AT A GLANCE

6 things to know about evaluating professional learning

01 What is evaluation?

Evaluation is a formal process of collecting and analyzing data about a program or initiative to make judgments and informed decisions. It examines clearly defined outcomes so stakeholders can determine whether and in what ways the program was successful.

02 How is evaluation different from research?

Research explores the relationship among two or more variables to develop knowledge on a topic. It is a broad category of social science inquiry that can describe a phenomenon, examine the causes of a problem, or test solutions, whereas evaluations examine specific programs with defined outcomes.

03 What do policymakers mean when they ask for evidence?

Evidence is a type of data. Data are pieces of information that are analyzed to answer evaluation questions. Evidence is data that serves to answer whether and how well a program works.

04 What does it mean to show impact?

Impact is the effect of a program on its participants and the people they serve. In professional learning, impact usually means changes in teachers' and students' knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors.

05 Who can conduct evaluation?

Anyone. While many education systems hire external evaluators with research backgrounds, any educator can use an array of evaluation strategies that range from simple to complex. Resources are available in this issue of *The Learning Professional* and at **learningforward.org/evaluation**

06 Why does it matter?

Evaluation is important for understanding which professional learning approaches work, when, where, for whom, and why. With that information, all stakeholders can make good decisions about how to invest time and resources so that all educators grow and all students succeed.

*Some definitions are adapted from **Assessing Impact** by Joellen Killion (Corwin, 2018).*