



Learning Forward's Equity Position Statement

(LFO is an affiliate of Learning Forward and we share these goals)

Learning Forward believes schools achieve their utmost potential when:

- ❑ Each student experiences relevant, culturally responsive, rigorous learning and benefits from the collective guidance and care of exceptional teachers and leaders;
- ❑ Each educator has access to high-quality professional learning so they can cultivate the strengths and address the needs of each student they serve; and
- ❑ Each leader advocates for and builds an education system that dismantles institutional racism and removes other barriers to students' equitable access to learning.

This vision for equity in schools requires transformation at every level of the education system.

Learning Forward defines equity as the outcome of educator practices that respect and nurture all aspects of student identity rather than treat them as barriers to learning. Professional learning is a critical lever to achieve equity.

What is the process that your school or Board will use to address and engage in courageous conversations about more equitable outcomes?

Working towards Success for ALL Students: A Learning Reflection from one of our Directors: Deborah McCallum

The most influential leaders are usually very involved in school goal-setting. This is especially true when a school prioritizes reading proficiency as a top goal! Which is exactly what has happened at Harriett Todd PS in Orillia. It takes purposeful and robust leadership to build common visions and to make reading a top priority in a school. As a Literacy Instructional facilitator, I have had the opportunity to co-learn with this amazing staff, students, and administrators to increase student achievement in reading.

The Principal, Jennifer Cornick, and Vice-Principal Colin Shawyer are the administrators of Harriett Todd, and they have developed an innovative process to meet their **Wildly Important Goal** (WIG) of increasing reading proficiency among **all** students. They personalized their plan to reach their WIG plan based on ‘The 4 Disciplines of Execution’ by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling.

They recognized that

“To achieve a goal you have never achieved before, you must start doing things you have never done before.” and

“To be successful, you need more than just compliance, you need commitment.”

To achieve true commitment by doing things that have never been done before, a clear process was put in place to build collective efficacy toward their WIG. Throughout each week, the administration meets with, leads, and co-learns with all staff in separate groups either before or after school, discussing data and progress in pursuing their school WIG.

They treat everyone, myself included, as co-learners, and everyone works together to collect and triangulate targeting evidence about phonemic awareness, letter-sound skills, reading levels, and comprehension tasks. This data is called the LAG data (data from assessments that have already taken place) and is essential in creating the WIG. LEAD data is the evidence collected daily, and used to talk about in weekly meetings.

Last year, the staff worked together to identify the best daily activities that were within their control to improve literacy. Once staff co-identify the most important thing to do to

reach that goal, it becomes hard to argue not to do it. The LAG and LEAD data are made visible on data walls and charts, and it means that educators are able to hold themselves accountable. These data help everyone reflect on the impact of interventions implemented each week, and if improvement is not happening, this evidence promotes reflection and leads to necessary changes. Students also have a voice in this process, and their feedback about their own learning is highly valued and key in reaching the WIG!

As Jennifer & Colin have shared, ***'It is very easy to lose track of various 'initiatives' and school goals, but the WIG is ever-present.'*** The ongoing commitment and next steps are all driven by educators themselves. Nothing affects collective efficacy more than working in this way and seeing regular successes on the way to the goal.

It is exciting for everyone to see the changes that are taking place in the students each week. This really builds self-efficacy and collective efficacy being able to see the successes each week in learning and reading. I feel humbled that I could be a co-learner in this process toward reaching the WIG!

Our Experience - Leading and Learning During COVID-19

Karen Hastings and Jenna Meyers are teachers with the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board, who hold board-level positions, but have been reassigned to the Blessed Carlo Acutis Virtual school due to the COVID pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth a wide variety of challenges in the world of education. Ministry leaders, school boards, teachers, and parents filtered through the information, the fear, and their moral obligations to do what is best for the students in Ontario. The two of us landed in our school board's virtual school as grade seven and eight teachers. Formerly, we were teacher-coaches in both Mathematics Instruction and in Transitions to Secondary School. With the shortage of teachers across Ontario, this was our new reality, however, the desire to lead and learn alongside our colleagues was still fierce.

Teaching virtually has provided us with the opportunity to continue to grow as leaders and lifelong learners. Both of us came into this teaching role with a strong knowledge of curriculum, as well as tried and true strategies to engage students in-person. Teaching online has tasked us to constantly find new ways to teach and engage students who are not physically in the same space as us. This means that we have also worked hard to create multiple assessment opportunities that are relevant and represent the true abilities of the student. Assessment is an essential part of teaching as it informs our next steps, and how to

LEARNING FORWARD ONTARIO NEWSBRIEF *November 2020*

provide the most effective teaching practices for the student. As educators, we are learning what these best practices look like in the virtual classroom.

We learned of the importance of triangulating assessment data in the Growing Success document. We know how crucial it is to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning and understanding in a variety of ways. In the virtual learning environment, products can easily be assessed as students submit their work through the Learning Management System. The task of trying to figure out what conversational and observational assessment looks like virtually has taken many attempts, has fuelled multiple conversations between colleagues, and is an ongoing process. Professional conversations with our colleagues in the virtual school have led us to utilize co-created success criteria consistently throughout our school day. This way, students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in this new mode of learning. Further, teachers have a clear picture of what they are looking for from students which allows for ease of tracking observations and conversations in anecdotal notes throughout the day. One example that we use in our classes is success criteria regarding the use of the chat feature during a synchronous learning session. Students are aware that teachers are looking for appropriate language, proper grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as using the chat tool as a means of communicating opinions and ideas during the teacher-led lesson.

