As we head into 2014, we might be thinking of making resolutions – but my math background reminds me that only about 6% of resolutions made are ever accomplished. Personally, my resolution is to complete my resolutions from last year. Professionally, I did take some time to reflect on what I would like to accomplish this year – and promised myself that I would continue to find ways to encourage and promote quality learning experiences for teachers and educational leaders.

Learning Forward Ontario can provide you with opportunities to fulfill your resolutions. We have some great events this spring. We are very excited to announce our annual spring conference that will take place in Niagara Falls on May 1 and 2, 2014. On the first day of the conference, our keynote speaker is the distinguished Judith Warren Little who is the Dean of Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley where she researches organization and occupational contexts of teaching, with special attention to teacher’s collegial relationships and practices of teacher’s professional development. On our second day, we will feature a panel discussion with experts in the field from across the country to explore current issues in mathematics education. As well, there will be breakout sessions that will feature work from across our province on the most recent tools, resources and implementation of effective professional learning.

Another wonderful way to build leader capacity is the exciting opportunity put together in conjunction with Learning Forward. There will be a Canadian Learning Forward Academy offered to Canadian members for the first time. We are launching a Canadian cohort because it would provide our members with an opportunity to focus on the Canadian context while also maintaining the connection to the broader Learning Forward network. The Learning Forward Academy is an extended learning experience over two years that immerses participants in a model of inquiry and problem-based learning. Academy members work collaboratively to gain knowledge to solve significant student learning problems in their provinces, districts or divisions. The first sessions will be in Niagara Falls on May 2-4, 2014. More information on both of these events and registration is available on our website.
If we want to reap the rich rewards that are possible through the work of the PLC, it is necessary for us to participate in rigorous learning, even if it pushes us outside the realm of what is comfortable.

The pathway to producing high-yield teacher teams is only through maintaining a watchful eye on the work of students, critically evaluating our work as teachers, planning for rigorous professional learning, and whole-heartedly digging in. Participants in thriving learning communities commit to collaborating, even when that means members may be exposed for what they do not know. Little’s (1990) Four Fold Taxonomy, designed to assess team collaboration, highlighted four ways in which teams typically work together.

Little (1990) asserted that the lowest level of collaboration is Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas which describes a form of collaboration in which participants exchange stories and form friendships but the conversation does not generally lead participants to examine and consider changing their teaching practices. Little suggested Aid and Assistance as the next level of collaboration, which involves participants requesting support and the members of the group simply providing advice for the individuals in need. Learning in this scenario is not viewed as a collaborative venture to arrive at a collective understanding on topics revolving around teaching and learning. Instead, an individual seeks advice and opinions from others regarding obstacles or concerns pertaining to issues as they pertain to teaching practices. The third level of collaboration, termed In Sharing suggests that team members are collaborating by sharing aspects of their instructional practice and teaching philosophy with peers such as trading teaching methods, ideas, and opinions (Little, 1990).

The highest level of teacher collaboration described by Little bears the name Joint Work. This type of collaboration involves participants raising issues for analysis and debate to assist the individuals and the team in arriving at new levels of understanding (Little, 1990). Little’s work suggests that effective collaboration that leads to high-quality outcomes requires active participants who are invested in their own learning and the learning of other group members. If high levels of collaboration produce better results and tasks such as debating, analyzing and evaluating work are typical tasks of these high-yield teams, perhaps facilitators who are looking to deepen the team’s academic discourse could consider...
PURPOSE
This protocol is particularly useful when a team is learning to:
• effectively plan, create and assess the outcomes of powerful lessons
• increase the rigor of instructional and assessment practices
• strategically craft assessments to target student learning
• improve current student assignments and tasks

PREPARATION
Select an assignment to be analyzed and evaluated for its effectiveness. Keep in mind that the assignment may be under scrutiny. Depending on the level of comfort that is established within the group, it may be helpful to begin this process with an assignment that was not developed by any individual member of the team.

STEP 1: Examine curriculum expectations.
  a) Post and collaboratively review the identified expectations from the curriculum that are being targeted through the current instruction.
  b) Brainstorm the likely success criteria for the various expectations.

STEP 2: Analyze the task(s).
  a) Take a couple of minutes to read and reflect upon the task that is up for discussion.
  b) Collaboratively create a chart or organizer first, jotting down which expectations are targeted through the assignment, then linking the related success criteria to the evidence that will be used to determine if students have learned the desired outcomes?
  c) On the basis of your own experience, break down the task. List what students have to know and be able to do to complete the task successfully. Be as specific as possible and go as deep as possible.
  d) Engage in working on the task while noting the knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully complete the task.
  e) Determine the level of thinking required. What are the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy that apply to this assignment? Justify your selection(s).
  f) Assess for desired level of rigor. Using the rigor scale, determine whether the task is appropriately rigorous.

