



LEARNING *Forward* NEWSLETTER

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Amy Lin

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.

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Spring Conference
May 1 and 2, 2014
Niagara Falls,
Ontario**

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The Power of PROTOCOLS

Assignment Analysis (Modified)

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.

by Margot Heaton

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.

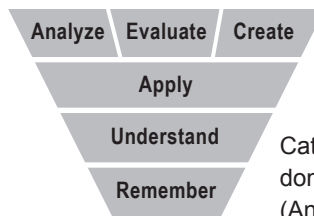
Little (1990) asserted that the lowest level of collaboration is *Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas* which describes a form of collaboration in which participants exchange stories and form friendships but the conversation does not generally lead participants to examine and consider changing their teaching 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



Dr. Margot Heaton works as a Vice-Principal for the Greater Essex County District School Board. She recently graduated with her doctorate from the Joint PhD Program at the University of Windsor, Brock University, and Lakehead University. Her research interests are in professional learning communities.

Bloom's Taxonomy

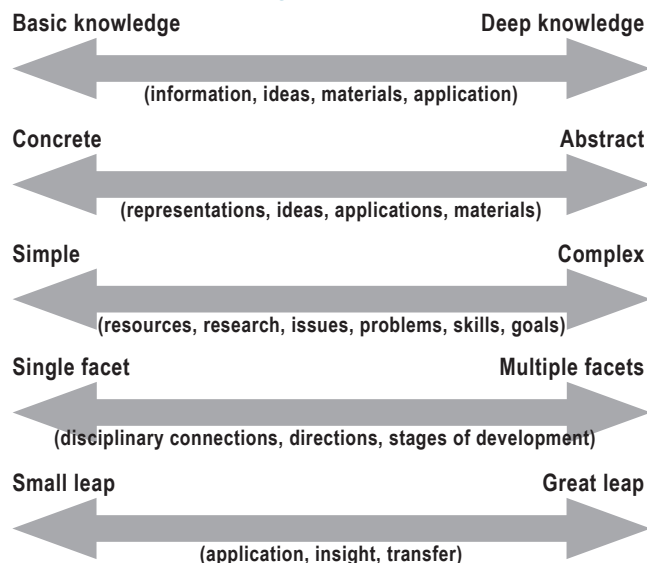


Categories in the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Reference:

Anderson, L. & Krathwohl, D. A. (2001). *Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman.

Rigor Scale



embedding prompts that encourage these sorts of rigorous conversations or tasks that call upon these higher level thinking skills.

The protocol that is featured in this edition of the Learning Forward newsletter encompasses many cognitively demanding components and this structure has the potential to have significant effects on teacher learning. Remember, 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. Consider using the entire protocol at a meeting that affords the team a couple

of hours of focused learning. As an alternative, facilitators might determine that their group may not be ready for the entire protocol, but might borrow pieces of this protocol to move teams closer to achieving their professional learning goals.

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

Reference:

Little, J. W. (1990). The Persistence of Privacy: Autonomy and Initiative in Teachers' Professional Relations. *Teachers College Record* 91, No. 4 (pp. 509-536).

Assignment Analysis (Modified)

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 Questioner
Student as Collaborator	Student as Investigator
Student as Time Manager	Student as Coordinator
Student as Listener	Student as Evaluator
Student as Critic	Student as Decision Maker
Student as Producer	Student as Deliverer
Student as Observer	Student as Facilitator
Student as Risk Taker	Student as Judge
Student as Researcher	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:

Anderson, L. & Krathwohl, D. A. (2001). *Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman.

researchsnapshot

Inside Teacher Community: Representations of Classroom Practice



Source of Research: Little, J. W. (2003). Inside Teacher Community: Representations of Classroom Practice. *Teachers College Record*, 105(6), 913-945.

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 you need to know...

Upon interpreting the evidence, a number of problems surfaced. *Accounts* of classroom practice:

- ♦ fell short by comparison to lived or observed practice;
- ♦ relied heavily on specialized and/or localized terminology;
- ♦ arose in relation to the work "immediately at hand" among the group rather than in regard to their relevance in the classroom;
- ♦ were limited due to time constraints.

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?

Moving Forward - Great to Excellent

Thursday, May 1 Keynote Speaker



Judith 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

Judith Warren Little

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 break-out 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 Inquires
- 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.

INSPIRING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) is a voluntary professional association representing 5,000 practising school leaders in elementary and secondary schools across Ontario. We believe that exemplary leadership results in outstanding schools and improved student achievement. We foster quality leadership through world-class professional services and supports, striving to continuously achieve "quality leadership - our principal product."



WWW.PRINCIPALS.CA

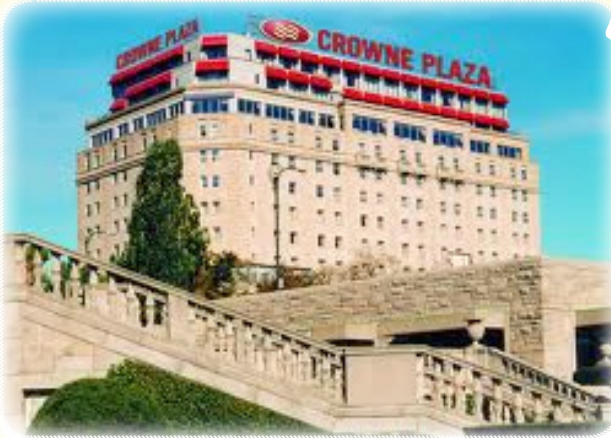
LEARNING FORWARD ONTARIO'S



Spring Conference

**Thursday, May 1
and Friday, May 2**

Register for one or both days.



CROWN PLAZA Niagara Falls, Ontario



Moving Forward - Great to Excellent

Visit <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**
- 3 PURCHASE ORDER:** Complete and print the registration form. **Send it along with a purchase order to "Learning Forward Ontario" to**

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 over night accommodations. Please call the hotel directly at **1-800-519-9911** and request the special convention rate for Learning Forward Ontario Association.

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

Special rate available until March 31st 2014.

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.*