As we begin a new calendar year, and as I begin my term as the new president of Learning Forward Ontario, I wanted to take this opportunity to wish you a prosperous and exciting new year of learning and leadership!

As learning leaders, many of our readers continue to strive to engage and/or support district and school leadership, learning teams, effective learning designs, and a deep commitment to a culture of learning and change. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to this kind of learning leadership!

At the national 2014 annual Learning Forward conference, one of the keynote speakers, Professor John Hattie, reminded teachers of the critical importance of “knowing thy impact” on teaching and learning. We need to make the commitment to evaluate what is being put into practice by, as Hattie reminded us,

“seeing learning through the eyes of the student, which can have the greatest impact of learning.”

He reminded us that

“success is all around us, but that we need to know and understand our impact.”

Hattie explained the key factors that impact student learning most are:

- teachers working together as evaluators of their impact;
- the power of moving from what students know now towards explicit success criteria;
- that errors and trust are welcomed as opportunities to learn;
- maximizing feedback to teachers about their impact;
- getting the proportion of surface learning to deep learning correct; and
- the Goldilocks principles of challenge by clearly defining the success criteria in small, measurable steps, and by deliberate practice to attain these challenges.
In order for teachers to adopt the key practices that John Hattie’s research has indicated will have the greatest impact on student learning, they need the support of staff developers working at the school and district levels. Staff developers need to be guided by principles or standards that help professional educators engage in ongoing, effective and meaningful professional learning. Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning, which I had the opportunity to analyze at the conference, can provide a framework for creating sustainable and deep professional learning opportunities. According to these standards, professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students is based upon:

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES** committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

**LEADERSHIP** who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

**RESOURCES** that are prioritized, monitored, and coordinated for educator learning.

**DATA** from a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

**LEARNING DESIGNS** that integrate theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

**IMPLEMENTATION** that applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.

**OUTCOMES** that are aligned with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

At the annual conference, I was also reminded of the critical importance of not only adopting these Standards of Professional Learning, but of evaluating professional learning. Dr. Tom Guskey reminded us that a lot of professional development today neither changes teacher practice nor improves student learning. He went on to explain the five levels of professional learning evaluation:

- Participants’ reactions to the experience.
- Participants’ learning from the experience.
- Organization support and change.
- Participants’ use of new knowledge and skill.
- Results: student learning outcomes.

In order to make professional learning effective, Dr. Guskey recommended:

- **Beginning with the end in mind** – a clear focus on learning (targets) and the learner (goals)
- **Engaging in rigorous self-analysis** – courage to ask tough questions and skill to find honest answers
- **Recognizing change is an individual and organizational process** – order of change being teacher attitudes and beliefs, followed by teaching practices and then student learning
- **Thinking big, but start small** – change is dynamic and large scale, but implemented through a series of smaller steps
- **Ensuring procedures are ongoing and professionally embedded** – change is a natural and recurring process that is essential to all learning environments

**Working in teams to maintain support**

**Including feedback on results**

**Providing follow-up, support and pressure**

**Integrating programs**

As Joellen Killion, Senior Advisor for Learning Forward, reminded affiliate leaders at the conference, change equals learning. But nothing about change is easy. We must engage in self-analysis to determine what we know, say, and do in order to adapt new ways of thinking and acting. To get better at what we do as educators, we must invest in professional learning. According to Killion,

“In education, change comes as a result of professional learning that integrates acquiring new knowledge; adding skills and competencies; examining beliefs, values, and assumptions; having desire to change; and transferring learning to routine practice.”

This integration of new knowledge and skills occurs when people apply their new understanding in their work on a regular basis, have opportunities to reflect on and analyze their own practice using clear criteria, receive feedback and support from a trusted colleagues, and commit to refining their practice over time.

**It truly is about knowing and understanding thy impact on both educator learning and student learning!** Best wishes as we move forward on our journey of continuous learning and improvement, challenged by our own thinking, the thinking of other learning leaders, and by our intense desire to seek and engage in change leadership!”
Implementation: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

The primary goals for professional learning are changes in educator practice and increases in student learning. This is a process that occurs over time and requires support for implementation to embed the new learning into practices. Those responsible for professional learning apply findings from change process research to support long-term change in practice by extending learning over time. They integrate a variety of supports for individuals, teams, and schools. Finally, they integrate constructive feedback and reflection to support continuous improvement in practice that allows educators to move along a continuum from novice to expert through application of their professional learning.

For more information and related resources, visit LearningForward.org

Standards for Professional Learning outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Learning Forward is the only association focused solely on the most critical lever in improving schools - building the knowledge and skills of educators. Through the Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward leads the field in understanding what links professional learning to improved student achievement.

The standard highlighted in this month’s newsletter is
A clear sense of ownership is required in order for collaborative teams to experience authentic learning that translates into instructional improvements. When team members begin to sense that the learning community’s agenda does not belong to them, they often become disengaged or demoralized. “Sustaining any profound change process requires a fundamental shift in thinking. We need to understand the nature of growth processes (forces that aid our efforts) and how to catalyze them. But we also need to understand the forces and challenges that impede progress, and to develop workable strategies for dealing with these challenges” (Senge et al, 1999, p. 10). It is critical that school leaders or facilitators attempt to provide effective supports while fostering autonomy and ownership among the team members. This ownership fuels the learning momentum of the team. Skilled facilitation requires a careful balance of structuring, coaching, probing, listening and reflecting, but most importantly, recognizing when their intervention is needed and when to allow ideas to ruminate.

This protocol supports collaborative teams by providing focused questions for dialogue while fostering a safe environment for the exploration of ideas and concepts. By carefully planning and scaffolding the questions, the pathways for high quality teacher talk will be more clearly paved enabling learning community members to engage in productive dialogue and powerful learning.

