

# Standards for Professional Learning

## STANDARDS VIGNETTE: LEADING LEARNING FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

**T**o illustrate how Standards for Professional Learning can guide the work of educators seeking to advance equity for educators and students in diverse settings, Learning Forward created the following vignette of a fictional district. The narrative is based on real experiences to depict how implementing standards-based professional learning is a journey, rather than an overnight transformation or a checklist to be completed.

### **About this resource**

The purposes of this vignette are to help educators:

- Envision what professional learning aligned with or informed by Standards for Professional Learning looks like in a real-world setting; and
- Consider how standards-based professional learning can address essential school and district challenges.

### **Suggestions for use**

1. Read the following vignette, using the prompts that follow to track notes, insights, and questions for subsequent conversations.
2. Note or highlight where you see direct or indirect evidence of Standards for Professional Learning throughout the narrative. While themes from Resources, Learning Designs, Equity Drivers, and Leadership standards are prominent, aspects of most standards are present to depict a systems approach to implementing high-quality professional learning.
3. Use the notes and insights to inform a team discussion or individual reflection to lead to deeper understanding and shared actions.

## **LEVERAGING LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Loretta Stiles has been an early adopter of the district's efforts to improve professional learning systems and has been examining the way time and resources are allocated at her school, Woodbridge Elementary. As a professional learning leader, she has familiarized herself with Standards for Professional Learning and uses her knowledge of those guidelines and the associated resources to improve the learning she and her colleagues experience. She is especially interested in the potential of professional learning to address the school's challenges with its new writing curriculum, which has not improved student learning as intended. As principal, Stiles embraces her role as an instructional leader, yet recognizes the need for collaborative design and facilitation of professional learning when she is not the content expert. Formal and informal feedback opportunities provide her with observation data about what is happening in the classroom and support the improvement of instruction and the development of relationships among teachers. There is no formal teacher leader designation in the district, but the district is exploring the use of locally issued microcredentials that would recognize a teacher's demonstration of a set of specific essential skills.

As she has grown into her role over the last four years, Stiles has increasingly come to see professional learning as the solution to a range of challenges in the school and district. She now recognizes the value in collecting and studying data about the impact of different types and designs of professional learning. Realizing that sending all teachers to the same professional learning sessions wasn't producing the results the school

needed, the leadership team now offers a mix of school-led, district-provided, and external professional learning, analyzing data about student learning and teacher content or pedagogical needs to contextualize and personalize learning, as outlined in Standards for Professional Learning. Stiles has reworked the master schedule to find time to dedicate to collaborative professional learning meetings and instituted professional learning days focused on collaborative data analysis by content teams and grade-level teams of teachers, which has led to more productive discussions about student learning and instructional strategies. Several teams have implemented a protocol to discuss the instructional shifts required by the new writing curriculum, which has revealed that some instruction was not at grade level. This finding prompted targeted professional learning support for teachers, resulting in improvements in conceptual understanding of grade-level texts.

## **MODELING INTENTIONAL GROWTH**

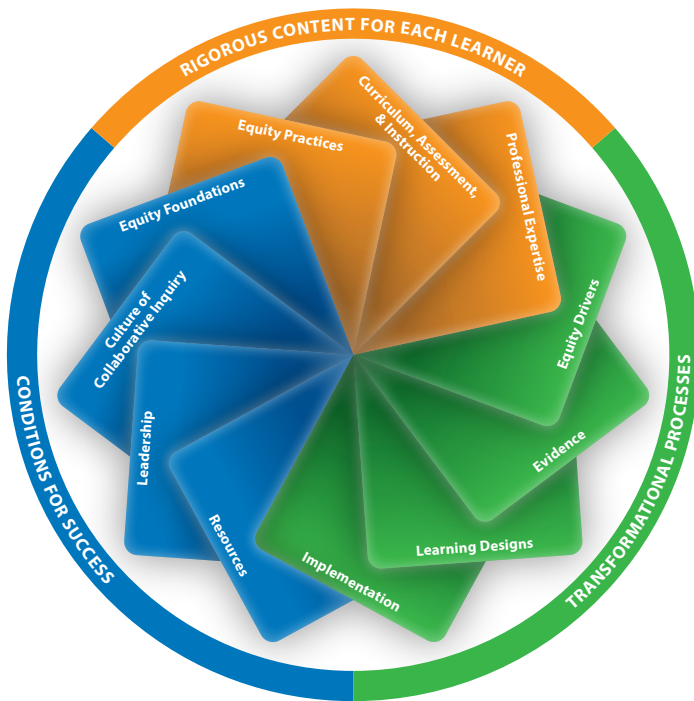
Experience has taught Stiles that she will be a better leader if she attends to her own learning. Recently she focused her reading on texts related to institutional racism to reflect on her own biases and as part of her commitment to being an engaged and informed leader. This learning was independent and private at first, but she increasingly shared what she has been reading and how it has informed her thinking about inequities in her own school. As her own comfort level with talking about race and other aspects of student identities increased, she shared more about her learning journey with colleagues as a way to create a safe space for discussion and to model learning and vulnerability. Her

