equity pause, a facilitator asks the group to stop and take a moment to consider these questions:

- How might we be contributing to the problem?
- Where are we making assumptions, engaging in deficit thinking, or blaming others rather than taking a critical eye to our system and our own practices?
- What forces in our system may be contributing to the inequities we see?
- How might our current

processes, practices, or beliefs be contributing to inequity?

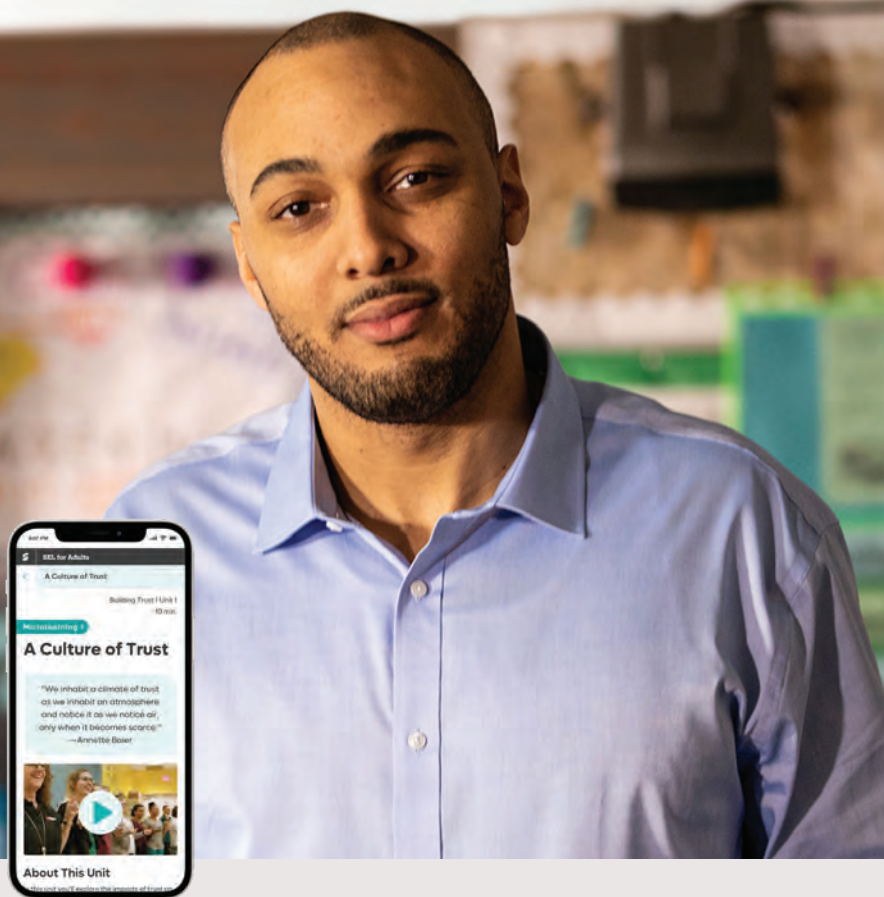
I use the equity pause designed by High Tech High to ask people to stop and consider how they or the system may be contributing to the results (High Tech High Graduate School of Education, n.d.). In the example of the student perception data discussion, I use the equity pause when teams are about 50% through their data analysis. I choose this moment for people to reflect on their analysis so far and set the purpose for the remaining analysis. I find it is a great way to reflect on self and begin to peel back the layers of how the system or institution can contribute to inequity.

Another helpful tool for critical reflection is the "I used to think ...

Now I think ..." protocol. This simple exercise, which asks people to reflect on how their thinking has changed, can be a powerful way for educators reflecting on data to revisit fixed or deficit-focused mindsets about students. You can see an artifact of this protocol from one of my previous school teams above.

### EMBRACE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

If we are going to be in service to all our students, we need to release inaction and bravely embrace facilitating difficult, unpopular conversations. As a coach, I find it is important to explain the need for difficult conversations when navigating emotionality. So often, we avoid conflict, which is understandable but



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can lead to inaction. It is important to feel the emotions and metabolize them, so I invite people to sit in the uncomfortableness of difficult conversations.

In his 2017 book, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathways to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, Resmaa Menakem refers to clean and dirty pain. Dirty pain is suppressing or going around something. It hinders healing and progress. Clean pain is acknowledging and working through difficulty. It helps us take action and make positive change. I think of difficult conversations in schools as clean pain. Coaches and other facilitators have an important role to play in helping educators work through it.

The tools I have described here can help us do that. In the schools where I have used them, I've seen progress over time. Schools have become more able to listen to their data and act on it because they acknowledge and work through their emotions rather than getting stuck in them.

We must all acknowledge that there is an emotional labor to doing this work. We must be willing to work through it and help others do the same. We can't be the equity leaders we want to be if we don't engage in these emotional processes. To be rebel leaders, we must be open and vulnerable to grow.

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**Jacobē Bell (jbell@teachingmatters.org) is a network director at Teaching Matters. ■**

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# Classroom vignettes shed light on cultural competence

BY AALIYAH BAKER AND NINA F. WEISLING

In 2019, New York Attorney General Letitia James launched an investigation into a social studies lesson on slavery at a local private school. In this lesson, a 5th-grade teacher staged a “re-enactment” wherein Black students were cast as slaves in a mock auction and lined up in front of the class to be

bid on by the other students (Kaur, 2019). Unsurprisingly, the attorney general’s investigation found that this situation caused profound harm to the students, especially the Black students.

Pause for a minute, and let this situation — and its likely short- and long-term impacts — sink in.

Although we don’t know the

teacher’s background, motivation, or intentions, we know that she showed a distressing lack of cultural competence that had a devastating effect in her classroom. As Attorney General James said in a statement at the time, “Every young person — regardless of race — deserves the chance to attend school free of harassment, bias, and

**Every student deserves to be seen, included, understood, and celebrated. For that to happen, teachers need to be culturally competent. Cultural competence is best built through reflecting on and discussing real-world experiences. Classroom vignettes support this difficult but important work.**

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discrimination.” And that’s not all they deserve. Every student deserves to be seen, included, understood, and celebrated. For that to happen, all teachers need to be culturally competent.

Although this situation is an extreme example, students of color frequently experience microaggressions and macroaggressions that stem from lack of cultural competence. These situations show the need for more nuanced teacher reflection, particularly on the subtleties (and not-so-subtleties) of racism, bias, white fragility, and power that are at play in classrooms. Teachers need support in reflecting on these subtleties and learning when and why they must change behavior that — even when well-intentioned — can be harmful.

Inequitable learning environments, rife with microaggressions, are common, in part, because of cultural mismatches between teachers, 81% of whom are white, and their students, 51.1% of whom are students of color (Taie & Goldring, 2020). The implications are real and devastating, affecting individual students as well as entire populations of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students. K-12 students who experience

microaggressions are at risk for higher rates of anger, stress, and anxiety (Huynh, 2012). Further, teachers are often unaware they are engaging in microaggressions, as these tend to be driven by teachers’ implicit biases, which can also impact other aspects of teachers’ pedagogy (NEA, 2021).

Multiple studies have shown that even when academic achievement is held constant, teachers have lower expectations for students of color and those who live in poverty (Gershenson et al., 2015) than for their peers. When teachers hold lower expectations, they are more likely to make pedagogical decisions that are less engaging, constructivist, and corrective (Good & Nichols, 2001). Many educators, especially those who are white, hold these (often unconscious) lower expectations because they have not acquired the cultural competence that would effectively prepare them for their students’ diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2002).

Cultural competence includes dispositions and skills that facilitate positive interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds, and it is developed through experiences, education, and critical reflection. The

development of cultural competence increases a person’s capacity for having critical conversations about race, class, gender, age, and ability that ultimately lead to more understanding and a change in expectations, which in turn influences dispositions and can lead to more positive interactions and behaviors that ultimately result in better school experiences and outcomes for all students.

Preservice, novice, and veteran teachers alike need strategic support in developing cultural competence in and out of the classroom. Cultural competence is best built through reflecting on and discussing real-world experiences, both formally and informally. Classroom vignettes are one tool to support this difficult but important work.

In this article, we share three fictional classroom vignettes that explore several related aspects of teaching and learning that contribute to whether classrooms are equitable, culturally responsive environments, including school culture, language, and curriculum. We also share reflection prompts to help educators think about whether and how the people in the vignettes embody cultural competence and begin to explore

## VIGNETTE 1: FINGER SNAPS

**Teacher background:** Matthew Potter is a 25-year-old white male in an alternative certification program that placed him into a 5th-grade classroom at a poverty-impacted school serving 100% students of color, predominantly Black and Latiné. His undergraduate degree is in history, and he has completed 10 weeks of training with 20 hours of classroom experience. He has said that he feels “called” to this work and that educational equity is “the social justice movement of our time.”

**Scenario:** Potter is teaching his morning literacy block to his 28 students, which begins with a daily “do-now” assignment that is to be completed in silence. He has brought the students into the classroom and gotten them started. The transition into the room went smoothly, but as students begin to work on their assignment, a small murmur emerges from the group. Potter begins to redirect behavior with corrections such as, “You need to be working on your do-now” and “Blue group, get back to work or you’ll be staying in at recess.” After about a minute, he has not managed to squelch the murmur, and he begins to “tsk” with his teeth and snap his fingers at students in attempts to redirect their behavior until they are back on task.

After completing the reflection prompts, consider:

- Potter’s behavioral expectation for silence. Do you find this culturally appropriate? Why or why not?
- Potter’s use of language, “tsks,” snaps, and finger pointing as behavior management strategies in the learning environment. Do you consider this to be culturally appropriate? Why or why not?

### Resources:

- To learn more about culturally and developmentally appropriate behavioral expectations and responses, see Delpit (2006), Hollie (2018), Milner et al. (2019), and the *Sanford Inspire Implementation Manual* at [www.inspiresel.org/wp-content/uploads/doc/Sanford\\_Inspire\\_Implementation\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.inspiresel.org/wp-content/uploads/doc/Sanford_Inspire_Implementation_Manual.pdf).
- To reflect on your own classroom management practices, consider the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (Siwatu et al., 2017) or the Learning for Justice Common Beliefs Survey at [www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/common-beliefs-survey-teaching-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-students](http://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/common-beliefs-survey-teaching-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-students).

where they are in developing their own cultural competence. The vignettes and reflection prompts are useful for educators in multiple roles as well as professional learning facilitators in their work with teachers and leaders.

Using these vignettes gives teachers an opportunity to engage in thoughtful reflection about their own beliefs and practices. The vignettes are also intended to inspire further cultural competence work so that, ultimately, teachers have an opportunity to evaluate and grow in their knowledge of long-standing structural inequities and injustice; see the humanity in their students, colleagues, families, and communities; evaluate and reflect on their values and

internal reward systems; and foster more effective classroom practices and school leadership that will encourage the eradication of antiquated and harmful ideas and behaviors.

### ABOUT THE VIGNETTES

The three vignettes are designed to address a variety of situations that could arise at various points in a teacher’s career and in a variety of settings. Each vignette begins with the teacher’s background to establish some baseline information about where the teacher is coming from. The vignette then describes a scenario that occurs in the teacher’s classroom and that reflects either attention to or absence of cultural competence.

The reflection prompts in the box on p. 41 can be used with each vignette. They are designed to help readers actively and intentionally evaluate their beliefs and understanding as they read. We provide more specific prompts after each vignette as well as suggested resources for further reflection and learning.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

The vignettes and reflection prompts are a helpful way for educators to begin exploring cultural competence and their own beliefs and practices that come from their own lived experiences. What comes next? There are myriad ways to continue to learn and unlearn



## VIGNETTE 2: THE CURRICULUM AS ASSIMILATIONIST

**Teacher background:** Stacey Kane is a 46-year-old white female teacher with 22 years of experience. She teaches 8th-grade social studies to 23 students, 11 of whom are female, 10 of whom are male, and two of whom are nonbinary, in a predominantly (59%) white, middle-class community. Less than 7% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. According to the state standardized assessment report, 78% of the students in the district are achieving at or above grade-level proficiency in reading.

**Scenario:** Kane is using social studies content standards to teach the principles and ideals upon which the United States was founded. She introduces the lesson by providing content knowledge and concepts, which include an abbreviated account of citizens' constitutional rights, via the Bill of Rights. She then requires students to read the first chapter of their social studies textbook, which discusses the development of these first 10 amendments. The chapter only mentions white, property-owning men and does not include stories or perspectives of anyone from another race, gender, or economic status. No primary sources are included.

Kane asks the students to work with a partner and write their responses to the end-of-chapter questions for credit. She does not include additional questions or ask the students to engage in critical analysis of the text, such as identifying the author's lens, whose story is being told throughout the chapter, or whose stories are missing. There is little student-to-teacher discourse during the lesson. Students talk quietly among themselves, mostly to check in with one another about the progress of lesson completion

and outside topics, but these whispered conversations are quickly silenced.

In later reflections, Kane says, "I think the lesson went very well" and indicates that these pedagogies are typical of her daily instruction.

