

Standards for Professional Learning

STANDARDS VIGNETTE: ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

To illustrate how Standards for Professional Learning can guide the work of educators seeking to advance equity for educators and students in diverse settings, Learning Forward created the following vignette of a fictional school-level history department. The narrative is based on real experiences to depict how implementing standards-based professional learning is a journey, rather than an overnight transformation or a checklist to be completed.

About this resource

The purposes of this vignette are to help educators:

- Envision what professional learning aligned with or informed by Standards for Professional Learning looks like in a real-world setting; and
- Consider how standards-based professional learning can address essential school, district, and regional challenges.

Suggestions for use

1. Read the following vignette, using the prompts that follow to track notes, insights, and questions for subsequent conversations.
2. Note or highlight where you see direct or indirect evidence of Standards for Professional Learning throughout the narrative. While themes from Culture of Collaborative Inquiry, Equity Practices, and Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standards are prominent, aspects of most standards are present to depict a systems approach to implementing high-quality professional learning.
3. Use the notes and insights to inform a team discussion or individual reflection to lead to deeper understanding and shared actions.

TUNING UP COLLABORATION FOR IMPACT

Educators at the Claremont Secondary School in British Columbia, Canada, are undertaking an effort to improve history instruction, and Leo Ganatra is at the center of the work to identify and address inequities of learning experiences among students. As the history department chair, he connects district and provincial goals to the priorities established by the school's educators.

Although the school has a long-established culture of collaborative learning, teacher interviews reveal that collaboration in some cases has become more about compliance than shared learning about educator practice impacting student outcomes. Ganatra is confident that the provincial priority to integrate the First Peoples Principles of Learning can be an opportunity to improve certain parts of the curriculum. The First Peoples Principles of Learning outline elements of teaching and learning common to First Nation societies. While Ganatra knows that there is a range among the faculty in terms of comfort with change and familiarity with the province's equity priorities, he also sees this as an opportunity to reinvigorate educator collaboration. As he and some of the other learning leaders in his schools have explored what constitutes high-quality professional learning, they've undertaken a study of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. Ganatra embraces the standards to guide how his department will structure, implement, and evaluate professional learning.

At the beginning of the school year, Ganatra convenes his department to discuss their current work and plans for the future. In the first meeting, educators commit to assuming collective responsibility for each student in their classrooms and sharing expertise with one another to improve learning for all. They agree that open discussion, productive conflict, and the freedom to fail will advance their practice. They commit to support one another through this learning journey. They then discuss

the collaborative inquiry process they will use to define their problem of practice and identify the set of strategies they will collectively test and refine.

INCORPORATING CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

When they next meet a month later, Ganatra raises the question about how the department can best address the First Peoples Principles of Learning. The educators engage in honest discussion about competing demands for teachers' time and energy and the fact that this is not something they have discussed before as part of their day-to-day work. After discussion, the teachers agree on what it will take to shift the school's culture so that each student feels that their academic and personal growth matters: The educators must ensure their instruction is more culturally supportive and hold each other accountable to their shared commitment to inclusiveness.

The team begins by asking each other a series of questions, such as: What do we do already to address the First Peoples Principles? Are there successful strategies we should keep? What needs to change to address the challenge? How will we know we are successful? Ganatra pledges to support the team throughout subsequent discussions and reminds them they will need to address their own beliefs and mindsets as they shift practices to ensure more equitable learning for themselves and their students.

As their meetings continue, the team develops a plan for addressing a problem of practice focused on building capacity to address the diversity of cultures and history of British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples, which aligns with the provincial priorities and is directly relevant to their own commitment to increasing understanding of First Nations peoples among all students.

LEVERAGING LEARNING CYCLES

The team zeroes in on a plan to incorporate additional content over several weeks and, true to continuous improvement principles, collect data they can reflect on together to assess progress. They adopt a team learning

cycle that starts with data about needs, continues with setting goals tied to their learning and that of their students, outlines new instructional strategies to test, and includes assessment of impact to continue to refine actions for ongoing improvement. The team aligns its professional learning goals to school and district priorities and refines its plan to ensure that the professional learning is directly tied to improving student outcomes.

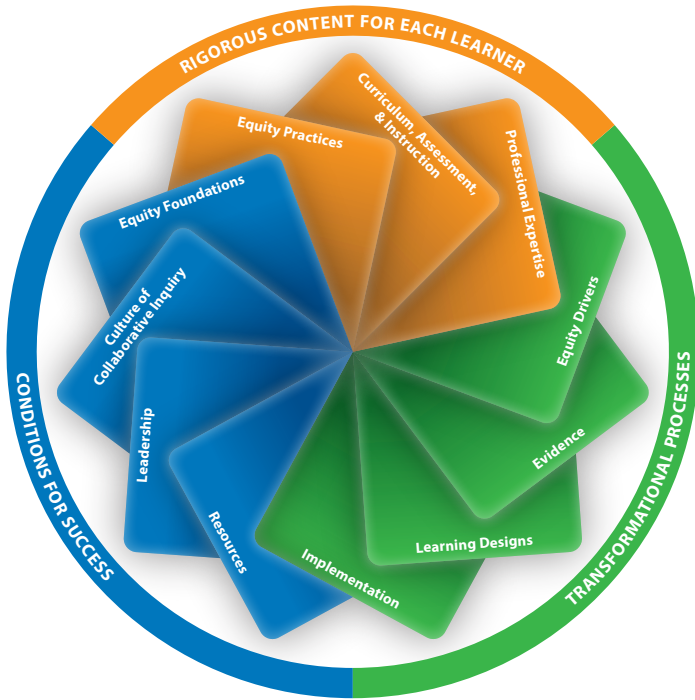
History team members ask each other challenging questions about impact and relevance, such as: Are we sure this lesson plan adequately conveys the complexity of British Columbia's First Nations cultural diversity? Have we created authentic opportunities for students to share about their own backgrounds and local contexts? The content of the discussion varies over the next year, but the process of collaborative examination is consistent.

