



HERE WE GO

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SUCCESS STORIES HIGHLIGHT HOW EDUCATORS CAN PIVOT

Pivoting in education takes investments in adults' learning and ongoing support to understand, initiate, evaluate, and recalibrate change strategies.

Whenever I hear the word “pivot,” I think of a move that’s common in many dance forms. You put your foot forward and push off of it to turn your body. A pivot can be a quarter turn or a half turn, but not a full turn. You end up facing a new direction, positioned to move toward a new location. Whether dancers or not, we all make metaphorical pivots from time to time — notable changes in direction that require putting a foot forward and ending up somewhere new. Often, we pivot because new information tells us that what we’re doing isn’t working or that there’s a better way.

In education, that information can take the form of student data, new research on instructional practices, or intentional reflection on the outcomes of past efforts. The need to pivot can also come from changes in our environments. It’s hard to think of a more significant pivot than the one necessitated by the physical and social changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A dancer’s pivot is a basic step that’s easy to execute; an educator’s is not. In education, it takes investments in adults’ learning to understand, initiate, evaluate, and recalibrate change strategies. That’s why we have dedicated this issue of *The Learning Professional* to learning to pivot.

Articles look at the what, why, and how of many kinds of pivots, including adapting to the reality of AI in schools, restructuring summer programs, and rethinking approaches to reducing racial disparities in school discipline. A special section focuses on how professional learning is supporting schools to shift to science-based methods of reading instruction, one of schools’ current highest-priority pivots. Around the U.S. and beyond, leaders are stressing the urgency of changes in literacy approaches based on alarming statistics about children’s low reading skills.

In the U.S., nearly 40% of 4th graders scored below basic on the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2022). As a result, in recent years, 34 states and the District of Columbia have passed policies or regulations requiring that teachers engage in professional learning about the science of reading. (For more information, see p. 85.)

Those policies are encouraging, but to make real change, they must ensure that professional learning is high-quality and aligned to Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2022). A one-time workshop or a boxed curriculum without ongoing support is not going to lead to improvements for students, as authors in this issue of *The Learning Professional* know. They describe how their schools, districts, and states are leveraging coaching, job-embedded residencies, leadership development, and online learning to improve educators’ literacy practices and close gaps in students’ reading proficiency.

The issue also includes tools for helping manage change, and Frederick Brown, Learning Forward’s president and CEO, revisits the learning team cycle and shows how it can help educators make shifts both minor and major.

With this issue, we’re also doing some pivoting of our own to make the research section as useful to you as possible. As a result of feedback from you, Elizabeth Foster’s column will have a broader focus, including evaluation, research tools, and methods and mechanisms for studying your efforts and their impact. We encourage you to send your ideas and questions to shape future issues.

Pivoting can be disorienting, especially when it takes you in a direction you’ve never faced before. But when you step forward with a clear focus and strong support, you can turn smoothly, ready to glide into your next move.

REFERENCES

- Learning Forward (2022).** *Standards for Professional Learning*. Author.
NAEP. (2022). *NAEP reading assessment: Highlights*. bit.ly/3zSOrgb ■

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