After completing the reflection prompts, consider:

- Whose voices are included in the selected reading? Whose are missing?
- What are the implications of this for students' understanding of history?
- What are their implications for students' opportunity to see themselves in history?
- Are Kane's pedagogical practices and behavioral expectations culturally responsive? Why or why not?

### Resources:

- To learn more about culturally appropriate pedagogy, see Hammond (2014), Ladson-Billings (2021), and Muhammad (2020, 2023).
- To reflect on whether your curricular resources and pedagogy are culturally responsive, consider *New America's Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Reflection Guide* (Muñiz, 2020) and New York University's Culturally Responsive Scorecards (NYU/Steinhardt, 2022).
- To learn more about culturally inclusive social studies, consider the resources from Learning for Justice ([www.learningforjustice.org](http://www.learningforjustice.org)) as well as Black History 365 ([blackhistory365education.org](http://blackhistory365education.org)).

and to grow and cultivate cultural competence. Here are four suggested pathways to get started.

**Provide designated time and space for dialogue around the vignettes and beyond.** This is critical for furthering our cultural competence and abilities to grow ourselves and each other. You can use the vignettes to engage in critical discussions during professional learning or find colleagues with whom to have informal conversations.

**For those early in their journey toward cultural competence, listen**

**to the voices of historically excluded communities.** Follow them on social media platforms and listen. Refrain from responding to their posts. Read the literature of thinkers like Ibram X. Kendi, Bettina Love, Gholdy Muhammad, Chezare Warren, and more. Sit quietly in any discomfort or fragility you experience rather than responding defensively or offering counterarguments.

**For those who have been journeying for a while, continue engaging in the tasks above and**

**consider longer-term commitments.**

These include the 21-day challenges from America & Moore (n.d), Michigan League for Public Policy (2020), and the United Way of Central Iowa (n.d.).

**If you believe you have arrived at cultural competence, take time to consider if that is a real possibility and then continue the work.** For those who have recognized that cultural competence is a lifelong journey, consider how you might engage with communities in the work that you do.

### VIGNETTE 3: THE BLACK NATIONAL ANTHEM

**Teacher background:** Megan Carroll is a white teacher who has recently graduated from a traditional teacher education program at a large state university. Natasha Little is an African American teacher who recently graduated from a large, private, Catholic institution. Both Carroll and Little have strong content knowledge and professional dispositions, and both are deeply passionate about their work.

As first-year teachers of record, Carroll and Little have been placed as co-teachers in a 2nd-grade classroom. The classroom has 14 African American students, seven white students, two students who identify as biracial, and two Indigenous students. Five children are bilingual (English and Spanish).

The co-teaching arrangement is a new concept for both teachers. Little believes students benefit from the combined curricular and experiential knowledge of two teachers in one classroom. Carroll is reluctant but willing to try, and she is encouraged by Little’s enthusiasm.

**Scenario:** Little is teaching a language arts lesson while Carroll is conducting a one-on-one reading assessment with a student in the hallway. During this time, Carroll overhears Little saying to the whole class, “Did you know we have not one but two national anthems?” She then asks, “Who has ever heard ‘The Star-Spangled Banner?’” and plays a brief clip.

Carroll pauses the assessment, deeply concerned about what is going to come next, as she knows there is only one national anthem. “I see so many of you recognize

this! But there is another!” Little continues. “Who has ever heard ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing?’” As she begins to play a clip, Carroll heads into the classroom. Before Little can continue, Carroll interjects, “That’s a pretty song, Ms. Little, but I want to clarify something for the class. That song is beautiful but it is not the national anthem. There is only one, and it is ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ that Ms. Little played first.”

After completing the reflection prompts, consider:

- What are your reactions to Little introducing “Lift Every Voice and Sing” as a second national anthem? Why?
- What are your reactions to Carroll’s objection, including both the content of the objection and the manner in which she objected?
- How might hearing this objection affect the students, their learning, and their relationships with the teachers?

**Resources:**

- To learn more about the cultural significance of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” see Karimi & Willingham, 2020.
- To further reflect on your current classroom practices, consider using the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy self-assessment from Due East Educational Equity Collaborative (n.d.).

Teaching is inherently political, and teachers bring their personal socialization into every classroom. Now, with every aspect of public education under attack, a global pandemic laying bare long-standing inequalities, and facing a social reckoning and significant turning point, it is critical that our educators do the work of unpacking their beliefs and actions toward their students.

If teachers and schools are to live out the potential for high-quality, engaging, meaningful learning for *all*, teachers must understand their identities and how those influence their teaching, recognize and interrogate

their biases, and learn to see students in the fullness of *all* their identities. We all have power to disrupt and transform the experiences of our students.

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## REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What are my initial gut reactions to this vignette and why?
- What are the educators' assumptions or biases in the scenario?
- What assumptions or biases are present in my own reflections about this scenario?
- What questions would I ask of the characters in the vignette to better understand the perspectives of the teachers and students?
- What questions should I ask myself to understand what has shaped my own perspective?
- In collaboration with others, what questions can I ask or stories can I offer to push my own thinking and the group discussion around cultural competence in the classroom?
- What next steps do I need to take to grow in my understanding of and ability to reflect on these scenarios with more nuance? What additional learning (and unlearning) do I need to do as a result of my reflections?

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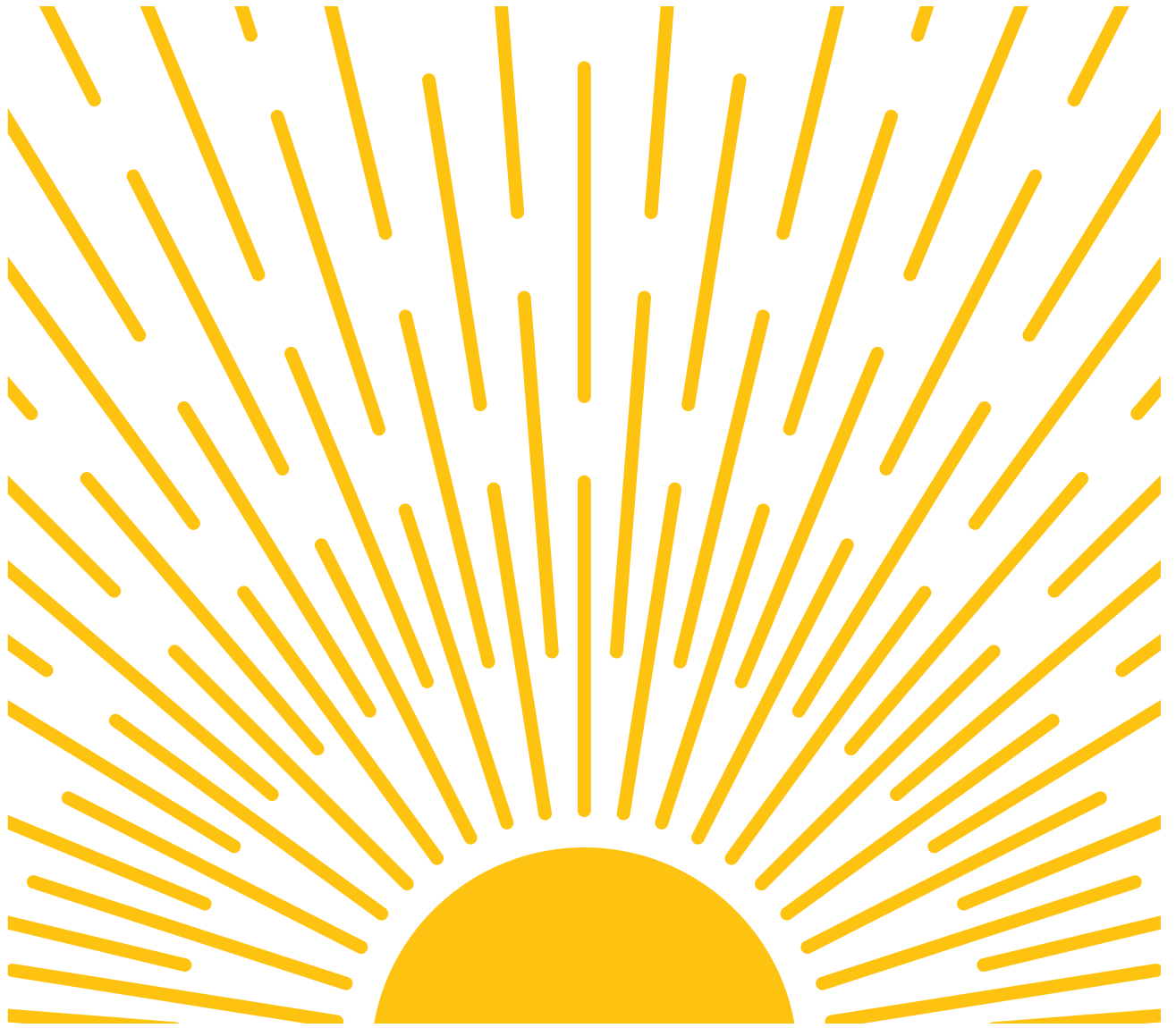
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**Aaliyah Baker (abaker1@udayton.edu) is assistant professor, educational administration, School of Education and Health Sciences, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio. Nina F. Weisling (nweisling@carthage.edu) is assistant professor of education, Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin. ■**



# Learning to teach Indigenous history and culture

BY M. BRUCE KING, LAURA M. LANG, CLAIRE S. BJORK, RACHEL BYINGTON,  
AND CHERYL BAUER-ARMSTRONG

**S**everal days before facilitating a professional learning session on making curriculum and instruction more inclusive of Indigenous cultures, we sensed the need to confer. We had read a lesson

plan that one of the participating teachers would share at the session, and it raised some serious concerns. The presenting teacher had developed this lesson with good intentions after she identified a need for more representation of Indigenous peoples

in her school's curriculum. However, the lesson about the first Thanksgiving included inaccurate historical content.

As facilitators, we (Rachel, Laura, and Claire) discussed how to remedy the problems while still fostering a space of encouragement and support

for the presenting teacher. She had taken initiative to attempt course correction to a history of schools' minimal inclusion of Indigenous cultures. We know that this can be isolating and challenging work.

Although educators have been acknowledging the need to honor and include the cultures of diverse learners for years, the instructional core has remained mostly unchanged (e.g. Banks & Banks, 1993; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Pewewardy, 2002). The current climate that includes direct attacks on equity-based and anti-racist educators and curricular resources makes the prospects for this work all the more tenuous and potentially even dangerous.

To support teachers to make this shift, we designed professional learning with a specific focus on developing learning activities that are both authentic and inclusive of Indigenous histories, cultures, and communities. We (authors of this article), along with others on the project team, are Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who collaborated through a partnership between the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Indigenous Arts and Sciences and the Authentic Intellectual Work Institute.

Indigenous Arts and Sciences is an initiative of Earth Partnerships, a space in which university staff and members of the Bad River, Red Cliff, Lac du Flambeau, Lac Courte Oreilles, Menominee, and Ho-Chunk Nations collaborate for educational and environmental professional learning. The Authentic Intellectual

Work Institute works with schools to bring together interdisciplinary teams of K-12 teachers who collaborate to improve their classroom practice.

Our two-year collaboration (with funding from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education's Grand Challenges project and the National Science Foundation) aimed to support participating teachers' efforts to develop intellectually challenging, culturally relevant instructional activities for their classrooms. Starting with the goal of supporting educators in their efforts to better teach American Indian studies to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, we grappled with how to provide the professional learning required to disrupt deeply embedded inequities in curriculum and instruction.

We wanted to honor the complex, interdisciplinary nature of American Indian studies and include content about diverse Native nations and Indigenous cultures, as well as avoid reducing this rich content to a single unit at a handful of grade levels. Additionally, we wanted to cultivate the deep reflection and growth that must take place to unlearn entrenched, often unintended, biases in a society where Indigenous peoples have been romanticized, demoralized, and propagandized for centuries.

In this article, we focus on the foundations of our partnership and how we implemented our professional learning, as well as important lessons about facilitating teacher professional learning. A note about terminology: We mostly use Indigenous in this

article to refer to people, communities, and cultures. We also use Native as a political term referencing sovereign tribes or nations and American Indian studies to refer to the specific curriculum area in policy and in some schools.

## **COLLABORATING FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

In designing our approach, we drew on two frameworks from the collaborating partners to provide focus and guidance. One was the Indigenous Arts and Sciences' place-based and relationship-based approach to learning. The other was a set of four guiding principles of implementation developed by the Authentic Intellectual Work Institute.

### **Indigenous Arts and Sciences: Place- and relationship-based learning**

The educational framework of Indigenous Arts and Sciences prioritizes the specific place and context of the work. Indigenous partners teach about their nations' unique histories, cultures, languages, traditional stewardship practices, and tribal sovereignty. In this way, content is taught accurately and in culturally authentic ways throughout the curriculum.

