



HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

LEARNING TOGETHER IS THE BEST WAY FORWARD

“Improving together” is a fitting description not only for this issue, but for everything we strive to do in *The Learning Professional* and at our parent organization, Learning Forward.

We are dedicated to continuous improvement in teaching, leading, and learning because when educators learn and grow, students learn and grow, and ultimately thrive.

We are proud to partner on this special issue with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is also deeply committed to continuous improvement. That commitment is evident in the foundation’s support for Networks for School Improvement, collaboratives that are working across schools and districts to build educators’ capacity to improve outcomes for students from historically marginalized communities.

The networks, which are featured in this issue, apply methods from improvement science and other improvement approaches to test change ideas at the local level to make meaningful change for educators and students. They operate in varied contexts and have different foci, but their members come together regularly as a community of practice to share knowledge, build skills, and support one another. The network members’ commitment to improvement is multilayered, as they seek to continually improve their own practice while building the capacity of educators in their local contexts to do the same.

We are honored to share their stories, including their successes and challenges as well as some of the processes and tools they have created to help other educators learn, reflect, grow, and improve. And we are grateful for the partnership of guest editor Lynn Olson, whose expertise in both educational improvement and strategic communications have been instrumental in bringing their stories to life.

As the authors worked with us on their articles, they embodied the spirit of continuous learning and improvement they describe in the pages of the journal. They listened deeply to their peers in and across network teams, engaged in deep inquiry about their practices and lessons learned, tried various writing approaches, and adapted their articles based on feedback and the needs of our readers. The result is a set of articles that are deeply rooted in local contexts but have broad applicability to learning professionals who have diverse roles, settings, and challenges.

This issue’s articles remind us that high-quality professional learning comes in many shapes and sizes — often not in the traditional mold that some policymakers and even educators themselves have come to expect. It can come in the form of one school team visiting another’s classrooms and asking, “How did you do it that way — and why?” It can come from empowering veteran teachers to mentor early career teachers in intentional ways connected to improvement goals. It can come through recognizing students as the experts of their own experience and listening deeply to them. Professional learning can also come in the form of publishing in a professional journal such as this one, from taking the time to reflect on and write about one’s own learning to reading about and applying others’ learning and insights.

We know, and research confirms, that we learn better when we learn together. That’s why we encourage you to share this issue with your colleagues and friends and discuss your learning. Ask questions, share opinions, find common ground, disagree. We will be hosting discussions about the issue in the coming weeks and months, so make sure you sign up for our email list at learningforward.org to be notified of those opportunities. We look forward to continuing to learn from you and with you, together. ■



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