Welcome!

Welcome to *Planning Professional Learning: Design*. This course is focused on building a professional learning plan that assists educators to implement new practices in their classrooms. An underlying assumption of this work is that professional learning leads to improved educator knowledge, skills, and practice. Improved instruction leads to improved student achievement. An effective plan builds on the thorough diagnosis of the learning needs of students and aligning those needs with educator learning goals. This diagnosis is the guidance system for the remainder of the professional learning work. Once the goal has been determined, we are ready to plan and design professional learning. The Learning Design standard has a special place in this course. It emanates from Learning Forward's theory of change—increased student learning results from building educators knowledge and skills as well as supporting implementation in the classroom. In effective professional learning, implementation is an essential part of the plan and responsibility of the whole system.

About Your Course Guides

Patricia Roy and Parker McMullen developed this course. They have extensive experience as middle school and high school teachers, administrators, and professional development consultants, and trainers. Pat has been involved with Learning Forward for over 30 years. She was President of the Board of Trustees in 1993. She co-authored *Becoming a Learning School* with Joellen Killion and also co-authored the first set of Innovation Configuration maps for the professional learning standards with Shirley Hord in 2001. Pat also wrote two monthly columns for *The Learning Principal* and *The Learning System* from 2004-08.

Parker facilitated the development of his urban high school as a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools and also served as a principal of an intermediate school in Delaware. He served as a team coach for Arizona schools engaged in a three-year program to improve professional learning at their sites.

Because of modern technology, you will be able to access a host of other experts and resources as well. You will find videos from Stephanie Hirsh, Executive Director of Learning Forward, Frederick

Brown, Deputy Executive Director, as well as a variety of other experts and consultants who have provided webinars through Learning Forward media programs. You will also find articles from many of Learning Forward's publications such as the *JSD*, *Tools for Learning Schools*, *Leading Teacher*, and *The Learning System* as well as special reports and research studies. A vast array of resources creates the foundation for this online course.

Who Is the Target Audience?

Promoting and designing effective collaborative professional learning is the responsibility of everyone who is interested in powerful teaching and learning and student achievement. That means classroom teachers, school administrators, central office staff, superintendents, school board members, and community members are appropriate participants for this online course.

- Central office staff could use the course for planning district-wide professional learning as well as identifying knowledge and skills needed by schools to create their own professional learning.
- School leadership teams and administrators could collaboratively participate in the course and apply their own data to the activities and tools suggested in the course.
- Administrators and aspiring and emerging leaders could study this information and strategies to decide what leaders need to know about planning effective professional learning.
- State education agency staff could use the course as the foundation for developing knowledge, skills, and strategies required for effective professional learning planning as well as school improvement work.

Why This Course Exists

While the standards for professional learning have existed since the early 1990s, a void still exists about what is required to change classroom behavior in order to improve student learning outcomes. Workshops and trainings dominate as the primary mode of professional learning in many schools and states. We "outsource" professional learning to external experts who may not be ready to personalize the learning to meet the specific needs of educators and their students.

A superintendent we knew talked about professional learning planning as being similar to throwing a lot of things on the wall to see what stuck. We throw a lot of programs and initiatives at student learning challenges hoping that one of them will make the difference. But the result is that educators become overwhelmed by so many new programs and don't have enough time to truly focus and learn how to use new strategies. As a consequence, those programs are not implemented by a majority of staff with integrity or fidelity. Unfortunately, that reality causes many staff to believe that professional learning makes no difference and that their students are incapable of learning at higher levels. One of the remedies to this situation is to plan professional learning so that you have confidence that the program or strategies you selected will make a difference, and your plan includes persisting with the initiative until it is used *well* by a majority of staff.

Course Materials

The course involves five modules that include readings, videos, short power point presentations, practices, and reflections. Practice activities are included so that you will have experience with and understand the impact of various components and tools provided in the course text. The expectation is that the practice activities will deepen your understanding, ground your practice, and encourage you to take action.

There will also be five quizzes, one for each module, based on the content. To pass the quizzes you have to read and/or watch all the content and participate in the practice activities. The point of including quizzes is to check to make sure you are keeping up with the reading and that you understand the basic concepts of the course. You have to correctly answer at least 4 out of the 6 questions to pass the quiz and advance to the next module.

Course Design

The first decision about this course was to ensure that your participation could occur any time and any place that is convenient for you—rather than determined by a specific day and time for real time involvement. As a result, creating community or requiring interaction is not a component of this online course. To compensate, we will ask you to occasionally respond and post your reflections, responses, reactions, and thinking in a commentary box called the *Open Space Forum*. This space will also allow you to see how other participants are reacting to the materials and thinking about the tools. It will allow you to see commonalities as well as differences from others across the country who also take the course.

The primary text for this course is *Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts, and Schools*, developed by Joellen Killion in 2013. It explains a seven-step process for planning professional learning. We will focus on the last three steps of this process and dive deeply into that content. The course text also includes tools to assist you in implementing this process. You will be able to download this text and tools within the online course.