

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



VOICES FROM:

The Netherlands p. 10

Northern Ireland p. 36

Palau p. 40

Ghana p. 30

India p. 45

Canada pp. 47, 49

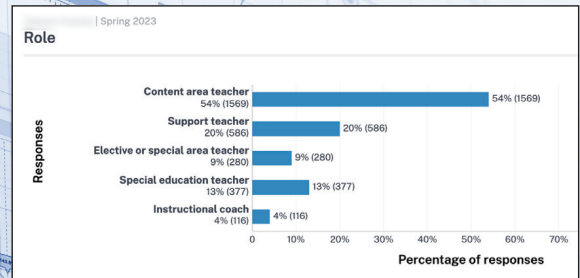
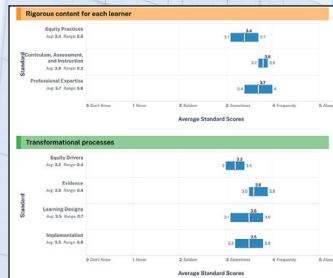
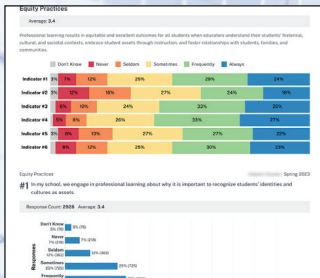
Australia p. 26

[NEW] Standards Assessment Inventory

Learning Forward's Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) is a valid and reliable survey administered to instructional staff that measures alignment of school and system practices to the Standards for Professional Learning.

The SAI provides crucial data on professional learning in your schools to help you identify needs, maximize resources, and focus on areas of greatest priority to improve teaching and students' success.

Survey responses from your instructional staff reveal the state of high-quality learning in your school, district, or system.



THE STANDARDS ASSESSMENT INVENTORY:

- Provides data on teachers' perceptions of the professional learning they experience in their schools.
- Reveals the degree of success or challenges systems face with professional learning practices and implementation in the system as a whole and in individual schools.
- Provides data on the quality of professional learning as defined by the Standards for Professional Learning, a system's alignment of professional learning to the standards, and the relationship of the standards to improvements in educator effectiveness and student achievement.
- Elicits extensive collegial conversations among teachers and administrators about the qualities of professional learning that produce results for students.
- Connects the Standards for Professional Learning (vision) with educator Action Guides, Innovation Configuration maps, and other planning and implementation tools.
- Helps schools focus on particular actions that contribute to higher-quality professional learning as guided by the questions on the inventory.

SAI PRICING:

- One school \$500
- Systems with fewer than 15 \$750 plus \$70 per school participating schools
- Systems with more than 15 \$1,000 plus \$70 per school participating schools
- State/provinces with 30% of all schools \$60 per school participating
- States/provinces with less than 30% \$1,000 plus \$70 per school of all schools participating
- Regional service centers..... \$1,000 plus \$70 per school

Projects that do not fit into the categories above will be priced on an individual basis. Price includes two administrations of the survey in one school year, detailed district and school reports available on the SAI website, additional resources and support materials, and a 45-minute data analysis consultation with Learning Forward.

For more information on the SAI, contact **Tom Manning**, senior vice president, professional services, Learning Forward, at tom.manning@learningforward.org.



VOICES 7

5 **HERE WE GO**

By Suzanne Bouffard

Today's challenges require global collaboration and innovation.

Educators can learn a lot from each other across geographical boundaries and cultures.



8 **CALL TO ACTION**

Inspiration comes from all across the globe.

By Frederick Brown

Systems around the world offer fresh perspectives on educational challenges and dreams.

10 **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

Team learning is built into Netherlands school's structure.

By Learning Forward

Sarah Grace explains how the International School of Amsterdam enhances teaching and learning through a culture of inquiry.



12 **FOCUS ON PRINCIPALS**

With action research, improvement is in our own hands.

By Ayesha Farag

Action research can be a valuable strategy for district leaders, principals, and teachers to gain insight into their practice.



14 **LEADERSHIP TEAMS**

Communication skills keep teams on track.

By Jody Spiro and Lucas Held

Reinforce your communication skills to ensure team coherence and productivity.

16 **CHANGEMAKERS**

Jay Schroder, implementation coach, Southern Oregon Regional Educator Network.

Schroder's nomination cites the way he inspires and supports educators to create positive school environments.

RESEARCH 17



18 **RESEARCH REVIEW**

By Elizabeth Foster

OECD report underscores global need for teacher learning.

A review of educational indicators around the world points to some common strengths and challenges, including a widespread need for more professional learning.

20 **DATA POINTS**

Keeping up with hot topics.

FOCUS 21

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES



22 Learning from education systems around the world: Q&A with Anthony Mackay.
By Suzanne Bouffard
Transforming education systems to meet today’s challenges means recognizing that we are all “in the learning business together, as humans.”



26 Australian studies link teacher well-being to student outcomes.
By Rebecca J. Collie
Strategies for building positive school and classroom climates can benefit both teachers and students.

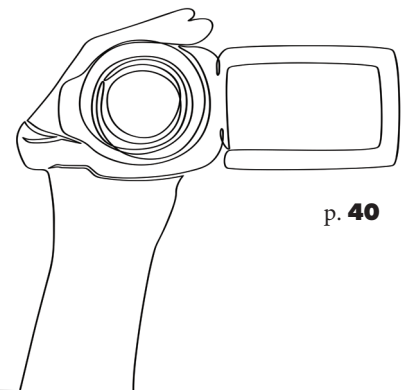
30 Master Fellows Program spreads learning across Ghana.
By Kwabena Amporful, Julius Agbeko, Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, Louisa Koomson, Israel Titi Ofei, Susan O’Hara, and Robert Pritchard
Teacher leaders facilitate peer learning through the Master Fellows Program, bringing continuous improvement to schools in Ghana.



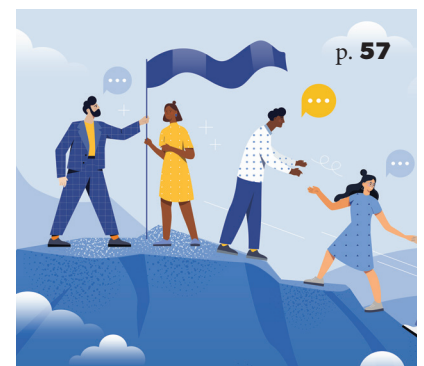
36 Lessons in navigating conflict from Northern Ireland.
By Emily Byers-Ferrian and Shannon Keeny
Building trust is a key ingredient in managing conflict in schools and beyond, as participants in an international seminar learned.



40 Video coaching advances teacher practice in Palau.
By Ida Rekoil Kilcullen and Lucia Tabelual
Video helps educators connect in culturally responsive ways across geographic distances.



44 Inside Learning Forward’s global community.
Leaders of Learning Forward Affiliates in British Columbia, Ontario, and India share highlights from their work and the role of standards-aligned professional learning in their local contexts.



IDEAS 51

52 Literacy success story highlights the power of professional learning.

By *Jefna M. Cohen*

A principal's unwavering focus and Learning Forward Academy experience led to 90% reading proficiency in her school.

57 Missouri students benefit from principals' leadership development.

By *Paul Katnik*

With targeted leadership support, Missouri principals are staying in their jobs longer and having a positive impact on student achievement.

p. 64



TOOLS 63

64 Resilient educators cultivate positive mindsets.

By *Lindsay Prendergast and Piper Lee*

Learning Forward Book Club authors offer strategies to foster a mindset for thriving in challenging times.

UPDATES 67

p. 68



68 The latest from Learning Forward.

- Summer online courses
- 2024 scholarship and grant winners
- Conference proposal tips
- Learning Forward Foundation annual report
- Findings from latest Title II report
- Summer reading recommendations

72 THROUGH THE LENS

of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

73 AT A GLANCE

Learning Forward's global reach.



p. 73

ISAY

Yen Ching Chua-Lim

Deputy director-general of education, Singapore



“When we talk about professional learning, we can never say we have arrived. ... The moment we say we have arrived, that will cause our downfall.”

— Source: **Bryant, J., Child, F., Demirdag, E., Dorn, E., Hall, S., Jayaram, K., Krishnan, C., Lim, C., Liss, E., Onabanjo, K., Panier, F., Rebolledo, J., Sarakatsannis, J., Scott, D., Tschupp, R., Ungur, S., & Vigin, P. (2024).** *Spark & sustain: How all the world's school systems can improve learning at scale.* McKinsey & Company.

Over the last decade, progress in most world school systems has flattened or declined. Singapore is an exception, a top-performing system that continues to innovate and turn improvements into action at scale.

As Bryant and colleagues write, “Singapore’s system is unique among top PISA scorers in that it continues to grow while others have stagnated.”

Learn more and find the report at mck.co/3wGb6no.

Instructional Coaches Academy

Implementation of district and campus improvement initiatives requires teachers make changes in their long-established classroom practices. Ensure your teachers receive the just-in-time, differentiated support they need to make meaningful and sustained changes in their practice by investing in the quality of instructional coaching they receive.

Learning Forward's Coaches Academy helps coaches:

- Identify unfinished learning and accelerate teachers' response;
- Capitalize on student strengths to improve initial instruction;
- Guide collaborative inquiry to foster data-informed improvement; and
- Expand the use of effective teaching practice to reach all students.

The quality of instructional coaching on your campus is the quality of implementation support your teachers are receiving. High expectations for change require strong, individualized support for making it happen. Ensure your coaches are prepared for fostering lasting change.

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**Empower
your coaches
to accelerate
teacher growth
and student
learning.**



Building relationships



Presenting and facilitating



Leading professional learning



Providing effective feedback



Coaching individuals and teams



Selecting learning designs

For more information, contact Sharron Helmke, senior vice president, professional services, at sharron.helmke@learningforward.org



HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

Working together across borders, we can consider elements that are common to successful systems and how they might be expanded or adapted to other contexts.

Suzanne Bouffard (suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org) is editor-in-chief of *The Learning Professional*.

TODAY'S CHALLENGES REQUIRE GLOBAL COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Learning Forward is proud to be an international community and to work with *The Learning Professional* authors and readers from around the world. In this issue, we celebrate that and focus on how we can learn from each other across geographical boundaries and cultures.

Often in education, we focus on which nations are on top and whether our students are at a competitive advantage or disadvantage, which can sometimes drive education policy. But in addition to learning from each other, we have a lot to learn *with* each other. Working together across borders, we can consider elements that are common to successful systems and how they might be expanded or adapted to other contexts.

The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) regularly reviews data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and looks for such common elements. They have identified four broad categories: effective teachers and principals, a rigorous and adaptive learning system, an equitable foundation of support, and coherent and aligned governance (NCEE, 2024). Educator learning and growth are part of or supported by all of these categories, as we illustrated in a recent issue (Learning Forward, 2023).

Top performers prioritize high-quality learning that aligns with the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2022). For example, NCEE identified “fostering teacher collaboration” as one of five priorities for building future-ready education systems. Consistent with the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard, they reported that, “To help teachers deepen their expertise, global leaders invest in time, space, funding, and support for reciprocal peer-to-peer learning and collaborative, innovative practice ... (which) means rethinking time and scheduling, reimagining the geography of classrooms, practicing flexibility with student groupings and class sizes, and using technology” (NCEE, 2023).

This issue of *The Learning Professional* builds on these themes of successful common elements to explore *how* systems are investing in teachers’ and leaders’ growth. We examine a wide range of promising efforts in places as geographically distant as Palau, Canada, Ghana, and India. As international education expert Anthony Mackay points out in the Q&A on p. 22, we have no time to waste. The challenges facing our schools and our world require global collaboration and innovation.

Fortunately, there are more ways to learn from each other, thanks to technology, international convenings, and cross-cutting resources. At Learning Forward, we are inspired by teams of educators from Singapore at our Annual Conference and educators from Qatar and Ecuador who participate in our webinars. We develop our own knowledge by learning about system efforts to apply the standards in Nigeria and Bermuda. We grow by collaborating with Learning Forward Affiliates in Canada and India.

Wherever you live and work, we encourage you to expand your perspective and invite you to share your insights with us. By learning together, we can discover that we have more in common than we realize, including answers to some of today’s toughest challenges.

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INSPIRE. EXPRESS. ADVOCATE.

VOICES



PUTTING ASIDE DIFFERENCES TO LEARN TOGETHER

The Equity Drivers standard of the Standards for Professional Learning “pushes us to move beyond our own lived experiences, assumptions, and biases to engage meaningfully with diverse stakeholders who have different perspectives,” writes Learning Forward’s CEO Frederick Brown. Looking at examples of collaboration around the world, Brown points out that growth takes “enormous commitment to learning ... for all the adults involved to put aside their differences to achieve their vision” (p. 8).



No matter our differences, we all want better opportunities for our students.

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

CALL TO ACTION

Frederick Brown

INSPIRATION COMES FROM ALL ACROSS THE GLOBE

I recently participated in a gathering of the Global Education Leaders Partnership in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This international network of education system leaders, institutions, and capacity-building organizations is focused on transforming education to prepare every learner to thrive in the 21st century. During the meeting, we looked beyond schools and districts as the centers of learning to consider what it would mean to create educational ecosystems that situate learning responsibilities across communities, regions, and countries.

Participants shared examples from Catalonia, England, Finland, Colombia, Peru, and the United States. The ideas ranged widely, but they all had big goals. The leaders who shared these innovations made clear that it will take more time and work to achieve their full vision, but it was impressive to hear what they have already accomplished.

As I listened and reflected, it didn't take long for my mind to focus on the professional learning implications of expanding educational ecosystems. For example, with the DigiOne platform in Finland, learning providers from across the country are contributing curricula, instructional materials, and other learning resources that can be used by traditional educators as well as others interested in creating innovative learning environments for students.

As Learning Forward has articulated in the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard of the Standards for Professional Learning, access to vetted, high-quality instructional materials and resources is critical, and so is job-embedded professional learning to use those materials. A platform like DigiOne can create that kind of access at a broad scale so educators throughout the country can create learning environments that benefit students.

In Columbia, the TAAP Workshop for Art and Peacebuilding is an ecosystem approach targeting the problem of local and regional violence, which impacts young people's educational and life outcomes. Young people served by this ecosystem had a history of being recruited into armed groups, organized crime, and other serious illegal activities. Educators and community members often lacked the tools and resources to support their students' learning and well-being amidst this chaos. TAAP is a multifaceted initiative to change the situation by supporting both children and adults — for example, by developing skills and strategies to address conflict.

TAAP facilitates professional learning for teachers and other members of the ecosystem to empower them to be change makers and peace builders. Leaders described learning how to talk with both gang and community leaders to work toward a better future. I thought about their courage in the context of the Equity Drivers standard. That standard pushes us to move beyond our own lived experiences, assumptions, and biases to engage meaningfully with diverse stakeholders who have different perspectives. TAAP leaders are doing just that, and it takes enormous commitment to learning and for all the adults involved to put aside their differences to achieve their vision.

As I listened to individuals from across the globe reflect on these and other examples, I was struck by how similar educational challenges and dreams are around the world. No matter our differences, we all want better opportunities for our students.

As you read this issue of *The Learning Professional*, I encourage you to look beyond the ways the initiatives' contexts are different from your own. A village in Colombia or the nation of Finland may seem very different from your setting, but their work offers lessons for us all. I invite you to use the Standards for Professional Learning to organize your thoughts about the connections. I know that many of the authors in this issue are eager to hear from you and learn together. I encourage you to reach out, ask questions, and deepen your understanding. ■



Customized learning for campus leaders

Engage campus leaders in professional learning designed to foster impact

WHAT WE DO. Customize a learning plan based on identified priorities delivered on your schedule.

Step into instructional leadership that makes a difference for teachers and students. We can help you succeed.

- Create the conditions and systems for professional learning that results in improved educator practice and student results;
- Explore personal beliefs and leading for equity for all students;
- Use change processes to accomplish the goals of the school;
- Dive into critical issues of school culture, assets, and opportunities, and their impact on establishing a clear vision and collective responsibility for learning in the school;
- Develop a Theory of Change, tied to the Cycle of Continuous Improvement, that drives a collective commitment;
- Support the alignment of curriculum, assessment, instructional materials, and professional learning;
- Maximize resources to better support educator and student learning;
- Implement shared leadership with cohesion;
- Coach school, team, and individual improvement.

For more information, contact Sharron Helmke, senior vice president, professional services, at sharron.helmke@learningforward.org. | services.learningforward.org



Increasing instructional effectiveness



Creating a culture of collective responsibility



Developing and supporting coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment



Developing coaching and mentoring skills



Developing skills to lead high-achieving professional learning communities



Observing lessons and providing feedback to increase teaching effectiveness



When you can hear a teacher of 12th graders talk about what they've learned from listening to a kindergarten teacher, it's really powerful.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Sarah Grace, International School of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

TEAM LEARNING IS BUILT INTO NETHERLANDS SCHOOL'S STRUCTURE

Sarah Grace has served as the International School of Amsterdam's associate director for teaching and learning and is currently head of safeguarding and wellbeing. The school is the first in the world to be authorized to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, and Diploma curriculum from preschool to grade 12. The school is known for attracting and retaining



Teachers at the International School of Amsterdam engage in professional learning through action research. Photo by Sarah Grace

talented faculty from around the world, in part due to its professional learning hub, the Centre for Development, Learning and Technology, which hosts hands-on learning opportunities for educators across Europe and beyond. The center provides a forum for educators to network and share ideas with field experts and partners, such as Harvard's Project Zero.

How have you seen professional learning enhance teaching and learning at your school?

Ongoing professional learning is part of our mission, and it's often one of the reasons faculty or administrators come to our school and why they stay. Faculty often apply to our school after coming to do a training with us. I've been at the school for 25 years now, so I'm an example of somebody who has been there a long time.

Inquiry is an important part of our professional learning. For example, we've been using thinking routines with our students for many years. A former director reflected on how we were developing a culture of thinking for our students and wondered what would that look like for our faculty. This led to a professional action research initiative called the Thought-full Schools Project, which is now embedded in the school. Teachers who are already tenured and have been through the formal teacher evaluation cycle their first three years can choose to do their own action research, arising from something with the students in their classroom.

This year, using the IB's program development inquiry cycle, every faculty member was looking at how to be explicit about the approaches to learning in their own practice. Each teacher chose a thinking routine to implement to make a targeted learning skill more explicit for students. They had to choose one of the five skills areas in the IB programs: thinking, communication, social, research, or self-management. Then they had to gather evidence of the impact of the use of the routine.

On our last professional learning day, faculty met in learning trios across the IB programs to share what they learned from their work this year. We deliberately mixed them up across the lower, middle, and high schools to exchange the impact of the routines on their students. This helped them understand how the curriculum spirals, and they gained insight into what's happening throughout the school. They loved learning from each other. When you can hear a

teacher of 12th graders talk about what they've learned from listening to a kindergarten teacher, it's really powerful.

How does your school tailor professional learning for educators' needs?

We have a dedicated budget that provides professional learning in the IB programs, initiatives, and goals laid out in the school's strategic plan. But we also think about every person's own development, as they're at different stages in their careers. In addition, there is a personal professional development allowance and, as professional learning is not just for faculty, every staff member receives this. This allows for equity in access to ongoing personal learning and provides agency for staff in seeking experiences that help them at that point in their career. For example, a member of the admissions department might elect to take some professional learning in marketing, and someone from communications might want to learn about improving parent communication.

Team learning is built into the school's structure. We have grade-level teams in the lower school and departments based around the disciplines in the middle and high school. The teams work on a group goal that supports the school's strategic plan, and they have their own team goals each year. These might arise out of their practice. This can be something that they've already uncovered the previous year or from reviewing unit assessments. For example, in the lower school, a goal may be developed following the reading assessments in a grade level. If teachers see a pattern across the grade, there might be something they need to change in the way that they're teaching reading.

We have a relatively new initiative

of peer coaching, where some of our teachers have participated in additional learning so they can then give more one-on-one support or provide short training experiences. For example, some peer coaches led a well-received session for staff on resilience. Another teacher is piloting a peer-on-peer feedback initiative with some colleagues as an alternative to formal teacher evaluation.

Why do you value Learning Forward membership, and what resources are particularly useful to you?

I first learned about Learning Forward during COVID-19, when I took an online course in which Learning Forward was listed as a resource. Then I took a couple of webinars — one was a conversation with Angela Ward, others included how to learn from the pandemic and virtual leading and learning in unique contexts.

In November 2022, I signed up for one of the courses on the new Standards for Professional Learning with our adult learning coordinator. We really liked the research-based approach and the way that the equity lens was coming through in the new standards. We enjoyed the course, even though it was starting at 9 o'clock at night for us. We felt so lucky to have vibrant professional conversations in breakout sessions and learn from other people who were working in very different contexts to ourselves.

