

Resources for professional learning include **staff**, **time**, **funding**, **technology**, and **materials**.

# INVESTMENTS *in* PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MUST CHANGE

THE GOALS ARE AMBITIOUS, THE STAKES ARE HIGH — AND RESOURCES ARE THE KEY

By Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh

**N**early every conversation about the Common Core includes the topic of professional learning. National consensus of policymakers and educators acknowledges the tremendous need for it. The standards require more of students and educators alike.

Fundamental to the success of the core standards are educators knowing what the standards call for in terms of student learning, how to design learning experiences for students to meet the expectations, how to transform their existing classrooms and schools to achieve the standards, and how to access classroom resources that support personalizing instruction to meet the unique learning needs of each student. Educators welcome the standards and are eager to undertake significant effort to prepare all students for college and careers.

The work ahead requires a long-term commitment to intensive professional learning for all educators and innovative, rich, and flexible classroom instructional resources that fill the gaps in learning for many of America's students. To undertake the efforts necessary so that every student leaves high school ready for college and careers, schools, districts, states, regional and national education agencies, and education vendors need to make thoughtful and deliberate decisions regarding resources, particularly resources for professional learning.

Inequitable and inconsistent implementation of standards will persist if insufficient resources are available for educators, particularly teachers and their principals, to engage in the requisite preparation, professional learning, and extended support to make the transitions in their classrooms and schools called for by the new standards.

#### NEW APPROACH NEEDED

Traditional professional development is inadequate to meet the curricular, assessment, instructional, and leadership changes the new standards demand. Over a decade ago, the introduction of standards-based education held great promise. Today, more schools than ever fall short of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress.

In recent years with shrinking budgets, report Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011), schools, districts, and states have cut resources for professional learning and the positions that support it "because of the perception that doing so does not compromise the basic operation of the school: teaching and learning. However, if the teaching in some classrooms is not at a level that allows students to achieve at least one year of growth, this perception is false, and resources need to be reallocated accordingly so that they are directly linked to improving teaching and learning" (p. 10). The decline in the past five years in the percentage of schools meeting Adequate Yearly Progress provides evidence that more must be done to improve student learning (Usher, 2011).

**A**dapted from the brief *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning*, this article draws on the work of Learning Forward's initiative, Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. This multidimensional initiative is focused on developing a comprehensive system of professional learning that spans the distance from the statehouse to the classroom. The project will reform policy and practice and apply innovative technology solutions to support and enhance professional learning. With an immediate focus on implementing Common Core State Standards and new assessments, the initiative provides resources and tools to assist states, districts, and schools in providing effective professional learning for current and future education reforms.

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Learn more at [www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core).

- Recommended investments, p. 12
- Transforming Professional Learning resources, p. 16
- Tools from *Establishing Time for Professional Learning*, pp. 22-28



## RECOMMENDED INVESTMENTS IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Investment	Purpose
<p><b>10 days embedded within educators’ work year and/or expanding educators’ work year.</b></p>	<p><i>To extend individual, team, schoolwide, and districtwide professional learning, teachers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in university courses;</li> <li>• Enroll in expert- and peer-facilitated workshops;</li> <li>• Engage in blended, face-to-face, and online courses;</li> <li>• Attend local, state, or national conferences; and</li> <li>• Interact virtually or in person with researchers and other experts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjust school-day schedules to provide three to four hours weekly for collaboration among teachers, between teachers and their principals, and among principals.</b></p>	<p><i>To provide daily time for educators to transfer learning into practice, develop shared expertise, and refine practice through continuous improvement by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studying content standards and curriculum to plan units and lessons of curriculum, assessment, and instruction;</li> <li>• Analyzing student learning progressions to identify and design interventions;</li> <li>• Solving problems related to student learning;</li> <li>• Calibrating student performance expectations;</li> <li>• Supporting peer professional growth; and</li> <li>• Reflecting on and assessing practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide technology infrastructure and innovative programs and resources to increase accessibility, efficiency, and adaptability of professional learning.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide access to just-in-time learning, models of effective practices, simulations of classrooms and schools, tools for knowledge management, analysis of practice, and presentation of learning;</li> <li>• To connect educators with local and global networks of experts and peers to solve problems, seek information and support, and give and receive constructive feedback; and</li> <li>• To make educators’ practice public in networking environments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide differentiated staffing and compensation to support coaches, mentors, and teacher and principal leaders.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To tap the expertise of educators within the school and school system through which master teachers and principals provide mentoring, coaching, and facilitated learning to individuals, teams, and school faculty to adapt and implement learning;</li> <li>• To increase the accuracy and frequency of use of the practices; and</li> <li>• To increase their collective expertise.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increase funding for professional learning expert consultants, technical assistance, conference registrations, program fees, print or electronic professional books and journals, memberships to professional associations, etc.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain professional libraries with resources linked to national, state, district, and school goals;</li> <li>• To provide registrations for local, state, and national conferences to acquire cutting-edge research and practices; and</li> <li>• To access technical assistance from experts with new perspectives and research- and evidence-based practices to support goal attainment and address identified gaps, needs, or problems.</li> </ul>