Indigenous Arts and Sciences professional learning also prioritizes relationships. Participants learn about themselves, others, and how to take action for personal and shared responsibilities to the land and one another. Grounded in cultural humility, the learning nurtures mutual respect and reciprocity (Brayboy et

al., 2012; YoungBear-Tibbetts, 2013). Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can and should benefit from this approach to teaching and learning, as education becomes a means of self-knowledge, cultural competency, and service to one's community.

### **Authentic Intellectual Work Institute: Four guiding principles of implementation**

The Authentic Intellectual Work Institute supports teacher professional learning to enhance construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school in classroom practice and student learning. This work puts into action four principles that can maximize success and teachers' continuous improvement (Newmann et al., 2016).

1. To make meaningful change, teachers must actively engage in sustained professional learning in which they construct knowledge through critical inquiry. This includes analyzing problems of pedagogic practice in depth, communicating their learning with peers, and applying that learning in their teaching.
2. Professional learning should contribute to collaboration and collective understanding of shared goals for learning, thereby nurturing a strong learning community.
3. Professional learning should be organic. Teachers bring artifacts from their own practice and identify important problems of practice from their own work to focus on. They should draw on their expertise and an understanding of students in their unique contexts.
4. Teachers should take intellectual and professional risks in their professional learning. A safe, nurturing culture with constructive feedback fosters individual and collective growth.

Over the course of two years, the partnership between Indigenous

### **The initiative focused on collaborative sessions where we helped educators develop lessons to use in their classrooms. From the start, we prioritized opportunities for coaching and collaborative reflection on pedagogy.**

Arts and Sciences and the Authentic Intellectual Work Institute supported educators in their efforts to improve curriculum and instruction. The two frameworks share a focus on the centrality of collaborative work to nurture strong relationships and learning communities to impact practice. The place-based approach that ensured inclusion of rich, culturally relevant Indigenous content complemented the four guiding principles for educator inquiry and design of instructional practices.

Integrating and enacting the frameworks is a work in progress. In our story, we share how we attempted to support one another and how professional learning can help teachers improve the instructional core leading to more inclusive schooling.

### **FORGING A NEW PATH**

The initiative focused on collaborative sessions where we helped educators develop lessons to use in their classrooms. From the start, we prioritized opportunities for coaching and collaborative reflection on pedagogy. In 2019-20, the first year of our partnership, the team offered six daylong sessions, available at no cost to educators working in local K-12 public and private schools, colleges, and community-based sites.

Sixteen educators participated over the two years, with seven attending both years. Almost all had attended Indigenous Arts and Sciences professional learning, and others signed up through word of mouth or recruitment emails. We held our

in-person sessions on Ho-Chunk land, a place the Ho-Chunk Nation calls Teejop (Day-JOPE). March 2020 brought the end of face-to-face meetings as COVID-19 necessitated the shift to virtual meetings for the last meeting of year one and all six meetings in year two.

In year one, a typical session included an opening land acknowledgment and one or two Indigenous presenters who explored topics designed to build educators' knowledge around issues central to Wisconsin Native nations, such as tribal sovereignty and Ho-Chunk kinship. Then the group would shift into a dialogue about how teachers could apply the new knowledge they gained to their instruction.

These dialogues were grounded in Authentic Intellectual Work Institute's focus on construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. During this first year, participants learned rich content, but we recognized that the dialogue wasn't building sufficient capacity for teachers to integrate their learning into their teaching.

During year two, the project team addressed this by prioritizing creation of a learning community in which teachers' work could be placed at the center and content knowledge could be shared as needed. Using the Authentic Intellectual Work Institute model for professional learning, volunteers brought an artifact of their practice such as a lesson plan, a project plan, or an assessment to the meetings, along with questions and discussion ideas for peer feedback.

Often, these artifacts were first drafts that participants had developed, based on their attendance at prior Indigenous Arts and Sciences professional learning, and wanted to improve. Some examples include: an Indigenous-centered campus tour with related activities, an Indigenous land acknowledgment curriculum for environmental educators; a debate concerning Native treaty rights

relating to water usage; and an outdoor classroom that emphasized native plant species and Indigenous agricultural and land stewardship practices.

These artifacts became the focus of our learning community's work during a given session, and the presenting teacher received feedback and suggestions from other participants, as well as from Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators. This approach allowed us to develop a collaborative community of educators dedicated to teaching more authentically and accurately about Indigenous communities.

However, this approach also posed facilitation considerations and challenges. For example, we noticed that participants' peer feedback often focused on suggesting additional resources related to the content. This was the case with the teacher participant we described at the beginning of this article, when peers responded by sharing alternative first Thanksgiving books and videos. This kind of feedback was only minimally helpful in improving the instructional plan because it only changed the details presented. The presenting teacher also said that the long list of resources generated by the group was overwhelming.

While important, accurate resources aren't sufficient to address how content should be taught. But in a group of primarily non-Indigenous teacher participants, there wasn't sufficient knowledge or experience of Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy to adequately shape some of the lessons shared. Even when participants did appear to recognize problems in artifacts their peers presented, they seemed uncomfortable naming the harmful inaccuracies in the lessons they saw. We hypothesized that they stuck with sharing resources because it felt like a low-risk form of support and feedback.

All of this put pressure on facilitators to point out inaccuracies and suggest strategies for addressing

**By focusing on a place-based lens as a way to holistically integrate American Indian studies throughout the curriculum, Indigenous Arts and Sciences facilitators considered how their individual identities and experiences shaped their abilities to connect educators with local, culturally relevant teaching resources.**

them. By focusing on a place-based lens as a way to holistically integrate American Indian studies throughout the curriculum, Indigenous Arts and Sciences facilitators considered how their individual identities and experiences shaped their abilities to connect educators with local, culturally relevant teaching resources.

Rachel, a member of the Choctaw Nation, drew on her experience of supporting Indigenous students and families to guide educators in selecting accurate and authentic resources as well as making personal connections and building relationships with the Native Nations nearest their school grounds. Claire and Cheryl helped the team guide educators to authentic lesson plans by highlighting connections between Indigenous content and holistic ecological stewardship action through hands-on learning. To illustrate, in a subsequent session, participants analyzed an artifact of one school's integrated learning approach on the actual school grounds as students studied Ho-Chunk sovereignty on Teejop and how to care for the land through restoration and water stewardship.

Laura was acutely aware of the gaps in her own knowledge about the topics and how she might say something that either perpetuated stereotypes or was

unintentionally harmful. To advance the Authentic Intellectual Work Institute's focus on peer feedback, she identified herself as "not the content expert" and posed questions to nurture teachers' critical dialogue about the artifacts and inquiry into potential changes that were needed for a lesson. Like teachers, facilitators had committed to taking risks and showing up with authenticity, humility, and a willingness to learn.

## **FACILITATING THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

After the participating teacher presented the problematic lesson described in the opening, facilitators and participants raised important concerns. We worried that the emphasis on the first Thanksgiving myth within an ancient cultures unit would unintentionally minimize the history of European colonization. In using the term "ancient," the lesson portrayed Indigenous peoples themselves as characters in history, not as thriving, contemporary members of sovereign nations who continue to make important contributions within the United States. Finally, this lesson plan did not relate to ancestral or present-day Indigenous peoples in Wisconsin, so the lesson could not adopt the place-based educational framework that we had offered as foundational to indigenizing teaching and learning.

Thanks to their collaborative planning after receiving the lesson ahead of the professional learning, Rachel, Claire, and Laura facilitated the learning experience in ways to both honor the presenting teacher while also helping the group to raise and address critical concerns. We had already established a supportive culture of feedback within this group, and we knew we had to push participants beyond sharing more resources that the teacher could use. We decided that our facilitation needed to be grounded within Indigenous Arts and Sciences' focus on place-based learning. To

accomplish this, we first tried asking the group: “How do you grapple with inappropriate (or inadequate) curriculum that is mandated but does not include information on the tribes in Wisconsin?”

Furthermore, we created a more robust list of guiding questions that anchored the dialogue in our professional learning. These questions merged place-based learning and the Authentic Intellectual Work Institute framework, and we shared and discussed them before teachers introduced their work. We then asked each presenting teacher to identify which question they would like to focus on during the discussion of their instructional artifact. Some of the guiding questions were:

- How can this lesson help students better understand the local Indigenous history, culture, and current environmental issues?
- How can we help students apply this topic or concept to a contemporary problem or an important issue to them?
- What strategies ensure that students are developing deep, conceptual understandings rather than superficial or inaccurate understandings?
- What additional background knowledge might students need?
- Whose perspectives are (and are not) represented?
- Why were these specific resources or activities included? To what extent do these (and other) resources or activities offer a more balanced or accurate perspective that will engage students in rigorous thinking?

By explicitly articulating these priorities, we were able to engage participants, including the presenting teacher, in a nurturing, yet critical dialogue that fostered all members’ learning. This narrative illustrates, we believe, how teacher collaboration, even when difficult, can help transform professional learning and practice for more inclusive and authentic curriculum and instruction.

## MOVING AHEAD

Prioritizing inclusive and equitable schooling — through teachers’ enacted curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices — was a main focus of our partnership. Teacher participants grew in their instructional capacity (including both content knowledge and practice) through collaborative inquiry that built on their expertise and immediate experiences in their settings.

Facilitators also grew by continuing discussion about their own roles and capacities and how our understandings and approaches would be open to change. By better understanding our own positions and educational philosophies, facilitators from both organizations are empowered to take responsibility for our own learning and lead by example in a relationship-focused, place-based educational space that prioritizes authenticity over expertise or content coverage and humility over compliance or fidelity.

Our project team still has many questions to address about supporting educators in the meaningful integration of American Indian studies in their teaching, but we see embracing this uncertainty and developing our deep commitment to examining our own perspectives and experiences as part of the process of supporting teaching and learning. Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators have distinct and important roles and responsibilities in this work. Our commitments to continue our own learning about what is called for from us as professional learning facilitators indicate that we are on an important journey toward inclusive learning spaces for educators and, ultimately, students.

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**M. Bruce King (mbking1@wisc.edu) is emeritus faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and director, Authentic Intellectual Work Institute. Laura M. Lang (laura.lang@wceps.org) is associate director and lead coach, Authentic Intellectual Work Institute. Claire Shaller Bjork (cshaller@wisc.edu) is Earth Partnership outreach specialist, Rachel Byington (rbyington@wisc.edu) is Earth Partnership tribal youth and community liaison, and Cheryl Bauer-Armstrong (cherylbauer@wisc.edu) is Earth Partnership director in the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison. ■**



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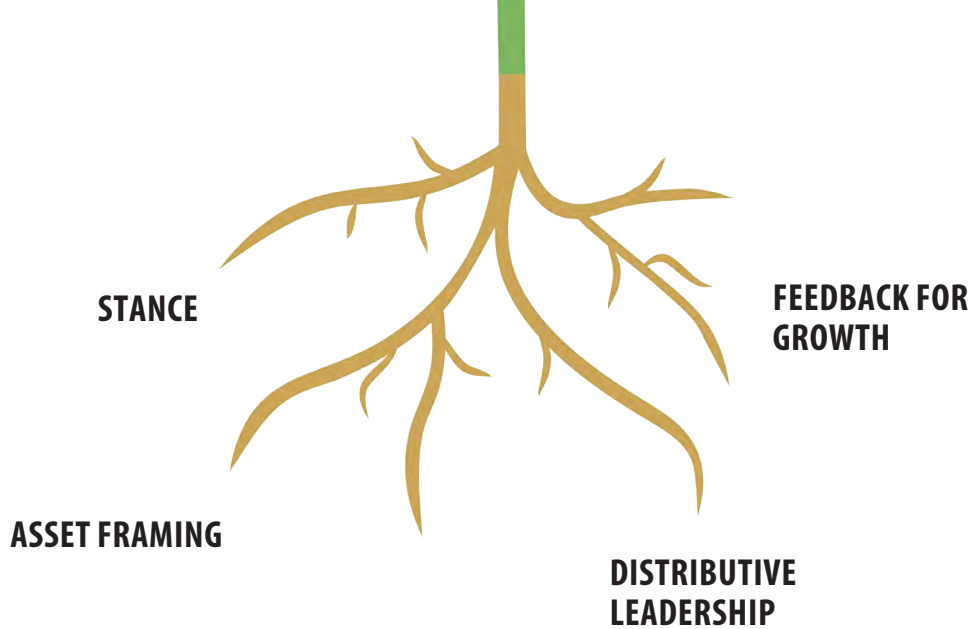
# 4 roots of anti-racist leadership — AND HOW TO CULTIVATE THEM

BY KIMBERLY HINTON AND JAMES T. SCHWARTZ

**M**arta Robertson, principal of Plainview High School, finished a long day invigorated by the senior leadership team meeting she had just left. The team had worked together for the past two years to develop leaders who could cultivate anti-racist policies and practices schoolwide. Composed of leaders

from various teams in the building, including instructional leaders, grade-level leads, and postsecondary leaders, the senior leadership team was committed to making space for the voices of those who are traditionally marginalized in schools and inviting them to co-construct practices and policies for more inclusive and engaging classroom and school environments.

