

TOOLS



EVIDENCE INTO **ACTION**

WASHINGTON, DC | *learningforward*
**2023 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
DEC. 3-6, 2023

MAKE THE MOST OF CONFERENCE LEARNING

BY LEARNING FORWARD

At Learning Forward's Annual Conference, educators engage in rich conversations with like-minded colleagues, learn new strategies, and access resources and materials relevant to their role. Participants often experience excitement, hope, and renewed energy or passion. However, a sense of overload can bring on anxiety, frustration, and even a bit of fear. What do you do with all this newly acquired information and energy once the conference is over?

Learning Forward developed a tool kit to support individuals and teams in organizing and making sense of everything learned at a conference — from keynote speakers, session presenters and facilitators, other educators, and vendors. The tool kit includes actionable steps you can take before, during, and after the conference so that you can apply what you've learned to your work. While it was designed for Learning Forward's Annual Conference, the tool kit can



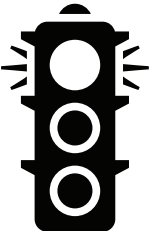
be used for any conference or learning event.

The table on p. 67 shows the steps we recommend before, during, and after the conference. In this issue of *The Learning Professional*, we highlight tools to use before and during the conference. Post-conference tools will be featured in the next issue. The entire tool kit can be downloaded or used online at **conference.learningforward.org/conference-action-toolkit**.

Preconference goal-setting and planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start with a clear purpose and outcomes. Use the Preconference Goal-Setting and Outcomes Planning Template below to focus your thinking. 2. Select sessions to match your goals. Use the Reflection Questions for Session Selection below. 3. Plan how to navigate the conference. For example, Learning Forward’s Annual Conference offers an Overview & First Timers Orientation session on the first morning.
During the conference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Capture your thinking during sessions. Use the Session Note Catcher on p. 68. 5. Collaborate and learn from others. Meet educators from around the world, for example, when you attend lunch. 6. Share ideas. Schedule a time to meet and plan with your team to capture those great new ideas. Connect with colleagues daily or at the end of the conference and use the Conference Debrief Protocol on p. 69.
Post-conference action planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Reflect and plan for next steps, using the tool on p. 70, How Do We Turn Our New Learning Into An Actionable Plan? 8. Commit to action. 9. Measure impact. 10. Make a strategic implementation plan. <p>(Tools for steps 8, 9, and 10 can be found in the December 2023 issue of <i>The Learning Professional</i> or at conference.learningforward.org/conference-action-toolkit.)</p>

PRECONFERENCE GOAL-SETTING AND OUTCOMES PLANNING	
Start with a clear purpose and outcomes:	
Purpose: What do I/we hope to gain from this conference? Why? What is my/our purpose for attending?	
Goal(s): What do I/we hope to achieve when we return?	
Action: How will we ensure we implement learning when I/we return?	
Reflection questions for session selection	
The following stems can be used to assist you in making decisions for session selections mindful of your purpose and outcomes:	
• Given the purpose I/we have for attending this conference, it makes sense that I should attend ... because ...	
• If I attend sessions that address ... I will be able to ...	



SESSION NOTE CATCHER	
Session title:	
 1. What are the big ideas you captured from this session?	
 2. To which of your conference goal(s) do these connect?	
 3. Because of this learning, what do you want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start doing?• Stop doing?• Continue or tweak?	Start:
	Stop:
	Continue/tweak:
4. What do you need to share and with whom?	

CONFERENCE DEBRIEF PROTOCOL

Purpose

Now that the conference is over, take a moment to reflect on your experience of the event. This activity is designed to maximize group learning by sharing and prioritizing ideas learned from a conference. This protocol works best in groups of four.

Time

- 45 minutes (daily debrief, depending on group size); or
- 75-90 minutes (end of conference debrief, depending on group size)

Process

1. Before the debrief session, participants should review responses to questions 2 and 3 of their Session Note Catchers.
2. Identify a facilitator, timekeeper, and note-taker.
3. As a group, review the purpose and goal for attending from your Preconference Planning Sheet. (5 minutes)
4. Individually review notes and materials to look for trends, confirmations, and new ideas or questions. On the Conference Debrief Notes page, select a session or two that stood out to you, and write a one-sentence summary and note the ideas it sparked for you. (5 minutes)
5. In round-robin fashion, each participant shares a brief overview of one session from the Conference Debrief Notes page, including the session title, a summary, the essential learnings, and the relationship to the group goal. (2-3 minutes each round)
6. Other participants ask clarifying questions, identify new practices, or brainstorm changes to existing practices in your school or system. (2-3 minutes each round)
7. After everyone has shared, review and revise group goals if necessary.
8. Identify and prioritize the top ideas to move forward. (5 minutes) Note: Prioritizing can be done for each day or once at the end of the conference.
9. Once the team debriefs the entire conference, schedule time to begin the reflection and After Conference Action Plan Template (which will appear in the December 2023 issue of *The Learning Professional*).

CONFERENCE DEBRIEF NOTES	
Our original purpose/goal: Write goal here.	
Session summaries (Connection to goals and impact to professional learning)	Ideas sparked (Connection to goals and impact to professional learning)
Revised goal (if any): Has our goal changed based on our new learning?	
Prioritized top ideas	1. 2.

HOW DO WE TURN NEW LEARNING INTO AN ACTIONABLE PLAN?

Before determining actionable steps, reflect on your new learning from this conference and its connection to your school, district, or organization (e.g., professional learning, policy, structures, culture, etc.).

Consider how your responses to the following questions will influence how you move forward as a result of the new learning acquired at this conference:

- **To what extent do our professional learning practices reflect the research on adult learning?**
How might this new learning/resource support this work?

- **How does our staff view professional learning?**
In what way(s) will this new learning/resource influence this?
Who will benefit from this? Why?
Will staff understand the need for this? If necessary, how will we develop this understanding?

- **To what extent are our professional learning practices results-oriented?**
How might this new learning/resource move us in this direction? In what way(s) does this represent changes in practice that are necessary to achieve desired results?
How might new learning and resources sustain and/or strengthen the work we are currently doing?

- **Is our professional learning appropriately differentiated?**
In what way(s) might this new learning/resource allow for appropriate differentiation for professional learning?

- **To what extent do our policies, structures, and culture reflect our beliefs about professional learning?**
In what way(s) does this new learning/resource reflect or influence our beliefs?