The urgency is high for implementation of the new standards, yet resorting to comfortable and familiar approaches to professional learning such as short-term awareness-building information sessions on what the new standards are and how they compare to previous ones will fall short of the intense, practical, content-focused professional learning needed to realize the promise of all students college- and career- ready at the end of high school.

Effective professional learning — that which leads to changes in educator practice and student learning — is a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving

teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness by extending their content knowledge, instructional and leadership practices, and understanding of how students learn. It combines educators learning from experts as well as with colleagues to apply their learning directly to their classrooms and schools.

### COMMIT TO RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) define the critical attributes of effective professional learning that emerge from research and evidence-based practice. Among the seven is one on resources.

Resources for professional learning include staff, time, funding, technology, and materials. Professional learning staff include coaches, instructional facilitators, curriculum leaders, program leaders and managers who oversee professional learning, and principal time devoted to leading learning of their staff.

Time includes the school day and school year schedules that provide concentrated and ongoing time for educator learning and collaboration. Funding supports registrations for conferences, programs, and courses; professional journals and books; and programs and services that extend the local expertise of school and district staff.

Technology includes the connectivity, programs, resources, maintenance, and support for personalized, continuous, and differentiated learning needs. Materials include sample instructional and leadership tools, professional journals, books, sample lessons, and other print or electronic resources to facilitate implementation of Common Core.

For professional learning to build educator effectiveness and increase results for students, those leading, offering, or facilitating it, including schools, school systems, state departments of education, institutes of higher education, or third-party providers, must be clear on the outcomes of professional learning, have a long-term plan for supporting implementation of new learning, and the committed resources the plan demands.

There is no way around it. To achieve the vision of Common Core standards, the nation and each state need to not only change their approach to professional learning, but also invest more in it.

In a recent analysis of the costs associated with implementation of Common Core State Standards, Murphy & Regenstein (2012) analyzed three major cost areas associated with the new standards: instructional materials, assessment, and professional learning. Their analysis, as well as that of others, makes it clear that success with Common Core requires investments in professional learning.

In examining three different scenarios to determine costs of professional learning, the business-as-usual approach includes in-person training and delivery and is the most costly of the three. The other two approaches to professional learning, which they call “bare bones” and “balanced implementation,” include online and blended professional learning.

Murphy & Regenstein propose that by repurposing existing resources and increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, it is possible to meet the implementation cost demands of the new standards with reasonable, not extraordinary, additional investments.

### **MAKE SMART INVESTMENTS**

Investment decisions are never easy. Even when working with a trusted financial consultant or skillful investment advisor, those making decisions face ever-expanding and attractive options, impending risk, and few certainties.

The same is true when investing in professional learning, particularly to support a high-stakes initiative such as implementing Common Core State Standards. Individuals, schools, districts, states, and other education agencies recognize that how they invest resources for professional learning influences the returns they are likely to gain.

In too many situations, decisions about how to invest professional learning resources have had little significance. The reasons vary. First, the percentage of overall budgets dedicated to professional learning was typically less than 2%. Second, little accountability for the investments existed. Even today, many districts and schools have inadequate means for tracking expenditures in professional learning. Third, the urgency and scope of the change force decision makers to resort to what is familiar, even if it has been unsuccessful.

To achieve the results promised in Common Core standards, states and district and school leaders must make smart and new investments in the capacity of educators. Successful implementation of Common Core standards that leads to every student being college- and career-ready requires a renewed commitment and focus from all policy and decision makers, elected, employed, or engaged within school communities.

The recommendations in the table on p. 12 describe investments schools, districts, states, and other education agencies need to make in professional learning. The recommendations are based on an evidence-based adequacy model developed by Odden, Goetz, and Picus (2008).

Their model identifies additional resources to support professional learning as well as realignment and repurposing of existing resources. “Given the importance of teacher quality to student learning and the link between teacher quality and professional development,” stress Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011), “the greater investment is likely to lead to greater levels of student learning.”

The recommendations are ambitious, yet they are no less ambitious than the intended outcomes of the Common Core standards. While the list of recommendations focuses on what teachers need, the same list can be used to identify the professional learning needs of principals, teacher leaders, coaches, and central office staff.