To that end, the team planned a project to better engage Black male students in their classes, and they were excited to test it out, learn from it, and apply the lessons learned, all in collaboration with students and community members. Robertson looked forward to meeting with her network of principals from across the city to share the team's ideas and get feedback.



Collaborative efforts like this one are key to transforming schools into communities of powerful learning where all students excel academically and develop the agency, integrated identity, and competencies necessary to have successful lives as adults. Such efforts start with leaders, like Robertson, learning to cultivate anti-racist systems, structures, policies, and practices. A school cannot be a place of success for all unless its leaders recognize the barriers posed by systemic racism and implicit bias and engage the whole staff in understanding and dismantling those barriers.

As a first — and ongoing — step, school leaders must nurture the growth of anti-racist leadership within themselves and their leadership teams. This leadership establishes a foundation for whole-school anti-racism efforts that make possible the transformation we seek for our students.

At the Network for College Success, we help schools to take up this work by supporting and coaching a network of principals to engage in cycles of transformational learning. Our theory of change is this: If we build the capacity of principals to develop and apply their anti-racist leadership, then the principals will create systems to disrupt inequity across their schools and nurture anti-racist school cultures for their students, staff members, and communities.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

To enact our theory of change, we started with an essential question that we posed to the principals and worked together to answer over the course of a year. The essential question was created by our team’s leadership coaches, drawing from practice data (coaching, observations) and feedback (from the principals’ network and school leaders).

Over time, the initial question led to additional essential questions. As principals engaged in cycles of reflection and action, the essential questions gradually shifted from broad theory and reflection (e.g. What does leadership for equity look like?) to more specifically defined actions and practices (e.g. How does anti-racist leadership create systems to disrupt inequity within and across school teams?).

We focused on the following essential questions over a period of four years:

- Year 1: What does leadership for equity look like?
- Year 2: What does leadership for equity look like in stance and action?
- Year 3: What does leadership for equity look like for advancing anti-racist practices in remote learning?
- Year 4: How does anti-racist leadership create systems to disrupt inequity within and across school teams?

The shift in year 4 to using the language of anti-racism was intentional. The two concepts are closely related but not the same. Equity recognizes that each young person is unique and requires different resources to achieve a certain outcome. Anti-racism focuses on the specific recognition that all racial groups are equal and that we must continuously work to disrupt and deconstruct systems, structures, and policies that create inequities on the basis of race. As a community, we made the shift in language because principals began to recognize the role of race in the inequities they saw, especially during the pandemic and as they learned from the uprising against racial injustice in summer 2020.

As principals in the network engaged with these essential questions, they began to understand how their identity as leaders impacted their ability to recognize, dismantle, and disrupt inequitable practices and policies in their schools. They also began to explore how to replace those structures with liberatory practices and policies. They looked critically at their systems to better understand their least served population, actively worked to dismantle inequitable policies, and co-created equitable policies with their community members. Simultaneously, many of them supported their teacher leaders and teams as they learned to become culturally responsive.

**FOUR ROOTS OF ANTI-RACIST LEADERSHIP**

As principals grew in this work, we repeatedly observed four distinct grounding practices that helped them move from theory to action. We call these the four roots of anti-racist leadership:

- **Asset framing:** Identifying, reframing and leaning into the wealth of knowledge and leadership in teachers, staff, and students;
- **Stance development:** Intentional reflective work to examine one’s identity and how it impacts leadership, resulting in articulation of daily commitment to anti-racism;
- **Distributive leadership:** Working in a collectivist manner that trusts and gives authority and intentional autonomy to multiple members of the team; and
- **Feedback for growth:** Engaging individually and collectively in systematic methods of receiving feedback on one’s leadership.

In this article, we explain why these roots are important and describe some of the moves that leadership coaches or other facilitators can play in nurturing them with school leaders. These moves draw on our own experience as coaches and facilitators in high schools. We also illustrate what the four roots of anti-racist leadership look like in practice, using the fictional Plainview High School as an example. This school represents a composite of schools and situations from our work with a network of Chicago public high schools.

**1. Center asset framing.**

Centering assets requires us to keep the strengths of each student, family member, and staff member at the forefront of our conversations. In addressing racist systems and conditions in our schools, it can be easy to fall into deficit thinking about those with whom we work. We must push back against that racist conditioning by lifting up what we each do well and what we each add to a community.

When leaders center assets, they focus others’ attention on competence, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation — the desire to do something for its own sake rather than for rewards. Psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, experts in motivation, have found that intrinsic motivation is nurtured by experiences of both autonomy and competence. The corollary is also true: “Negative feedback or excessive difficulty which undermine perceived competence also diminish intrinsic motivation” (Ryan et. al., 2021). When leaders focus on staff or students’ deficits, community members often feel defeated and progress toward equity moves backward.

Coaches can help leaders develop this root using tools to identify and leverage assets in the school community. One example is the High 5 Strengths Test, which can be found online at [high5test.com](http://high5test.com). Coaches can also help leaders identify and discontinue the use of deficit language and framing by observing and providing feedback about leaders’ interactions with and conversations about teachers and students.

**What centering assets looks in practice:** In working to improve the experiences of Black male students at Plainview High, senior leadership team members realized that often they spoke about students and teachers from their own negative or deficit mindsets. They realized that they could not improve students’ experiences if they didn’t believe that young people deserve positive experiences and that teachers should provide them. So the team made an intentional effort in meetings to speak about the assets and worth that each student and teacher possessed — their unique gifts, their knowledge, and their humanity.

**2. Develop and hold an equity stance.**

Anti-racist leaders ground their leadership in their equity stances. A stance functions as a stable platform from which the leader can act toward justice and react toward injustice. This stance generates a strong understanding

of the leader’s own identity, the connections between themselves and others, and what they must stand for as leadership challenges arise in their context (San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small Schools, n.d.).

Leaders nourish this root through the examination of “the skin they are in” — their prominent identity markers, their relationship to their identity, and the relationship between others’ identities and their own. Leaders must also reflect on the formative experiences that have shaped their conceptions of race and other identities and then determine their nonnegotiables.

Anti-racist leaders also work with those they lead to support them in cultivating their own equity stances. This is especially important for those who work directly with students because how educators show up has an enormous impact on the daily experiences of young people.

The coach’s role in cultivating equity stances is to act as a mirror for the principal, helping them examine their beliefs as well as whether and how their decisions and actions align with their stance. The coach can also help the leader examine how those decisions impact those they lead and the school as a whole.

**What developing an equity stance looks like in practice:** When Robertson first formed her senior leadership team, she identified school staff who already embedded strong anti-racist practices in their daily work and had the potential to lead teams to engage in that same kind of work. But she knew that it was not enough to select these leaders and rely on their preexisting practices and beliefs — she had to support them to form individual and team equity stances.

At the team’s first meeting, Robertson asked team members to speak about their own identity markers and how their identities affect how they show up as educators. Each leader wrote and spoke about their priorities, nonnegotiables, and core beliefs. Over time, each leader codified all of these into individual equity stances and the team developed a collective stance — the moral and ethical ground on which they stand when making leadership decisions.

Each member of the team also worked with the teams they lead to develop individual and collective stances. Some of their team members were resistant to this work, expressing reluctance to name and reflect on their own racial identities. Senior leadership team members shared these challenges with and supported one another to stand firm in the vital nature of this work.

### 3. Design and catalyze distributive leadership.

Distributive leadership is essential to anti-racist leadership because a leader cannot make significant anti-racist change in a school by working alone, regardless of the strength of their leadership qualities. Nourishing this root means helping the entire team take responsibility for creating anti-racist changes.

To develop this quality on their team, a principal must support the team's members to take on the team's

stance and work as their own. Although individual team members may take the lead in certain areas (e.g. leading a subcommittee), they must see these as connected to the whole and not as separate “buckets” or “lanes” that they own.

Principals also need to build trust within the team so that members maintain their commitment to collective goals, count on one another to fulfill their responsibilities, and feel comfortable to take risks and learn from missteps.

Coaches play an important role in this process by helping leaders facilitate collaborative assessment and analysis of current school policies. Coaches can then support leaders in strategically planning and implementing antiracist change ideas.

In our network, we have seen some evidence of a connection between

distributive leadership and student outcomes. When we looked at the 11 schools that had a consistent principal and consistent coaching over the past two years, all five schools that had freshman on-track rates over 95% had evidence of distributive leadership in a key leadership team, meaning that most or all team members consistently regarded the team's work as their own, worked together in alignment rather than on separate projects, and trusted one another to uphold their equity stances and work toward their collective goals.

In addition, four out of six schools where more than half of freshmen earned a 3.0 GPA or higher had evidence of distributive leadership. However, some schools who had distributive leadership in place had lower on-track and 3.0+ rates, so this quality may be beneficial but not sufficient to raise student outcomes.



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**What distributive leadership looks like in practice:** As the Plainview High School senior leadership team members developed their stances, they needed to determine what systems at Plainview were most in need of change. They started by organizing themselves into subcommittees to perform a collective investigation of how they currently support Black male students.

The team empowered these subcommittees to lead and make critical decisions about their assigned area of work. One subcommittee engaged Black male students in focus groups, another administered surveys to teachers and students, and a third organized observations of students in classes, the counselors' offices, and the climate office.

As these subcommittees did their work and brought their data back to the whole senior leadership team, the team uncovered that many adults in the school didn't know how to connect with their students as a whole and engage them in learning, and that this issue was especially strong with their Black male students. The senior leadership team members came to consensus on the idea that each of their teams would invite a group of Black male students to give deep feedback on one aspect of their work, then the teams would share with the whole senior leadership team.

#### 4. Seek and give feedback on practice.

Feedback is a powerful tool for both student and adult learning because we need to understand the impact of our efforts to improve them (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This process grounds us in a growth mindset because feedback, when authentically requested or given, reflects a belief in the capacity for improvement.

For leaders, including those aiming to be anti-racist leaders, that feedback should include learning about our impact on others' learning and growth. Inviting and expecting feedback helps leaders reflect and builds trust that enables leaders to foster a team culture where members bring their dilemmas for collective problem-solving, own those dilemmas together, and use protocols to unpack and address the dilemmas with a focus on growth.

Coaches can help leaders develop

feedback processes and habits by engaging them in reflection learning cycles and introducing tools such as tuning, success, or dilemma protocols, as well as other reflective processes. They can also support principals to regularly request feedback from team members, thereby modeling the importance of feedback for others.

**What feedback looks like in practice:** To cultivate the habit of seeking and incorporating feedback, the senior leadership team at Plainview developed a rhythm of meetings in which they would present dilemmas and give one another feedback on their practice. Each team member regularly presented a dilemma from their own leadership practice so the team could hear the dilemma, push the presenting team member's thinking, and support the presenter to think differently about the dilemma.

Presenting team members would leave with new insights into their dilemmas, and hearing leadership dilemmas would often prompt new insights for other team members as well. In addition, as the senior leadership team members heard the similarities and differences among dilemmas in their various teams, they developed a stronger understanding about their work to engage Black male students, and they engaged in collective feedback on that project as well.

#### INITIAL STEPS

The four roots of anti-racist leadership operate in interconnected ways. There is no one right way to apply the four roots, and no one right place to start. For those looking to get started, we recommend exploring the following initial steps and questions.

**Start by reflecting on your own asset framing.** Consider: What assets do you see in your own leadership and your key leadership team? What assets do you see in your staff members? In your students?

**Create a draft of your own equity stance.** What are the most important aspects of your leadership identity? How does your race play a role? How does your identity inform your nonnegotiables in leadership?

**Engage your team in learning about the four roots.** We have listed

some resources we believe are good starting places for each:

- *Asset Framing: The Other Side of the Story.* [www.comnetwork.org/resources/asset-framing-the-other-side-of-the-story/](http://www.comnetwork.org/resources/asset-framing-the-other-side-of-the-story/)
- *How We Can Bridge the Cultural Gap.* [learningforward.org/journal/october-2016/how-we-can-bridge-the-cultural-gap/](http://learningforward.org/journal/october-2016/how-we-can-bridge-the-cultural-gap/)
- *Leading Together / Power to the People.* [www.ascd.org/el/articles/power-to-the-people](http://www.ascd.org/el/articles/power-to-the-people)
- *Seven Keys to Effective Feedback.* [www.ascd.org/el/articles/seven-keys-to-effective-feedback](http://www.ascd.org/el/articles/seven-keys-to-effective-feedback)

**Engage your team members in developing their own individual equity stances, and then in developing a team equity stance.**

All four roots are necessary to support anti-racist leadership. When leaders and teams nourish these roots together, they grow collective anti-racist leadership, fostering schools that honor the brilliance and insights of the Black and Latinx students they serve.

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Kimberly Hinton ([khinton@uchicago.edu](mailto:khinton@uchicago.edu)) is the deputy director of partner schools and James T. Schwartz ([jtschwartz@uchicago.edu](mailto:jtschwartz@uchicago.edu)) is the lead leadership coach at the Network for College Success in Chicago, Illinois. ■



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~ Angela Walker

“ The Academy has given me tools to plan for change initiatives systematically, as well as developed my confidence in leading and carrying out this challenging work. Perhaps most importantly, it has expanded my network of peers, colleagues, and friends that I can without hesitation reach out to and collaborate with.”

