



**Curriculum-based professional learning brings the meaning of job-embedded to life because it is integrally connected to what happens in the classroom.**

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## CALL TO ACTION

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# LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM GO HAND IN HAND

**W**hen Learning Forward revised the Standards for Professional Learning in 2022, we added the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard (Learning Forward, 2022), in

part due to the accumulating evidence about the importance of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials. As we noted in the research brief released alongside the revised standards (Foster, 2022), several studies pointed to the power of grounding professional learning in high-quality instructional materials, with results including

improvements in teacher practices and student achievement (e.g., Taylor et al., 2015).

The Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard includes the key constructs that professional learning should prioritize high-quality instructional materials and support educators to understand them and implement them successfully. A meta-analysis conducted by American Institutes for Research found a statistically significant correlation between these activities and behaviors and positive changes in educator practice and student achievement (Garrett et al., 2021).

Implied in the standard and inherent in the research that drives it is the job-embedded nature of professional learning. Learning Forward is proud to have helped incorporate the term “job-embedded” into the United States’ federal definition of professional learning. Job-embedded means that professional learning is ongoing (not a one-time event), is part of educators’ workday responsibilities, and occurs in or connected to their work. Effective curriculum-based professional learning brings the meaning of job-embedded to life because it is integrally connected to what happens in the classroom. Educators participate actively and over time, often engaging in the curriculum lessons themselves as learners before implementing them with students.

As with all of the Standards for Professional Learning, the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard applies across levels and roles. As you’ll see in this issue, curriculum-based professional learning can occur districtwide or school-based and at the building, grade, or subject-area team level.

In particular, I want to call your attention to the role of leaders. Effective curriculum-based professional learning, like any high-quality professional learning, cannot flourish in a leadership vacuum, as our Leadership standard articulates. That standard speaks to the importance of leaders establishing a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, sustaining coherent support to build educator capacity, and advocating for professional learning by sharing the importance and evidence of impact of professional learning.

If leaders don’t understand the important role high-quality curricula and instructional materials play in professional learning and student success, they are unlikely to create the conditions in their districts or schools to support it. As articles in this issue of *The Learning Professional* show, leaders benefit from participating as learners, just as teachers do.

It’s also important that leaders know their staff well enough to differentiate professional





learning when needed. When I was an elementary school principal, it was clear to me that different teachers and various grade-level teams had different learning needs. For example, the 5th-grade team already embodied the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard, while the 1st-grade team needed support to build its collaboration.

The same kinds of variations and stages of development hold true at many, if not most, schools, and this applies to curriculum-based professional learning as much as any other form of learning. We must meet our teachers where they are so that we can best position them to meet the needs of the children they support.

Of course, it's important to remember that all of the standards work together. Curriculum-based professional learning and the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard that can inform it are deeply connected to the Learning Designs standard because of the interactive and hands-on nature of the learning.

They also connect to Culture of Collaborative Inquiry because educators make meaning together as they work through the curriculum in a collaborative learning approach that mirrors the one their students will take. As you read this issue, I invite you to consider all the ways the standards are embedded in the excellent examples of curriculum-based professional learning and reflect on their place in your own work.

## REFERENCES

**Foster, E. (2022).** *Standards for Professional Learning: The research.* Learning Forward.

**Garrett, R., Zhang, Q., Citkowicz, M., & Burr, L. (2021).** *How Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning are associated with teacher instruction and student achievement: A meta-analysis.* Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at American Institutes for Research.

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**Taylor, J., Getty, S., Kowalski, S., Wilson, C., Carlson, J., & Van Scotter, P. (2015).** An efficacy trial of research-based curriculum materials with curriculum-based professional development. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(5), 984-1017. ■

## STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Below are the standards mentioned in this column.

### CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.

### LEARNING DESIGNS

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators set relevant and contextualized learning goals, ground their work in research and theories about learning, and implement evidence-based learning designs.

### CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators engage in continuous improvement, build collaboration skills and capacity, and share responsibility for improving learning for all students.

### LEADERSHIP

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, sustain coherent support to build educator capacity, and advocate for professional learning by sharing the importance and evidence of impact of professional learning.