

## Overview to Units 1–4



# SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE



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

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Learning Forward's Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core is a multidimensional initiative 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 professional learning for current and future education reforms.

This work is supported by Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation. Learn more at [www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core)



# School-based Professional Learning for Implementing the Common Core

**M**eeting the promise of college and career readiness is not achieved by agreeing on and publishing new standards. The success of the Common Core State Standards in preparing all students for college or a career depends on educators' capacity to make the instructional shifts the standards require. Teachers' ability to effectively teach to the standards, not the standards themselves, prepares students.

Setting consistent standards across most states creates high expectations for all students and requires educators to expand their expertise, design deeper learning experiences for students, use new forms of formative assessment, and be more consistent in the rigor and cognitive demands they make in the classroom.

The need to ensure effective professional learning has never been more important. To use the Common Core State Standards and other college- and career-ready standards, teachers will need to engage in professional learning. The kind of professional learning educators experience must engage them not in the externally driven, traditional models of sit-and-get learning in which content is not connected to their daily work or the students sitting in those classrooms. Instead, professional learning should immerse them in communities of learners committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and shared accountability.

Within communities of learning in which they commit to learning and working together, teachers can transform their instructional practices and resources to align with the new standards and move the standards into



instruction. These units will help educators build stronger communities of practice in which each member can learn and contribute to peers' learning.

### **Purpose**

The units are designed to give principals and teacher leaders professional learning resources and develop their ability to facilitate job-embedded, school-based professional learning. The resources include materials for providing colleagues with professional learning and to use when facilitating teams focused on teaching and learning.

### **Overview**

The four professional learning units will help teacher leaders, principals, and other resource staff facilitate teachers' learning experiences in four critical areas of effective school-based professional learning.

Successfully implementing new standards depends on how well student learning aligns with the standards. Education leaders agree that the foundation for implementing the new standards well is professional learning. While experts outside schools and school systems may lead some of this learning, most will occur within schools, among teams of teachers, within communities of practice focused on translating the standards and supplemental curriculum guides into daily instruction. Educators in their own schools will facilitate this professional learning, focusing on their own continuous improvement and directly aligning it to the work they do each day in their classrooms and schools.

Many principals and teachers have worked with district leaders and community members to create a schedule that gives teachers time during the school day for collaborative learning. Yet in many schools, educators are asking how to use the time available to maximize their learning, engage in collaborative planning, reflect on their practice, and use student work to inform their decisions about instruction. By planning, reflecting, and planning lessons in communities of practice, every educator's expertise is enhanced and success supported, and the likelihood increases that students will learn more.

The focus of these units is to help those in leadership roles — teacher leaders, coaches, principals, curriculum leaders, and other resource staff — to develop a shared body of knowledge about the procedures, processes, and structures needed in effective communities of practice and develop the skills to facilitate those communities.

### **Using the units**

These units can be used as a resource guide and for professional learning on the four topics. Deciding which use is most appropriate depends on school teams' existing skills.

### **Professional learning**

Use units for explicit professional learning with staff or with collaborative teams if team members:

- Want to increase their effectiveness and efficiency as a team.
- Want to develop common language to talk about their collaborative work and strategies for accomplishing their goals.



- Want defined options from which to choose when they plan their collaborative learning.
- Use the same processes repeatedly and want to explore new ways to accomplish their work.
- Feel that they could dig deeper into their work.
- Want to know more about how to structure their time together.

### Resources

Use the tools as resources to enrich successful collaboration within teams if team members:

- Are confident that their collaboration includes opportunities for their own learning and to reflect on practice, and expands what they know and are able to do as educators.
- Have demonstrated success with using their collaboration time and want additional procedures, processes, and structures to enrich their work.
- Can identify their strengths and gaps as a team and want to continue to learn how to increase their effectiveness and efficiency as a team.
- Focus simultaneously on student results and achieving educator learning goals.
- Have developed an open, honest, trusting relationship in which members do more than share materials, but can identify their individual challenges and receive constructive support from their peers that expands each team member's expertise.

### Content

Each unit's content works interdependently with other units to develop participants' foundational knowledge, skills, and practices to implement school-based, job-embedded professional learning designed to support implementation of new curricula, assessments, and other reforms. The four professional learning units address essential topics for improving professional learning. Each unit includes background readings, protocols to use with learning teams, recommended processes and strategies to accomplish the school's improvement plan through effective professional learning, and other resources for principals and teacher leaders to use to support their efforts to implement effective teaching and learning for full implementation of KCAS.

The units and expected outcomes are:

#### Unit 1: Managing change

Learners will be able to ...

- Describe the three phases of the change process as defined by Michael Fullan.
- Discuss six strategies for managing change.
- Understand how the Stages of Concern can provide differentiated support.
- Identify and explain strategies for addressing resistance to change.

#### Unit 2: Facilitating learning teams

Learners will be able to ...

- Recognize team facilitators' responsibilities and other roles that contribute to a team's success.





- Understand how teams develop in order to be able to address members' needs at each stage of team development.
- Acquire skills and strategies for facilitating learning teams, such as forming agreements, using purpose and nonpurpose, managing challenging situations, and assessing team effectiveness and efficiency.
- Develop strategies for assessing learning team members' contributions, the team's effectiveness, and the results of the team's work.
- Identify actions to take to improve professional learning within their own setting.

Each unit includes a plan for professional learning that suggests the sequence for the learning experience, recommends strategies, and provides additional materials. Each unit also contains tools that can be used independently. To use the units as a resource guide, give team members a brief overview of the unit so they understand the purpose and content and may select which tools to use.

There is no expected sequence to the units; however, these guidelines will help school and district leaders determine the most appropriate sequence for their school or district:

### Unit 3: Learning designs

Learners will be able to ...

- Provide a rationale for using multiple learning designs.
- Identify at least five to seven learning designs appropriate for one of their professional learning goals.
- Draft a professional learning plan using a variety of learning designs.

### Unit 4: Standards for professional learning

Learners will be able to ...

- Explain the purpose of the Standards for Professional Learning.
- Identify the implications of the prerequisite for professional learning.
- Understand the purpose and key components of the learning standards.
- Identify the alignment between the cycle of continuous improvement and the professional learning standards.

- Start with Unit 1 if a school's leadership team and faculty have limited understanding about how changes associated with various education reforms will affect staff and how to address responses, feelings, concerns, or reactions to the change.
- Start with Unit 2 if the school's faculty is engaged in professional learning communities or other forms of collaborative learning and want to strengthen the teams' effectiveness, efficiency, and results. This unit will support team leaders and the entire faculty in applying the essential skills for working productively together to improve teaching and learning.
- Start with Unit 3 if the school's, district's, or team's approach to professional learning is repeatedly the same, is more often one-size-fits-all, focuses more on increasing awareness



and knowledge than on implementation, or is infrequently adapted to adult learners' learning preferences. Unit 3 helps individuals, teams, coaches, school leadership team members, and principals implement team-focused professional learning designs.

- Start with Unit 4 if the school's leadership team, district and school leaders, or faculty have limited understanding of the research about effective professional learning practices that improve educator practice and the achievement of all students.