~ April Chauvette

“ The Academy experience has been such a growth opportunity. It has highlighted my skill set and allowed me to work on big projects and leadership development while still providing support around professional learning. I now am part of building our leadership pipeline and supporting aspiring principals and new principals. Even though I haven’t changed positions, I believe I am seen more for my expertise now because of the opportunities the Academy has afforded me.”

~ Trisha Myers

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# IDEAS

## AN EMERGING FIELD IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

**C**urriculum-based professional learning brings educators together to immerse themselves in the content and instructional materials they use in the classroom, collaborating on how best to equitably serve their students. However, only a small percentage of educators experience this form of professional learning, report the authors of “Curriculum-based professional learning shows great promise” on p. 62. In their article, researchers from Columbia University’s Center for Public Research and Leadership explore the state of curriculum-based professional learning and how to expand its reach.



## Fishbowl coaching magnifies the impact of feedback

BY JO LEIN

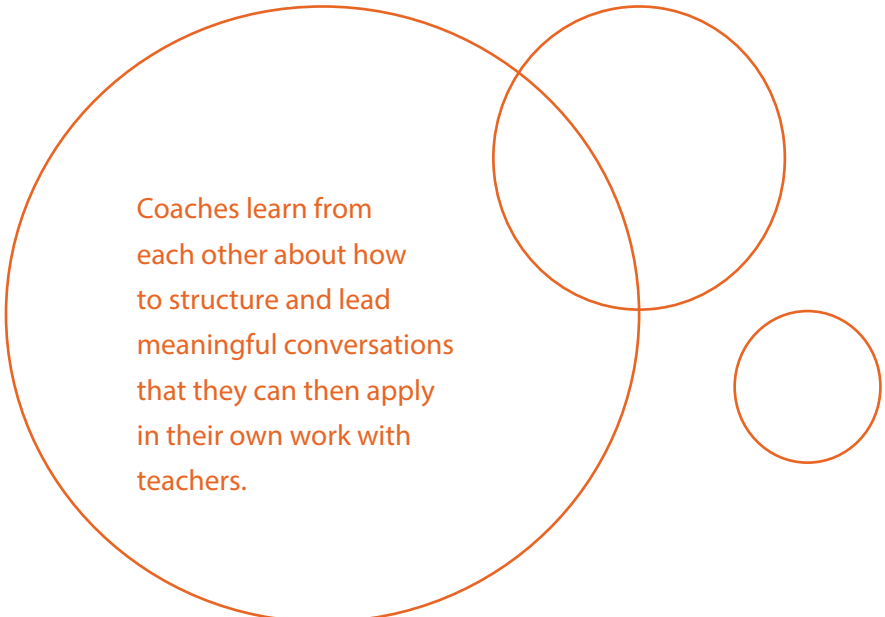
**W**hen I began working with teachers as a first-year coach, I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. To build my coaching skills, I emulated the coaches around me, but those opportunities were limited. Unsure of myself, I posed big-picture reflection questions to teachers and

was too intimidated to share my true feedback. Not surprisingly, the teachers made very little progress.

Feeling like an imposter, and desperate to find my voice and my ability to help teachers develop their skills, I spoke to my supervisor. She told me that other coaches were feeling the same way. At first, it was reassuring to know that I was not suffering alone. But

it was disappointing to think about the lack of impact our coaching team was having on teaching practices.

Since then, I have learned many concrete coaching techniques, as well as tools for helping coaches develop their own skills. One of those tools, which I learned in my second year as a coach and have made a standard part of my practice ever since, is fishbowl coaching.



Coaches learn from each other about how to structure and lead meaningful conversations that they can then apply in their own work with teachers.

## FISHBOWL COACHING

Fishbowl coaching is where a coach and a teacher engage in a coaching session while other coaches observe the live interaction. While the conversation is happening, the other coaches take notes and prepare feedback to share after the conversation. Coaches learn from each other about how to structure and lead meaningful conversations that they can then apply in their own work with teachers.

My first fishbowl experience was nerve-racking but powerful. I felt like I was sweating through my clothes with seven sets of eyes watching my every move. I sat down with Taylor Jones, whom I had observed in the classroom a few hours earlier. I had my coaching plan gripped in my hand and I was off, sharing observations and asking reflection questions.

After I thanked Jones and she left the room, it was my turn in the hot seat. Each of the seven other coaches had an opportunity to give me feedback. One asked, “Jo, did you enable behavior with your students when you first started teaching?” “Yes. Oh, yes,” I said. She nodded and said, “You do it with adults, too. You asked Ms. Jones a tough question

and then you dialed it back. You were uncomfortable with making her uncomfortable about feedback she needed to hear.” I knew she was right, and I immediately started thinking about how I might do things differently next time.

Not only was this an important learning moment for me, but also for the other six coaches. I could tell it gave them food for thought, too. Some nodded their heads or jotted down notes.

My colleague Jamie Winston was the next coach to do a fishbowl. She sat down with James Hartford, a first-year math teacher who had no background in teaching. Hartford was struggling in his classroom, and he needed to hear some hard feedback. After Winston shared some initial praise about his strengths, she asked him, “Why did you avoid giving the consequence to Jeremy when you needed to give him one?” She stayed silent while she waited for his response. The question laid over the room like a weighted blanket. “I was scared to give it to him. I didn’t know how he was going to react,” Hartford finally said. “Let’s unpack that,” Winston replied.

The conversation continued and

it got deep, in sharp contrast to my mostly surface-level conversation with Jones. Hartford discussed his prior experience where a student had exploded at him and went on to talk about how he did not want to be “mean.” He even revealed some biased mindsets about students and their families. As a white male teaching predominately Black students, he was afraid of being accused of being racist if he held students accountable for their choices. He and Winston talked through those fears and about how holding students accountable can also demonstrate care.

After this conversation, Winston suggested that she and Hartford do a role-play to practice how to give consequences in a beneficial way. Hartford played himself and Winston played the student. Hartford was successful role-playing delivering a consequence in a supportive yet firm tone. “How did that feel?” Winston asked. “Like it’s what I have to do to show them love,” Hartford said.

Hartford left the room. The other coaches looked at each other and quietly cheered for Winston. She had taken the feedback that I had received, about not shying away from difficult

# IDEAS

conversations, and immediately applied it. This example shows the power of fishbowl coaching. All of the coaches practiced their coaching moves together, reflected, and learned from one another.

## DISTRICT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COACHING

A decade after I was introduced to fishbowl coaching, I use it regularly in the nonprofit organization I founded in 2018 to bring coaching to underresourced school districts. Coaching teachers in states like Oklahoma, where I live and work, has become even more important in recent years. Currently, only one out of every four teachers in the state has a background in teaching (Lazarte-Alcala, 2021). This reality has left Oklahoma school leaders scrambling to build teacher capacity quickly to best serve students' needs. Our team partners with school districts to address that need through coaching.

To illustrate how this process works, here is an example of one school district we work with that has invested in the fishbowl approach for the last two years. This work started with some initial professional learning with all district leaders who directly influence teacher development: principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, district specialists (special education and English language development), and reading specialists. With the goal to build coaching capacity across the district, my team then rotated across schools to practice coaching using the fishbowl approach.

The days ran like this:

- All coaches reviewed the key aspects of coaching they intended to practice throughout the day: creating effective low inference notes (an objective, evidence-collecting technique during observations), selecting effective action steps, preparing a coaching script, and executing a coaching conversation. Each person made commitments for the day.

- All coaches observed one teacher for 20 minutes.
- The group reviewed all classroom-based evidence such as a classroom transcript, student work samples, and participant data. Using all of the information available, coaches selected their action steps and prepared their conversations. Depending on the skills and strengths of the group, this part of the day could have been done collaboratively or independently. Those who finished early rehearsed with one another.
- We wrapped up the day with the much-anticipated fishbowl sessions. Each coach executed their conversation in front of their peers. Then they received feedback from each person in the group using the sentence frame, "It was effective when ... next time try ... ." If time allowed, the coach role-played the conversation again, incorporating the feedback.

Coaches responded to the feedback that their colleagues received, making each conversation stronger as the day progressed. Beyond the conversations with teachers, principals worked alongside their assistant principals and instructional coaches to think broadly about school improvement using coaching. They identified specific instructional practices that they wanted to see across the school.

My team measured progress of each coach on an internally developed four-point scale rubric that included each component of the coaching conversation from praise to closing. Each leader was evaluated at the end of each of the five fishbowl days occurring every three months over two years. When the 27 coaches started the process, most leaders were scoring ones and twos on the rubric rows. Now, coaches are scoring mostly threes, with an overall average growth of 36% increase in effectiveness. This statistic is significant because that means that coaches are using empirically based coaching practices regularly (Knight, 2018; Lein, 2017).

## CHALLENGES OF FISHBOWL COACHING

Fishbowl coaching comes with some risks. District or school leaders who want to initiate fishbowl coaching to improve coaching skills should consider a number of potential challenges and how to prevent or overcome them.

### Making the teacher uncomfortable

If it was intimidating for me, who was familiar with the fishbowl method, to have seven sets of eyes on me, imagine how it might feel for the teacher. Done correctly, coaching feels like a collaboration between two adults for the best interest of students. Adding a public element to the feedback can undermine that dynamic and sometimes feel awkward, even in the context of a trusting coach-teacher relationship.

This sometimes puts teachers on the defensive, and they will sometimes address the "audience" with a lot of context and background. They may say, "Well, today was different because ..." or "This student struggles with ..." These types of reactions can sometimes get the conversation off track and lead to a confusing outcome.

Start by ensuring that the coach and teacher have a positive, trusting relationship. Then I recommend locating the coach and teacher in a separate room from the audience coaches and connecting the two rooms via video conference. Be sure the coach-teacher pair cannot see the other coaches, nor their own images. Even though the teacher will know others are watching, the conversation will hopefully feel more routine and therefore more comfortable.

### Selecting a teacher who isn't ready

Not all teachers are the best fit for fishbowl coaching. They may feel judged, challenged, or frustrated by the process. There are a number of factors to consider when selecting a teacher to participate in fishbowl coaching:

- *Trust between the teacher and coach:* Teachers need to know that the

coach is in their corner and that their feedback is in their and their students' best interests. Ideally, the coach and teacher should have an established relationship. If that's not possible (for example, if coaches come together from multiple locations and their teacher partners are not nearby), the coach and teacher should at least have a phone conversation in advance.

- *Evidence of responding to feedback:* A teacher who has previously shown evidence of implementing feedback is an ideal candidate for fishbowl coaching. In contrast, those who have demonstrated resistance to feedback will only feel added pressure in this style and may not have a productive conversation with the coach.
- *The teacher's foundational skills:* While it will be tempting to want to coach in classrooms that have the highest need, it is essential to select a teacher who has some foundational skills. Coaches often struggle to identify highest-leverage action steps in classrooms that require a lot of intervention (not to mention that it is stressful for coaches and teachers in these situations). Coaching a teacher with some foundational skills will allow the conversation to stay focused on a singular issue.

It may feel tempting to select teachers based simply on the logistics: what time they are in classrooms with students, when they have their planning time, or how it fits into the schedule of the day. Resist this temptation and get creative with class coverage to ensure the right person for this experience.

### Exposing the coach

Coaching is a complex job that requires deep analysis and interpersonal skills, cultural competence, and a deep understanding of curriculum and instruction. Fishbowl coaching may reveal to the group that the coach lacks some of these skills, and that can leave the coach feeling embarrassed or

inadequate compared to their peers. This can be particularly frustrating for new coaches who are experienced educators but are struggling with the unfamiliar role of coach.

To overcome this challenge, facilitators should get a baseline for coach skills before the fishbowl day. Facilitators can target their support during the fishbowl day and isolate a specific skill to practice. For example, one new coach I worked with needed practice identifying action steps. Before the fishbowl day, we visited four classrooms together to practice identifying all of the potential action steps and then determining the most effective action steps and those that could be considered exemplary. On the fishbowl day, when she coached a teacher in front of her peers, she was able to pull one of the exemplary action steps that she had practiced and that applied well to the current situation.

In addition, careful framing can be done to start the day. For example, a facilitator may say, "It is important that we do not compare ourselves to others. We are all going to learn something throughout today — from the smallest communication technique to huge instructional practices. The most important thing is that we are vulnerable and honest about what we do not know or do not feel comfortable with. This is why we are a team."

This challenge also highlights the importance of facilitators conducting individual follow-up with coaches after the fishbowl conversations. If the coach is feeling uncomfortable, the facilitator can discuss this with them and work diligently to ensure that they can demonstrate proficiency in other specific areas for the next round of practice.

### Breaking school or district agreements and policies

Every school context may have different policies about observations and feedback outside of the traditional evaluation periods as described by negotiated agreements between teachers unions, associations, and districts.

School leaders should examine policies closely when making decisions about the function and use of fishbowl coaching.