Throughout the year, Ganatra is also intentional about focusing the team's learning on how the learning cycle itself operates and why various aspects of the process are essential to achieving the results they seek. He also taps a couple of teammates to serve in facilitator roles, offering them support to become skilled facilitators and assist their peers in strengthening their knowledge, skills, and practices to collaborate effectively.

Ganatra sees they are making progress on the question of how the department can best address the First Peoples Principles of Learning. He also observes that some team members struggle to define their own learning path within the collaborative process.

Leigh Mantavas, a new teacher on the team, is unsure about her pedagogical skills for eliciting student voice in the classroom and sometimes struggles to incorporate some of the team's new instructional strategies. She asks her colleagues for guidance and suggestions about an online course that she can take at her convenience.

The team offers suggestions, and an experienced colleague offers to join her, noting that they could take the course on their own but share and reflect together



Standards for Professional Learning work within a framework of three categories:

- The **Rigorous Content for Each Learner** standards describe the essential content of adult learning that leads to improved student outcomes.
- The **Transformational Processes** standards describe process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets.
- The **Conditions for Success** standards describe aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning.

periodically. Ganatra recognizes that what they learn from the course will help keep the team up to date, so he invites them to lead the professional learning community meeting in a few months to discuss what they have learned with the whole team.

At the other end of the career continuum, Michael Matthewson is an experienced teacher who is skilled at engaging his students with new content. He has been frustrated by the time it takes to develop a shared problem of practice and agree on a series of iterative cycles. He’s not always sure what he is gaining from these collaborative discussions. But because he has agreed

to trust the process, he engages in the discussion with Mantavas as she shares what she has learned about strategies to draw out quieter students through storytelling.

Matthewson realizes that this is an area in need of improvement in his own classes and implements an adaptation of the approach as the year progresses. After a few months of observing previously reticent students engaging in classroom discussions, Matthewson shares this progress with the team, reinforcing both the value of the individual learning Mantavas undertook but also the value of the collaborative discussions about pedagogical skills. Matthewson

also reflected with the team how his learning experience demonstrated to him that changing his practices ended up influencing his beliefs, opening his eyes to the variety of ways change happens for learners.

Both educators have improved their skills, their sense of efficacy, and their trust in the power of collaborative learning. In turn, they have improved the knowledge and efficacy of their colleagues and made great progress toward improving the culture of the school for the benefit of all learners.

Prompts for discussion and reflection:

What critical school, district, and regional challenges are present?

What strengths and improvement-oriented actions do you see in the vignette? Where do you see room for growth?

Which Standards for Professional Learning do you see reflected? Note key phrases that represent the standards at work.

What ideas, questions, or concerns does the vignette spark for your work in your context?

Standards for Professional Learning

<p><i>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...</i></p> <p>EQUITY PRACTICES ... understand their students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts, embrace student assets through instruction, and foster relationships with students, families, and communities.</p> <p>CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION ... prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.</p> <p>PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE ... apply standards and research to their work, develop the expertise essential to their roles, and prioritize coherence and alignment in their learning.</p>	RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER
<p><i>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...</i></p> <p>EQUITY DRIVERS ... prioritize equity in professional learning practices, identify and address their own biases and beliefs, and collaborate with diverse colleagues.</p> <p>EVIDENCE ... create expectations and build capacity for use of evidence, leverage evidence, data, and research from multiple sources to plan educator learning, and measure and report the impact of professional learning.</p> <p>LEARNING DESIGNS ... set relevant and contextualized learning goals, ground their work in research and theories about learning, and implement evidence-based learning designs.</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION ... understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.</p>	TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES
<p><i>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...</i></p> <p>EQUITY FOUNDATIONS ... establish expectations for equity, create structures to ensure equitable access to learning, and sustain a culture of support for all staff.</p> <p>CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY ... engage in continuous improvement, build collaboration skills and capacity, and share responsibility for improving learning for all students.</p> <p>LEADERSHIP ... 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.</p> <p>RESOURCES ... allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize equity in their resource decisions, and monitor the use and impact of resource investments.</p>	CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Learning Forward is committed to building every educator's capacity to establish and sustain high-quality professional learning so that every student has access to high-quality teaching and learning.

As the only membership association solely focused on effective professional learning for K-12 educators, Learning Forward serves thousands of members and subscribers while simultaneously influencing the broader education field. Learning Forward works at all levels of the education system.

Information about standards, membership, services, or products is available from:

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Learn more

Visit standards.learningforward.org to find resources useful for sharing, studying, and implementing Standards for Professional Learning.

- Role-based Action Guides include Innovation Configuration maps.
- Research resources go deep on the evidence behind standards.
- Policy tools suggest steps to advance adoption and use of standards in a range of contexts.