I was impressed, so I joined as a comprehensive member to have more access to the resources. Some of the books that I receive are really helpful. In particular, *Street Data* (Corwin, 2021). We even plan to bring co-author Shane Safir to our school next year as a result. *Assessing Impact* (Corwin & Learning Forward, 2017) was another, and, most recently, *The*

Age of Identity (Corwin, 2023) — in an international school, we are very conscious about culture and identity, so that's really useful. We've been doing a lot of work with gender identity in particular and are thinking about intersectionality. A lot of our students are either global nomads who have never lived in the country of their nationality or have dual nationalities.

With *The Learning Professional* magazine, I like reading about what's happening in other places and the research focus. The recent section on wellness links well with my safeguarding work in terms of wellness strategies that we need to put in place.

How are you developing your school's well-being strategy?

I'm working on developing the school's well-being strategy, as well as looking at how can we improve workplace culture, especially in terms of addressing school-based stress. We're a high-achieving school, and that comes with high expectations as well.

We've been doing surveys of our staff and looking at our data, including psychosocial aspects of employee health and well-being. As a leadership team, we are also looking carefully at other data, such as absenteeism rates. For instance, if we've got more people on long-term absence, we're trying to determine if it's work-related. If so, how can we turn that around? And what other things do we need to be doing as a school?

If you're attending to the problems and the issues all the time, it's important to remember to celebrate the achievements and thank people. I think sometimes we don't do that well enough, that appreciation piece. If you take care of your staff, they're going to be more engaged, and they're going to take care of the students. That's a no-brainer, really. ■



This research-oriented approach promotes experimenting, learning, risk-taking, and a willingness to think differently in support of improved practice and student outcomes.

Ayesha Farag
(faraga@newton.k12.ma.us)
is assistant superintendent for elementary education in Newton Public Schools in Massachusetts, a Learning Forward Foundation board ambassador, and a graduate of the Learning Forward Academy Class of 2021.

FOCUS ON PRINCIPALS

Ayesha Farag

WITH ACTION RESEARCH, IMPROVEMENT IS IN OUR OWN HANDS

Fostering a culture of inquiry and supporting educators' continuous learning and growth is essential for improving student outcomes. Action research, in which educators investigate their own practice, reflect on their impact, and make informed decisions to enhance student learning, can be a valuable strategy for district leaders, principals, and teachers. Empowering educators to identify areas of need within their context, engage in professional learning, and experiment with and apply new practices and approaches can be a powerful way to promote an environment of curiosity, self-reflection, and continuous improvement in support of improved student outcomes.

Action research is a structured approach to engaging leaders and teachers in the study of their practice and its impact within the context of specific dilemmas or problems of practice. This process involves several key elements: identifying an area of focus, developing guiding questions, and engaging in iterative cycles of inquiry relative to the identified dilemma or problem of practice. This research-oriented approach promotes experimentation, learning, risk-taking, and a willingness to think differently in support of improved practice and student outcomes. Educators have a critical responsibility to assess and evaluate the impact of their decisions on student learning and take responsibility for ensuring the growth and well-being of all students (Hattie, 2023). Action research can be a powerful strategy for studying educators' own practice and understanding and demonstrating that impact.



EXAMPLES

In my roles as a principal and district leader, I've used an action research approach to improve my own knowledge and skills and supported teachers and school leaders to do so as well, typically as part of annual goal-setting processes.

For example, when I was a principal, 2nd-grade teachers designed inquiry cycles about how to support students to use comprehension strategies to deepen understanding of fictional and informational texts. They engaged in professional learning about the development of reading comprehension, learned how to collect and analyze data about essential elements of that developmental process, and used the data to plan and implement instruction. Their end-of-year reflections detailed the steps they took to learn and improve their instruction as well as analysis and insights about how student learning changed in response.

In my current role as a principal supervisor, I have been working with principals this year to conduct case study action research related to a key district goal: ensuring all students engage in grade-level work that is culturally relevant, real-world connected, interactive, and guided by high expectations. In response to data that demonstrates persistent disparities in academic and social and emotional outcomes for students from historically underserved populations in our district, principals' inquiry is structured around a guiding question focused on specific students:

How can I employ deliberate processes to learn more about this identified student to better understand their strengths and needs and support their teachers to provide culturally responsive instruction that results in improved learning outcomes?

The inquiry is grounded in the following theory of action:

IF I focus on the strengths, challenges, and learning needs of a specific student from a community typically underserved in our school district ...

THEN I will be able to use those insights to identify and coach for specific changes in practice ...

WHICH WILL help teachers of these students employ effective strategies for learning about and responding to their student's needs ...

THAT WILL support the student to meet their identified learning outcomes ...

AND provide me with insights and practices I can expand on in my work with teachers to build our capacity as culturally responsive educators able to support the needs of all learners.

As we approach the end of the school year, principals will reflect on their learning, insights, outcomes, and next steps. Some have already shared feedback about the power of this learning. For example, principal Mark Chitty of Franklin Elementary School in Newton, Massachusetts, said, "Focusing on a specific student is a meaningful way of studying the impact of my work as a principal and how I can facilitate shifts in practice that improve students' outcomes and experiences at school."

He went on to explain how this approach is a shift from typical practices: "Too often, we look at student achievement data in the aggregate without stopping to notice whom we are not yet serving well. We will become the school we are meant

to be when we look at who is not yet experiencing academic growth and social and emotional connectedness and create a culture of experimentation to find how to reach these students and their families."

He says that action research "supported our school team to think more deeply about our focus students' school experiences, consider which instructional practices would reach them and benefit everyone else in the class, and make shifts in practice that are responsive to their needs."

Angie Downing, a 4th-grade teacher at Franklin Elementary School, also believes this approach is beneficial. "I am on a journey to foster a sense of belonging within my classroom that will nurture the potential of all of my students. Through affirming conversations and the intentional creation of trust with one student and her family, a positive relationship is being cultivated. Although my focus is on one student, this process causes a mindset shift that is forging a path toward inclusivity and empowerment for every student ensuring all voices are honored and valued."

Explaining how action research makes that possible, she said, "Enacting an action plan and analyzing the data collected directly from my students' experiences has led to a broader perspective on student success beyond [skills] proficiency, embracing diverse forms of achievement and progress."

As principals examine their work and learning this year, I will be reflecting on my own inquiry cycle as well, which is focused on the support I provided to principals in enhancing their instructional leadership practices. Examining principals' insights, feedback, progress indicators, and other relevant data is essential for me to understand and build on what is effective and identify areas for

continued growth in my own work so I can provide support responsive to their needs.

SUPPORTING AN ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH

The following questions can be helpful for launching action research or other forms of inquiry:

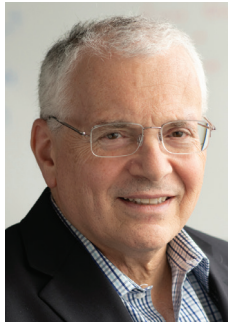
- What's your dilemma? What do you want to know more about or study?
- What data, experiences, or observations have brought you to this focus?
- What do you expect to gain from this inquiry? Who stands to benefit? How will it improve your practice and impact your students?
- What action will you take to launch your inquiry?
- How will you build in periodic reflection and assessment of your inquiry and learning?
- How will you hold yourself accountable for maintaining your focus, evaluating your learning and progress, and identifying next steps?
- How and with whom will you share your insights, impact, and next steps?

These questions can help educators at all levels navigate a process of inquiry to address the complex challenges of our work in education. They can also foster educational environments that encourage the curiosity, experimentation, and positive risk-taking that facilitate continuous improvement (Saphier & King, 1985) and meet students' needs.

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Strong communication skills are especially important today because stress and political polarization are high.

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LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Jody Spiro and Lucas Held

COMMUNICATION SKILLS KEEP TEAMS ON TRACK

Good communication skills are essential for leadership teams to function well and meet their goals. Communication is fundamental to all aspects of teams' work, including the steps of getting off the ground and establishing early wins, which we have written about in previous columns in this series (Spiro & Fisher, 2024; Spiro & Reyes-Guerra, 2024).

Strong communication skills are especially important today because stress and political polarization are high (National SAM Innovation Project, 2024). These factors can test and undermine relationship skills and therefore compromise team coherence and productivity. Under these circumstances, it can be helpful to reinforce and extend communication skills, even for people who consider themselves to be good communicators. Here are four ways to do that in the context of leadership teams.



Establish agreed-upon ground rules and carry them out.

The best team processes have explicit ground rules from the beginning. These can either be negotiated or proposed by the team leader. Some effective ground rules are that team members should: address the subject at hand rather than digressing to extraneous topics; only contribute comments that are appropriate for the whole team; say nothing personal about any given team member; use data to support arguments when possible; and be constructive and propose solutions rather than criticisms.

The team leader, or a designee, should enforce these ground rules. Eventually they will become part of the team's culture.

Commit to understanding what team members are saying.

Communication involves not only what you say and how you say it, but also how actively you listen and try to understand what others are saying. Most people are so interested in what they want to say that they ignore how they are heard.

One strategy to foster active listening is to ask good questions — questions that clarify what the other person is saying, rather than challenge or assume what they are going to say. Especially during stressful times, this can help us avoid the tendency to simplify and bear down on our own views.

It is also helpful to understand communications styles. People have different communication styles, and this can be helpful for teams because it provides checks and balances. But it is important to be aware of our own and others' communication styles because they influence how we each say and hear things.

There are many ways of thinking about communications styles. For example, several frameworks based on the work of Carl Jung (such as Mok, 1975) analyze styles that emphasize generating ideas, applying logic, delving into feelings, or pragmatically getting things done. Some people have a dominant style, while others have various combinations. Of course, a good team needs all perspectives, and these communication styles can be complementary. For example, the idea person often complements the pragmatic person, with one wanting to pursue all available ideas while the other stops at the first viable alternative.

When you are under stress, your style may change. We need to be aware of this. Team members might look like the same people but may act quite differently. The person who normally is kind and considerate of others' feelings becomes someone who is more concerned with meeting deadlines, for example.

We can use knowledge about our own and others' communication styles to think about not only what we're hearing but how others may be hearing us. A good exercise is to think about and fill in this sentence: "When I say X, others hear Y." For example, if I am trying to communicate to the team the importance of meeting deadlines, I may say, "Let's complete this task by May 25." Others may hear, "She is trying to control us." By recognizing this, the request might be rephrased as a question for group input such as: "What is a realistic deadline for getting this done?" or "Let's agree on a realistic deadline for getting this done."

Document discussions to make sure everyone has the same understanding.

We can leave a meeting believing everyone is on the same page when, in fact, everyone walked away with a different message. It is not uncommon for different people to hear the same words or phrases differently, even when it might seem like a simple statement. A famous example of this comes from *Brown v. Board of Education*, where the Supreme Court used the phrase "all deliberate speed" to eliminate separate but equal schooling. This crucial goal was deterred because some school systems emphasized "speed," while opponents focused on "deliberate," and thereby delayed implementation for decades.

One solution is to write down the key points of agreement, such as action steps, during the meeting. Looking at the language together helps people expose disagreements and clarify what they really mean, thus enabling genuine understanding. Another

helpful strategy is to send out a summary of decisions after the meeting. Ask team members for comments and revisions, then resend the document with those comments reflected.

Look for common ground while acknowledging differences.

Many of us emphasize team members' shared perspectives on what is important to address and why. These common values often drive the team forward as they are underlying motivators of members' behaviors and can be used to spark unity. However, it is equally important to know where team members' values diverge because conflicts may arise, even when some values are widely held — some members' values might privilege other values more highly.

Values are motivators of behavior and can be deeply ingrained and not always obvious. Surfacing common values (like collaboration or student achievement) can help bring the team together when differences emerge. Similarly, it is good to know if competition is a widely held value, for example, in which case, such strategies might be effective for this team.

Readers might find useful the values exercise in *High-Payoff Strategies* (Spiro, 2015, pp. 45-58). This is a brief simulation that will both engage the team and provide data on the individual values of team members. When aggregated, you can see the values of the team — and each member can see where their values are similar to or different from those of the team. Recognizing differences as well as similarities will add to the team's effective functioning.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The following questions can help you and your teams think about some of the aspects of communication described here.

1. To what extent does our team practice active listening using such techniques as:
 - Not interrupting the speaker

before they have finished?

- Paraphrasing what the speaker has said so they are sure they have understood correctly?
2. What are the communications styles of team members?
 - Are we honoring and making good use of team members' different styles?
 - How do these styles change under stress?
 3. How can we minimize polarization on the team?
 - Are we aware of each other's values, including where they are similar and where they are different?
 - On polarized topics, are we seeking common ground that we can build on?

As the team's work progresses, things will happen that were not anticipated. It is useful, at all stages, to think through various scenarios, from the different perspectives, of what might result and monitor the work to try to catch and resolve conflict early. It may seem easier to leave these assumptions untested and avoid the conflict in the moment, but not doing so may well result in even more conflict and in the demise of the team's good work. The four tips in this article may help teams do just that.

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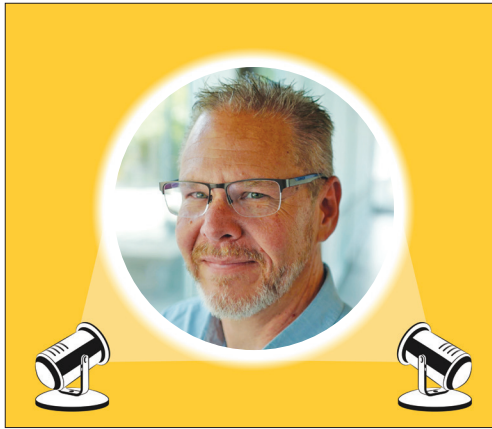
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CHANGEMAKERS: JAY SCHRODER

NOMINATED BY SUNSHINE DAMICO-IVY AND MAUREEN LOOMIS

Jay Schroder is an implementation coach for the Southern Oregon Regional Educator Network (SOREN). In this role, he supports SOREN's mission to create affirming school environments where all adults and children feel safe and know they matter and belong. In her nomination, math teacher Sunshine Damico-Ivy noted how "Jay demonstrates exceptional compassion and leadership in his roles supporting educators and students."

Schroder, a teacher for 24 years, was acknowledged for pursuing excellence with awards from the Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the National Council of Teachers of English. Schroder shifted to facilitating professional learning for teachers after observing how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing education system challenges. He felt he could have a broader positive impact helping educators and preservice teachers thrive than if he had remained in the classroom.

HELPING EDUCATORS RECONNECT WITH THEIR PASSION AND SKILL

"Now working as an implementation coach, Jay facilitates intensive, ongoing professional learning for educators in Southern Oregon. He provides them with tools to create positive learning environments for their students and teach from their best selves.

"Jay's classroom experience means that when he approaches teacher training, he does it by first honoring teachers' experiences and grounding his lessons in those experiences. He focuses on building community within the session, resulting in participants feeling comfortable to be vulnerable about their challenges both in and out of the classroom.

"Well-being is a broad concept, and he presents participants with a variety of strategies for discovering and nurturing it. Jay understands that every teacher has unique skills and strengths, so teachers can choose ideas and strategies he offers to best fit their individual needs. Session activities include circles where teachers explicitly share their experiences and writing prompts that explore the unique difficulties they face. Many teachers benefit greatly from expressive writing, a process through which they identify and rewrite the trauma-based stories that can make them susceptible to not teaching from their best selves. Others get more mileage

from strategies to help bring out the best in students, such as building moments of positive messaging for students into their classroom routines."

REVITALIZING TEACHERS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

"Jay is the author of *Teach From Your Best Self: A Teacher's Guide to Thriving in the Classroom* (Routledge, 2023), a book meant to revitalize education through effective training that empowers educators to create educational environments where students and teachers thrive. By supporting educator capacity, the principles in Jay's book align with Learning Forward's Leadership standard. Readers are guided to deepen their capacity to respond to teaching stressors in ways that don't burn them out, instead helping them bring their best to effectively advocate for students' needs while creating equitable classroom environments.

"Teachers in 11 Southern Oregon districts have participated in Jay's yearlong professional development program, which empowers them to identify their driving force for teaching, reconnect with their passion, and thrive in an increasingly challenging profession.

"After working with Jay, 100% of surveyed participants reported feeling confident in their ability to create and sustain a learning environment where all students experience a sense of belonging, which supports receptivity to learning. 100% of survey takers said the program had 'definitely' or 'mostly' helped them thrive despite teaching stressors. Teachers in or nearing burnout have come away revitalized after working with him."

•
If you would like to nominate a changemaker, visit learningforward.org/changemakers. ■

EXAMINE. STUDY. UNDERSTAND.

RESEARCH



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROVIDES RICH INSIGHTS

In a globalized world, educators have opportunities to learn from peers near and far. International education summits are one way systems are collaborating to rethink their work and improve outcomes for students. A report from OECD's International Summit on the Teaching Profession highlights research and lessons about the need for high-quality professional learning around the world (p. 18).



The report points to some areas of common need across countries as well as to examples of how certain countries are addressing these needs.

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RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

OECD REPORT UNDERSCORES GLOBAL NEED FOR TEACHER LEARNING

► THE REPORT

OECD. (2023). *Teaching for the future: Global engagement, sustainability and digital skills. International Summit on the Teaching Profession.* OECD Publishing.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) hosts an annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession that brings together education ministers, union leaders, policymakers, and teacher leaders from all over the world to learn from each other about ways to elevate the teaching profession. In advance of the summit, OECD compiles and summarizes research on key topics to be discussed, drawing on several OECD resources, including results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), and research and policy publications.

A recent summary report emphasized the importance of educator learning for students' success. "Students are unlikely to become lifelong learners if they do not see their teachers as active lifelong learners, willing to extend their horizon and question the established wisdom of their times," it says (p.

16). The report advocates for an approach to teacher development that takes into account the long careers of many educators and the support needed to ensure lifelong learning. "If we want schools to support more powerful learning for students, we need to think harder about how to offer more powerful upskilling and reskilling learning opportunities for teachers" (p. 25). While this terminology is not what Learning Forward uses, acknowledging the need for professional learning that supports and sustains educators throughout their careers and as conditions and requirements change aligns with our vision as articulated in the Standards for Professional Learning.

The report also emphasizes sustained and meaningful professional learning, stating that "effective professional development needs to be continuous and include education, practice, and feedback, and provide adequate time for follow-up. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to those they will use with their students" (p. 26). This is consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's definition of professional development, which Learning Forward helped to write, as sustained, intensive, collaborative, and job-embedded.

► KEY LEARNINGS

The report looks at educational indicators in countries around the world on a wide range of topics, including educator capacity and professional learning. It points to some areas of common need across countries as well as to examples of how certain countries are addressing these needs.

It underscores the fact that the need for more high-quality professional learning is widespread, starting at the earliest stages of teachers' careers. For example, "At least one in two teachers in Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Iceland, Italy, Spain, and Japan reports feeling underprepared for classroom practice, subject pedagogy or both" (p. 20). It calls for teacher preparation that is more effective at helping future teachers master their content and subject, acquire strategies for early identification and support for struggling students, practice pedagogical



skills, and gain practical experience.

The report also highlights that teachers' participation in effective professional learning is far less than ideal, despite researchers' and policymakers' understanding of effective professional learning. Across several administrations of the TALIS surveys, OECD data shows that informal exchange and coordination is more common among teachers than deep professional collaboration such as peer observations and lesson study. Yet the more frequently teachers engage in the different types of collaboration, the greater their self-perceived effectiveness.

As the report provides recommendations for improvement, it also points to examples of how countries have invested in professional learning systems and strategies. For instance, the province of Ontario, Canada, invested in teachers through extensive capacity building, including quarterly meetings with system leaders, teachers unions, superintendents, and school leaders to discuss reform strategies. In Singapore, teachers have access to 100 hours of professional learning as well as teacher networks and professional learning communities focused on peer-to-peer learning and sharing best practices.

The report also identifies the ways teachers need support on intercultural understanding. This is an area in need of further exploration because the report cites that teachers feel confident in their ability to teach in multicultural settings and yet also report a high need for professional learning in teaching intercultural communication, second languages, and equity and diversity.

Across 18 countries with comparable data, professional learning in those areas was relatively infrequent. Instead, the most common professional learning focus in the intercultural understanding area was "training for teaching about equity and diversity."

In fact, "(t)he data show highly uneven participation in relevant professional development activities" (p. 48).

► STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

There are points of alignment to the Standards for Professional Learning throughout the report. For example, TALIS data about "professional discretion" relates to dimensions of learning that Learning Forward refers to as collegial collaboration and participation in leadership, as described in the **Professional Expertise and Culture of Collaborative Inquiry** standards.

On the positive side, 78% of teachers across 48 countries and systems reported participating in school-level decision-making. On the negative side, only 9% of teachers reported exchanging feedback with colleagues, and only 21% engaged in collaborative professional learning at least once a month.

Some of the report's recommendations also align with the standards. For example, the report points to a challenge in the United States and some parts of Europe in which "teacher education is shaped by myriad decisions made by local authorities who have little information about how their choices affect the overall national quality of the teaching profession" (p. 26). The report points out that educators can address this challenge by using research evidence. This is consistent with the **Evidence** standard, which says that educators should "turn to evidence at all stages of planning, monitoring, and assessing professional learning" (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 38). The standard goes on to say, "The use of data, evidence, and research is a recursive process; their use informs decisions about planning professional learning, and impact results inform the next

planning decisions" (Learning Forward, 2022, p. 38).

Like the standards, the report acknowledges that professional learning does not happen in a vacuum and points to the need for a system of improvement that encompasses structures and processes as well as mindset and belief shifts to improve teaching and learning at scale. It calls for a new way of organizing educational systems to ensure that ongoing professional learning supports educators in accessing and applying the skills and knowledge they need to reach all students.

Overall, this OECD report provides an international context for the teaching profession and highlights the need for education to shift and evolve along with changing social conditions, emerging technologies, and student needs in a globalized world. Educators' professional learning can help them address global challenges such as the increased number of hours students spend online, the proliferation of unverified sources of information, and a dearth of discernment and analytical skills. The report also notes the rising expectations for teachers globally.

It points out that "we expect teachers to have a deep and broad understanding of what they teach, whom they teach, and how students learn because what teachers know and care about makes such a difference to student learning. We expect them to be great instructors, coaches, mentors, and designers of effective and innovative learning environments, as well as technology experts and data scientists" (p. 16). If we expect them to fulfill all those roles, we need to provide them with support.

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DATA POINTS



11.6% RISE IN TEACHER PREP PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

New federal data revealed a steady increase in teacher preparation program enrollment from 2018 to 2022. The Center for Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis (CEEPA) at Penn State released its analysis of Title II data from the U.S. Department of Education's website. Among the findings, CEEPA noted a 42% decline in teacher preparation program enrollees from 2009-10 to 2014-15. Since a teacher candidate low point in 2018-19, the recent growth of nearly 12% in future U.S. teachers shows progress at addressing educator shortages.

bit.ly/3UGDcYN

81% OF TEACHERS REPORT HAVING SEL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Institute of Education Sciences at the National Center for Education Statistics released the latest monthly data collection from a national sample of elementary, middle, high, and combined-grade public schools on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. 81% of responding public school teachers reported receiving professional learning to implement social and emotional (SEL) skills development curriculum to support students' SEL skills. However only 51% of the noninstructional staff received those same learning opportunities. 63% of respondents said they use formal curricula for SEL

skills instruction, which are effective at improving student outcomes, according to 72% of those polled.

bit.ly/3xWMUNH

7% DROP IN MALE TEACHERS SINCE 1988

The American Institute for Boys and Men published a research brief on declining gender diversity among teachers. Men now make up 23% of U.S. elementary and secondary teachers, down from 30% in 1988. In early education, men account for only 3% of kindergarten and pre-K teachers. While 26% of all U.S. students are boys of color, only 6% of their teachers are men of color. A handful of states have initiatives to recruit and retain male teachers, particularly men of color, such as Texas's residency program for Black and Latino men in Dallas ISD, New York's NYC Men Teach program, and "Call me MISTER" at Clemson University in South Carolina.

bit.ly/4a0Cytg

1 ACCELERATOR TO K-12 INNOVATION: BUILDING EDUCATOR CAPACITY

The Consortium for School Networking announced the survey results from its annual Driving K-12 Innovation series, in which over 140 international advisory board members identified the most important hurdles, accelerators, and tech enablers influencing current K-12 innovation. Two of the top hurdles are attracting and retaining educators and IT professionals and

scaling innovations effectively in school systems. A leading accelerator is strengthening educators' capacity — building leaders' capacity or providing opportunities for K-12 educators to learn new skills and practices that enhance student experiences. The top tech enabler is generative artificial intelligence, which is changing how students learn but must be used responsibly and safely. The report repeatedly highlights the importance of strategic professional learning, including mentorship, to lead innovation and merge technology with proven strategies that improve outcomes for students.

bit.ly/3UFChYn

82% OF NEW RURAL TEACHERS STILL TEACHING AFTER FIVE YEARS

Eastern Iowa's Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) supports 32 primarily small, rural districts, and like other rural areas in the U.S., GWAEA has struggled with recruiting and retaining teachers. In the mid-2000s, 41% of its teachers left the profession within five years. To bolster new teacher induction, GWAEA partnered with the New Teacher Center. New teachers now receive two years of job-embedded professional learning, including support by trained, high-quality induction coaches. GWAEA's new teachers are now 13 percentage points more likely to teach for at least five years (82%) as compared to a statewide average of 69%.

bit.ly/44kTTw5

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

FOCUS

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AROUND THE WORLD

Educators around the world have common professional learning needs and strategies as well as unique successes and challenges. In this issue of *The Learning Professional*, educators in Ghana, Australia, Palau, India, Canada, and Northern Ireland share how professional learning is making a difference and what countries can learn from one another about supporting teachers to support students.



Learning from education systems around the world: Q&A with Anthony Mackay

BY SUZANNE BOUFFARD

Anthony Mackay is a leading voice in global education policy, research, and development who has advised organizations, governments, and school systems on nearly every continent. *The Learning Professional* recently spoke with

him about how countries can learn from one another to improve professional learning, the educator workforce, and outcomes for students.

Mackay is co-chair of the board of trustees at the National Center on Education and the Economy, where

We are in the learning business together, as humans, and particularly humans in an AI world. We have some very tough challenges, but also huge opportunities to become more human rather than less. People understand that, at a time when a sustainable future is in balance, it is crucial to have a perspective that is international, global, and planetary.

he formerly served as president and CEO. He is also an expert advisor to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE), and several other international education organizations. He moderates the annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession and the Global Education Industry Summit and facilitates key debates at the events of the World Innovation Summit on Education (WISE). He was also a member of the Standards Advisory Council that helped develop Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

Q: Why is it important for countries to collaborate on improving education?

Learning from each other is hugely valuable — and underleveraged. We are, and have always been, interdependent, though perhaps that is even more the case now than it has been in the past. We are in the learning business together, as humans, and particularly humans in an AI world. We have some very tough challenges,

but also huge opportunities to become more human rather than less. People understand that, at a time when a sustainable future is in balance, it is crucial to have a perspective that is international, global, and planetary.

There is an orientation toward learning across international boundaries that has always existed among multiple sectors and industries. We have learned a lot from environmental challenges. Climate change is an area where, without international collaboration, there would have been no chance of making the progress we are now making. I know that we need to make it faster, but international collaboration is key to further progress.

We are learning that if we work together across jurisdictions — everyone, from politicians to professionals to citizens to young people — we will have a stronger social license to do the work. Often, you will find that government ministers get involved in international endeavors to not only to learn from each other, but to send a message to their own constituencies that this is the direction of travel we need to take.

This kind of international

collaboration has been perhaps less prevalent in education because the nature of the enterprise is so connected to place, to geography, to nationhood. There's a natural disposition to think about your learning system in these local terms. Yet I think educators are increasingly appreciating how others are tackling the work, particularly because we are increasingly recognizing our shared purpose. Most countries are now looking at how learning can seriously contribute to human thriving, to human flourishing.

Q: What does that increasing global collaboration in education look like?

International exchange is not only alive and well, but there is an appreciation that without it, we are not going to be able to advance the cause in any one country.

For example, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession is an annual convening that began in the U.S. 15 years ago. The then-U.S. Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, came back from an OECD gathering and envisioned an interactive, debate-

oriented international convening, where ministers of education could come together with teacher union leaders for two to three days and tackle a whole range of issues around teacher policy. It has always been fascinating to see how much we can learn from each other.

We have over 20 high-performing countries (as measured by the international PISA assessment) who commit to shared participation. Countries make a commitment to priorities for action to advance teacher policy at the end of each gathering. Teacher learning and leadership learning are at the heart of those policies and priorities. When we are together again a year later, country reports reveal the progress made across all of these jurisdictions.

There are many international gatherings, including the High Performing Systems for Tomorrow program of work — a joint endeavor by OECD and the National Center on Education and the Economy. We have eight countries represented by their education permanent secretaries, together with their directors of strategy, working together to look at how we might be able to redesign our learning systems to address today's challenges and transform learning.

The OECD Future of Education and Skills initiative has brought many countries together over a sustained period of time to think differently about how we should judge the performance of our education systems on a new set of metrics that are responsive to today's needs, including economic prosperity, social cohesion, and individual and collective well-being.

And of course, there was the 2022 UN Transforming Education Summit, a galvanizing moment in the advancement of international collaboration. All UN countries have been reporting each year on what progress they are making on that transformation agenda. That effort is alive and well, including in many states and districts in the U.S.

Q: How can we learn from other countries and contexts that are very different from our own?

PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) allows us to make international comparisons of students' performance on a variety of assessments that address foundational learning, advanced learning, and applied learning for 15-year-olds across OECD participating countries and beyond.

Over time, PISA has measured not only literacy, mathematics, and science, but a range of other domains, including critical and creative thinking. We inevitably compare and contrast across countries, but this gives us a way to learn from each other with a heightened level of appreciation about how other countries are tackling the issues we are all grappling with. We are learning a lot about how our jurisdictions are addressing the areas of collaborative problem-solving, global competence, and the general competencies and capabilities that we think all young people should have.

Of course, top-performing education systems around the world look different from one another. And in different countries, the way in which you go about governance and decision-making varies significantly. Some are more top-down than others, and some build partnerships at the community level more than others. If you think about the Baltic and Nordic countries, there is a strong ethos of collaboration, of social compacts. The cooperative relationship between the teacher unions and government is a key feature.

In Singapore — this year's host of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession — the Ministry of Education, the National Institute for Education, which prepares all teachers and all leaders in one institution, the Academy of Singapore Teachers, which spearheads professional learning, and the Singapore Teachers' Union are all deeply knowledgeable about

the profession. As a result, you have a profession that is constantly working on the expertise that is required and leaders who are coordinating and collaborating on policy and practice, embedding these approaches in the system as a whole.

It is clear that culture, politics, and governance play a very significant role. Learning to adapt and adopt what is appropriate, in your context, to serve your desired outcomes, is the key.

Q: What are some of the important professional learning conditions or elements that are common across high-performing countries?

One of the crucial aspects of the agenda around teacher policy is the need for a system perspective. The concept of the system looks different across jurisdictions with different models of government and governance. Some have a unitary government, whereas others have a federal system of states or provinces — the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Germany — each with their own distinguishing characteristics. But what is common is the need to design an end-to-end system. How do you recruit and retain professionals, how do you prepare and induct educators, how do you think about career progression and leadership development? Very early on, we recognized that those defining features of a high-performing system are essential.

Other lessons we have learned from different countries include striving for consensus building, strengthening the teaching profession, and strengthening the leadership of that profession. This involves everything from setting a national plan through to implementation at a local level. The key enabling structures, shared beliefs and values, and aligned practices are vital.

A common thread is the importance of being standards-based and evidence-informed. Standards embody the knowledge

base, supporting decision-making and collaboration necessary for a profession to be a profession. To use the language from Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, standards need to define rigorous content, transformational processes, and conditions for success. That is how we make sure we are clear about the nature of our professional endeavors and expectations. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning are an outstanding illustration of what we want from a profession, advancing the quality of teaching and learning. This is something that is now shared across multiple jurisdictions with different histories and cultures and ways of organizing learning.

I was the inaugural chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. We achieved an agreement on a national set of standards for the teaching profession. We were looking across at the U.S. and the work of Learning Forward and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. We agreed on the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement to constitute Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. This is a powerful mechanism for leveraging a common agenda. Shared language about our work generates confidence in and commitment to consistent quality.

Q: What do you think needs to change in the educator workforce and educator support to achieve excellence across the globe?

We need to be open to rethinking learning and redesigning systems. We have sufficient understanding now around what deep learning looks like, informed by the learning sciences, and we know that we need to rethink pedagogical practices and rethink assessment. All of this needs to be of an order that motivates and drives deeper levels of learning for all young people. You can't achieve this unless

you invest in changing the work, the workplace, and the workforce.

For example, in many countries, teams of teachers work with large groups of students and others work on one-to-one tutoring. This requires a different way of thinking about your workforce and how you allocate time, along with the provision of supporting structures. In many schools, the model of one-teacher-one-classroom is changing, guided by learning needs. The practice of having 80% to 90% of your time devoted to face-to-face teaching can be contrasted with working in teams of teachers, where teachers' time includes planning, reviewing, and research, and teaching contact hours may be limited to 50% of time.

As another example, some systems prioritize having a differentiated workforce supported by allied professionals, so there is a range of roles and responsibilities. Some staff prioritize social and emotional issues, and others focus on cognitive development. All are conscious of both.

This kind of thinking is important for meeting students' evolving needs, and also educators'. Most countries are experiencing teacher shortages and asking: How can we attract more young people into this profession? We know they will not be attracted to a work environment that is not technology rich, and they won't necessarily be looking at an environment where they need to show up on site every day. We need to change the environment. Give educators the chance to do the work with each other in different ways, in different learning environments with more flexibility.

Q: What does it take to achieve that kind of transformation?

The reasons for the successes we have derive from standards and processes designed to support improvement. But we have to go

further and be more innovative, and our efforts have to be supported by evidence. Different jurisdictions have different ways of thinking about and using evidence. In England, for example, they have an Education Endowment Foundation, seriously committed to deep collaboration between schools and the research community. The Netherlands has an approach to research and evidence that is a partnership model based on action research by educators. It's the commitment to that collaboration that matters.

Transformation needs to happen not only in our systems and practices, but also in our values and beliefs. In many countries, the multicultural, multidimensional nature of our communities requires a commitment to values and beliefs that embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and indigeneity. To tackle the huge problems that we are confronting, in terms of environment, poverty, and conflict, we need to build among all people attitudes and dispositions that are respectful and sustainable. That is why there has been so much debate about what it is that we are attempting to ensure all young people know and are able to do — to care for self, others, and the planet.

We should be optimistic. We are having this conversation among educators, community leaders, employers, and civil society. It is a conversation about the competencies of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, creativity, and imagination. We need to think this way, and think about it together, if we are going to be able to tackle problems for which we don't yet have solutions and anticipate a better future. Now is the time for step change requiring a global perspective and a strong sense of global responsibility.

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Australian studies link teacher well-being to student outcomes

BY REBECCA J. COLLIE

Many countries around the world are facing issues related to low levels of teacher well-being. In Australia, for example, there is a severe teacher

shortage, resulting in many understaffed schools. Although this shortage is due to a confluence of factors, part of the cause stems from the fact that the support provided to teachers in recent years has not kept pace with

the increasing professional demands. Reduced support and increased demands have led to higher stress, lower well-being, and greater attrition in the workforce (New South Wales Department of Education, 2023).



Supporting teacher well-being is a worthy and critical aim in itself, but it also has a larger benefit because teacher well-being has ramifications for instruction and student well-being. Teacher and student functioning are inherently intertwined, so efforts to promote well-being among each party are likely to have carryover effects to the other.

My colleagues and I have conducted several recent studies looking at teacher and student well-being in Australia, with a particular focus on factors that predict greater well-being. In this research, we generally define well-being as feeling good and functioning effectively.

The “feeling good” part of that definition reflects experiences such as job satisfaction for teachers, school satisfaction for students, and a sense of vitality at school for both. The “functioning effectively” part of the definition reflects experiences such as work engagement and low quitting intentions for teachers, and academic engagement and low behavioral misconduct for students. In our studies, we include well-being variables tapping into all of these aspects.

FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER WELL-BEING

Working conditions play an important role in teacher well-being, including both *job resources*, which are

supportive factors that boost teacher well-being, and *job demands*, which are hindering factors that reduce teachers’ well-being.

In a recent study with 426 Australian teachers (Collie, 2023), I examined how factors from both categories affect several dimensions of teacher well-being — vitality (the vigor and passion teachers exhibit toward their profession), engagement (the effort teachers demonstrate in their job responsibilities), and professional growth striving (teachers’ investment to enhance their professional competencies and expertise), as well as teacher attrition, as measured by teachers’ quitting intentions.

The study found that two types of job resources related to interpersonal connections were associated with greater levels of all three well-being dimensions:

- *Autonomy-supportive leadership*, which pertains to teachers’ views that their principal fosters their self-motivation and self-empowerment; and
- *Relatedness with students*, which reflects teachers’ sense of having positive interpersonal interactions with their students.

In addition, another type of interpersonal connection, relatedness with colleagues (or sense of belonging), was positively associated with professional growth striving and lower

quitting intentions, underscoring the significance of robust collegial networks.

A job demand, time pressure, was negatively associated with vitality, yet it showed a positive association with increased engagement. This latter finding seems counterintuitive but has been shown in previous research. It likely occurred because a sense of urgency can have a motivating effect in specific circumstances — when we are busy, we often get more done. At the same time, prolonged exposure to time pressure could have negative consequences. In fact, this study also showed that time pressure was associated with greater quitting intentions.

In another study, we found that teachers who experienced a combination of high workload and low levels of autonomy over their work tasks were more likely to want to quit (Collie & Carroll, 2023).

Together, these studies suggest that working conditions and aspects of school environments affect teachers’ well-being, as well as their likelihood of leaving their schools or the teaching workforce altogether.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Importantly, teachers’ working conditions and well-being also have implications for student achievement.

In a study of 486 teachers in 39 elementary schools in New South Wales, we looked at the relationship between teachers' emotional exhaustion, which is a key indicator of burnout, and student achievement (Granziera et al., 2023).

We looked at school-level averages of teachers' responses and students' achievement because we wanted to explore how this relationship may be affected by school factors such as school climate and the social contagion of burnout, above and beyond individual factors.

Schools where teachers had higher levels of emotional exhaustion had lower levels of student achievement, on average. This was consistent with previous research that has found individual teachers' levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with lower levels of student achievement (Arens & Morin, 2016) and opens avenues for more exploration of whether and how those feelings and connections with low achievement may be affected by school-level factors or spread among colleagues.

This study did not allow us to look at the direction of the relationship between the variables, so it is possible that teachers' emotional exhaustion was influenced by students' achievement or by an additional mediating factor. But findings suggest that education leaders should pay close attention to how these factors are related.

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Our research offers insights into practices that schools can adopt to support teachers and therefore students. First, school leaders can promote teachers' empowerment and sense of autonomy (Collie, 2021). Specific strategies include granting them opportunity to determine their work methods, encouraging their participation in decision-making processes and school policy formation, and providing explanations and rationales for the assignment of work tasks, which shows respect and active consideration of the teacher in the decision-making process.

Teachers in Australia are expected to engage in professional learning each year. For example, in New South Wales, teachers working full-time are expected to complete 100 hours of professional learning every five years to maintain their teacher accreditation.

Second, school leaders can work to foster a sense of belonging between teachers and students. Some specific strategies include embedding schoolwide social and emotional learning programs, developing a school mission that prioritizes positive interpersonal interactions, and emphasizing a professional learning focus that aims to boost positive interactions in the classroom.

All teachers in Australia (and many other countries) are expected to engage in professional learning each year. For example, in New South Wales (the most populous state in Australia), teachers working full-time are expected to complete 100 hours of professional learning every five years to maintain their teacher accreditation. Some of that time can focus on strategies for developing positive teacher-student relationships, even within the context of learning about new curricula or other professional learning topics.

Third, leaders can have an impact on well-being and, ultimately, student outcomes by simplifying teachers' workloads whenever feasible. For example, they can reduce the volume of administrative tasks and ensure that professional learning time is spent on substantive topics, rather than procedural matters that can be addressed via email.

Some may try reducing the amount of face-to-face teaching hours required of teachers, taking inspiration from countries where teachers have ample

time for collaboration, planning, and research. Encouraging collaboration and teamwork among teachers has other benefits as well, including distributing responsibilities and boosting teachers' opportunities to learn from one another.