STEP 3: Analyze the lesson.
  a) Discuss the following questions:
     How did the teaching prepare students for this task?
     What scaffolds were taught, outlined, or suggested?
     What could be added to the instruction to better prepare students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge, skills and/or abilities?
  b) Provide a copy of the role chart to participants or post the chart for the group to view. Provide 1-2 minutes for the team to reflect on this question: “In this lesson what is the role of the student? Explain your rationale.” Consider the following:
     Student as Task Completer
     Student as Collaborator
     Student as Time Manager
     Student as Listener
     Student as Critic
     Student as Producer
     Student as Observer
     Student as Risk Taker
     Student as Researcher
     Student as Questioner
     Student as Investigator
     Student as Coordinator
     Student as Evaluator
     Student as Decision Maker
     Student as Deliverer
     Student as Facilitator
     Student as Judge
     Student as Coach
  c) Does the instruction provide students the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do based on the curriculum expectations? Explain.

STEP 4: Revise the assignment accordingly.
Revise the assignment, prompt, or task according to your work in steps 1-3.

Reference:

Reference:
Inside Teacher Community: Representations of Classroom Practice


What is this research about?
This research explored how teachers learn by examining how teaching practice comes to be known, shared, and developed among teachers through their out-of-classroom interactions.

What did the researchers do?
Using fine-grained discourse analysis, Little examined audio and videotape recorded during three professional learning community sessions. The notion of ‘affordance’ was used to consider professional development activities in terms of what enabled or did not enable teachers’ collective inquiry into practice.

The following broad questions framed the analysis:
1) What facets of classroom practice are made visible in out-of-classroom talk and with what degree of transparency?
2) How does interaction open up or close down teachers’ opportunity to learn?

What did the researchers find?
Although situated classroom practices arose in out-of-classroom talk as “discrete, condensed, and desituated”, they formed the basis for important, pervasive, and meaningful talk among teachers.

Each professional learning session displayed:
a) “something in the nature of affordances” – in other words, Little identified ways in which the team’s interactions opened up and/or constrained opportunities for learning;
b) representations of practice that were co-constructed by the way team members ‘interrupted’ each other’s language (e.g., drawing out language of fixed and growth mindsets).

Upon conclusion, Little noted, “the force of tradition and the lure of innovation seem simultaneously and complexly at play in the teachers’ everyday talk. Habitual ways of thinking or acting coincide closely with moments of surprise (“aha”); the impulse to question practice resonates against the press simply to get one with it”. Little offered one final consideration: “if we are to understand more fully what distinguishes particularly robust professional communities, we may have to understand the interplay of the conventional and the creative in all of them”.

QUESTION: What is the interplay between convention and creativity in your professional learning community? How do you know?
LEARNING FORWARD ONTARIO’S SPRING CONFERENCE

Moving Forward - Great to Excellent

Thursday, May 1  Keynote Speaker

Judith Warren Little is the Dean at the Graduate School of Education, University of California, in Berkeley. She has received numerous honours and awards and is the author of over 100 publications. Some of her latest titles include:

- Understanding Data Use Practices Among Teachers
- Professional Community and Professional Development in the Learning-Centered School
- Social Network Theory and Educational Change
- Attending to Problems of Practice: Routines and Resources for Professional Learning in Teachers’ Workplace Interactions

In addition, Judith’s work about teacher collaboration and learning communities has been cited by many educational leaders – including Andy Hargreaves, Michael Fullan and Steven Katz, to name a few. Don’t miss out on the opportunity to meet Judith and hear what she has to say about professional learning.

Friday, May 2  Moderated Panel Discussion

Mathematics

This is an opportunity to hear from mathematics experts from across Canada.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussions. This session will be moderated by Amy Lin (President – Learning Forward Ontario) and Cam McDonald (President - OMCA).

In addition, you will have an opportunity to attend breakout sessions intended to support all professional learning facilitators, including coaches and instructional leads either at the System level or the School level. Topics include:

- Collaborative Inquiries
- 21 Century Learning
- Math Inquiries
- Professional Learning Team models
- How a System and/or School Use Student Voice to Support Student Learning

Don’t miss out! Register today.
LEARNING FORWARD ONTARIO’S Spring Conference

Thursday, May 1 and Friday, May 2
Register for one or both days.

Moving Forward - Great to Excellent

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

There are three ways to register:

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 it along with a cheque payable to “Learning Forward Ontario” to

   Crowne Plaza, Niagara Falls - Fallsview
   5685 Falls Avenue, Niagara Falls, ON

   Special rate available until March 31st 2014.

Registration fee includes keynote speakers, break-out sessions, breakfast, lunch, and snacks. You will also receive a one-year membership to Learning Forward Ontario.

Registration fee does not include overnight accommodations. Please call the hotel directly at 1-800-519-9911 and request the special convention rate for Learning Forward Ontario Association.

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

Register before February 21, 2014 (Early Bird Special) for both days:
- Member - $299.00
- Non-Member - $329.00

Register after February 21 for both days:
- Member - $349.00
- Non-Member - $379.00

Register for May 1 only*: $175.00
Register for May 2 only*: $175.00

*One-day registration fee does not include LFO membership.

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