



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Peter Carpenter

ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING FUELS HOST COMMITTEE CHAIR

Peter Carpenter is director of organizational development and continuous learning for Harford County Public Schools in Maryland. He is also the host committee chair for the 2023 Learning Forward Annual Conference Dec. 4-7 in Washington, D.C. His previous roles include teacher, elementary curriculum and instruction supervisor, and principal.

What professional learning means to

him: The whole reason I love education is because, at its heart, it's about learning. I love learning. I see myself as a lead learner and developer. I once had a superintendent who said, "If learning's a wave, we always want to stay on the tip." For so many years, that's what I've aspired to do. But now the thing I'm thinking about is how to make the wave. Instead of having to ride someone else's ideas, what about being the organization that makes it happen? In my role, I oversee all the adult learning in the district for teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, clerical workers, and leaders. That includes leadership development and school performance and achievement. Everyone in our district benefits from professional learning, not just educators. The learning we do as adults ultimately translates to learning for kids. That's the critical part.

How he became a professional learning leader: When I transitioned from the classroom to be an assistant principal, I was assigned to a Title I elementary school with a principal new to the school. In two years, we were able to turn the school around from the lowest-performing Title I school to a higher-performing one. That principal saw the strengths I brought to the role in terms of being able to plan, organize, orchestrate, and deliver high-quality professional learning.

How he became involved with Learning Forward: When I moved from school-based leadership into central services leadership, I really started to dive into Learning Forward. I joined the host committee for the 2015 conference and chaired the program team subcommittee. That spurred many partnerships. I got to know Learning Forward Virginia very well. We've been able to collaborate on some things, and, even through COVID-19, we were able to pick each other's brains and support one other. I became president-elect of the local Learning Forward Affiliate in Maryland for two years and was president for two years. Recently, I decided it was time to take advantage of Learning Forward offerings. I applied to the Learning Forward Academy, was accepted, and will partake in that after my role of host committee chair is completed.

Why he encourages learning professionals to attend the Annual Conference: I would say that time is made for what is valued. If you really value learning, not just the learning of students or the people you work with, but your own learning, make the time to come. I guarantee you're going to be different when you walk out — not just for what you've learned, but for the relationships you've gained. That's what is so unique about Learning Forward. The fact that we have meals together and that you can build your network. You can walk up

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Hello!

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conversation could have helped our team be even more strategic about time than we were.

Another prompt in the tool asks users whether they think time allocation is an individual decision or a collaborative one. This can help school teams recognize and reassess their beliefs about collaboration and lead to a systemic approach that promotes collaborative learning time. I know how important that vision and universal commitment is. If our individual teachers or even some of our teams had tried to find time in the school day to collaborate on their own, without the support of us building leaders or the support of the whole staff, it might have happened only occasionally — at best. It took all of us working together to create a building-wide schedule that allowed consistent collaboration among all of our grade-level and subject-area teams.

In addition to reflecting on these prompts in the tool, school and district leaders can learn from the way Standards for Professional Learning recognize the importance of dedicated time for professional learning. The rationale for the Resources standard specifically calls out time as an essential resource:

“Educators have a unique appreciation for time as a critical resource for professional learning.

Sustained, job-embedded learning requires time during the work day as well as on professional learning days during and beyond the school year. Collaborative, team-based professional learning happens ideally during the work week, with consistent, protected times for teams to meet.

“School and system leaders create time for professional learning when they establish master schedules with dedicated blocks of time for learning. They also examine other noninstructional uses of time in the schedule and maximize use of those hours to prioritize learning — for example, through the redesign of faculty and staff meetings” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 68).

The role of dedicated, intentional allocation of time is also embedded in other standards. For example, the Learning Designs standard points out the importance of aligning professional learning to the cadence of the academic year and curricula, with ongoing and sustained support throughout the year. The Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard cannot be met without dedicated time, as it is grounded in the recognition that “achieving long-term goals takes time, persistence, and trusting relationships as well as regular cycles of planning, learning, testing, data collection, and analysis” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 60). And

the Implementation standard notes that applying new learning is an “ongoing process [that] requires educators to adapt procedures, calendars, meeting agendas, staffing arrangements, substitute assignments and other structures” (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 52).

As you read through the rest of this issue, I encourage you to focus on the possibilities of time and ground your work in the assumption that prioritizing professional learning time will enhance your efforts rather than constrain them. Look for examples where school and district leaders stayed committed to their vision of ensuring that teams of teachers and leaders have the time to engage in the kind of professional learning that leads to the development and sustainability of new practices. As you continue to look for and find time for collaborative, job-embedded professional learning, do not become discouraged or give up before meeting all of your goals. Your teachers and your students will thank you for making the time.

REFERENCES

- Killion, J. (2023).** *Establishing time for professional learning.* Learning Forward.
- Learning Forward. (2022).** *Standards for Professional Learning.* Author. ■

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to someone like a Chris Emdin and introduce yourself. Really and truly, it is *the best* professional learning conference I’ve been to. I’ve been to all of them, and this is by far my favorite.

Advice for first-time conference attendees: It’s a lot to take in. I would offer a few things. First, find the things that you’re curious about. Make a list

of questions before you go. Search for sessions that look like they will answer those questions. If you have a goal to become a better coach, or become more equity-minded, or make connections with people who are in your same role, we can do that for you at this conference. Second, take full advantage of the location. There is so much history in the nation’s capital. Go out

and enjoy the monuments or get out on the town. It will be the holidays, so it will be beautifully decorated. The last thing I’d say is to take full advantage of all that the conference has to offer. Go visit the vendors. Go to the meet-and-greets. Go to the bookstore. Don’t just feel like you have to go from session to session. Those are still high-quality investments in yourself. ■