



STANDARDS IN PRACTICE

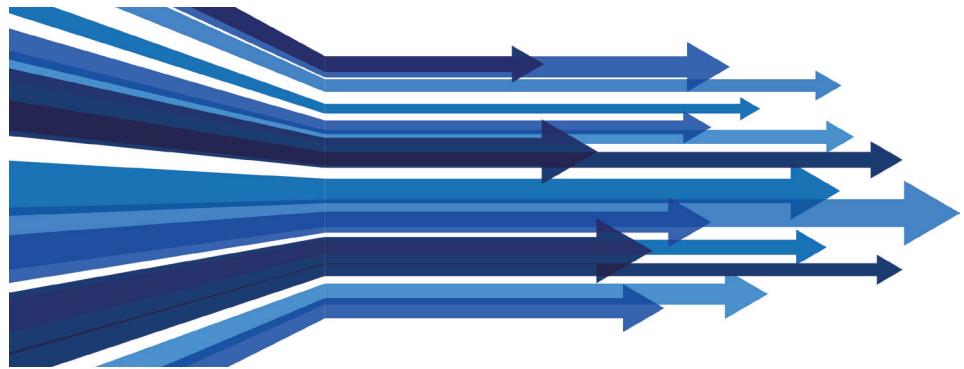
Paul Fleming

WHY THESE STANDARDS MATTER FOR YOU (YES, YOU)

“How can Standards for Professional Learning help me and my schools?”

I remember being asked this question by a principal supervisor in 2014 when, as assistant commissioner at the Tennessee Department of Education, I was rolling out guidance and professional learning for administrators on the standards. Fast-forward to 2022, and this question remains pertinent as Learning Forward releases revised standards.

To learn more about applying the standards in your own role, visit standards.learningforward.org to find role-specific Action Guides.



The short answer is that Standards for Professional Learning set the bar for high-quality professional learning by defining the rigorous content, transformational processes, and conditions for success so that each educator experiences high-quality professional learning and each student engages in high-quality learning.

The central equity issue confronting public education right now is the need for a diverse, well-trained, and stable teacher and leader workforce equitably distributed across all states, communities, districts, and schools. A high-quality professional learning system aligned to Standards for Professional Learning can accelerate policies and practices for solving these equity challenges.

The challenges of the past 2½ years during COVID-19 have heightened the urgency for such a system. Educators at all levels are working harder than ever to meet the needs of their students despite sometimes daunting and ever-changing conditions.

In my conversations with school, district, and state leaders across the country, I see and hear that they understand the importance of equipping themselves and their colleagues with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to accelerate student growth and reduce the opportunity gaps that can derail their most underserved students at this critical time. They also understand they cannot do this work alone or in silos.

Many educators express to me this common and recurring hope: To be part of a collaborative and supportive system in which everyone is rowing in the same direction toward common goals undergirded by equitable and evidence-based policies, programs, and practices that accelerate excellent teaching and student outcomes.

Standards for Professional Learning, and the tools that accompany them, provide direction and guidance to steer the boat in that direction. They detail key roles and responsibilities for educators at all levels to help ensure that the standards are applied in a systemic way.

The table on the next page lists specific examples of how stakeholders at multiple levels can apply the newly revised standards to improve professional learning.

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TEACHERS	PRINCIPALS	DISTRICT OFFICE LEADERS	STATE COMMISSIONERS/ MINISTERS OF EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage regularly with colleagues in professional learning on how to implement high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and aligned assessments. Participate in and contribute to inclusive professional learning practices in the school, recognizing how historical or systemic inequities have created barriers. Set professional learning goals with colleagues tied to student needs to engage in aligned professional learning. Expect and contribute to a school culture where professional learning connects to each student’s opportunity for and access to rigorous learning. Create and embrace opportunities to demand high-quality professional learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop or contribute to policies to provide high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and aligned assessments. Leverage inclusive professional learning practices in the school, removing barriers that result from historical or systemic inequities. Use multiple types of data and evidence to plan, design, implement, and evaluate professional learning. Create a vision for how professional learning enables educators to achieve school and system goals. Create schedules that include time for job-embedded learning for all educators in a school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize understanding and applying inclusive education practices across the system or district. Use learning theory in the design of professional learning and match appropriate learning designs with educator learning goals. Sustain learning with opportunities for practice, feedback, and follow-up in coordination with human resources such as leader and school coaches. Create a vision for how professional learning enables educators to achieve system goals. Design structural coherence across all entities that provide leader and educator professional learning services across the system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish expectations that professional learning for each educator is aligned to role- and content-specific standards, guidelines, and research. Analyze and track the impact of investments in professional learning on teacher and leader growth, retention, and student outcomes. Ground actions in understanding that professional learning is a change process that requires alignment across the whole system and sustained investment and implementation support. Set expectations that professional learning ensures all students have access to rigorous learning, inclusive of their race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, and other aspects of identity. Advocate for professional learning resources with policymakers at local, state, provincial, regional, and federal levels.