In certain contexts, participation in fishbowl coaching should be entirely voluntary. Administrators should properly inform the teacher who will be observing and what their role is ahead of time. While the observation can be used to establish patterns for teacher performance, the evidence should not be used as part of the teacher's formal evaluation to reduce any conflicts with district policies.

### LEVERAGE PEER LEARNING

Coaching can be isolating and confusing. Self-doubt runs rampant. And just like teaching, coaching requires a specific set of skills that take a lot of practice and feedback. Fishbowl coaching provides a way to build those skills that leverages collaborative peer learning and reaches coaches on a larger scale than one-to-one support. If fishbowl coaching is conducted in a school or a district, it also has the benefit of creating consistent knowledge and approaches across multiple coaches.

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**Jo Lein (jo.mabee@gmail.com) is a leadership development coach with Tulsa Public Schools, the founder of the Teaching & Leading Initiative of Oklahoma, a commissioner at Oklahoma's Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, and an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University. ■**



## Curriculum-based professional learning shows great promise

BY ELIZABETH CHU, GRACE McCARTY, AND MOLLY GURNY

**W**alk into a classroom in Seaford, Delaware, on a Tuesday afternoon, and you will find a room full of learners in deep discussion grounded in strong instructional materials. Pouring over content-rich texts or real-world math problems, these learners are engaging in close reading to identify textual evidence to support arguments and inferences,

prompting one another to explore new mathematical strategies, and supporting each other to articulate next steps for their learning journeys.

What's special about this Seaford class is that the desks are not filled with students. Rather, they are filled with teachers (both general education teachers and specialists who support students with disabilities) and leaders (including principals, assistant principals, and coaches) who come together regularly

to engage in collaborative professional learning focused on how best to teach the curricula that are shared across the district.

Seaford's teachers credit this professional learning as one of a set of instructional supports that expands their capacity to equitably serve a linguistically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse student body in ways that are rigorous, standards-aligned, and tailored to students' specific



needs. Moreover, the all-hands-on-deck nature of this professional learning has broken down barriers that too often exist between general education staff and special education providers, between individual schools within a district, and between educators and their leadership.

For many educators across the country, this practice of teachers deeply engaging with their content and the instructional materials they use in the classroom, testing strategies and collaborating with their peers, and practicing research-based approaches — known as curriculum-based professional learning — has become routine, the standard by which professional learning is defined (Short & Hirsh, 2022).

Curriculum-based professional learning is situated within the broader professional learning ecosystem. It focuses on how to teach a specific subject for specific grades, using the specific materials that teachers will use with their students. As explored in Jim Short and Stephanie Hirsh’s book, *Transforming Teaching Through Curriculum-Based Professional Learning: The Elements*, curriculum-based professional learning takes on various models (e.g. expert support, study groups, professional learning communities, institutes, workshops, and learning walks) and learning designs (e.g. inquiry-based and sense-making processes) to develop teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and habits of practice (Short & Hirsh, 2022). The common thread across these varied approaches is the focus on accomplishing transformative learning through direct engagement with high-quality educative curriculum, which intentionally includes instruction and learning opportunities for teachers to support their use of the curriculum with students.

But for many, this practice is far from the professional learning they experience. In fact, a 2019 study highlighted that, on average, teachers received only one to two days of

professional learning tailored to specific instructional materials, and a recent analysis by RAND Corporation indicates that roughly 23% of teachers reported receiving no professional learning on how to implement classroom materials, 38% just one to five hours, and only 10% more than 20 hours (Short & Hirsh, 2022; EdReports, 2022; Doan et al., 2021). Teachers report that the quality of the professional learning they receive is low, with half indicating that their preparation for teaching “did not prepare [them] at all” or only to a “slight extent” to use the curricular materials they were provided (Doan et al., 2021; EdReports, 2022).

## AN EMERGING FIELD

Given the potential of curriculum-based professional learning to support teachers and strengthen educational experiences and outcomes for students, Columbia University’s Center for Public Research and Leadership recently conducted a study to explore the state of the field of curriculum-based professional learning and how it might grow to give all teachers the kinds of rich professional learning teachers in Seaford experienced (Chu et al., 2022).

The study asked and answered four research questions:

1. Within the broader field of professional learning, how is the curriculum-based professional learning field defined, and what are its observable characteristics?
2. Where is the curriculum-based professional learning field most developed, and what actions, conditions, and resources supported its development?
3. Where is the curriculum-based professional learning field least developed, and for what reasons?
4. To what extent does the curriculum-based professional learning field exhibit the key features and supports described in

Short & Hirsh’s framework?

The Bridgespan Group, which provides a framework to understand field-building for population-level change, defines a field as a group of stakeholders from multiple settings working together, in coordinated and strategic ways, to achieve and sustain change at scale (Farnham et al., 2020). In this case, the field includes those who work inside and out of school buildings to improve teachers’ learning in service of students’ learning — teachers, leaders, district and state leaders, professional learning providers, philanthropies, and others.

To understand the state of the field, we conducted a systematic review of the literature on high-quality instructional materials, curriculum-based professional learning, and field-building. We interviewed 146 state-level academic leaders, regional leaders, system-level leaders, school-based professionals, professional learning providers, curriculum developers, philanthropic funders, and many others from across the country. To supplement these data, we sourced publicly available information about public and private giving to curriculum-based professional learning and related efforts and reviewed a number of secondary sources, including state professional learning websites, state-approved lists of professional learning providers, state professional learning standards, and Rivet Education’s Professional Learning Partner Guide (Rivet Education, n.d.). Finally, we reviewed publicly available information from RAND Corporation’s American Instructional Resources Survey for the last three years.

To analyze collected data, we employed The Bridgespan Group’s field-building framework and its five observable characteristics — field-level agenda, stakeholders, knowledge base, infrastructure, and resources — to understand the state of the curriculum-

based professional learning field and assess its stage of development (Farnham et al., 2020). The Bridgespan Group theorizes three stages of field development: emerging, where impact is inconsistent; forming, where impact is more coordinated and consistent; or evolving and sustaining, where impact “accelerates exponentially, even as needs and conditions change” (Farnham et al., 2020).

Our research reveals that the field of curriculum-based professional learning is in its early, or emerging, stage. Yet this emerging field shows great promise. A diverse set of stakeholders — including funders, system- and state-level leaders, a growing number of professional learning providers, teachers and leaders, and many others — are aligned on a number of key approaches to promoting teacher effectiveness through curriculum-based professional learning. They agree that professional learning must be curriculum-based, contextualized, and grounded in cycles of improvement, and they engage in diverse work that advances curriculum-based professional learning, including building the research base for curriculum-based professional learning, establishing policies to increase the adoption and implementation of high-quality curriculum and curriculum-based professional learning, elevating examples of curriculum-based professional learning in action, and directly providing curriculum-based professional learning to systems and schools.

The infrastructure supporting these stakeholders is forming, with many linked through networks, associations, and shared knowledge and tools. Individually and collectively, stakeholders use a limited but growing knowledge base about curriculum-based professional learning to inform their practice, and they access limited but increasing public and private dollars to support implementation.

## NEXT STEPS FOR SCALE

Moving from scattered

implementation and impact to consistent and accelerating implementation and impact will require advancing the field of curriculum-based professional learning. Achieving this change at scale is work too big for any single organization.

Our research surfaced a set of recommendations about how to move the field from an early to middle stage, ensuring more teachers get the support they deserve. Our recommendations include:

- **Engage those on the periphery.** The field needs to engage more stakeholders who could shape its direction and expand its reach. This includes school leaders, teachers, students, families, educator preparation programs, professional associations, and regional service agencies.
- **Leverage economies of scale.** Some schools and districts that want access to curriculum-based professional learning can’t afford it, and some providers can’t afford to reach smaller districts. The field needs to explore delivery methods that enable districts to share resources.
- **Prioritize quality.** The field needs to strengthen and expand the evidence base for curriculum-based professional learning practices, testing practices and studying how they support impact, for whom, and under what circumstances. Then, they need to systematically and effectively execute those ideas.

Seeing these practices and the work of educators in Seaford as part of a broader movement can help move success stories like Seaford’s into the mainstream. For individuals and organizations engaged in curriculum-based professional learning, reimagining their work as part of a broader effort to further professionalize teaching and provide educators with robust adult learning experiences will strengthen efforts already underway. By working together in an increasingly coordinated and collaborative way, those who are working to scale curriculum-based

professional learning will achieve something far greater than the sum of their individual efforts. They will co-construct a field — a movement — that gives teachers the learning opportunities they need to ensure students across the country have access to the consistently high-quality educational experiences they deserve.

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- 
- Elizabeth Chu (emc2170@tc.columbia.edu) is executive director, Grace McCarty (gam2131@columbia.edu) is associate director of research strategy and policy, and Molly Gurny (mg4034@columbia.edu) is senior director of legal strategy and policy at the Center for Public Research and Leadership at Columbia University. ■**

DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

# TOOLS

## SYSTEM STARTING POINTS

**S**tandards for Professional Learning work as a coherent system to lead to the ambitious results educators seek. Yet every educator needs a starting point — whether in planning their own learning or creating or improving a system. Starting points might include:

- Identify a priority tied to urgent student learning needs.
- Build on an existing strength for a quick win.
- Collaborate with a small team of diverse colleagues to explore potential for standards.

Use the following pages to explore the need for a systemic approach.



## Standards for Professional Learning work best together

BY LEARNING FORWARD

**L**earning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning are designed to be addressed as a cohesive system. Applying some standards without attending to others reduces the overall effectiveness of any professional learning effort, leading to gaps in educators' learning and, therefore, students' learning.

The tables on the following pages describe what happens when educators neglect one or more of the standards within their professional learning systems. For each of the 11 standards, we have listed the types of challenges that tend to arise when the standard is implemented inadequately, inconsistently, or not at all.

You can use this tool to build your team's understanding

of the importance and role of implementing standards collectively. You can also peruse the bulleted statements to find challenges you face in your context and consider how to focus attention on implementing the corresponding standard.

As you identify your challenges and areas for further effort, there is no one right place to start. To achieve full implementation of a professional learning system guided by standards, you can identify areas that are top priorities and action steps to implement now or outline a full-blown strategy to develop a vision and short- and long-term goals. The reflection questions that follow the tables invite conversation to determine a potential entry point.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STANDARDS AREN'T IMPLEMENTED



### RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

Without each standard, schools may see the following challenges:

EQUITY PRACTICES	CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION	PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low expectations</li> <li>• Lack of relevant instruction for each student</li> <li>• Disengaged or disenfranchised students and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of rigor and relevance</li> <li>• Inadequate use of assessments</li> <li>• Misaligned or ineffective instructional practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stagnant or ineffective educator practices</li> <li>• Neglect of current grade-level or content standards</li> <li>• Reduced educator advancement and retention</li> </ul>



### TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

Without each standard, schools may see the following challenges:

EQUITY DRIVERS	EVIDENCE	LEARNING DESIGNS	IMPLEMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequitable access to professional learning</li> <li>• Disengaged or disenfranchised educators</li> <li>• Lack of diverse perspectives in discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uninformed decision-making</li> <li>• Irrelevant professional learning</li> <li>• Professional learning without impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misaligned professional learning goals</li> <li>• Lack of educator engagement</li> <li>• One-size-fits-all professional learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• Professional learning without impact</li> <li>• Short-term improvement</li> </ul>



**CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS**

**Without each standard, schools may see the following challenges:**

<b>EQUITY FOUNDATIONS</b>	<b>CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequitable access and opportunity for learning</li> <li>• Low and/or inconsistent expectations</li> <li>• Distrust and division among staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pockets of individual excellence</li> <li>• Students falling through the cracks</li> <li>• Ineffective use of team time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No shared commitment to professional learning</li> <li>• Disjointed professional learning efforts</li> <li>• Lack of understanding about why professional learning matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of support</li> <li>• Gaps in access to learning</li> <li>• No return on investment</li> </ul>

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- Where do we see successes in our efforts to implement a system of professional learning, emphasizing multiple elements as represented in Standards for Professional Learning? What can we learn from those successes?
- Scanning the challenges listed on these pages, which do we tend to observe in our settings? Where do we see opportunities for improvement?
- What other professional learning challenges do we experience, and how might a standards-based system support us in addressing those challenges?
- The 11 Standards for Professional Learning live within a framework of Rigorous Content for Each Learner, Transformational Processes, and Conditions for Success. Based on the challenges listed when a standard is neglected, which frames does our team or system tend to overemphasize while neglecting others?
- What are potential implications for our next actions?

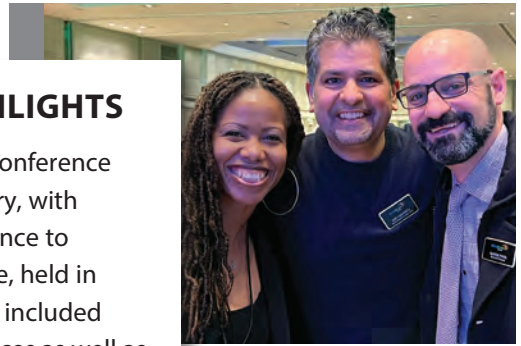
CONNECT. BELONG. SUPPORT.