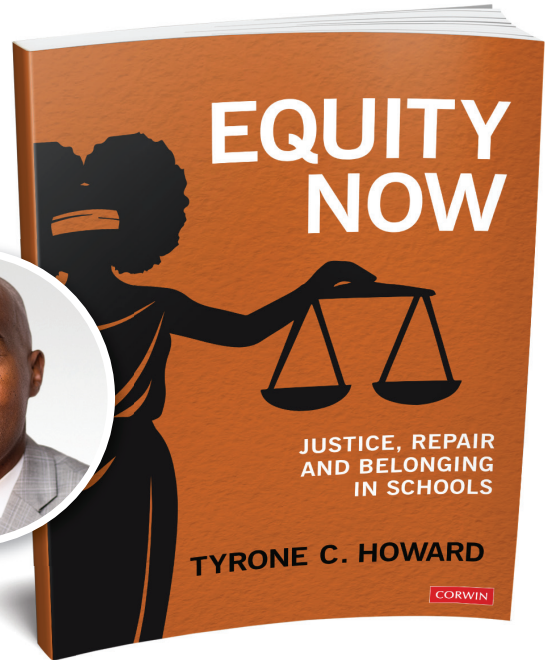
These documented strategies for building positive school and classroom climates can benefit both teachers and students, in many kinds of schools and contexts, in Australia and beyond.

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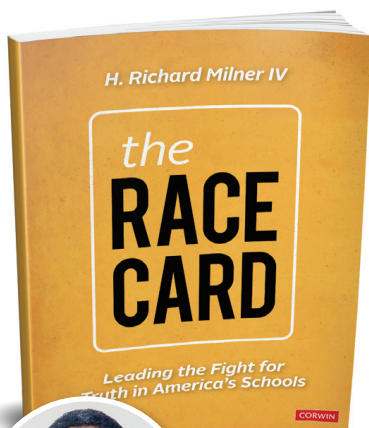
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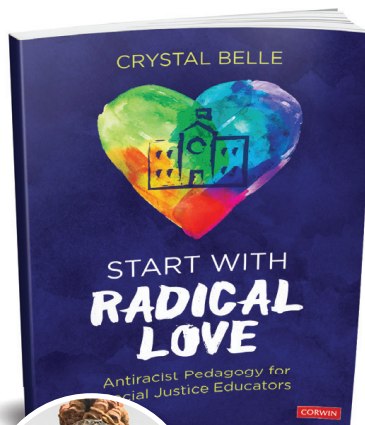
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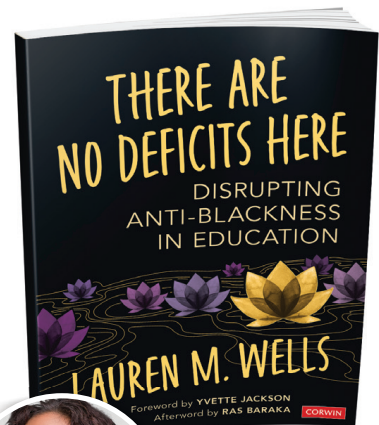
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INTED participants join the Chief and Queen Mother of Jumapo, Eastern Region of Ghana, and other guests at a town hall event in December 2023.

Master Fellows Program spreads learning across Ghana

BY KWABENA AMPORFUL, JULIUS AGBEKO, JOPHUS ANAMUAH-MENSAH, LOUISA KOOMSON, ISRAEL TITI OFEI, SUSAN O'HARA, AND ROBERT PRITCHARD

Facilitating high-quality professional learning on a large scale poses financial and logistical challenges, especially in the developing world. However, in the West African nation of Ghana, amid the national

expansion of access to public secondary education, a private sector-led teacher leadership program shows how peer support and train-the-trainer models can build capacity to improve teachers' instruction and students' learning.

The Institute of Teacher Education

and Development (INTED) was founded in Accra, Ghana, in 2011, thanks to a fellowship from Stanford University. The institute is a nongovernmental organization whose objective is to improve learner outcomes by supporting the



Trainers and candidates at INTED's first Master Fellows Academy, held in 2012.



Teachers share ideas during a group activity at an INTED session in the Eastern Region of Ghana in March 2024.

professional growth of educators. At the center of INTED's model is a professional learning initiative for teacher leaders called the Master Fellows Program.

The Masters Fellow Program builds the capacity of teachers to become instructional leaders who support professional learning communities, engage other educators in the institute's professional learning activities, share their experiences at conferences and community events, and act as mentors and champions of teachers.

Over the past 13 years, the program has led to continuous improvements in teaching and learning in schools in most regions in Ghana. The experience and the ongoing efforts to scale the program across the country offer lessons about improving educator growth and student learning, even in the context of infrastructure challenges.

SETTING THE STAGE

In 2017, the government of Ghana expanded free and compulsory pretertiary (preuniversity) education to all public senior high schools or students ages 16-18 years old as part of the Free Senior High School policy.

Before that, the country had free and compulsory basic education for K-9 students, but many students did not have access to secondary education — in part due to fees required to attend, inadequate space, and low testing scores at the end of middle school. As a result of the Free Senior High School policy, the government of Ghana has improved access to secondary education and taken commendable steps to improve the regulatory environment for teachers.

However, an evaluation by Dwomoh et al. (2022) shows a significant decline in quality of educational outcomes and academic performance for secondary students after the policy was implemented and access was expanded.

A number of factors may have contributed, including the fact that many schools began a double-track system, in which students alternated attending school for 81 days and taking vacation for 41 days, to accommodate the large increase in the student population (Dwomoh et al., 2022). Interviews from the evaluation suggested that inadequate teaching and learning materials may also have been a factor.

At the same time, professional learning for teachers was not meeting teachers' and students' needs, despite some government initiatives that were well-intentioned but inappropriately applied. As an example, in 2020, the Ministry of Education of Ghana began providing teachers with an annual professional development allowance. However, the timing of the allowance was at the end of each year near the holidays. Coupled with teacher salaries that were so low that most educators required a second job to make ends meet, this meant that many teachers spent the money on things other than professional development.

In this context, INTED saw a great need to support educators to use learner-centered pedagogy with 21st-century skills to enhance the achievement of all learners (Vavrus et al., 2011). Unfortunately, opportunities for high-quality continuous professional learning that have been shown to improve teaching and learning outcomes are still infrequent for most teachers in Ghana.

Classrooms are teacher-centered rather than student-centered, and learning remains predominantly by rote

memorization. The institute’s goal is to help address these issues and contribute to Ghana’s attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

THE INTED MODEL

The INTED model begins with the Master Fellows Program, which is a program designed to build the capacity of local teachers to facilitate professional learning and support colleague teachers. Following the first cohort in 2012, Master Fellows have identified future candidates from among the teachers they have worked with to implement improved teaching practices.

The Master Fellows Program helps develop the pedagogical skills of teachers and build social cohesion and collaboration among them and across schools. It also provides opportunity for monitoring and support, evaluation for learning, and review sessions to enable teachers to address identified gaps.

Senior Master Fellows, who have been with the organization as Master Fellows for 10 years and have supported at least 10 schools or 500 teachers, also monitor and support Master Fellows as they work with teachers and while teachers work with students.

The INTED model draws on the professional learning communities work by Hord (1997), which derived from the seminal work by Senge (1990) on learning organizations in the corporate world. Hord’s five dimensions of professional learning communities

(PLCs) were adopted with some modifications to form the theoretical underpinnings for the INTED model. These are:

1. **Supportive and shared leadership:** Leaders are involved and engaged in the PLC and are ready to delegate responsibilities, listen to teachers’ ideas, and share decision-making. Through reflective practices, teachers who adopt INTED practices are able to support their peers during PLCs, which are now nationally mandated.
2. **Shared norms, values, and vision:** Participants have common beliefs about institutional purposes and practices, understanding of educational policies and cultural values, and a strong, shared commitment to students’ learning.
3. **Collaborative learning:** Teachers engage in collective learning and apply this learning to meet students’ needs. INTED believes that teachers know the source of the real problems in their classrooms and therefore the kinds of solutions that will work.
4. **Deprivatization of knowledge and practice:** Teachers continuously and collaboratively review their pedagogical practice with an eye toward improvement. Master Fellows facilitate interactive and reflective sessions called design studios where teachers try out and hone

instructional strategies.

5. **Supportive conditions:** Learning and improvement are dependent on conducive and relational structures. INTED’s work promotes a culture of trust and respect through collegial relationship building, seeks partnerships with technical experts and financial sponsors to support its teacher capacity building, and has recently initiated research-based monitoring and evaluation for learning.

This model positions the PLC as a learning ecosystem that creates an organizational culture focused on student learning through improvement in teacher practice (Blacklock, 2009). Through the five dimensions, we have seen our teachers engage in collaborative, collegial, and collective learning as well as develop trust and mutual respect and appreciation.

The institute’s theory of action articulates that its activities with educators should lead to elevated student-centered instruction that leads to improved student learning outcomes. Through our monitoring, evaluation, and learning work, we have found four components that are essential to achieving this chain of effect:

- Articulate a set of research-based teaching practices and associated instructional strategies for Master Fellows to implement with their peer teachers.
- Build Master Fellows’ common understanding of how teachers



Bernice Anane, an INTED Master Fellow, facilitates a session at Ghana National College in October 2023.



Master Fellows Faith Aku Dzakpasu, seated left, and Barikisu Suleiman, seated right, won national teaching awards in 2023. With them are INTED staff members. Photo by Kezia Amartei

develop their professional practice.

- Create conditions and organizational infrastructure for ongoing professional dialogue about instruction and improvement among teachers.
- Foster a professional culture that expects teachers to engage in instructional change that leads to a more equitable learning environment for all students.

THE IMPACT OF MASTER FELLOWS

Several evaluations have been conducted on the Master Fellows Program, including those by Ravi (2012), Acheampong and Wumbee (2016), MKA Education Services (2021), and INTED. These and other analyses have shown that participating teachers who worked with Master Fellows have adopted new learner-centered pedagogy in classrooms.

INTED uses lesson and learner observation tools that are aligned to Ministry of Education standards. Master fellows use these tools to observe lessons presented by beneficiary teachers, and students' reactions to those lessons, to identify areas of progress and need, identify training and support gaps and how to fill them, and

provide feedback to teachers.

These also provide a source of data for us. INTED has found that, in most cases, teachers are meeting expectations by adopting and using the 21st-century pedagogy and strategies that were introduced to them through the program.

Another indicator of success comes from school- and department-level reporting of student learning. Though data is yet to be fully analyzed on student-level impact, there are a number of success stories from individual schools, including the Ministry of Education's reclassification of schools based on performance data. For example:

- The number of Akokoaso Senior High Technical School students who passed a secondary level terminal exam increased from 4 to 22 — the highest rate ever — a year after INTED's program.
- The number of Aburi Girls' Senior High School students receiving grade A increased steadily from 8 in 2013 to over 200 in 2017, after implementation of multiple INTED training and support programs.
- Anum Presby Senior High School was reclassified from a Category

C to Category A school in two years, following implementation of multiple INTED programs.

- Two Master Fellows won the "overall best" and "primary" level awards at the 2023 Ghana Teacher Prize.

We have also viewed the growth of the program using the lens of Coburn's (2003) framework for scale of education reforms, which includes four components: depth, sustainability, spread, and shifts in reform ownership.

Depth: Reflecting the model's depth of change, documentation of teacher reflections and the observation tools described above show changes in teachers' philosophy of teaching and learning, including teachers embracing the importance of active student engagement, critical thinking, and the belief that all students are able to participate in and benefit from disciplinary discussions. Evidence also includes increased subject-specific curricula design.

Sustainability: Evidence of the program's sustainability comes from Master Fellows' growing support of the model even through periods of limited financial support; increasing requests and support from schools and teachers for INTED's model; and increased collaboration among teachers at



Master Fellow Faith Aku Dzakpasu, right, facilitates a design studio session with her peers at Odorgonno Senior High School in Accra, Ghana, in April 2023.



Master Fellow Barikisu Suleiman facilitates a session with her peer teachers at Odorgonno Senior High School in Accra, Ghana, in April 2023.

participating schools (e.g., joint lesson planning, peer observation of lessons, involvement in impact data collection efforts, participation in training of subject heads and teacher leaders).

Spread: Over the initial 10-year period ending in 2021, three Master Fellows Programs built the capacity of 66 teacher trainers, who facilitated professional learning programs for at least 3,500 teachers in over 70 schools by influencing their own and other schools to subscribe to INTED’s programs, reaching an estimate of over 100,000 students per year by the end of the period. This impact is possible thanks to the generous support from funders, including the Ghana Skills Development Fund, the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, and other local sponsors.

Shifts in reform ownership: Ownership of the model has begun to shift so that it is increasingly accepted and held by not just teachers and schools who have directly experienced its benefits, but also by district education officers, regulators, and community leaders. Multiple participating schools have subscribed to follow-up programs from INTED, even in an environment with competition from more than 30 other licensed professional learning providers.

Districts and municipalities have also expressed interest in participating

in additional programs, with most willing to commit resources, based on positive experiences with prior programs. Local stakeholder interest in the model is also growing, with members sharing their INTED experience at conferences and a series of town halls with community leaders, regulators, and regional leaders of education.

LESSONS LEARNED

Along with the successes, INTED has faced some challenges and learned lessons about how to improve the program going forward. Some of these needed changes are within our locus of control, while others are not.

Because teaching in Ghanaian public schools involves a heavy workload under challenging conditions, low morale among teachers needs to be addressed creatively to inspire teachers to do more. INTED’s strategy to improve morale is to provide opportunity through its Master Fellows Program and other programs for collective thinking and collaboration among teachers and administrators as well as engagement with parents and community leaders through town hall meetings to develop a shared vision, boost morale, bring back the joy in teaching, and improve student outcomes.

It is also important to ensure that teachers have developed deep understandings of the innovations and can practice them with ease before trying to spread the innovation to other schools. Building trainer capacity takes time, resources, deliberate effort, and a resolve to continue to address gaps.

With peer professional learning in our low-resource environment, neither INTED nor schools have the resources to sustain training, monitoring, and support that results in deep understanding and ease of practice. This has been the model’s biggest challenge, and INTED is working to improve with partners and stakeholders.

Looking to external structures and stakeholders, experience shows that professional learning is most effective when the designers work closely with regulators at the appropriate level: e.g., national, regional, municipal, or district to plan, implement, and follow up for learning.

For example, about a third of Master Fellows do not remain active with the program and follow through to facilitate training to and support their peers. We believe this attrition is related to multiple factors, including funding and travel issues but also factors requiring a closer collaboration with regulators and school administrators,

such as teachers' schedules and teachers leaving their schools or the profession.

As another example, amid the aforementioned Free Senior High School policy that requires a double-track system to reach all students, senior high school students spend less time in school than they used to. This shortened contact time between teachers and students has contributed to a pressurized context in which teachers tend to focus on content that will be covered on exams, often reverting to rote memorization strategies rather than instructional strategies that require critical thinking.

In this context, teachers sometimes adopt a checking-the-box attitude to professional learning. This underscores the need for high-quality professional learning like that used in the Master Fellows Program to occur alongside and in collaboration with structural and policy reforms.

NEXT STEPS

In its second decade since 2022, INTED is building up its administrative, governance, and programming capabilities, with support from the United States Agency for International Development and the Ministry of Education. The institute is transforming into a membership-based organization that should boost the ongoing shift in ownership and, over time, its sustainability. With the completion of the fifth Master Fellows Program cohort, INTED is aiming to support 4,126 additional teachers in over 360 schools by 2027, reaching over 90,000 students per year by 2027.

We are also expanding depth by working with Master Fellows to conduct research studies on the fidelity of implementation as well as randomized control trials to assess the impact on student learning.

Looking into the future, INTED is seeking to expand offerings to include online learning opportunities to ensure that greater numbers of teachers and schools can access its programs at lower costs and improved convenience. We intend to develop modules in bite-sized forms and create a learning management system to support it.

We believe that by using a mix of in-person and virtual engagement opportunities, Master Fellows can be supported to extend their impact from thousands to tens of thousands of teachers, who can possibly bring 21st-century pedagogy to extend the impact on learning outcomes from hundreds of thousands to millions of students.

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Lessons in navigating conflict from Northern Ireland

BY EMILY BYERS-FERRIAN AND SHANNON KEENY

Eighteen people from different countries sat in a circle of chairs in a room facing the Sea of Moyle, some having traveled far to reach Ballycastle, Northern Ireland, for a week of learning about skillful responses to conflict and living better together across differences.

Addressing the group was Colin Craig, founder of Dialogue for Peaceful

Change Global, a method that supports the development of individual and group capacity to transform conflict (Dialogue for Peaceful Change, n.d.). Craig, a person of Northern Ireland who has facilitated peaceful change processes with groups locally and internationally since the 1970s, introduced himself and gestured toward the large windows, referring to the land and sea as his co-facilitation

partners. He then invited each person to share something about the story of their name and what inspired them to participate in this learning experience. Participants came from Ireland, Sweden, Italy, and England, representing such diverse professions as pastor, mediator, activist, therapist, leadership coach, and educator.

We were three Americans in the mix (Emily and Shannon plus another

colleague), each of us a group facilitator working in educational settings across the United States, leading professional learning with hundreds of educators on skillful responses to differences.

Over the years, we have experienced a lot of conflict ourselves — when facilitating the development of trust and understanding across disparate cultural groups within school communities, when coaching constructive cross-cultural conversations with parents, guardians, and staff, and when consulting with school leaders taking intentional actions toward equity in education, which at times included responding to incidents of cultural destructiveness.

At the core of our work is a commitment to cultural proficiency and responsiveness, having begun our careers in facilitation informed by the Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice. The center's framework highlights five essential elements of cultural proficiency: assessing cultural knowledge, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (The Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice, n.d.).

While working with individuals and groups, especially since the pandemic, we have found that the third element, managing the dynamics of difference, is where progress toward equitable systemic change tends to stall. This element of the framework articulates the importance of understanding conflict as a normal part of life and developing skills to navigate those conflicts in positive, constructive ways.

However, the strategies we witnessed and sometimes employed ourselves were not always positive or constructive. When faced with conflict, we watched teachers avoid, children accommodate, administrators control, and parents or guardians compromise — giving up a little to get a little back rather than finding ways forward that work for all. Stories of us versus them, and who is right or wrong, pervaded.

It turns out that the patterns of

Conflict transformation, like co-creating equitable schools, is a creative and sometimes messy process of learning and growth. Both require trust — in ourselves, in one another, in the path we're on. Taking the time to build that trust, care for it, and repair it is essential for our work in schools.

conflict we experienced were not unique to the school districts we worked within and are, in fact, part of a national trend toward binary thinking (Ripley, 2021). We concluded that if we were ever going to facilitate equity in schools in the U.S., we were going to need more effective knowledge, skills, and attitudes for navigating conflict in a constructive, culturally proficient way.

We read books, researched articles, and listened to podcasts about effective ways for managing the dynamics of difference in schools. However, we ultimately concluded that we needed to *experience* a better way to navigate conflict.

We asked ourselves, “Who already knows how to do this well?” The answer came in the form of an invitation: Five days of learning about Dialogue for Peaceful Change with Colin Craig at Corrymeela, Northern Ireland's oldest and largest peace and reconciliation organization.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

As we gathered information about the learning opportunity at Corrymeela, we discovered we would get the chance to explore the nature of conflict, including its physiological effects.

We would look at conflict theory, our personal experiences with conflict, and conceptual frameworks and models that help locate and identify the drivers of conflict. We would explore the roles of peace building and mediative behaviors in transforming conflict from

something that destroys to something that strengthens.

Finally, we would practice applying specific tools and mediative communication techniques in an intensive, coached role-play with scenarios based on real-world conflicts gathered from cultures and regions around the world. And we would be doing it all in a place that has a unique relationship to conflict and change.

Northern Ireland is a country that has experienced polarization and intercommunity violence. Until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, communities were plagued with deadly sectarian conflict that, in simple terms, pitted Catholic Nationalists who wanted a united Ireland against Protestant Loyalists who identified with the United Kingdom. Many people continue to live by age-old assumptions, sometimes based solely on the spelling of a person's name: Martin = Loyalist; Máirtín = Nationalist.

Colin Craig explained that “when communities live the realities of deep systemic violence, they often seek shortcuts to categorize who is and who is not safe as well as what is and what is not safe to talk about.” In Northern Ireland today, people continue to live in segregated neighborhoods, not unlike those driven by racial, cultural, and class divisions in the United States.

When we arrived in Northern Ireland and settled into the residence hall in Ballycastle, where we would share lodging and meals with the other participants, we immediately became aware of our own assumptions about safety and fear.