Teachers and principals need considerable opportunities to develop deep content-specific knowledge, expand content-specific pedagogy, examine how students learn, and apply new learning with extended support and constructive feedback. Principals need to expand their capacity to serve as instructional leaders and support teacher and student learning. To meet these expectations, schools, districts, states, and other education agencies must make the investments outlined on p. 12.

### **RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND EQUITY**

Student needs vary from school to school and district to *Continued on p. 17*

### Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Third-Party Providers

Strengthen skills of administrators and leaders to develop productive relationships with third-party professional learning service providers in the state.

[www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-third-party-providers.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-third-party-providers.pdf)



### Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Technology for Teacher and Student Learning

Understand how teachers use technology to implement Common Core, increase their instructional effectiveness, and support student learning.

[www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-technology-for-teacher-and-student-learning.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-technology-for-teacher-and-student-learning.pdf)

### Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Tapping Technology for Professional Learning

Guide the selection and use of technology within a system of professional learning. Access relevant content, refine instruction, and monitor continuous progress.

[www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/tptappingtechnology.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/tptappingtechnology.pdf)

### Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Principal

Guide principals in implementing Common Core standards by ensuring they have

support in key areas of school leadership.

[www.learningforward.org/docs/commoncore/meetpromiseprincipal.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/commoncore/meetpromiseprincipal.pdf)

### Establishing Time for Professional Learning

Redesign the school-day schedule to provide time for professional learning necessary to implement Common Core standards and assessments.

[www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/establishing-time-for-professional-learning.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/establishing-time-for-professional-learning.pdf)

### School-Based Professional Learning for Implementing the Common Core

Build capacity to lead effective collaborative professional learning to implement Common Core standards.

[www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core/professional-learning-units](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core/professional-learning-units)



### Guiding District Implementation of Common Core State Standards: Innovation Configuration Maps

Assess and guide district leaders in their core responsibilities to support deep implementation of Common Core standards and educator effectiveness systems.

[www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/kycss\\_icmaps.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/kycss_icmaps.pdf)



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district. Formulas for resource allocation too infrequently address the dramatically different circumstances, characteristics, and history of academic need that exist among schools.

In their analyses of resource allocations in districts, particularly large urban ones, Calvo and Miles report that they find “significant misalignments in how they allocate resources to schools. ... [S]chools and students with similar needs receive different levels and types of resources that don’t match their circumstances,” (2010, p. 40) typically because resource distribution is based on identical staffing and budgeting formulas regardless of the school’s needs. Principals, they report, are given limited flexibility in how to use resources to address their unique needs. “All too often, the result is a system that is unintentionally inequitable and inflexible and doesn’t serve school needs” (p. 40).

To address inequity, Calvo and Miles recommend weighted funding as a way to address the challenges and to create “transparency, flexibility, equity, and the conditions necessary for schools to organize themselves effectively around the particular needs of their students and staff” (p. 40). In some cases, allowing for such flexibility requires changes in federal, state, and local policies and perceptions about resources and organizing resources around academic need rather than formulas. Bold actions such as funding by academic need demonstrate accountability and responsibility for investments in educator success.

### POOLING RESOURCES

Despite the growing need for support, resources are limited. In many cases, states, districts, and schools operate as independent entities in relationship to resources, especially those for professional learning. Collaborating on resource use may increase access to what is needed to support implementation of standards (Education First Consulting & Grantmakers for Education, 2011).

Pooling resources through purchasing cooperatives, shared investments, and joint research and development, states, districts, and schools can exponentially increase their influence and purchasing power with vendors, developers, and researchers. The common standards make pooling more viable than before. Besides combining resources for professional learning, states, districts, and schools might consider sharing the costs of curricula, formative assessments, instructional resources, and technology to support implementation of Common Core.

### TAKING ACTION

Federal, state, district, and school leaders can advance the potential of Common Core State Standards through smart investments in professional learning. The following list of recommendations identifies bold actions needed to ensure educator learning.

#### Federal actions

- Establish a new program to support professional learning for Common Core standards and new assessments in those states and school systems demonstrating greatest student achievement needs.
- Require existing federal investments (Title I, Title II, Race to the Top, etc.) and federally funded agencies and programs (regional centers, comprehensive centers, National Science Foundation, Math and Science Partnerships, etc.) to support professional learning for implementation of Common Core standards.
- Use definition of and Standards for Professional Learning as the framework for ensuring all federal investments in professional learning are positioned for success.
- Invest in a nationwide technology infrastructure to provide equitable access to innovative, web-based resources and support for implementation of standards.
- Develop tools, processes, and resources to assist individuals, schools, school systems, and states to plan, monitor, and assess the quality and results of professional learning.
- Establish recognition programs to spotlight states and school systems that demonstrate effective professional learning for Common Core standards and new assessments.