# UPDATES



## ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The 2022 Learning Forward Annual Conference sold out for the first time in its history, with attendees eager for a much-needed chance to connect and collaborate. The conference, held in early December in Nashville, Tennessee, included four days of in-person learning experiences as well as emotional reunions, top-notch presenters, cutting-edge topics, and fun surprises.



# UPDATES



## NEW ONLINE COURSES

Learning Forward's online learning platform brings participants together to meet virtually for live, facilitated sessions, asynchronous learning experiences, and group collaboration. For more information and to register, visit [learningforward.org/online-courses-2/](https://learningforward.org/online-courses-2/)

### *Essential Strategies for Sustained Educator Wellness*

In this 15-hour, four-week facilitated course, Laura Lee Summers provides strategies to help you focus on your own well-being and the well-being of those you support to minimize stress and avoid burnout for yourself, your colleagues, and your students. Through video lessons, self-selected wellness activities, reflective discussions, and one-on-one support, you will develop an actionable self-care plan for personal wellness that transfers to school, team, and community. *Begins Jan. 16, 2023.*

### *Introduction to Standards for Professional Learning*

This three-session online course gives educators an overview of the revised standards and the key frames that describe the essential content of adult learning, process elements of professional learning, and aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning. *Begins Jan. 23, 2023.*

### *Powerful Practice for Professional Learning*

As you plan professional learning, make sure that you're providing educators with targeted, highly engaging professional learning that develops their capacity to implement new learning in their schools and classrooms. In this course, professional learning leaders and administrators will implement a professional learning framework, grounded in Standards for Professional Learning, that promotes high levels of learning and retention and increases adult learners' capacity and desire to implement new learning. *Begins Jan. 26, 2023.*

## Learning Forward Academy applications open

The Learning Forward Academy is recruiting candidates for the Academy Class of 2025. The Academy is Learning Forward's flagship learning experience. Over a 2½-year period, Academy members come together with colleagues from around the world to dive deep into a problem of practice. They learn about and apply innovative, equity-centered professional learning practices with the support of expert coaches and professional learning leaders.

Applications are due March 15, 2023. Visit [learningforward.org/academy/](https://learningforward.org/academy/) for more information and to apply.

The Learning Forward Foundation offers scholarships to select Academy members. For more information, visit [foundation.learningforward.org/scholarships-and-grants/](https://foundation.learningforward.org/scholarships-and-grants/)



Congratulations to the Learning Forward Academy Class of 2021. This hard-working class finally celebrated its graduation at the 2022 Annual Conference after the group's experience was extended due to COVID-19.

## Apply for Learning Forward Foundation grant

Applications are now available for the Learning Forward Foundation's 2023 Dale Hair Affiliate Grant. The foundation will award \$2,000 to a Learning Forward Affiliate needing to rebuild or generate a stronger organization and will award multiple Academy scholarships covering the cost of tuition. The deadline to apply is March 15, 2023. To learn more and apply, visit [foundation.learningforward.org/scholarships-and-grants/](https://foundation.learningforward.org/scholarships-and-grants/)

Also, for Amazon shoppers: The Learning Forward Foundation is now part of the AmazonSmile program, which allows shoppers to designate their favorite charity to receive donations from Amazon. To learn more and add the Learning Forward Foundation as your AmazonSmile charity, visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)



## In memoriam

Learning Forward is saddened by the deaths of three professional learning leaders and dedicated members of the Learning Forward family in fall 2022.



Hayes Mizell

**Hayes Mizell** is a legend in our organization and our field who challenged us to link professional learning with student achievement and to develop Standards for Professional Learning. A former program officer at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation,

Mizell received the National Staff Development Council's Contribution to Staff Development Award in 2000, and from 2007 to 2019, he served as Learning Forward's Distinguished Senior Fellow.



Sybil Yastrow

**Sybil Yastrow** was a founding member of Learning Forward in 1979 and served as president of the board in 1987. She spearheaded the creation of the Learning Forward Foundation, which has supported hundreds of learning leaders. She was a tireless advocate for students

and educators and was one of the nation's leading fundraisers in the battle against multiple sclerosis.

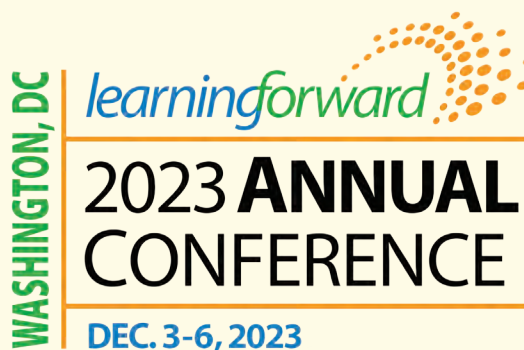


Cindy Harrison

**Cindy Harrison** served as president of Learning Forward's board of trustees in 2004 and was a highly regarded senior consultant. She co-wrote the books *Taking the Lead* and *Coaching Matters*, which form the core of Learning Forward's Coaches Academy.

She co-founded the September School in Boulder, Colorado, was a fierce advocate for students, teachers, coaches, and leaders, and was an essential member of the Learning Forward consultant community.

These leaders were passionate advocates for professional learning. Their commitment, wisdom, and warmth will continue to influence the field through the many educators they mentored and supported.



## APPLY TO PRESENT AT THE 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Learning Forward is accepting proposals for the 2023 Annual Conference, to be held at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland, near Washington, D.C. Submission deadline is Jan. 31, 2023. Applicants will be notified of decisions in spring 2023. To learn more about how to submit a proposal, log in to the conference proposal system and select "Instructions" in the menu: [lfp.learningforward.org/](https://lfp.learningforward.org/)

## Standards overview in Mississippi

Mississippi educators participated in a two-day overview of Standards for Professional Learning. The event was a collaboration of the Mississippi Department of Education, Regional Education Service Areas, and Learning Forward. Through a combination of direct instruction, independent reading, small-group discussions, and collaborative synthesis, participants learned how to apply the standards to their particular roles and contexts. Events were held in Oxford, Cleveland, Meridian, Jackson, Biloxi, and Hattiesburg.

Learning Forward Mississippi, the state's Learning Forward affiliate, built on this foundation by providing a deeper look at the Conditions for Success, one of three frames within Standards for Professional Learning, at its fall retreat. About 125 education leaders convened in Flowood to deepen their understanding of the contexts, structures, and culture necessary to cultivate high-quality professional learning that leads to improved student outcomes. Mississippi is a strong model for how state agencies of education and Learning Forward Affiliates can collaborate to support educators, thus students, throughout a state, province, or region.

For more information on how Learning Forward can bring statewide learning on Standards for Professional Learning to your area, contact [sharron.helmke@learningforward.org](mailto:sharron.helmke@learningforward.org)

# UPDATES

## THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL TOP 10 ARTICLES IN 2022

*The Learning Professional's* most-read articles in 2022 focus on building community in a divided world, implementing revised Standards for Professional Learning, and perennially popular topics like coaching and equity. Here's the list:

1. "Asking good questions is a leader's superpower" by Charles Mason.
2. "Data shouldn't be a dirty word" by Jim Knight and Michael Faggella-Luby.
3. "Should groups set their own norms? Maybe not" by Joyce Lin and Ayanna Perry.
4. "Why these standards matter for you (yes, you)" by Paul Fleming.
5. "How to achieve collective efficacy in a time of division" by Steven Katz and Jenni Donohoo.
6. "Leaders can build community, even in a divided school" by Baruti Kafele.
7. "Curriculum and instruction take a front seat in professional learning" by Jess Barrow and Eric Hirsch.
8. "In times of division, strategic communication matters" by Ashley Burns and Manny Rivera.
9. "New look, new standards" by Tracy Crow.
10. "Equity is a standard of practice" by Baruti Kafele.

To view these articles, visit [learningforward.org/2022/12/14/the-learning-professionals-top-10-articles-of-2022/](https://learningforward.org/2022/12/14/the-learning-professionals-top-10-articles-of-2022/)



Jessica Hansen

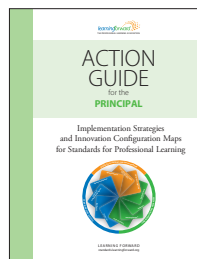
## TWO NEW STAFF MEMBERS HAVE JOINED LEARNING FORWARD

**Jessica Hansen** is program associate for networks, communications, and strategy. Previously, she was an elementary school teacher in the Coppell Independent School District in Texas.



Tricia Burgess

**Tricia Burgess** is associate for customer service. She has experience providing administrative support to teachers and school officials and customer service in consumer retail.



## NEW BOOK FOR PRINCIPALS

Learning Forward's *Action Guide for the Principal: Implementation Strategies and Innovation Configuration Maps for Standards for Professional Learning* is now available in the Learning Forward Bookstore.

This role-specific Action Guide describes the steps principals can take to implement Standards for Professional Learning and illustrates how to progress from entry-level implementation to ideal implementation using Innovation Configuration maps. The book includes tools to help principals plan first steps, reflect on current work, and coordinate their roles and responsibilities with those of other stakeholders.

Designed to be used individually or with a team, it is useful as a standalone resource or as a complement to other Standards for Professional Learning tools and resources. This is the first in a series of role-specific Action Guides. Books for system/central office leaders, coaches, and external partners will be released in coming months.

Learning Forward members receive a 20% discount, and orders of 25 or more qualify for a large-order discount. Visit [learningforward.org/store](https://learningforward.org/store)

## Affiliate leaders meet at Annual Conference

Leaders from 19 Learning Forward Affiliates met at Learning Forward's Annual Conference to discuss topics most relevant to their contexts. Using the World Café protocol, the 40 leaders posed questions and shared strategies on Affiliate visions and missions, outreach and collaboration, valuing Affiliate members, and planning for leadership succession. In addition, participants heard from Learning Forward staff about the Learning Forward Academy, advocacy, *The Learning Professional* magazine, and updates to the Affiliate website.

Affiliate leaders convene monthly to engage in learning, problem-solve, and build their capacity to support educators and systems in their states, provinces, and regions. To learn more about Affiliates or find an Affiliate near you, visit [learningforward.org/affiliates](https://learningforward.org/affiliates)



## Thank you to Annual Conference session hosts

We want to thank the almost 500 conference session hosts who volunteered during Learning Forward’s 2022 Annual Conference. We randomly selected these five hosts to receive complimentary three-day registration to Learning Forward’s 2023 Annual Conference: Donna Jones, Cocke County School District, Newport, Tennessee; Leneda Laing, Cleveland City Schools, Cleveland, Tennessee; Patricia Maze, Athens State University, Athens, Alabama; Julianne Ross-Kleinmann, Ulster BOCES, New Paltz, New York; and Nicole Turcotte, Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.



### PODCAST FEATURES LEARNING FORWARD LEADERS

Two Learning Forward leaders were featured guests on a recent episode of High Tech High’s Unboxed podcast. Michelle Bowman, vice president of networks and continuous improvement, and Elizabeth Foster, vice president of research and standards, discussed how to improve adult learning in schools. Bowman and Foster shared insights about continuous improvement processes and improvement science, including how Learning Forward networks apply these tools.

Unboxed is a multimedia project of the High Tech High Graduate School of Education. The episode is available on most podcast platforms and at [hthunboxed.org/podcasts/s4e5-improving-adult-learning-in-schools/](https://hthunboxed.org/podcasts/s4e5-improving-adult-learning-in-schools/)

### LEARNING FORWARD JOINS RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AS AN AFFILIATE

Learning Forward has joined the Research Partnership for Professional Learning as an affiliate, joining other professional learning member organizations and researchers from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University.

This partnership will advance our collaboration with researchers at an organizational level and will connect researchers with our practitioner members to explore and inform key questions about professional learning. Research Partnership for Professional Learning’s agenda focuses on discerning which professional learning strategies and designs are effective in which conditions and contexts and on better understanding the conditions that must be in place to support and sustain strong professional learning systems.

This affiliation will support our organizational commitment to ensuring educators at all levels have access to the best available evidence about improving professional learning to ensure it is effective and equitable.