We noticed that the bedroom doors didn't lock from the outside. We hesitated. *Should we take our passports with us?* we wondered when we were invited to join the others for tea and biscuits. We reminded each other that everyone was here to learn and build relationships. We chose to trust. Once we met Colin, his co-facilitator and wife Rachel, and the other 16 participants, we quickly realized there was no reason to worry about the lack of locks.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRUST

The first day of learning was a grounding day. In small groups, we shared stories, reflected on our values and perspectives, built connections, and deepened trust. That afternoon, we engaged in a simulation of how groups resolve a problem, which thereafter was dubbed “the Lego experience” because the seemingly simple task of working together to reconstruct a sculpture made of Legos proved surprisingly difficult when cultural norms of competition, hierarchy, and haste superseded collaboration and creativity.

While the content on its own was notable, we also noticed the way Colin and Rachel led the learning, developing the conditions for collaborative work while deliberately sharing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and frequently calling forward participants’ wisdom and experiences. This resonated with previous work we had read by Brenda and Franklin Campbell Jones (Campbell Jones et al., 2010) and Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman (1999).

On day two, we were ready to explore mental models surrounding conflict and break it down into stages that can be explored and critically examined and for which communication skills can be developed. We examined the stages of conflict, how our brains process conflict, mediative communication techniques, and an analysis process to break down a conflict into specific issues and dynamics.

While day two was a substantial analytical lift, it was paired with connecting to one another and our experiences, laughs, breaks for tea and biscuits, strolls outside taking in the view, and shared meals.

At this point, we realized what set this learning experience apart from anything we had previously engaged in as participants or facilitators: food. It wasn’t just the fact that we ate together. We’ve done that many times before with other groups. But this went beyond sharing the meal. Everyone — facilitators included — shared a moment of silence before the meal,

filled each other’s glasses, passed the salt, bussed each other’s plates, and took turns washing, drying, and storing the dishes.

What at first seemed like mundane tasks were actually part of creating the conditions for deep, shared learning. After meals and before reconvening, we took walks together along the shore; we began to understand what Colin meant when he referred to the land as a facilitator of learning.

The remainder of the week was centered around coached application practice with a six-step mediative process. We used authentic scenarios from around the world where Colin and Rachel have applied the frameworks, tools, mindsets, and processes with success.

The conflict scenarios cut across cultures: a small village where food insecurity is at the core of the conflict, a pair of neighbors fighting over the construction of a fence, and a board challenged by the very people it serves.

We role-played our new knowledge and skills, receiving real-time, continuous coaching during each step of the process. The fact that we had developed deep trust within the group is what made possible this kind of public practice paired with feedback.

Conflict transformation, like co-creating equitable schools, is a creative and sometimes messy process of learning and growth. Both require trust — in ourselves, in one another, in the path we’re on. Taking the time to build that trust, care for it, and repair it is essential for our work in schools.

APPLYING THE LEARNING AT HOME

Upon returning home after five days of rich learning, a staff member at one of the schools we work with approached us with a conflict. She explained there was a rift within her team of eight, but that the whole team had agreed to meet with us to address it. We had the opportunity to see if the knowledge, skills, framework, and tools we learned in Northern Ireland could work in the U.S.

The conflict involved a group of teacher leaders in a department. Some had worked there for years, while others had recently joined. The new staff members were onboarded during COVID-19 school closures, so it was many months before the team met in person. Cultural differences quickly emerged in how individuals related to students, staff, one another, and their shared work.

In addition to their intrateam relational tensions, they also expressed difficulty navigating the varying expectations of other groups, including students, families, and administrators. They sought time and support to strengthen their team to better serve the community.

We applied the strategies we always use — such as learning as much as possible about the participants and selecting content and processes to activate their existing knowledge and values — and also drew on our experience with Colin and Rachel. We increased our focus on hospitality, developing trust within the group, and the nature of the learning environment.

For example, we reserved a space with natural light, played music, and arranged the furniture in configurations that facilitated movement as well as small- and large-group conversations. We dedicated time to sharing the stories of our names, practicing listening, and asking open-ended questions before we got into tackling the group’s challenges.

As facilitators, we were prepared to be flexible and fully present with participants, open to learning from them and adjusting. Because, as it turns out, hosting is not about setting a perfect table spread; it’s about a quality of presence that is sincere, generous, and open. It’s about offering tea or coffee and allowing participants to fill our cups as well.

In turning our attention to these things, we discovered that seemingly small shifts in the way *we were* with people made a difference in what *the group did* together. By the time



A view from Corrymeela at Ballycastle, Northern Ireland.

Photo by Emily Byers-Ferrian

we engaged in a strategy that assists people in breaking down a conflict into parts, the group was ready to proceed and own their conflict transformation together.

What had worked in our role-played scenarios also worked in our real-life context at home. Each participant walked away taking responsibility for a specific part of the problem they were facing as a group. Participants ended the session saying they felt hopeful, connected, and that they wanted to dedicate more of their time to constructive conversations like the one they engaged in that day. On the last day of our work with them, they spontaneously went out together for lunch.

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE

As we continued to reflect on our learning in Northern Ireland and our subsequent experience, we wanted to share the lessons with others. Last December, we facilitated a two-hour session at Learning Forward's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., with the hope of drawing at least 30 participants.

In fact, we maxed out at 125. We knew we were passionate about conflict transformation and found it crucial for our work in schools, but we were surprised and encouraged by how many other educators wanted to learn about it, too.

During our session, participants explored a tool for uncovering the hidden beliefs, assumptions, and values that result in conscious and unconscious biases leading to conflict. They practiced using an intentional questioning strategy for managing the dynamics of difference that interrupts biases and opens possibilities for new patterns of thought and action. The session concluded with participants developing an action plan to respond effectively to differences for equitable systemic change. Participants were highly engaged, and the session feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive.

A BETTER WAY OF BEING AND LEARNING

Trust is the glue that holds us together through challenging conversations and new shared learning. It can be built, sustained, and repaired over time, in part, through consistent, intentional acts such as sharing tea or coffee or in exchanging the stories of our names.

While binary thinking and unproductive responses to conflict may be prevalent today, our experience shows us that many people are seeking and practicing a better way of being and learning together, which gives us hope that co-creating more inclusive, loving, equitable experiences for students, staff, and families is possible.

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VIDEO COACHING ADVANCES TEACHER PRACTICE IN PALAU

BY IDA REKOI KILCULLEN AND LUCIA TABELUAL

Alii! We send greetings from pristine Palau, our homeland encircled by the brilliant waters of the western Pacific Ocean. Palau is a nation of 20,000 people in the westernmost part of Micronesia, 2,000 miles south of Japan,

830 miles southwest of Guam, 400 miles north of Papua New Guinea, and 950 miles southeast of the Philippines.

We are the Indigenous people of Belau, the traditional name by which we call our nation, now known as the Republic of Palau. In 1947, the United States assumed administration of

Palau under the auspices of the United Nations as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands following World War II. In 1982, Palau signed a compact of free association with the United States, which took effect on Oct. 1, 1994, codifying our independence.



Charmaine Bitlaol, Palau Ministry of Education specialist for English language, captures a video of Delina Kebekol, Palau Ministry of Education specialist for Palauan studies, as she models how to teach dual language lessons on colors to students in a kindergarten classroom. Photo by Adam Geller



Jay Watanabe, Palau Ministry of Education specialist for Palauan studies, creates a virtual PLC for first-year Palauan studies teachers in the Edthena Video Coaching platform, while Charmaine Bitlaol, Palau Ministry of Education specialist for English language, uploads videos of model lessons she has recorded of teachers for the video library. Photo by Diane Lauer

Because of this compact, the United States Department of Education supports Palau’s education, and our 18 schools follow its standards and policies. For example, our students learn English in addition to the Palauan language, thus all students are multilingual learners. Our students also strive to meet Common Core-aligned academic standards. Our students’ performance is measured by standardized assessments that provide critical data to principals, teachers, students, families, and our nation as a whole.

The mission of the Palau Ministry of Education is to ensure that our students will be successful in Palauan society and the world. Schools are the heart of our communities, reflecting the rich culture of our nation. They incorporate a unique blend of traditional values and modern

methodologies to support learning for our diverse and geographically dispersed student population.

We recognize the responsibility of ensuring that every student has the capability to thrive in a complex, globalized environment. To do so, our educators use video technology to capitalize on our cultural ways of learning while applying the rich body of research related to student and professional learning from around the world. The use of video for virtual learning, virtual coaching, and self-reflection enriches our educational landscape — and advances learning for our educators and students.

VIDEO COACHING INITIATIVE

Three years ago, we began working with video coaching, which aligns with Learning Forward’s focus on engaging

educators in continuous improvement, to support our principals. We contracted with an outside consultant who had experience using video for professional learning and teacher collaboration.

We selected the Edthena Video Coaching platform and began incorporating video into our coaching cycles, led by school principals who were paired with a curriculum specialist from the Palau Ministry of Education.

These coaching cycles were designed to help principals build their instructional leadership skills. The pairs led planning conversations with teachers, recorded classroom observations, then facilitated coaching conversations using the observations we captured to elicit new learning.

A year later, curriculum specialists and principals began using video

coaching to further augment coaching cycles through deep reflection and ongoing collaboration directly with teachers. The video coaching practices took hold quickly with our curriculum specialists.

First, we used short, targeted videos to demonstrate a specific instructional strategy. We continued with snapshots of lessons taught by teachers shared with specialists for the purpose of getting feedback. Now video is one of the best ways we can share best practices across our island nation, as our teachers do not always have the opportunity to visit other schools.

We found that video coaching enables principals and teachers to receive support and feedback from Ministry of Education specialists more frequently. Given Palau's geography, specialists may be located far away, prohibiting them from conducting regular on-site visits. However, asynchronous coaching allows both principals and teachers to collaborate with specialists, reflect on their practice, and receive valuable feedback at any time.

For principals, this feedback helps them build on the ways they deliver feedback to their teachers and supports their instructional leadership skills such as leading data-driven conversations around newly adopted student assessments. This feedback is extremely beneficial to early career teachers and teachers who receive subject-specific coaching. Beginning with principals and having them be active participants in this professional learning process has built momentum with teachers.

The Edthena platform allows all educators to record, share, and collaboratively review teaching practices remotely and asynchronously. Using a platform for video coaching and reflection provides opportunity for ongoing collaboration and professional learning.

Using recorded teaching segments helps us more quickly build a shared definition of collective efficacy, which is strongly correlated with accelerating student achievement (Hattie, 2012).

This process has also helped calibrate teaching expectations among the specialist, the teacher, and the school principal, creating a shared vision of what high-quality instruction looks like in our schools and across our nation.

ACCELERATING COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

Through this implementation, we immediately recognized the time-saving impact of using video, especially for the specialists working with principals and teachers. Some schools are only accessible by boat, so making frequent trips to every school is not often feasible. "We may have to plan a half- or full day of travel just to visit some of our schools," said Charmaine Bitlaol, Ministry of Education specialist for English language.

With video coaching, our specialists can record a video when visiting a school and analyze it multiple times for a future coaching conversation. They learned how powerful it is to record a video of themselves teaching a model lesson in one school and then share it with teachers at another school.

Delina Kebekol, Ministry of Education specialist for Palauan studies, describes how important this can be for teachers: "If there is a teacher who needs some ideas for lesson delivery, we can just take a video, share it with them, and they can watch it, review it, and do the lesson at their school."

We also learned video works equally well for sharing best practices between teachers in the same building. Tanya Patris, Ministry of Education specialist for English language, works with 9th-grade English language arts teachers in a professional learning community (PLC) format at Palau High School in central Koror, the largest city and home to about half of our country's population. "My teachers at Palau High School are right next door to our central office, so traveling is not an issue, but I can say video coaching saves us time and energy," she said.

Even when teachers in the same building collaborate in person, they

can't always teach and observe each other in real time. Video enables them to share their videos privately with one another or their coaches to receive feedback and ensure their teaching is anchored in best practices. "This encourages collaboration between teachers, and it increases their professionalism and pride in the profession because they pay attention to the details of teaching," said Patris.

SEEING OURSELVES IN RESEARCH-BASED INSTRUCTION

Early in implementation, it was evident that the video coaching platform paired with instructional coaching was going to be successful. Video is universally accessible since everyone has a phone in their pocket and knows how to take and share videos.

Our teachers and content specialists adapted to this strategy quickly and began using it immediately. We soon realized the use of video was more than an accelerator of professional learning (Baker et al., 2017). For us, video provides something incredibly precious. Video is perfectly aligned with the cultural learning practices we typically use as Palauan people, and it empowers us to become the narrators of our own learning as we see ourselves in the research-based practice.

As Palauans, we teach by demonstrating and modeling. We learn by seeing, observing, and doing. We need to see what it looks like to be able to understand what we are teaching so we can do it well. We especially like to communicate and share, as well as connect lessons to something familiar and meaningful by using examples to increase understanding.

Video coaching and feedback is responsive to our way of learning. As native Palauans and second-language learners ourselves, we can attest that this is culturally how we learn. We need pictures, examples, and landmarks to learn, and video provides this.

The video coaching process also makes learning feel safe for our

teachers. Teaching can feel private — it’s the teacher’s classroom, their set-up, and their routines — and video coaching is respectful of that. Using a secure platform enables teachers to see themselves, identify areas where they may need help, and request support and feedback in a safe and welcoming way.

THE VALUE OF NONEVALUATIVE PEER SUPPORT

“There’s comfort for teachers when they reflect on a video of their own teaching. It’s not imposing, it’s not evaluative,” said Sarah Sugiyama, principal of Meyuns Elementary School in Palau. “Teachers are able to see where they need help and where they can improve, and then work to make those changes. This gives them more ownership over their learning.”

“Video coaching provides a positive and friendly way to also give each other feedback,” said Linda Ngotel, Ministry of Education curriculum specialist for social studies. “I think for us as Pacific Islanders, we need to see teaching happening — whether it is a teaching strategy or practice — not just have a conversation.”

She added: “I really like being able to view a teacher’s video and see everyone’s feedback, whether it’s from a school team, us, or a principal.” We are finding that the entire process brings us closer together as an educational community. When sharing video becomes a norm, or a common practice, it doesn’t feel evaluative, it’s just what we do. That is what we are striving for, an active, reflective community that learns together.

Video allows us to take an active role in the rich array of education research from around the world. As Indigenous people, video offers us the opportunity to navigate and own our path forward. It matters that we see ourselves in the educational landscape. We are energized by how we can use advanced technologies like real-time video capture and virtual coaching to foster our own growth.

Specialist Patris explains it this

way: “As a Pacific Islander, when I read books about education, I can understand the words, but I feel like the books were written for a different culture. I can’t see that culture. But when I see a person who I can relate to teaching it, then I can build on that. I say to myself, ‘I can do this, I can try this because I can relate to the person I am watching.’”

BUILDING A VIDEO REPOSITORY

With the videos captured by Ministry of Education specialists, teachers, and principals we are developing a digital repository, called the Palauan Ministry of Education Video Library. It showcases videos of exemplary instruction in English, reading, social studies, science, math, and Palauan studies instruction. Since exemplary practice can happen at any time, educators can now capture videos on the fly and then share them with others.

Videos uploaded to the library are tagged by subject, grade level, and instructional strategy. The library enables educators to easily and securely access, search for, and share videos of teaching greatness across Palau. In one example, Charmaine Bitlaol recently captured a video of Delina Kebekol modeling how to teach a dual language lesson on colors to students in a kindergarten classroom.

Bitlaol is especially optimistic about the opportunities to foster indigenous research and build on the rich instructional practices already present in our country. “I hope that our video coaching practices and video library will allow us to generate our own local research and contribute to the field of Indigenous research,” she said. “While we value the insights of others and access to technical assistance, we are realizing how video can empower us to lead our own instructional discoveries.”

EXPANDING THE USE OF VIDEO

This work has led the Palau Ministry of Education to adopt the

mindset that video reflection helps all educators improve their practice. Moving forward, the ministry hopes to expand PLCs beyond the 9th-grade English language arts teacher cohort to other high school content areas and increase the use of video to engage teachers in peer-to-peer collaboration and feedback.

We see the potential for first-year Palauan studies teachers to receive support from their coaches and peers. With only one Palauan studies teacher per building, video makes it possible for Palauan studies teachers to be observed, receive feedback, collaborate, and build a community with fellow role-alike teachers across the country. As the only speakers of Palauan in the world, these teachers know that teaching and preserving Palauan language, history, and culture to students is critical.

Nothing seems impossible now that we use video to navigate our own professional growth. Our continued work, reflecting on ourselves by seeing ourselves, is the greatest gift we have given ourselves, part of our many efforts to ensure our children are truly successful in Palauan society and the world.

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Inside Learning Forward's global community



Tip O'Neill, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, famously said, "All politics is local," meaning that people experience policies, even national and international ones, in the context of their own communities and lives.

Educators know that all learning is local, too. Many best practices apply across very diverse settings, as this issue of *The Learning Professional* illustrates, but they must ultimately be applied in ways that are responsive to local contexts.

Learning Forward Affiliates foster local application of best practices in professional learning and are a vital part of building and maintaining Learning Forward's vibrant, diverse, and international community. Affiliates are branches of Learning Forward with deep local expertise and a commitment to equity and excellence in professional learning.

State and provincial affiliates build educators' and systems' capacity to design, facilitate, and assess high-quality professional learning that aligns to the Standards for Professional Learning and improves educator and student outcomes. They do this through a range of events and resources, including conferences, book studies with expert speakers, podcasts, tool kits, and videos.

Affiliates also work with Learning Forward to influence state and local policies and practices and advocate at all levels of government for sustained funding. Collaborating with state departments of education and other policymakers, they raise awareness about the impact professional learning can have on educators and students and offer resources and tools to collect data and measure impact.

Importantly, Learning Forward Affiliates provide an active community of like-minded colleagues and professional learning experts from around the world. They learn with and from each other and Learning Forward. They share lessons and insights from their own contexts that inform Learning Forward's work and resources.

Learning Forward has 24 active affiliates, including three outside of the U.S. *The Learning Professional* invited leaders of Learning Forward British Columbia, Learning Forward Ontario, and Learning Forward India to share highlights from their work and the role of standards-aligned professional learning in their local contexts. The commonalities and uniqueness of these three affiliates underscore the breadth and strengths of Learning Forward's global community of thoughtful and dedicated educators.



Learning Forward India

Affordable, quality professional learning puts teachers at the center

BY SANDEEP DUTT, RAJINDER PAL DEVGAN, NEETU KORANGA, AND KUNAL RAJPUROHIT

The National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020) aims to reshape India's academic landscape to develop global citizens rooted in local values, with teachers being the catalyst for school transformation. However, a recent report on the education workforce in India found that students lack sufficient access to quality teachers (Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, 2023). India needs better working conditions and affordable professional learning resources for teachers.

Addressing those needs is the goal of Learning Forward India, which was founded in 2015 by Sandeep Dutt. We aim to transform schooling in India through a focus on modeling and providing high-quality professional learning. We help children and teachers learn together through the Good Schools Alliance, a network of schools across India that works to empower learners for a brighter future.

As of 2024, 25 member schools are part of the growing Good Schools Alliance. Teachers from the alliance schools engage in personalized professional learning as well as a professional learning community across schools. Students join an online program that meets every Sunday to read, reflect, and build relationships.

We are committed to providing professional learning that is not only high-quality but also affordable for all teachers in India. The annual fee for the professional learning is INR 1100 (\$13

U.S.) so even educators with limited incomes can participate. In addition, the foundation provides scholarships to selected teachers. Expert mentors and coaches work pro bono with the Learning Forward India Foundation to facilitate high-quality learning.

ABOUT OUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The professional learning program provides custom-built learning for each participant or team to match their needs, with the teachers' happiness at the core. It promotes a holistic development practice for educators, enriching their teaching methods and engagement through a blend of activities:

1. **Reading and discussion:** The learning modules based on books help teachers improve the classroom environment.
2. **Individual/group assignments:** The social and emotional learning-based assignments focus on collaborative learning and teacher-student relationships inside a classroom.
3. **Writing:** Teachers are encouraged to write and publish their thoughts online. It helps teachers build their professional writing, language, and communication skills.
4. **Speaking:** Teachers are encouraged to communicate and share their experiences on Learning Forward India's podcast.

5. **Progressive teachers'**

community: The focus of this community is to have an open platform where teachers can share best practices and updates from education sectors across the globe.

One of the focus areas is e-learning because many teachers are not digitally literate (UNESCO, 2023). We encourage teachers to use open educational resources, and we provide free digital tools like a learning assessment management platform and Blogger to learn, track, and share progress.

Teachers learn how to navigate the new technology supported by coaches, paying close attention to using technology flexibly and in ways that promote diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. We use open source resources and social media, using the hashtag #HappyTeachers.