Share your story with us. Let us know how you decided to use this protocol or how it impacted your learning community. Drop us a line at editor@learningforwardontario.ca.

Reference:
MICROLABS (MODIFIED)

A version of this protocol was shared through the National School Reform Faculty resources and it was found at [www.rontichhart.com/COT_Resources_files/microlabs.pdf](http://www.rontichhart.com/COT_Resources_files/microlabs.pdf). This version of the protocol has been modified by Margot Heaton to fit the learning goals of a learning team.

PURPOSE

This protocol is particularly useful when a team is learning to:

- share a common philosophy or set of beliefs about education
- clarify and articulate issues and dilemmas that affect our work
- collaboratively generate ideas to solve problems

PREPARATION

1. Invest time in crafting high quality questions that relate to the current professional learning goals of the team and the content that is currently being explored by the group. Develop approximately three questions that will facilitate the desired learning outcomes. Scaffold the questions so that initial questions are relatively safe, while more probing questions should be introduced once comfort is established in this activity.

2. Group chairs into triads and provide some notebooks and writing space for the journaling component.

3. Introduce the process before beginning. Explain to the group that the facilitator will post and read out a prompt. Participants will have some wait time and an opportunity to write their ideas. Participants will then share their thoughts in timed go-arounds.

   NOTE: It is important that participants respect the time allocation and if a person is done before their time, they will use the rest of the time to reflect upon the ideas that the speaker presented. In addition, if the time limit expires, participants are asked to stop speaking. Stating these ideas in advance helps participants to understand the parameters of the activity and makes it easier for the facilitator or team members to address violated norms, if needed.

4. Invite team members to number themselves off (person 1, person 2, and person 3).

PROCESS

1. Post the first prompt and read it aloud to the group. Indicate to the group that they will have 4 minutes of writing time (or as much time as you deem appropriate) and 2 minutes of talk time per participants (or as much time as you deem appropriate).

2. Invite group members to think about the prompt and to record some of their ideas in their notebooks in preparation for the discussion.

3. Prompt person 1 from each group to begin to share his thinking for the predetermined amount of time. Remind the other members to simply listen to and reflect upon the ideas of the speaker. Prompt speakers when there are approximately 15-30 seconds remaining and then again when the time has expired. Follow this same process for person 2 beginning the dialogue on the second round and person 3 beginning the dialogue on the third round.

4. Once all participants have shared their ideas on any given prompt, invite team members to journal items that they found resonated with them. For instance, a team member might have a question that is remaining or an idea that requires a follow-up conversation or additional research, etc.).

5. After all of the prompts have been explored invite participants to go in a final go around to share some of their overall reflections and possible implications for their daily practice. For instance, ask "What did you hear that was significant? What key ideas or insights were shared?” or “What ideas really connected with the work that you are currently doing with students? How does it support or challenge your current practice or beliefs?”

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

Debrief the process by asking participants to consider how the protocol and conversation worked for them. Invite participants to reflect upon what worked well and what was difficult about the process. Collect any ideas or reflections that participants share or that you may have regarding future modifications that might help to improve the process.
Share Your Thoughts…

about the collection of feedback in regard professional learning.

Why collect the information?
What are the most important questions to ask?
What do you use the information for afterward?

We welcome your thoughts and comments.
If you have an idea to share, please send it to: editor@learningforwardontario.ca
We will do our best to publish all submissions.

If you are interested in resources for educators

including previous newsletters; interviews with Carol Dweck, Andy Hargreaves, Michael Fullan and Steven Katz, to name a few; and featuring research snapshots and book study guides.

Please visit www.learningforwardontario.ca
George Couros

George Couros is the Division Principal for Parkland School Division and an Innovative Teaching, Learning, and Leadership consultant.

THE NETWORKED LEADER

Thursday, February 19, 2015

Waterfront Hotel

Burlington, Ontario

The only constant in our world today is change, and as leaders from any position, it is important to be able to tap into others around the world to push our organizations forward. In this workshop, there will be a focus on “why” it is imperative to connect as individuals to further our own understanding of the opportunities there are for learning, while also going deeper into “how” this is done by learning how to connect with educators all over the world through digital media. There will also be an opportunity to have conversations to help others push their own thinking in our organizations on how these changes can enhance student learning. If we are not willing to think deeply about the way we learn, we will not change the way we teach. The day will be centred around how we can better serve our students as we continuously evolve in our learning.

HOW YOU CAN REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT

Visit http://learningforwardontario.ca/events.html to access the registration form. This form is needed to register electronically, by mail, or by purchase order.

REGISTRATION FEE: $185.00

1 ELECTRONICALLY: Complete the online form and submit it electronically. On the confirmation page you will use the link to the payment page where you can pay using PayPal.

2 BY MAIL: (convenient for those wishing to pay by cheque)
Complete and print the registration form. Send the form along with a cheque payable to “Learning Forward Ontario” to

Attention: Jennifer Canning
Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB
1994 Fisher Dr.
Peterborough, ON K9J 6X6

3 PURCHASE ORDER: Complete and print the registration form. (You will receive an invoice.) Send it along with a purchase order to “Learning Forward Ontario” to

Registration fee includes a full day event, breakfast and lunch, plus a 2014-2015 Learning Forward Ontario membership.

If you need accommodations for this event, The Waterfront Hotel is offering reduced rates for rooms. Please contact the hotel directly for reservations: (905) 681-5400 and mention LFO event.
REGISTER ONLINE NOW

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You may want to check out George’s blog at: http://georgecouros.ca/blog/

See inside for registration information or visit http://learningforwardontario.ca/events.html