Below is our example of co-created success criteria regarding how to use the chat feature appropriately:

I can...

- Use chat feature if the nod extension isn't working (by saying "raised hand" or "me")
- Ask questions (of your peers or of the teacher)
- Try to help my peers if the teacher is in a breakout room or answering a different question
- Type out the full word instead of using abbreviations, acronyms or slang
- Use appropriate language (spelling, punctuation and grammar)

While success criteria aids students' awareness of what their teacher is looking for during conversations and observations, parents also play a pivotal role. Parents are an integral part in a student's development and their success in school. In the virtual learning environment, parents have a new lens into the classroom. We have noticed that this involvement lands on the spectrum between one of two extremes; from being very involved in their child's learning to being unsure and unable to contribute. The extremes pose

difficulties to the accuracy of our assessment data. Some parents prefer to stay close to their child throughout the day, helping them along the way. This threatens the accuracy of our assessment data by becoming an assessment of what the child can do with the help of an adult, not independently. It is a learning curve for teachers, parents and students to view this as a way of “over helping” which can be detrimental to the student by sending them the message that they are unable to complete the task on their own.

On the opposite end of these extremes are parents who may not be technologically comfortable and therefore take a backseat to helping their child in their virtual learning. This also poses a threat to our assessment data. In a classroom, students would never be left completely on their own to regulate their behaviour, self-monitor, and work on their lessons or assignments independently. All students, regardless of how independent they are, require questioning, feedback and assistance at times. In a face-to-face classroom environment this would naturally come from peers or the teacher. In a virtual setting, with no parent involvement, students may struggle on their own, not asking for help, even when it’s required. To combat these two extremes, we have found that it is important to connect parents to the Learning Management System so that they can view the assignments and lessons. We have made an effort to communicate with all parents at the end of each week so that they feel connected and hopefully more comfortable in their child’s virtual classroom.

Going forward, important professional learning that would be a benefit is to continue to create quick and efficient tracking tools for conversations and observations online, as well as virtual learning look-fors. With further understanding of what learning skills might look like in an online environment, we can continue to help students to develop these lifelong skills.

We also recognize more than ever the need to support colleagues with so much new learning and continue in our roles as curriculum leaders to do so by sharing our knowledge and experiences. We have a Google Classroom set up for staff that we have used to help support some colleagues with their learning around the technology. We have met one-on-one with colleagues to share what has worked and also approaches we have altered.

We are keenly aware of the importance of creating a culture of trust, collaboration and critical conversations amongst staff. With so many uncertainties this school year, we need to challenge and support each other for the betterment of our students. Be open to change and flexibility and ensure we are honouring the many successes that are taking place in our schools!

Thanks for sharing your experiences Karen and Jenna!

LEARNING FORWARD ONTARIO NEWSBRIEF *November 2020*

Virtual Ignite Session Feedback



On Wednesday, September 30th, Learning Forward Ontario held their first Virtual Ignite Session. Participants were able to listen to five different speakers.

Here are some of the feedback that was received from this event:

“engaging topics and smooth transitions with tech ”

“important topics, significant connections made, wonderful speakers, loved the format ”

“Loved hearing all of the presenters ”

“The topics were timely, relevant and fostered amazingly insightful conversations. I left this session feeling engaged, entertained and given

new avenues to explore in my own practice; code breaking, building empathy through failure, collective efficacy just to name a few “

“ I love hearing from the speakers as they "kindle" the fire to keep it ignited. It is challenging times and sometimes we need something that oxidizes the flame. “

“Excellent learning experience. Presenters and participants were engaging and thoughtful in our conversations.”

We wish to sincerely thank our Ignite Speakers:

Jeewan Chanicka, Noa Daniel, Jenni Donohoo, Maggie Fay & Ruthie Sloan

Kitchen Table Conversations #2



Join us for our 2nd Virtual Kitchen Table Conversations

Topic of Conversation will be

Assessment in Virtual & Hybrid Learning Environments

Our @LearningFwdON Kitchen Table Conversations connects educators around burning issues + topics of interest. Mark your calendars for the return of our second Kitchen Table Conversations online discussion on **Wednesday,**

November, 25th, 2020. 7:30 p.m.- 9:00 p.m. E.S.T. The cost will be \$5.00
Registration now open! [Registration Link](#)

Learning Forward Ontario- Website

We invite you to visit our Learning Forward Ontario Website for all the latest information and updates. Be sure to check it out at www.learningforwardontario.ca



Contact Us

If you have thoughts to share or questions, please email us at:
membership@learningforwardontario.ca

LFO- Monthly Twitter Chats @LearningFwdON #LearnfwdON

We invite you to join our monthly #LearnfwdON twitter chats. They are held on the **second Monday of each month**. Be sure to check the website for more details, and follow @LearningFwdON on Twitter where we will post topics and questions prior to the chat.

Learning Forward Ontario Board 2020-2021

At the Learning Forward Ontario August AGM meeting the following Board of Directors were approved.

Appointment of Officers and Directors:

Brian Weishar/Beate Planche - Co-Chairs
Karen Steffensen - Vice Chair
Alison Golding - Secretary
Dawne Boersen -Treasurer

Directors at Large:

Jenni Donohoo - Past Chair
Richard Erdmann - Communications Lead
Noa Daniel
Michelle Kreller-Janke
Deborah McCallum
Brenda Sherry
Tania Sterling

We are currently in the process of finalizing an 'expression of interest' form for additional executive members. Stay tuned for more details. We invite you to consider joining our team of volunteers in a variety of capacities.