We also offer additional opportunities for teachers to connect with one another to learn and grow. For example, a cohort of 63 teachers and coaches meets online every Saturday for a program we call Masterclass.

APPLYING THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

We ground our work in the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2022). In the table on p. 46, we explain how Learning Forward India applies the standards to the professional learning we facilitate and to our internal operations.

Standards frame	Standard	How Learning Forward India addresses the standards
Rigorous Content for Each Learner The essential adult learning content that leads to improved student outcomes	Equity Practices	Our professional learning programs are affordable to all in our country.
	Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction	Learning Assessment Management Platform helps manage the operations and the learning programs.
	Professional Expertise	Coaches and passionate educators help strengthen the professional learning communities.
Transformational Processes Process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets	Equity Drivers	Diversity, inclusion, and belonging are at the core of all our professional learning and school programs.
	Evidence	We collect data about participation as a measure of engagement. Our learning community consists of over 500 members from 25 schools that reach over 25,000 students. Multiple graduates return to volunteer, which demonstrates the joy and success of their learning.
	Learning Designs	Collaborative learning is one of the research-based learning designs we use to explore core values like happiness, respect, and humility.
	Implementation	On Saturdays, teachers meet with the school improvement coach to collaborate and get feedback, a key part of implementing professional learning.
Conditions for Success Aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning	Equity Foundations	Our offerings are affordable and include micro-learning that is accessible to large numbers of people.
	Culture of Collaborative Inquiry	Our professional learning includes a focus on collaborative reading, reflection, and relationships.
	Leadership	The Teacher’s Academy graduates are our champions and brand ambassadors. They experience and then advocate for high-quality professional learning.
	Resources	Open educational resources are available online and via Telegram. We share news, updates, and resources for building professional learning communities.

TEACHERS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Improving the conditions of teacher professional learning in India can be critical and challenging, but we are taking steps in the right direction and putting teachers at the center, as the agents of change. We will continue to deepen our work as we grow.

Learning Forward India has a robust development plan and is committed to onboarding 100 schools and program partners by 2025, building capacity to serve 100,000 students, and helping empower over 2,500 teachers.

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Learning Forward British Columbia

Conversations inspire innovative, transformative practices

BY SUE ELLIOT AND AUDREY HOBBS JOHNSON

The mission of Learning Forward British Columbia is to create professional learning opportunities that focus on improving student engagement, learning, and achievement in the province of British Columbia. We do this by fostering and facilitating powerful cross-role, cross-district conversations to inspire innovative, transformative practices.

With each conversation, we listen, reflect, and stay open to change so we can apply the lessons learned as we continue our work. We commit to listening to our students, getting out of their way, and supporting them. We challenge ourselves to go beyond the borders of our country, province, district, schools, and classrooms.

Our affiliate invites teachers, administrators, board office staff, and superintendents (our district CEOs) to step beyond the borders of their associations, and the roles that each plays, to create the most engaging possible environment to support students in their learning journey. We aim to encourage leadership within and among all roles and to center student voice and agency.

Our work in professional learning is to ensure that our system aligns with a global context and works toward transformation. Learning beyond our borders is a fundamental aspect of what we do. For example, Learning Forward British Columbia is informed by the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 agenda, which was adopted in 2015 “to set goals and develop a common language for teaching and learning” (OECD, n.d.). It uses the metaphor of a compass to emphasize the need for

students to learn to navigate through unfamiliar contexts. Core foundations for 2030 are the fundamental skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that are prerequisites for further learning.

Learning Forward British Columbia is also guided by the goals of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, whose strategic plan outlines priorities that include Indigenous education, global competencies, and postsecondary education sustainability, and by the British Columbia Ministry of Education curriculum (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d., British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.a).

The curriculum builds on literacy and numeracy and is driven by the Core Competencies, a set of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need to engage in deep lifelong learning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.b). Our work is also guided by the First Peoples Principles of Learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, n.d.), a set of learning principles specific to First Peoples.

National and global perspectives have historically informed our lens on education in British Columbia. Working with leaders across Canada, including those from other provinces and territories, produces a Pan-Canadian perspective and stretches our thinking, while at the same time allowing us to operate in the context of our province.

In 2023 and 2024, we have engaged with Learning Forward Ontario in two cross-Canada conversations involving multiple roles

and perspectives. One conversation focused on how the learning needs of students post-COVID-19 are driving professional learning practices, and another focused on the role education must play in preparing our students for the reality of an AI world.

We nurture an international perspective in many ways. For example, three of Learning Forward's Annual Conferences have been held in Vancouver, and they have served as a catalyst to pull together and collaborate with our education partners both locally and globally. Collaborating with educators from around the world helped us and our partners deepen our global perspective.

At the same time, these convenings have helped us strengthen collaboration within our province. British Columbia has strong education organizations that address the needs of their members, including trustees, superintendents, secretary treasurers, principals, and teachers.

The learning does not end at the conclusions of the events, however. For example, since the 2016 conference, we have followed the work of Pasi Salhburg, an author and professor of educational leadership who was a speaker at the conference, and are encouraged by his work at Melbourne University in Australia in finding ways to build high-performance systems, especially listening to student and teacher voices.

FOCUS AREAS

An ongoing focus of our learning opportunities has been to work with districts on the truth and reconciliation process in Canada. The Truth and

Reconciliation Commission was formed in 2008 to investigate the full extent of the harm caused by the forced displacement of Indigenous children into residential schools and to propose solutions and prevent future abuse of Indigenous communities. The commission developed actionable policy recommendations meant to aid the healing process (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Our learning opportunities with districts often lead to powerful conversations that inspire our ongoing work. For example, one district recently hosted a hybrid session that was held in person and on Zoom for educators throughout the province. Breakout discussion groups were held at the in-person site, at a second site where 30 people engaged in the session virtually, and online for those who joined from their own remote locations.

The session began with an Indigenous welcome, including a welcome to their territory, thanks to the participants for coming together to move the truth and reconciliation conversation forward, and drumming. The facilitators expressed the hope that the learning experiences for Indigenous children would be more welcoming and encouraging than it had been in the past.

In the online breakout group, participants raised several questions that evolved into a conversation on cultural bias and the importance of addressing it in the truth and reconciliation process. It was a reminder of why sustaining ongoing learning opportunities is essential.

To hold us to account, each district facilitates equity scans — “a collective and collaborative decision-making process for school districts to enter into a genuine and meaningful self-assessment dialogue about the experience of education for Indigenous learners and to respond in strategic ways to create conditions for success” (Government of British Columbia,

2024). This process encourages us to explore how we encourage educators to welcome every student with respect and the willingness to create a welcoming rich learning environment for every child.

Overarching this are the OECD parameters and metrics, a tool providing opportunity for reflection and goal setting. Learning Forward British Columbia highlights districts that are making progress in addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s goals and improving the graduation rate of Indigenous students.

Another current focus for Learning Forward British Columbia is facilitating conversations about AI practices in education in our province. In our January 2024 cross-Canada conversation with Learning Forward Ontario, we hosted a panel conversation about AI and the role education must play in preparing our students for the reality that AI is a part of our world.

We reached out to education partners in British Columbia and Ontario, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, and others to encourage varied perspectives on teachers’ and students’ needs. A district leader, district vice principal of innovation and technology, a classroom teacher, and a student offered their perspectives on the promises and perils as well as the questions they are asking related to AI.

We are following up on this conversation, with plans to convene again to discuss next steps in exploring AI. We are focused on supporting educators and students to develop agency and ensure they are well-prepared for a changing global context.

REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

As we continually reflect on our work, we remain focused on creating ongoing provocative conversations to ensure that our system works toward transformation. We believe

improvement alone will not produce the changes needed to give our students the skills they need to be successful in their adult lives.

By engaging voices across boundaries — whether province, country, classroom, school, or school district — we have the potential to prepare and support our educators and students to be successful within a global context.

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Learning Forward Ontario

Clear goals and a commitment to equity improve professional practice

BY BEATE PLANCHE

Learning Forward Ontario, one of two Canadian affiliates, hosts virtual events and discussions that are responsive to our community's needs. We share many goals and aspirations with our American colleagues, but as an international affiliate, our work is directly influenced by our context, and as a result, we have a different association with our fellow educators.

Ontario has a centralized public school system directed by the provincial government, and all of our school boards use a common curriculum and standardized summative reporting practices, which we can access online. School boards differ in terms of complexity and size, but we are all working toward the same learning outcomes and have the same learning intentions for our students and staff.

The Conservative government in Ontario has encouraged a back-to-basics approach with an emphasis on core skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. School boards are also involved in efforts to increase student engagement and well-being, including student and staff mental health.

What Learning Forward Ontario, and Ontario educators generally, share with Learning Forward is an emphasis on creating a culture of collaboration, inquiry, and strong professional practice. We focus on having a clear driver, goal, and a desired outcome in our work.

Another area we share with Learning Forward is a commitment to promoting equity. The research behind Learning Forward's Standards

for Professional Learning is therefore highly relevant for our work.

Educators attend Learning Forward Ontario events and discussions as individuals, rather than as representatives of a particular school board. To shape our learning opportunities, we survey those who engage with us about their interests and needs.

Our board of directors is in a rebuilding phase as we address the post-COVID-19 challenges that have affected education systems worldwide. In the past year, we have welcomed many new directors and associate members, who attend six to eight board meetings per year. They have also aligned themselves with project work that interests them via subcommittees.

SUBCOMMITTEE FOCUS AREAS

Current projects and focus areas include the following.

The Early Years subcommittee focuses on supporting educators in kindergarten and the early years. Ontario's literacy practices have shifted this year to more structured literacy for students.

Members of this subcommittee organized an online virtual conference in February during which board members implemented professional learning in self-regulation, the role of play, and concepts of strong early literacy pedagogy. A follow-up conference is planned for the 2024-25 school year.

The Supporting Professional Learning Through Inquiry

subcommittee is working on building educator capacity and developing resources that will be accessible on the Learning Forward Ontario website. Highlighting the connections between inquiry and equity to drive school improvement is a goal for this group and may involve future virtual or face-to-face learning opportunities.

Our most recently developed subcommittee focuses on the promise and perils of AI in education. Members are organizing an online learning institute for October 2024. Ontario educators and leaders will be presenters, and there will be time for participant sharing and discussions. The goal for this learning institute is to learn from each other's emerging experiences with AI and how its place in pedagogy can be effective for educators and students.

COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATION

Collaboration is a staple for us as an organization, and we work within and across our province. Locally, we collaborate with the Ontario Principals' Council and the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario to engage in three article studies together each year. Our sessions have a leadership focus. This year's topics have included leading in times of transformational change, trauma-informed leadership, and students as agents of change.

Beyond our province, we collaborate with Learning Forward British Columbia. To date, we have organized two virtual gatherings on the topics of refocusing professional learning post-COVID-19 and on the

LEARNING FORWARD AFFILIATES

To learn more about or join your local Learning Forward Affiliate, visit learningforward.org/affiliates
If you are interested in starting an affiliate in your area, contact machel.mills-miles@learningforward.org

emerging influence of AI in schools and school life. Panelists were from both provinces, and participants were from many different jurisdictions across Canada. We look forward to continuing these conversations with Learning Forward British Columbia in the future.

RESPONSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO LEARNING NEEDS

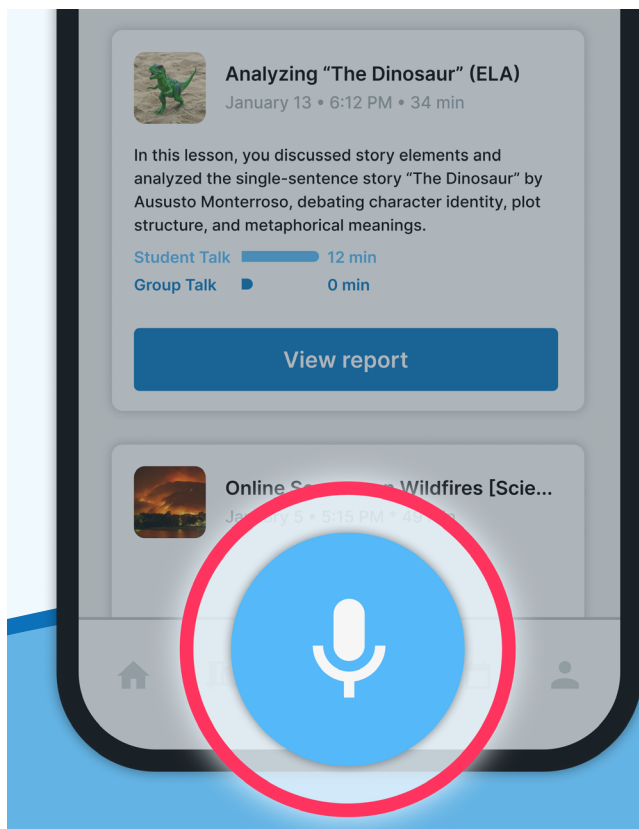
We consider our work to be emergent and responsive to the areas that our Ontario participants deem to be important, and we aim to make

it widely accessible. Ongoing surveys of board members and participants are a key part of this. In addition, we have relaunched our website (www.lfontario.com), and we continue to explore how to use social media to connect with participants and promote learning opportunities.

As educators, Learning Forward Ontario members and associates understand how important it is for each of us to take responsibility for leading learning for ourselves as well as others. As Learning Forward articulates, rigorous content for each learner,

transformational learning processes, and attention to conditions for success underpin opportunities for high-quality professional learning. We believe this orientation is in the best interest of all educators, no matter which country they call home.

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IDEAS

STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning programs in two states demonstrate the impact on student learning. In New Jersey, students' reading proficiency has been steadily climbing to 90% with improved literacy curricula and professional learning for teachers (p. 52), and in Missouri, educators report that a program to develop principals' leadership skills is improving student achievement (p. 57).





Literacy success story highlights the power of professional learning

BY JEFNA M. COHEN

Principal Syeda Carter has a literacy success story to tell. It's a tale of determination, learning, and overcoming obstacles that leads to achieving one of the most important goals of education: ensuring every child can read.

At the root of this story is Carter's participation in the Learning Forward Academy, a multiyear, high-quality professional learning experience. When Carter, principal of John Fenwick Academy in Salem, New Jersey, began the academy in 2013, the percentage of 2nd graders in the school reading at

grade level hovered around 40%.

Carter set an ambitious goal: 90% of 2nd graders attending for at least two years would be reading at or above grade level on entering 3rd grade. She devoted herself to learning how to achieve it. In 2023, Carter's students met that goal, and she is determined to



Syeda Carter, principal of John Fenwick Academy in Salem, New Jersey, stands beside welcoming bulletin boards in the school's main hallway. Photo by Robert Thomas

help them maintain that high level of achievement going forward.

To get where they are now, Carter and her colleagues made a serious investment of time and significant changes in the pre-K-2 school. They adopted a new curriculum and an assessment system, integrated coaching into their work, refreshed the school's library collection, and put as many books into students' hands as possible.

They pushed back against chronic absenteeism and tardiness, highlighted parent education, and steadily developed a school culture of reading. All of those efforts were grounded in the educators' commitment to continually learning and improving.

How has she maintained her unwavering dedication to this literacy goal over many years? "I've been in education for 31 years," Carter says. "When the call is strong, you do everything possible to ensure these kids move."

THE POWER OF RAISING EXPECTATIONS

When Carter became the first Black principal of John Fenwick Academy in 2010, the student population was 87% Black. She was committed to working against assumptions that the students weren't capable. She started with a goal to improve literacy, motivated by the high probability that if students are not reading at or above grade level by 3rd grade, they may not graduate from high school (Lesnick et al., 2010).

One of the key things she did was raise the reading assessment expectations for students. This meant an increase in the difficulty it took to achieve a reading level, differing from how the school had previously classified its young scholars.

Many staff were not pleased with this new determination because it meant every adult would have to work harder to meet it. Some left in Carter's first years as principal, but she

was undaunted. She built a learning community among the staff who remained with the new staff, giving all educators the opportunity to engage in learning rounds.

They visited colleagues' classrooms and provided feedback to each other to promote best practices around the district's look-fors in classroom instruction: higher-order thinking questions, think time, student engagement, and feedback.

To motivate her fellow educators the following school year, Carter opened her staff meeting with the story of a jumping challenge that her daughter played with her Uncle Cliff. Uncle Cliff would raise his hand, and the 5-year-old would jump to it, pushing herself higher with each attempt. Then Uncle Cliff lifted his hand higher than the girl had ever reached. Her daughter quickly formed a plan. She ran, jumped on the couch, and tagged his hand, surprising everyone.



Carter holds examples of engaging, quality picture books that reflect a diversity of people and stories. “Students must see themselves in the literature,” she said.
Photo by Tyrus Davis

Carter’s point: “If you don’t raise the expectations, you don’t give them a chance to challenge or reach those goals. And we got 67% of our students at the independent reading level the next year.”

THE ACADEMY EXPERIENCE

Carter knew that raising expectations was just the beginning of the school’s efforts to universal student literacy, and she wanted to learn as much as she could to help her teachers get every student to proficiency.

In 2013, Carter applied and was accepted to the Learning Forward Academy, which brings together educator leaders with expert coaches to create successful and sustainable change in their educational systems. Over the professional learning program’s 2½ years, participants learn about and implement several system improvement tools, such as root cause analysis and theory of change, and work together on their individual problems of practice.

At the core of the academy is

an understanding that educational improvement is iterative and requires continuous assessment, adaptation, and refinement, as well as ongoing learning among all educators in a system.

Carter’s academy learning turned out to be foundational to her career as an educator and to reaching her goal of getting 90% of 2nd-grade students to grade-level reading. It allowed her to apply and deepen her existing educational knowledge and skills while building new ones.

“I had this fire,” Carter says. “I had this passion, but I didn’t know how to connect things, like a big puzzle. I had the edges, but that middle was still developing. Learning Forward put those pieces in the middle and taught me how to connect them.”

She credits Dawn Wilson, one of her academy coaches, with giving her the tools to describe the work she was already doing and go even further with it. “Dawn gave me the language and helped me complete the puzzle pieces I didn’t see,” she said, adding that

Wilson’s coaching “pushes you out of your comfort zone and challenges you with a soft voice.” Carter values her relationship with Wilson, a friendship that has lasted through the years.

ALIGNING THE CURRICULUM

Focusing on the literacy problem of practice in the academy helped Carter and her school take the next steps to improving student achievement: a new all-encompassing curriculum with a fresh assessment system. Previously, the school used a writer’s workshop approach with Lucy Calkins’ materials and a Fountas and Pinnell assessment program. “We had a lot of teachers all over the place,” Carter said. “They were grabbing and pulling from here and there.”

The school adopted the American Reading Company’s ARC Core, which integrates explicit foundational literacy skills instruction to build phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. “It gives us a common denominator,” Carter says.

With it, teachers have a clear instructional road map for science, social studies, literary genres, and writing across the disciplines. The school also uses the American Reading Company’s Independent Reading Level Assessment for literacy assessments. “We wanted something everyone would use that mapped to the standards,” Carter says.

Alignment and coherence were key for developing consistency throughout the school. To become skilled with the new curriculum, teachers participated in three days of professional learning over the summer with the American Reading Company and were paid for their time.

During the school year, additional professional learning was embedded in faculty and grade-level meetings, where Carter shared videos of her teachers assessing students using the Independent Reading Level Assessment. She also provided time for teachers to share strategies and activities aligned with the new curriculum.

About the Learning Forward Academy

The Learning Forward Academy is Learning Forward's flagship deep learning experience, committed to increasing educator and leader capacity and improving results for students in the ever-changing landscape of education. For over 30 years, the academy has supported the problem-based learning of teachers, teacher leaders, instructional coaches, principals, regional leaders, superintendents, and others whose jobs involve supporting the learning of other adults and students. For more information, visit learningforward.org/academy.

Sustained professional learning was essential for teachers to shift to more effective reading instruction because the approach was very different from what they had been doing previously. American Reading Company coaches continued to support curriculum implementation. "We had a coach come twice a month to be with (different) grade levels but also go into the classrooms," Carter says. Coaches also worked with teachers to demonstrate how to assess the students with the Independent Reading Level Assessment and enter student data into the online performance management system.

Coaching became an ongoing priority for the school. The school continues to engage teachers in coaching through a combination of a Title I-funded expert reading specialist and American Reading Company-provided coaching.

MONITORING PROGRESS

With new instruction underway, Carter and her teachers were ready to monitor progress and make adjustments as needed. After analyzing student data from the Independent Reading Level Assessment, the coaches and teachers realized they weren't where they wanted to be and needed to make significant changes in how teachers worked with students.