### #TheLearningPro

FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POST



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

## 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.



### LEARNING FORWARD STAFF

**Frederick Brown**

President/CEO  
frederick.brown@learningforward.org

**Anthony Armstrong**

Senior vice president,  
marketing & communications  
anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org

**Shannon Bogle**

Director, networks & academy  
shannon.bogle@learningforward.org

**Suzanne Bouffard**

Senior vice president,  
communications & publications  
suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org

**Michelle Bowman**

Vice president,  
networks & continuous improvement  
michelle.bowman@learningforward.org

**Kristin Buehrig**

Vice president, conference programs  
kristin.buehrig@learningforward.org

**Christy Colclasure**

Senior associate, member services  
christy.colclasure@learningforward.org

**Chelsea Collins**

Project manager, Wallace ECPI Program  
chelsea.collins@learningforward.org

**Ariel Durham**

Program manager, digital marketing  
ariel.cain@learningforward.org

**Anne Feaster-Smith**

Director, accounting  
anne.feaster-smith@learningforward.org

**Paul Fleming**

Chief learning officer  
paul.fleming@learningforward.org

**Elizabeth Foster**

Vice president, research & standards  
elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org

**Carrie Freundlich**

Vice president, conference operations,  
program management  
carrie.freundlich@learningforward.org

**Niki Gamble**

Director, partnerships & products  
niki.gamble@learningforward.org

**Melinda George**

Chief policy officer  
melinda.george@learningforward.org

**Jessica Hansen**

Program associate for networks,  
communications, and strategy  
jessica.hansen@learningforward.org

**Kristina Harrison**

Designer, *The Learning Professional*  
kristina.harrison@learningforward.org

**Sharron Helmke**

Vice president, professional services  
sharron.helmke@learningforward.org

**Michael Lanham**

COO/CFO  
michael.lanham@learningforward.org

**Tom Manning**

Senior vice president,  
professional services  
tom.manning@learningforward.org

**Machel Mills-Miles**

Vice president, standards  
implementation & outreach  
machel.mills-miles@learningforward.org

**Gail Paul**

Content marketing specialist  
gail.paul@learningforward.org

**Joel Reynolds**

Board administrator,  
senior executive assistant  
joel.reynolds@learningforward.org

**Tim Taylor**

Director of professional services  
operations  
tim.taylor@learningforward.org

**Renee Taylor-Johnson**

Vice president, business services  
renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org

**Joellen Killion**

Senior advisor  
joellen.killion@learningforward.org

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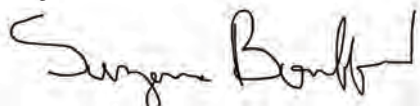
**Linda Chen**

**Mark Elgart**

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<b>15. Extent and nature of circulation</b>		<b>Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months</b>	<b>No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date</b>
a. Total number of copies (net press run)		4595	4107
b. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail)	1 Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	3897	3497
	2 Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		
	3 Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS	116	112
	4 Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)	214	281
c. Total paid distribution [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)]		4227	3890
d. Free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside the mail)	1 Free or nominal rate outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541	575	0
	2 Free or nominal rate in-county copies included on PS Form 3541		
	3 Free or nominal rate copies mailed at other classes through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)		
	4 Free or nominal rate distribution outside the mail (Carriers or other means)	326	200
e. Total free or nominal rate distribution [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]		901	200
f. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		5128	4090
g. Copies not distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (p. #3))		21	21
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		5149	4111
i. Percent paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		82.4%	95.1%
<b>16. Electronic copy circulation</b>		<b>Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months</b>	<b>No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date</b>
a. Paid electronic copies		9365	8703
b. Total paid print copies (line 15c) + paid electronic copies (line 16a)		13,592	12,593
c. Total print distribution (line 15f) + paid electronic copies (line 16a)		14,493	12,793
d. Percent paid (both print and electronic copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100)		93.8%	98.4%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.			
<b>17. Publication of Statement of Ownership</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the December 2022 issue of this publication.			
<b>18. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner.</b> Suzanne Bouffard, publisher, Learning Forward			Date: September 30, 2022
			

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# THROUGH THE LENS

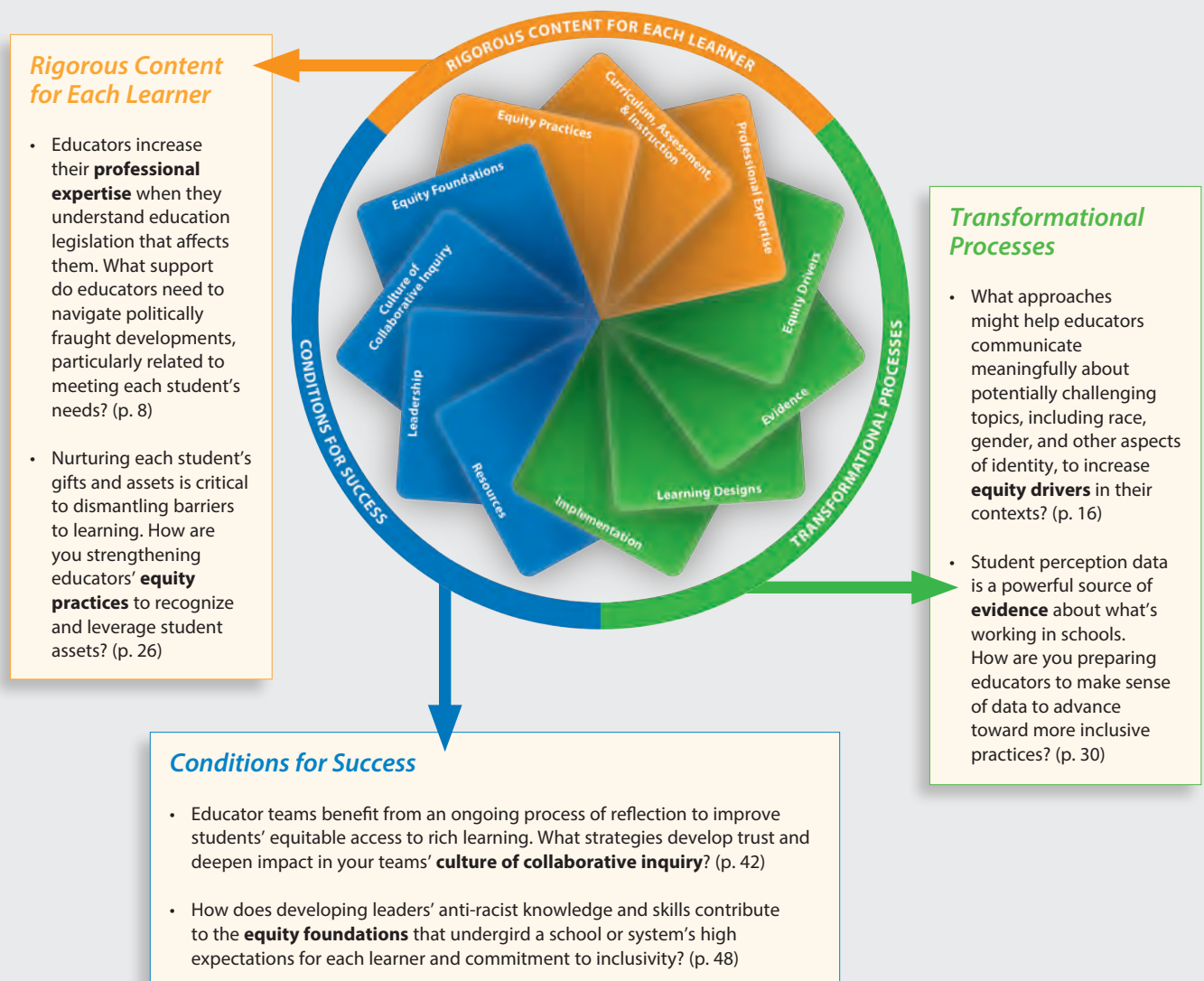
OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

**S**tandards 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 IMPLEMENT STANDARDS TO DISRUPT INEQUITY



Learn more about Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning at [standards.learningforward.org](https://standards.learningforward.org)

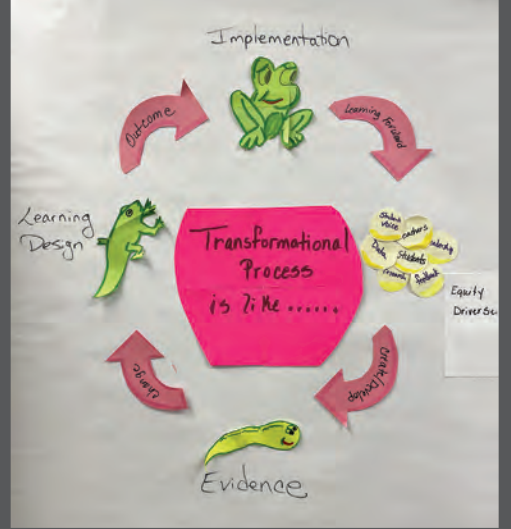
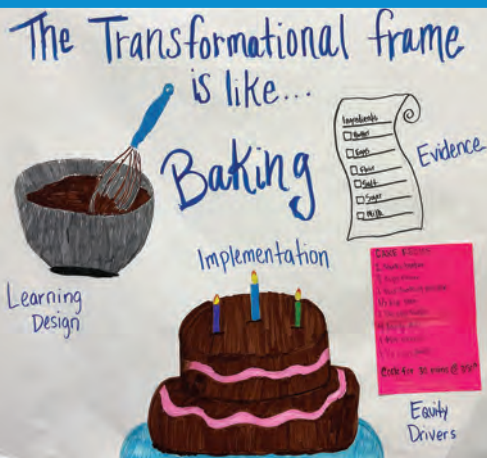
# AT A GLANCE

## Making sense of standards

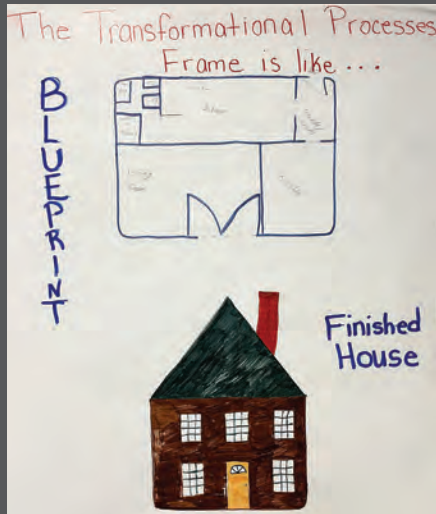
Learning Forward works with educators in a range of contexts as they develop their awareness and understanding of Standards for Professional Learning. During a recent series of sessions in Mississippi, teams across the state engaged in two days of standards exploration (read more on p. 71).

Looks Like	Does Not Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored to each child/student + restorative justice</li> <li>• SEL is incorporated</li> <li>• looking at all civil laws and conventions</li> <li>• student voice</li> <li>• building p/c relationships</li> <li>• diverse resources</li> <li>• self eval of your own biases</li> <li>• use student strengths to drive learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The same for everyone.</li> <li>• Not based on one culture — Materials/resources are one-size fit all.</li> <li>• Quiet student with lecture based predominantly sage on stage</li> <li>• One discipline doesn't fit all</li> </ul>

T-charts encouraged conversation around what standards look like and do not look like.



Participants created visual analogies to express how Standards for Professional Learning lead to improved outcomes.



Educators collaborated to make meaning of their new standards learning.



Educators used visual analogies to find their own pathways to understand complex ideas.





THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

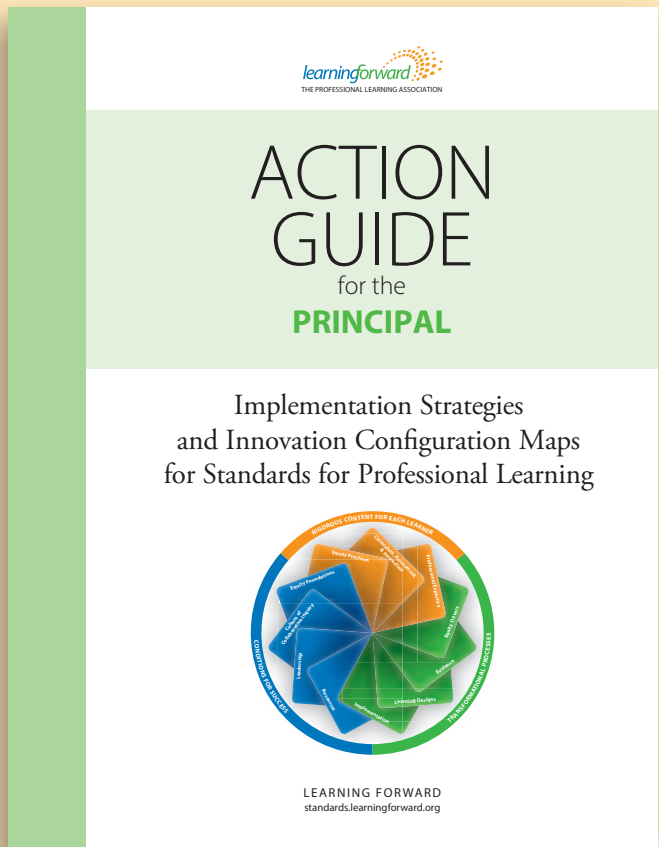
504 S. Locust Street  
Oxford, OH 45056

# New book for principals

*Action Guide for the Principal:  
Implementation Strategies and  
Innovation Configuration Maps for  
Standards for Professional Learning*

Learning Forward’s newest book is a comprehensive resource designed to help school principals implement Standards for Professional Learning in meaningful, effective ways. This role-specific action guide describes the steps principals can take to implement each of the 11 standards and illustrates how to progress from entry-level implementation to ideal implementation.

**Additional roles coming soon:  
System/Central Office, Coaches, and  
External Partners.**



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