



Encouraging all educators' career development can be an important part of keeping talented educators in the profession for the long term.

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HERE WE GO

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NEW ROLES, NEW CHALLENGES: LEARNING HELPS US THRIVE

I always enjoy asking people about the paths that have led them to their current jobs. More often than not, those paths have included some unexpected twists and turns. (My own path is no exception.) Even people who are working in the professions they dreamed about as children describe surprises — about the kinds of projects they've taken on, the roles they've assumed, or how the nature of their work has changed over time. Those surprises are often the best parts of our stories because they keep us growing.

Learning is one of the main reasons so many of us have found ourselves in positions we didn't expect. We're always learning about our own interests and needs, how our skills fit into the world, and new opportunities and jobs that didn't exist when we started out.

Fortunately, learning doesn't just inspire us to take on new challenges, it helps us succeed in those challenges. No matter how much preparation and experience we have, we are all continually learning on the job. We learn from those around us, the expectations of the situation, and the evolving demands and opportunities of the work, often implicitly or even subconsciously.

High-quality professional learning provides the structure to make that learning intentional and even more useful. Professional learning gives us the time to reflect and practice, learn about and apply research, and ask questions of veteran colleagues with track records of success. It helps us grow not only in a professional capacity, but as professional people.

This issue of *The Learning Professional* shows how professional learning can lead us to new roles and challenges, help us thrive in those roles, and even open up new career paths supporting other educators' learning. The articles show diverse ways districts, schools, and organizations are supporting career growth in ways that benefit not just staff but, ultimately, students.

A district-university partnership in Chicago (p. 32) and a university graduate program (p. 28) are tapping into the power of teacher leadership, recognizing that some teachers want to grow and do more without leaving the classroom teaching they love. A district leader in Minnesota is taking inspiration from research on the unique needs of midcareer teachers to design tailored professional learning (p. 24).

A guidebook shows how to strengthen the pathway from assistant principal to principal, drawing on years of research funded by The Wallace Foundation (p. 46). And a Maryland district has committed to professional learning for all staff, including administrative, operational, and noninstructional staff (p. 41).

Helping each other continue growing as professionals isn't simply a nice staff perk. It matters for student success. Students benefit from consistent relationships with experienced educators (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). But educator attrition and burnout have been at concerning levels for years (Kurtz, 2022; NCES, 2022). Encouraging all educators' career development can be an important part of changing that trend and keeping talented educators in the profession for the long term. When educators keep learning, students keep learning.

REFERENCES

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