The assessment groups students into three categories of performance: emergency, at risk, and proficient or above. "What we found when we looked at the data was that the teacher would

meet *more* with the students that were proficient or above," Carter says. "It's easier to meet with them, but the at-risk group was not getting the time and support needed to accelerate reading growth. We needed that to shift."

The educators worked toward the goal of moving at least 40% of students from the emergency category to at risk and that same percentage from at risk to proficient or above. To do so, teachers have to know explicitly what every student needs to learn and meet more frequently with students in lower-performing reading groups.

Around the same time, an external equity audit by the New Jersey Network of Superintendents indicated that Carter needed to commit to implementing professional learning for her staff on how to ask students more higher-order thinking questions, engage students, and provide feedback that would allow students to improve learning skills for future lessons.

Carter set about honing her school's professional learning. She gave educators collaboration time to develop reading assessment inter-rater reliability and shared expectations. Using extended common planning periods and grade-level meetings, teachers could also spend one-on-one time with coaches to assist with assessments and planning for instruction.

With support from the coaches, teachers adjusted their reading group meeting schedules to make this shift. Coaches also worked with teachers on the instructional practices that needed improvement.

Priorities Carter learned through the Learning Forward Academy provided her with the guidance to make these big shifts in curriculum, assessments, and professional learning. She modeled leadership by being willing to share data and develop strategies to assist teachers in improving student achievement. Encouraging rigorous lessons, teacher accountability, reflecting on practice, and, most importantly, being visible in the classrooms added to the instructional improvement.

COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

Once the new curriculum was in place, one of the largest obstacles to achieving the reading goal was school attendance rates. Chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and the high student mobility rate hindered student success.

The school is in a high-poverty area where many residents' housing situations change frequently. Many students don't stay for a full year, Carter says, and about 32% of K-2 students missed 18 or more days in 2022-23, while 27% were late on 18 or more days.

To help families understand the need for consistent, on-time attendance, Carter showed slides at back-to-school night illustrating the academic differences between children who attended school consistently for two years and those who did not. Only 39% of students with 18 or more absences could read at or above grade-level proficiency versus 73% of students with good attendance. "If you bring



Carter checks in on two students working on the Waterford reading program.
Photo by Robert Thomas

them to my teachers, I promise your children will succeed,” Carter told the families.

One attendance improvement strategy that worked was to host surprise early morning all-school celebrations, sometimes with a DJ and dancing. When word got out, students didn’t want to miss out. “We had it on a Friday. The next Friday, we had 99% of the kids in school,” Carter says.

The pre-K-2 students depend on their parents for transportation, and Carter says, “It’s strategic because the kids become our advocates, begging their parents to get there and celebrate.”

Another strategy is attendance awards that encourage teamwork. Classes work to spell out the word “attendance,” one letter for each of the 10 months of school. “If students have 85% or more attendance, you color (the letter) in.” At the end of each month, Carter and her vice principal visit classes that met the goal with noisemakers and hand out attendance bracelets.

BUILDING A LASTING CULTURE OF READING

Threading through Carter’s work are other important initiatives that have contributed to achieving her schoolwide reading goal. One is her attention to building relationships with her staff and families. This includes fostering relationships between teachers and

students’ families to establish trust and rapport between them.

Building relationships leads to an openness to learn, so when the staff talk with parents about the importance of reading and what early reading behaviors look like, the community is more open to receiving this information, Carter said.

With the school community, Carter has created a culture of reading where one didn’t exist. Teachers challenge their students to make reading-level goals and chart their progress. This way, students are aware of their current levels and expected end-of-the-year reading-level goals.

Today, the reading culture manifests in ways big and small. Books can be found everywhere around the school. When students are waiting in the hallway for the restroom, teachers have crates of books on hand for them to peruse. Every summer, Carter makes sure students have collections of books to take home.

TIME TO CELEBRATE

As Carter and her team kept their focus on on-grade reading by the end of 2nd grade, they saw student proficiency go up, but reaching the reading goal would take time and persistence. At the end of the 2022-23 school year, nearly 90% of students completing 2nd grade met or exceeded

grade-level expectations in reading — a significant increase from the 40% when Carter began as principal. Carter brought the staff together to mark the accomplishment.

Even though 13 years had passed since her time in the Learning Forward Academy, one of the first people Carter contacted was her academy coach, Dawn Wilson. “I was literally in tears. I had to call Dawn,” she said. Wilson remembers the phone call well. “She was elated,” Wilson said.

Carter and her staff keep working, learning, and leading because they know that ensuring all students are reading proficiently is not a one-time accomplishment. Carter stays closely connected to Learning Forward and has not missed a Learning Forward Annual Conference since her first one in 2013 because, she says, it helps her stay current in the field and connect with other learning leaders, colleagues, and friends.

In 2019, her academy experience came full circle when she signed on as a coach for a new cohort of academy members. “I’m always hungry and thirsty for knowledge. Learning Forward fills that void,” she says. Carter has also expanded her learning to doctoral studies.

“Our challenge now is to keep that (high achievement) trend and to sustain that over time,” she says of her school. She’s already thinking about placing the right person in her role to ensure the work continues when she retires someday. “It’s just too much work to go backwards,” she said.

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Missouri students benefit from principals' leadership development

BY PAUL KATNIK

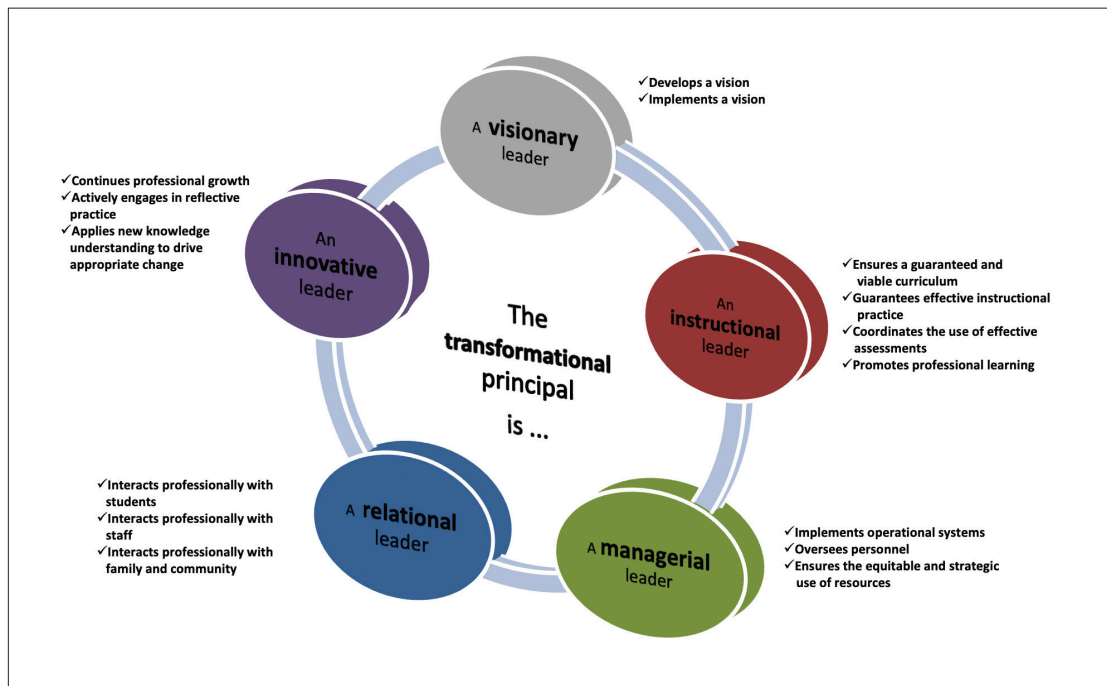
With targeted leadership support, Missouri principals are staying in their jobs longer and having a positive impact on student achievement. That's according to annual evaluations over the past five years of the Missouri Leadership

Development System (MLDS), a multiyear, multistakeholder effort to grow the state's school leaders. As opposed to a one-time program, MLDS is a systemic approach to supporting principals and assistant principals at all levels of experience. Even through the tough years of the COVID-19 pandemic, participating principals

felt connected, supported, and able to weather the challenges facing schools.

Eight years ago, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education came together with the state's leadership associations, regional service centers, and higher education institutions to act on research about the importance of school

MISSOURI LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (MLDS)



leadership. The Wallace Foundation had funded and published a synthesis of two decades of research on leadership, which found that principals have a measurable impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004).

As the foundation has continued to support research on leadership, we have learned that the impact is even larger than originally thought (Grissom et al., 2021). Principals not only matter — they matter a lot. One of the major findings of the latest review was that moving principals from average to above average performance gives every student in a school three extra months of academic gain. It also creates better school culture and climate for all students, staff, and parents.

The authors of the report wrote, “It’s difficult to imagine an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve leadership” (Grissom et al., 2021, p. xiv).

In Missouri, we have made that investment, using federal Title IIA funds, and are seeing the returns grow every year. Title IIA is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the U.S.’s main source of federal funding for professional learning, and it includes a 3% set-aside that states can use to support leaders’ learning and development. With that funding, we have been able to develop, implement, and evaluate a system of support and facilitated learning opportunities that ensure principals have what they need to lead effective teaching and learning in their schools.

As Margie Vandeven, Missouri’s commissioner of education, said, we can either “let trial and error serve as the lead instructor, or we can be more intentional.” Vandeven added, “Through the implementation of the Missouri Leadership Development System, we choose to cultivate improved leadership practice by

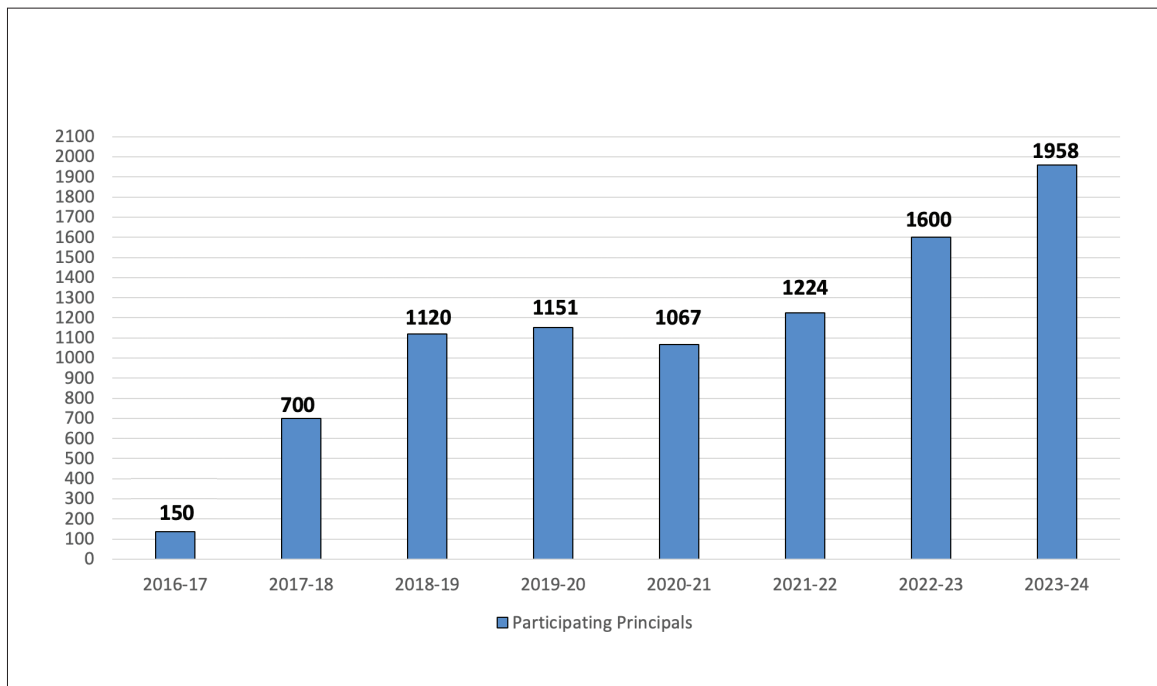
engaging our principals in relevant and meaningful learning over the course of their entire career” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020, p. 2).

ABOUT MLDS

MLDS was developed by the state education agency in collaboration with a number of partners, including both of Missouri’s principal associations, the superintendents association, the higher education association, and regional service centers, with support and collaboration from the teacher associations and the school board association.

MLDS builds five connected domains of transformational leadership, which summarize the main roles a principal must assume to effectively lead a school that is focused on teaching and learning. Principals need to wear a lot of different hats, often simultaneously, and MLDS aims

PRINCIPALS PARTICIPATING IN MLDS



to make sure our leaders can wear and balance all those hats. The five domains are:

- Visionary leadership
- Instructional leadership
- Innovative leadership
- Managerial leadership
- Relational leadership

Each domain is broken down into more detailed competencies, which have been cross-walked with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. (See figure on p. 58.) These are similar to the domains found to be important in research about principal pipelines funded by The Wallace Foundation, including the importance of leader standards, high-quality preparation for principal candidates, aligned evaluation systems, and the importance of supervision, mentoring, and coaching (Gates et al., 2019).

The federal funds allow us to support a team of specialists, organized in nine regional hubs throughout the

state, to facilitate learning about the domains and competencies, facilitate networking, and mentor principals.

The system provides four levels of learning and support for principals at all stages of development. Some principals from the original cohort that started eight years ago continue participating to continually grow their skills. The levels are:

- Aspiring (principal candidates)
- Emerging (Year 1 or 2 MLDS content)
- Developing (Year 3 or 4 MLDS content)
- Transformational (Year 5+ MLDS content)

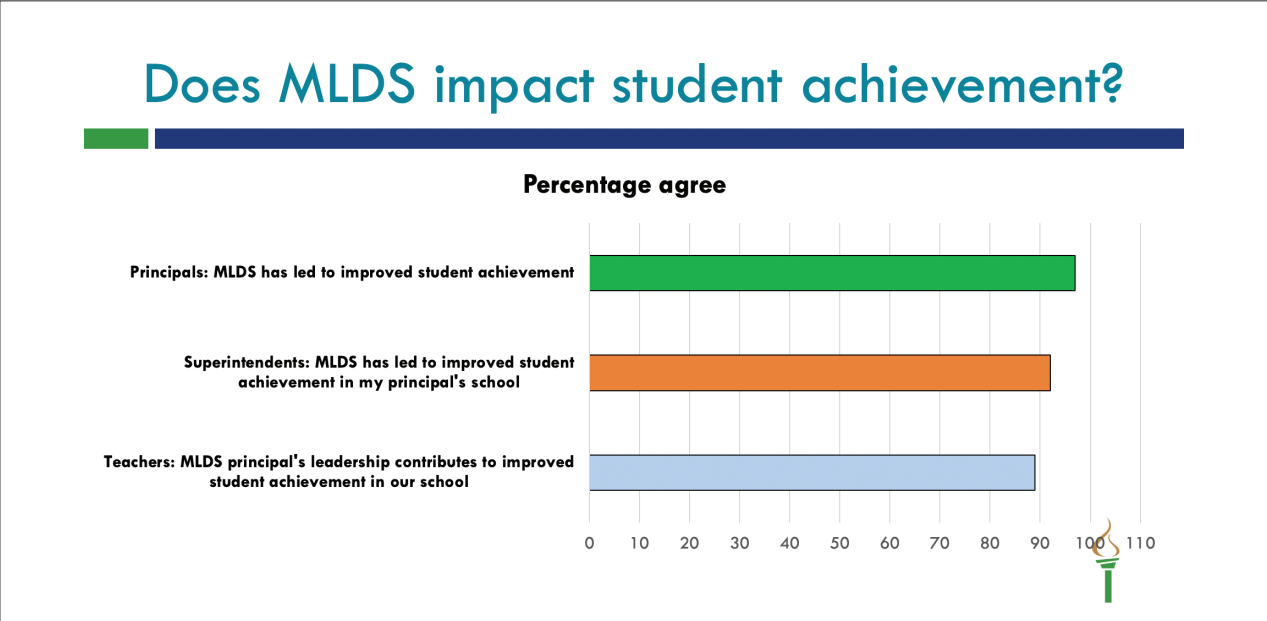
In addition to the learning and networking for current principals, we have embedded the MLDS components into multiple policy areas in the state to create a cohesive system. These include our state standards for principals, principal preparation coursework at Missouri universities,

performance assessment for principal candidates, principal certification language and requirements, the state's mentoring requirements, the state's evaluation model, and the microcredentials that principals can obtain for upgrading areas of principal certification.

This systemic approach and the collective ownership it inspires among all partners are key to scaling, sustaining, and succeeding with our leadership development efforts because we know that a one-off program cannot achieve the transformation students need.

GOING TO SCALE

MLDS is built on the belief that all principals need and deserve support and on the recognition that scale is essential for making a difference for all students at all schools. Before MLDS, our state ran an annual leadership academy program that was popular



and successful but only reached about 250 principals a year, or less than 10% of school leaders in the state. We also saw that principal turnover was too high. We recognized that we weren't moving the needle on teacher practice or student achievement with those numbers.

Our vision for MLDS was to change that and make leadership development universal. Every year, we are getting closer to that goal. Over the past eight years, there has been a steady increase in participation in MLDS, even through the years of the pandemic. (See graph on p. 59.) In 2023, the vast majority of districts' principals and assistant principals (87%) participated in MLDS, along with 38% of charter school principals.

This saturation is important because it is clear that common language across schools and districts is a necessary component for school improvement, yet it's very difficult to

accomplish. MLDS has allowed us to create common leadership language so that when a school or district loses a principal and hires a new one, that principal will bring their MLDS experience and leadership skill with them. That creates consistency for schools, teachers, and students and makes everyone more likely to succeed. This occurs regardless of whether the principal is a veteran or novice leader because MLDS content is being taught in each of the 23 principal preparation programs in our state and across veteran principals' levels of experience.

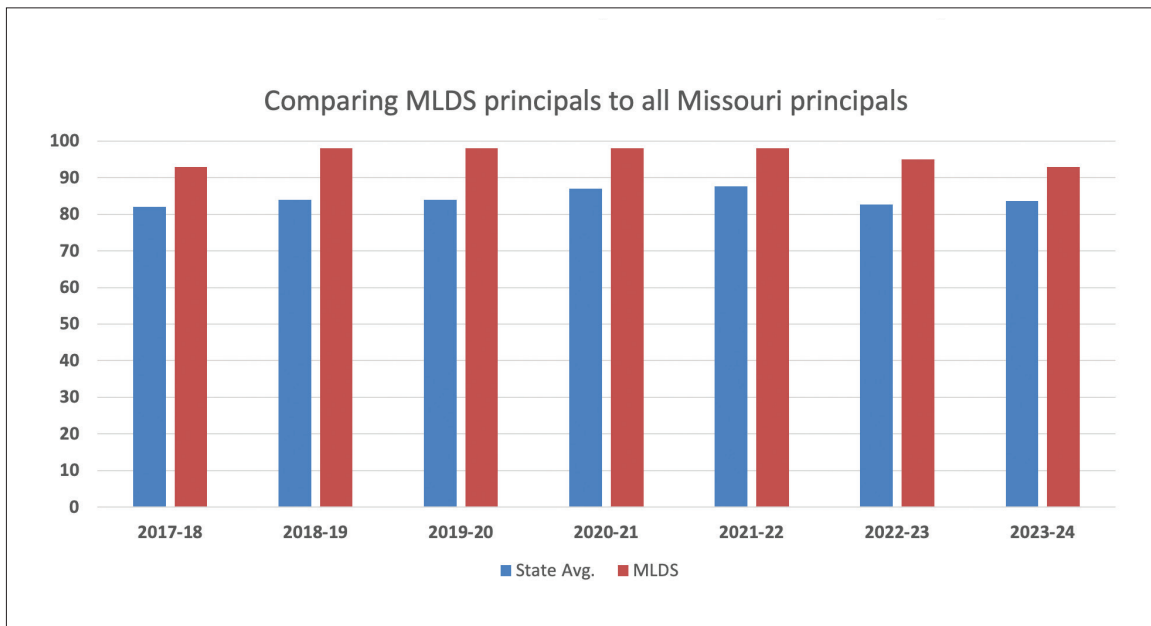
RESULTS: HIGHER STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND PRINCIPAL RETENTION

We conduct an evaluation of MLDS every year, and results can be found at dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-development/missouri-leadership-development-system. In the most recent evaluation,

from 2023, researchers conducted surveys of 270 MLDS principals and 70 superintendents whose principals participated. They also conducted interviews with 55 people and conducted document reviews of MLDS materials. Through external evaluations, we have also gathered data from hundreds of teachers who are in schools that have an MLDS principal.

