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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Kelly Wegley, Worthington City Schools, Ohio

OHIO DISTRICT CONNECTS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In Worthington, Ohio, K-12 educator professional learning is always happening, even in summer. Worthington City Schools provides sustained and ongoing support to all teachers, leaders, and instructional staff members under the “WorthU” umbrella of learning and teacher leadership growth experiences, coaching and mentorship, and collaborative teamwork. Educators personalize their professional learning in a multitude of ways, said Kelly Wegley, Worthington Schools director of academic achievement and professional learning. Learning from peers at Learning Forward’s Annual Conference, honing the skills of instructional coaches, and using the Standards for Professional Learning as foundational resources are ways Worthington City Schools benefits from its Learning Forward membership.

Worthington City Schools uses the Ohio Improvement Process as its platform to drive continuous improvement initiatives and the Ohio Resident Educator Program to support novice teachers throughout their first four years. A central theme of professional learning is maintaining connection among academic and school improvement initiatives. Wegley spoke with Learning Forward recently about how the district is doing just that.



What’s been happening this summer?

One summer professional learning focus is preparing for a 2024-25 program where we are piloting two different knowledge-based English language arts curricula. Ohio requires districts to adopt and implement scientifically based reading instruction. Our pilot involves 45 teachers across our elementary schools, across grade levels.

What are your professional learning pillars, and who plays what roles?

What’s unique is I am on the academic achievement side of the house, which has helped professional learning to be tightly connected to district academic initiatives. There’s not professional learning happening on one side that isn’t connected to our improvement initiatives.

We connect into state resources and ensure we are marrying up those programs. For example, new teachers in the Ohio Resident Educator program also participate in our Ohio Improvement Process teacher-based teams. Before, there was some separation, but we realized our new teachers need to participate in teacher-based teams to benefit from that level of ongoing support that ultimately supports growth in our students.

Some of the most important professional learning that our teachers do is through the teacher-based teams, which are supported by their building leadership teams. Those teams are also supported by our district leadership team. When we think about high-quality professional learning that is job-embedded, ongoing, and sustained, our teacher-based teams are an incredibly important part of that process.



District members: Share your experiences with us

The Learning Professional wants to hear from Learning Forward district members so we can share your professional learning success stories. Contact jefna.cohen@learningforward.org to schedule a conversation and possibly be featured in a future Member Spotlight column.

How do you use federal Title IIA funds?

We pay a modest stipend to members of our building leadership teams who work in concert with our building leaders. They support the teacher-based teams in their building, which supports ongoing improvement efforts. We're proud to use some of our Title IIA funds for this.

Describe a few successes.

We have an incredible instructional coaching team of six coaches who serve 11 elementary buildings and one middle school,

which is a Title I school. We can really see the impact in teacher actions in the classroom and the impact on students and their growth and learning in these buildings. Our instructional coaching and instructional strategies are tightly connected to the curricular resources we are using, and that's been a success for us.

Something else that has helped us be successful with coaches is my partnership with our director of elementary education because we get the principals and coaches together periodically to be able to do shared

learning and collaboration. We visit them in their buildings and brainstorm: What is going well? How can we better support them?

We're glad you're part of the Learning Forward community.

The resources available through Learning Forward support the work we are doing. For example, our district completed a special education audit this past year, and members of our professional development advisory council were pleased to see an entire issue of *The Learning Professional* focused on special education. ■

ANNOUNCING THE #PLSIGN CHALLENGE



What does your school sign say when teachers analyze student data, collaborate, and optimize the curriculum? This ongoing, essential, complex work to improve student outcomes is so much more than a "PD day."

We invite all schools to change your #PLsign to educate your communities on the value of educator professional learning. When teachers learn, all students can learn more. The next time students are out of school for a professional learning day, change your #PLsign! Use the hashtag and tag @learningforward on social media.