#### State actions

- Adopt the definition of and Standards for Professional Learning to guide decisions about professional learning investments.
- Use rule-making authority to create a transparent, flexible, and equitable process for distributing resources, particularly time, staffing, and funding, to districts and schools with most significant student learning needs.
- Require state-supported agencies to focus their professional learning efforts on implementation of new standards and assessments.
- Repurpose existing resources for professional learning on

the high-priority areas related to implementing college- and career-ready standards and new assessments.

- Provide guidance to districts and schools on how to review and make smart investments in resources and services from third-party providers to best meet their professional learning needs.
- Coordinate and fund the development of a statewide technology infrastructure and learning management systems to provide access to high-quality professional learning, especially personalized, just-in-time support for implementation of new standards.
- Coordinate efforts of state and community partners to assist districts in creating programs for extended student learning time and to provide time for teacher collaborative planning, study, and problem solving.
- Recognize and support differentiated teacher licenses to position teacher leaders with professional learning expertise to support consistent and full implementation of Common Core standards statewide.

#### District and school actions

- Adopt definition of and Standards for Professional Learning to guide decisions about professional learning and investments in it.
- Use rule-making authority and waivers to create a transparent, flexible, and equitable process for distributing resources, particularly time, staffing, and funding, to schools with most significant student learning needs.
- Design professional learning that leverages appropriate face-to-face, blended, and virtual learning and support to ensure that all educators develop the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices necessary for deep implementation of Common Core standards.
- Use differentiated staffing, including teacher leaders, instructional coaches, principal coaches, and mentors, to ensure school- and classroom-based facilitation of individual, team and schoolwide professional learning.
- Collaborate with community partners to create programs for extended student learning and to provide time for teacher collaborative planning, study, and problem solving.
- Provide technology infrastructure and learning management systems to provide access to high-quality professional learning, especially personalized, just-in-time support for implementation of new standards.
- Realign professional learning resources to prioritize the implementation of new standards and assessments.

### MAKING THE DECISION TO BUY

Vetting and purchasing the appropriate resources (materials, support, and technology) for professional learning requires careful deliberation, and, if done well, provides teachers with the support they need to be successful in shifting instructional

practice and school leaders with the expertise needed to support teacher and student learning.

The process that follows outlines the recommended steps for accomplishing the task of acquiring and using resources. When the stakeholders who will use the resources are engaged in all aspects of the process, it is more likely to result in sound decisions.

To make savvy decisions about resource investments for professional learning, education leaders and policymakers need to be deliberate and thoughtful with decisions before purchases. This is the first step in increasing the value of the investments. The second step is developing and using a solid plan for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating investments.

### RECOMMENDED STEPS FOR ACQUIRING RESOURCES

1. Assess student learning needs in context of instructional and content shifts of Common Core State Standards.
2. Assess educator learning needs to meet student learning needs, asking such questions as:
  - What are educator needs related to addressing Common Core content meaningfully?
  - What are educator needs related to mastering new kinds of instruction?
  - Are educators prepared to differentiate new kinds of instruction to reach a range of student populations?
3. Use analysis of student and educator learning needs to identify professional learning content.
4. Establish criteria for reviewing, selecting, and purchasing professional learning resources, such as:
  - User-friendly.
  - Flexible content.
  - Platform interdependence.
  - Aligned with defined curriculum and standards.
  - Contextually appropriate.
  - Meets IDEA standards.
  - Adapts to differing educator learning needs.
  - Comprehensive, sustained, and intensive.
  - Includes opportunities for feedback and extended support.
5. Identify potential collaborators or shared users.
6. Invite collaborators.
7. Review and revise selection criteria with collaborators.
8. Invite vendors and/or identify or design products, services, and other investments.
9. Screen products, services, and other investments using established criteria.
10. Select or design products, services, and other investments.
11. Design implementation/use plan.
  - Staging use.
  - Professional learning to launch and support use.
12. Design evaluation for resource use and results.
13. Negotiate purchase/use agreements.
14. Implement resource investments.

15. Monitor and assess implementation of resources.

16. Evaluate implementation and results of resource use.

### TAKE BOLD STEPS

States, districts, and schools must take bold steps to focus resources “on improving instructional practice and student learning” that will require “instructional revisioning and staff reallocation,” according to Odden & Picus (2011). “The current fiscal shortcomings buffeting schools shouldn’t be used as a rationale for failure to make continued progress toward higher levels of student achievement” (p. 48).

To improve resource investments in professional learning, states, districts, and schools need transparent and deliberate processes that require clear accounting as well as ongoing analysis of data about investment in, quality of, and results from professional learning (Killion & Hirsh, 2012, p. 16).

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