We pay close attention to the connection between principal practice and student learning. Although we recognize that it can take years for professional learning to change practice and ultimately impact student learning, we are beginning to see some signs of that impact in our data. More than 90% of principals, 90% of superintendents, and nearly 90% of teachers who are involved in and connected to MLDS believe the program makes a positive contribution to student achievement. (See graph above.)

RETENTION RATES OF MLDS PRINCIPALS



Survey and interview data also provide detail about how MLDS is leading to improvement.

Between 90% and 100% of principals who participated in MLDS say that the program helps them strengthen their leadership practices, is relevant to their needs, and helps them grow as professionals. More than 95% say that the program makes clear connections between leadership skills and student learning and focuses on research-based leadership practices.

Similarly high percentages of superintendents who had a principal participating in MLDS say that it strengthens principals' instructional leadership practices, makes their principals better school leaders, and supports the growth of school leaders all across the state.

Between 80% and 90% of teachers feel that MLDS has helped their principals support them and students effectively. They reported

that their principals' leadership practices strengthen classroom instruction and contribute to improved student achievement and that, because of MLDS, their principal provides them with constructive feedback that helps them be better teachers and builds positive relationships with students and staff.

Another important indicator of success is that principals who participate in MLDS are more likely to stay in their jobs than those who do not participate. Improving principal retention rates is one of our primary goals because we know that principal turnover has a negative impact on schools, teachers, and students (Blad, 2023; Cieminski & Asmus, 2023).

The past seven consecutive years of data have shown that the retention rates of MLDS principals exceed the state's average retention rates by over 10 percentage points each of

those years. (See graph above.) Even more strikingly, we find that, due to the large number of principals now participating in MLDS, we are having a positive impact on the state's overall average principal retention rate. These were the system-side improvements, the needles we had hoped to move, by developing the state's leadership development system and taking it to scale.

These findings are getting noticed. In summer 2022, the state of Missouri participated in a Title IIA audit and received a commendation from the U.S. Department of Education based on the MLDS data. The commendation cited the ongoing growth and reach of the program as well as the fact that the program is grounded in research, such as the review by Jason Grissom and colleagues, and evaluation data, which we use to continually refine and adjust the services.

IDEAS

NEXT STEPS

Our work is not done. Our goal is to have all 3,500 principals and assistant principals in Missouri engaged in MLDS, and we are making encouraging progress toward that goal. We are also working to meet the ever-evolving needs of students and schools.

In September 2022, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a three-year SEED grant to the state of Missouri and the Community Training and Assistance Center to expand MLDS to address challenges created by the pandemic.

The specific goals of the grant are to build principals' capacity to accelerate learning for students whose learning was disrupted; create structures and systems to address students' increased social and emotional needs; and develop systems of teacher recruitment and retention to mitigate the teacher shortage that was exacerbated by the pandemic.

New and revised content for these three goals has been developed along with strategies for implementation with our MLDS principals. Our first round of evaluation is taking place this spring to determine the effectiveness of our efforts to increase principals'

capacity and the impact of these three goal areas on post-pandemic challenges in our schools.

Based on the decades of research about principals' impact on student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004), we believe that supporting principals through MLDS is an essential catalyst for helping schools and students rebound from the pandemic.

As we continue with this work, we are learning from and sharing our insights with other states so we can all continue to provide the kind of leadership that schools need and students deserve. As one principal interviewed during the evaluation said, "Keep doing what you are doing. Keep it relevant. I don't know what I would have done without MLDS. It was a huge godsend. It was the best (professional learning) I had as an educator in my 15 years."

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Self-paced online learning:

Introduction to Standards for Professional Learning

The Intersection of Equity and Professional Learning

learningforward.org/online-courses



DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

TOOLS

BOOK CLUB AUTHORS SHARE STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENCE

Through the Learning Forward Book Club, comprehensive members receive four books per year and have exclusive opportunities to meet with authors to ask questions and discuss best practices. In May, Lindsay Prendergast and Piper Lee, authors of the Book Club pick *Habits of Resilient Educators*, met with members and shared strategies for cultivating resilient mindsets. Find some of their strategies on pp. 65-66.



JOIN THE CLUB! Visit learningforward.org/membership/



Resilient educators cultivate positive mindsets

BY LINDSAY PRENDERGAST AND PIPER LEE

Educators face complex and challenging experiences daily that may cause stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. What is the difference between those who become overwhelmed by the difficulties and experience burnout and those who navigate problems with confidence and remain steadfastly optimistic no matter their environment? Research suggests that positive psychology — the study of what’s right with people rather than what’s wrong — may hold the answers (Luthans et al., 2015). By intentionally cultivating specific mindsets, educators can learn to withstand the external influences surrounding them that kill joy.

In our book, *Habits of Resilient Educators: Strategies for Thriving During Times of Anxiety, Doubt, and Constant Change*, we explain how to apply

four mindsets that help people thrive in any environment: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. While each of us possesses these mindsets to varying degrees, they vary and change depending on different experiences and throughout our careers. In the book, we champion how educators can intentionally develop and practice these skills and “strive to master the art of thriving amidst any environment or setting” (Prendergast & Lee, 2024).

Habits of Resilient Educators was chosen to be a Learning Forward Book Club selection, and in May, we met with Learning Forward comprehensive members to explore and practice resilience-building strategies and tools from the book, which is available at learningforward.org/store. Adapted from the book, the tools on the following pages can be used to develop

a bank of practical strategies for cultivating the four mindsets to help you thrive in any environment.

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Luthans, F., Youssef, C.M., & Avolio, B.J. (2015). *Psychological capital and beyond*. Oxford University Press.

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DEVELOP HERO MINDSETS

Read the descriptions of the four mindsets and tips on how to develop them. Jot down ideas for ways you might want to rekindle or emphasize it in your work.

Mindset	Description	How to develop it	Strategies I want to try
Hope	A thinking state in which an individual is capable of setting realistic but challenging goals and expectations, and then reaching for those goals through self-directed determination, energy, and perception of internalized control	Set goals toward something (tasks, emotional states, etc.). Identify your motivation sources and develop plans to engage with them more consistently.	
Efficacy	The level of confidence teachers have in their ability to guide students to success	Before attempting something new or challenging, focus on identifying past successes or mastery experiences. In the case of negative experiences, practice reframing their outcome as something positive.	
Resilience	An individual's capacity to respond to and even prosper from negative or positive stressful circumstances	Try new strategies to solve a problem. Improvise! Journal around the experience and the outcome. Practice identifying your purpose and revisit your purpose whenever faced with a challenge or obstacle.	
Optimism	An optimist attributes positive events to personal, permanent, and pervasive causes and interprets negative events in terms of external, temporary, and situation-specific factors	Collect some data. Reflect on your response patterns to different situations at work. (To what do you attribute events and interactions occurring?) Practice strategically shifting your response in future experiences and reflect on the change outcome.	

Source: Adapted from Prendergast & Lee, 2024, pp. 167-168.

TOOLS

YOUR HERO IN ACTION

Practice applying HERO mindsets to an experience you have had as an educator. Write or discuss a recent event or interaction that may have caused you to feel increased stress, pressure, anxiety, or frustration. Then generate new mindsets about how you might approach the situation, shift your thinking about it, or react in a manner likely to reframe your thinking toward realistic optimism.

Describe the situation	
Apply HOPE	I am hopeful that the outcome of this situation will lead to the positive change of ...
Apply EFFICACY	While this is a difficult or challenging experience, I know I possess skills to navigate it, including ...
Apply RESILIENCE	Even though I'm unhappy or uncomfortable in this situation or I find it challenging, I will focus my actions on demonstrating my personal values and stay true to myself. Some values guiding my actions include the following:
Apply OPTIMISM	This challenging situation isn't easy. However, I will gather some data to determine if it's as bad as it seems. Reflecting on the data that I gathered, I learned ...
Source: Adapted from Prendergast & Lee, 2024, p. 169.	

CONNECT. BELONG. SUPPORT.

UPDATES

RECORD YEAR FOR CONFERENCE PROPOSALS

Dozens of reviewers evaluated our most competitive pool of proposals yet for Learning Forward's 2024 Annual Conference. The process resulted in 252 outstanding sessions for the conference, to be held Dec. 8-11 in Denver, Colorado.



UPDATES



LEARNING DOESN'T TAKE A SUMMER BREAK

Summer is a great time to invest in your professional growth, and Learning Forward's online courses offer you an opportunity to do that. These self-paced, four-hour online courses dive into the Standards for Professional Learning and explore the critical issue of equity in professional learning.

The Intersection of Equity and Professional

Learning: Our latest online course is designed to equip educators with a comprehensive understanding of the equity standards within the Standards for Professional Learning and apply them to your work as you examine the crucial role equity plays in a high-quality professional learning system.

You'll explore how the Equity Drivers, Equity Practices, and Equity Foundations standards advance a vision of success for all students. Learn how to embrace student assets through instruction, prioritize equity in professional learning, identify and address educator beliefs and biases, and sustain a culture of support for all staff.

Introduction to Standards for Professional Learning:

This course provides an overview of the standards and describes how system alignment to the standards is associated with improved teacher instruction and student success.

Through videos, readings, threaded real-world scenarios, checks for understanding, and interactive activities designed to help apply your learning to your role, these courses will help you develop a deeper understanding of the connection between the standards, equity-focused professional learning, improved instruction, and student success, and reflect on the implication of the standards and equity-focused professional learning for your system and your role within it. These courses are designed for individuals and teams. On completion, you will receive a certificate indicating four hours of professional learning.

Learn more at learningforward.org/online-courses-for-educators/



2024 ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP AND AFFILIATE GRANT WINNERS

The Learning Forward Michigan Academy Scholarship

Deborah Chapman
Fenton Area Public Schools
Fenton, Michigan

Patsy Hochman Memorial Academy Scholarship

Amanda Johns
Blue Ridge Independent School District
Blue Ridge, Texas

Stephanie Hirsh Academy Scholarships

Megan Hewitt
Gwinnett County Public Schools
Sugar Hill, Georgia

Ana Lara
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Miami Gardens, Florida

Sybil Yastrow Memorial Academy Scholarships

Sarah Elwell
American Federation of Teachers
Silver Spring, Maryland

Jessica Leedy
Prince George's County Public Schools
Columbia, Maryland

Dale Hair Affiliate Development Grant

Peggy Stewart
Learning Forward New Jersey



DENVER PROMISES STANDOUT CONFERENCE SESSIONS

2024 was a banner year for proposal submissions for Learning Forward’s Annual Conference in Denver, with 830 proposals vying for 252 available spots. The conference team described the submissions as “competitive” and “high quality.”

Our selection process includes layers of proposal reviews, and each proposal is read by multiple reviewers. To make your proposal submission stand out, here are three tips to help you craft an effective application.

1. Sessions that include school district or division employees are given priority. We encourage others in the field to submit presentations with education practitioners as co-presenters.

2. We prioritize sessions with diverse presentation teams. The selection committee values diversity of race, culture, gender, level of experience, or areas of educational expertise.

3. Providing data is key. We seek sessions that provide evidence or impact data that illustrates what effect the work has had in a school, district, or other setting. If the professional learning has been implemented for three or more years, we’re looking for impact data. If it has taken place for less than three years, include emerging data.

Learning Forward would like to thank the volunteers who spent hundreds of combined hours to carefully review and comment on the submissions. We are grateful to our applicants, a community of devoted, driven educational improvers who do some of the most important work every day — engage in professional learning to improve educational outcomes for each and every student.



2023 Academy awardees, Learning Forward CEO, Frederick Brown, and Learning Forward Foundation members

LEARNING FORWARD FOUNDATION RELEASES 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

In the 2023 annual report of the Learning Forward Foundation, Deb Radi, foundation chair, reflected on a year of partnership and growth. Radi reports that the foundation expanded board membership by adding three ambassadors and renewed its commitment to join Learning Forward in creating a professional learning movement with and for educators to impact student learning.

The foundation’s notable accomplishments from the past year include streamlining and coordinating its scholarship application process with Learning Forward, which resulted in a higher number and improved quality of applications.

New this year, all major donor awards — the Stephanie Hirsh, Patsy Hochman, and Sybil Yastrow Learning Forward Academy scholarships — offer travel compensation in addition to covering program fees. The foundation has awarded more than 89 scholarships and grants in three countries since 2008 through donations from supporters.

To learn more about the foundation, visit **foundation.learningforward.org**

#TheLearningPro FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POST



Follow us on social media. Share your insights and feedback about *The Learning Professional* by using **#TheLearningPro**.



What we are reading and listening to...

Summer learning recommendations from Learning Forward staff



***Change Agents: Transforming Schools From the Ground Up* | Justin Cohen**

"This book shows how improvement science can help educators achieve equity for all students. It draws on successful examples of real schools and educators to give helpful advice on how to make meaningful and systemic change through building educators' capacity." — Michelle Bowman, senior vice president, networks & continuous improvement

***How a City Learned to Improve its Schools* | Anthony Bryk, Sharon Greenberg, Albert Bertani, Penny Sebring, Steven E. Tozer, and Timothy Knowles**

"This book tells the story of the turnaround in Chicago Public Schools — a story that's close to my heart because I worked with CPS in the early 2000s. I've watched the district improve so much over the years and see many lessons educators can apply in their own contexts." — Frederick Brown, president and CEO

***I Wish My Teacher Knew: How One Question Can Change Everything for Our Kids* | Kyle Schwartz**

"This has been one of my favorite education books since I heard the author speak at the Learning Forward Annual Conference in 2020. I'm inspired by her straightforward way of connecting with students by giving them a chance to open up." — Melinda George, chief policy officer

***Reading for Their Life: (Re)Building the Textual Lineages of African American Adolescent Males* | Alfred W. Tatum**

"I credit Alfred Tatum and this book for helping me understand the transformative power of texts that reflect and uplift the identities of Black and Brown boys (and girls). I run into former students who still thank me for introducing them to the first novels they were willing to read independently because they connected with them." — Machel Mills-Miles, vice president, standards implementation and outreach

***Sold a Story* podcast | American Public Media**

"Emily Hanford's investigation into literacy instruction in America details how balanced literacy instructional methods persisted despite being proven ineffective by cognitive scientists. As a balanced literacy teacher for much of my classroom career, I found the podcast both wrenching and affirming." — Jefna Cohen, associate editor

***Spark & Sustain: How All the World's School Systems Can Improve Learning at Scale* | McKinsey & Company**

"This report is clear-eyed about how school systems succeed when they ground system strategy in better classroom instruction for improved student outcomes. Systems like Singapore's that beat the odds in producing meaningful gains use similar levers, described in the report." — Gail Paul, content marketing specialist

***Unpacking the "Science of Reading"* | Kim Austin from the Regional Educational Laboratory Program's blog**

"This Q&A with literacy expert Tim Shanahan provides an easy-to-read overview of what the science of reading is — and isn't. It dispels common myths, shares research evidence, and provides helpful implementation resources." — Elizabeth Foster, senior vice president, research and strategy



How educators benefited from Title IIA funds in 2022-23



Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the sole federal program focused specifically on educator professional learning and growth in the U.S. A new report from the U.S. Department of Education shows how states and districts used the funds in the 2022-23 school year to improve educators' practice and student achievement.

Title IIA supported about 2 million teachers.

- All states and the vast majority of districts (more than 95%) received Title IIA funding.
- On average, districts that responded to the survey reported that 73% of teachers participated in professional learning supported by the funds.
- Districts spent about 90% of their Title IIA funds on teachers.

The largest use of district Title IIA funds was for professional learning, with the majority of it focusing on improving instruction.

- Districts spent 57% of their Title IIA funds for professional learning, a slight increase from the previous year.
- Other uses of the funds included activities that can be enhanced by professional learning, including teacher recruitment and class-size reduction.

Recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective educators has been steadily increasing as a use of the funds.

- About 34% of districts used funds for activities related to recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective educators, using about 17% of funds for this purpose.
- About 80% of states used funds for these purposes, a slight increase from the previous year.

Professional learning for teachers most commonly focused on improving instructional practice and content knowledge.

- 79% of districts allocated the funds to teacher learning about instructional strategies for academic subjects, with 45% naming this topic as one of their two largest expenditures.
- 72% allocated funds to improving teacher content knowledge in English language arts.

- 68% allocated funds to helping teachers use data and assessment to guide instruction.
- 59% allocated funds to improving teachers' instructional strategies for meeting state content standards.

Education leaders also need and benefit from professional learning funds.

- 25 states set aside up to 3% of their funds for professional learning for principals and, to a lesser extent, for other school leaders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The report is available at: oese.ed.gov/files/2024/05/Title-IIA-UseOfFundsReport-22-23.pdf

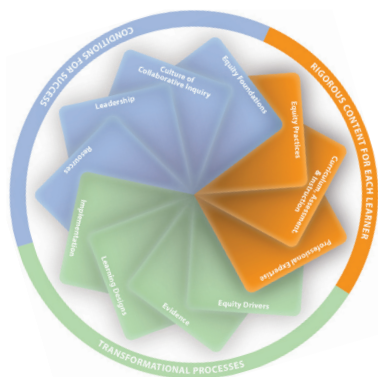
Learn more about Title IIA's role in professional learning at poweredbytitleii.com

THROUGH THE LENS

OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Standards for Professional Learning describe the content, processes, and conditions of high-quality learning that make a difference for students and educators. Understanding each of the 11 standards can help you design and build professional learning that has a positive impact. This tool provides reflection questions to help you deepen your understanding and view this issue's articles through the lens of the standards.

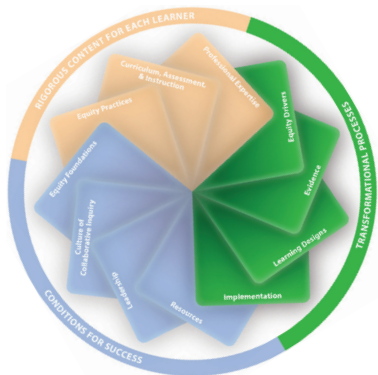
HOW GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES CAN HELP EDUCATORS APPLY THE STANDARDS



Rigorous Content for Each Learner

How can you develop **Professional Expertise about conflict transformation to help you navigate contentious issues?**

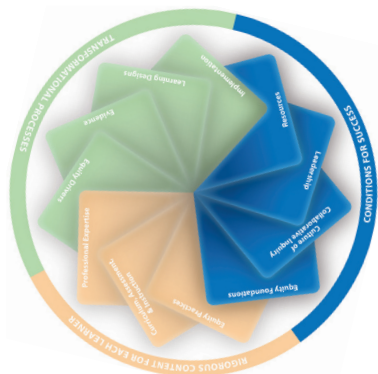
Conflict transformation is a process that requires learning, growth, and, most importantly, trust. Lessons from Northern Ireland show strategies for developing this expertise and addressing complex problems. (p. 36)



Transformational Processes

How can the **Learning Designs standard shape your professional learning so that it supports teachers' well-being and retention?**

Australian studies suggest that working conditions affect teachers' well-being and the likelihood of leaving their schools or teaching altogether. Well-designed professional learning can create positive working conditions and increase teacher satisfaction by prioritizing teachers' autonomy and empowerment. (p. 26)



Conditions for Success

How does the **Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard inspire you to learn from high-performing education systems across the world?**

Countries at the annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession share their commitments and actions to advance teacher learning and leadership, and organizers share themes through public reports. This issue describes some of the many other ways to learn from other countries. (p. 22)

Learn more about Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning at standards.learningforward.org

AT A GLANCE

Learning Forward's global reach

All around the world, professional learning matters for teaching, leading, and learning. Learning Forward is building capacity for high-quality, standards-aligned professional learning because all children deserve excellent teaching.

This map highlights the many countries and regions where educators engage with Learning Forward and our resources.

LEARNING FORWARD INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATES
Affiliates are local branches of Learning Forward with deep local expertise and a commitment to equity and excellence in professional learning. We welcome affiliates from around the world.

ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS AND SERVICES
The Standards for Professional Learning can be applied in all countries and contexts. Learning Forward works with education systems around the world to apply standards and implement high-quality professional learning.

LEARNING FORWARD MEMBERS
Learning Forward's global community stretches across the globe. Members learn from our resources and from one another virtually and at in-person events such as our Annual Conference.



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2024 Learning Forward Annual Conference



Frederick Brown



Juliana Urtubey



A.J. Juliani

2024 KEYNOTE PRESENTERS

Make plans to join us for the 2024 Learning Forward Annual Conference.

The 2024 conference takes reimagined possibilities and leverages them with evidence-based practices to achieve our ultimate goal to **Reach New Heights for Students.**

Join colleagues from similar positions around the world as we learn together about what works for changing educator practice and student results.



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REACH NEW HEIGHTS FOR STUDENTS