investment resulted in a personally rewarding experience as well as more understanding and support for the district's equity mission among her colleagues. This independent and collaborative exploration of systemic bias also informed the content and design of professional learning. Lastly, it compelled her to think more about who is involved when decisions are made, to establish a cross-role equity task force at the school, and to participate in a districtwide principal-level professional learning community focused on progress toward several collaborative equity goals aligned to the new mission.

Stiles supports the growth and development of those around her, informally by modeling and explicitly valuing learning and formally as a mentor for a new assistant principal she recruited from the school's informal teacher leader cadre. Drawing on research on principal retention, the district recently established a system of support designed to address the trend of assistant principals and teacher leaders leaving the district for principal positions in a neighboring district. Recognizing that she needed to increase her contribution to the district goal of a more equitable and diverse faculty, Stiles joined a districtwide initiative dedicated to elevating a diversity of voices and perspectives in district decision-making.

## **ADVOCATING FOR RESOURCES**

At the same time, recent budget discussions at the state level seemed to be signaling that cuts to professional learning funding could be coming soon, so Stiles and her colleagues have been sharing their professional learning impact data with state policymakers to make the case for sustained or even increased funding.



**Standards for Professional Learning work within a framework of three categories:**

- The **Rigorous Content for Each Learner** standards describe the essential content of adult learning that leads to improved student outcomes.
- The **Transformational Processes** standards describe process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets.
- The **Conditions for Success** standards describe aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning.

## Prompts for discussion and reflection:

What critical school, district, and regional challenges are present?

What strengths and improvement-oriented actions do you see in the vignette? Where do you see room for growth?

Which Standards for Professional Learning do you see reflected? Note key phrases that represent the standards at work.

What ideas, questions, or concerns does the vignette spark for your work in your context?

# Standards for Professional Learning

<p><i>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...</i></p> <p><b>EQUITY PRACTICES</b> ... understand their students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts, embrace student assets through instruction, and foster relationships with students, families, and communities.</p> <p><b>CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION</b> ... prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.</p> <p><b>PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE</b> ... apply standards and research to their work, develop the expertise essential to their roles, and prioritize coherence and alignment in their learning.</p>	RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER
<p><i>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...</i></p> <p><b>EQUITY DRIVERS</b> ... prioritize equity in professional learning practices, identify and address their own biases and beliefs, and collaborate with diverse colleagues.</p> <p><b>EVIDENCE</b> ... create expectations and build capacity for use of evidence, leverage evidence, data, and research from multiple sources to plan educator learning, and measure and report the impact of professional learning.</p> <p><b>LEARNING DESIGNS</b> ... set relevant and contextualized learning goals, ground their work in research and theories about learning, and implement evidence-based learning designs.</p> <p><b>IMPLEMENTATION</b> ... understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.</p>	TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES
<p><i>Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...</i></p> <p><b>EQUITY FOUNDATIONS</b> ... establish expectations for equity, create structures to ensure equitable access to learning, and sustain a culture of support for all staff.</p> <p><b>CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY</b> ... engage in continuous improvement, build collaboration skills and capacity, and share responsibility for improving learning for all students.</p> <p><b>LEADERSHIP</b> ... establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, sustain coherent support to build educator capacity, and advocate for professional learning by sharing the importance and evidence of impact of professional learning.</p> <p><b>RESOURCES</b> ... allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize equity in their resource decisions, and monitor the use and impact of resource investments.</p>	CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Learning Forward is committed to building every educator's capacity to establish and sustain high-quality professional learning so that every student has access to high-quality teaching and learning.

As the only membership association solely focused on effective professional learning for K-12 educators, Learning Forward serves thousands of members and subscribers while simultaneously influencing the broader education field. Learning Forward works at all levels of the education system.

Information about standards, membership, services, or products is available from:

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## Learn more

Visit [standards.learningforward.org](http://standards.learningforward.org) to find resources useful for sharing, studying, and implementing Standards for Professional Learning.

- Role-based Action Guides include Innovation Configuration maps.
- Research resources go deep on the evidence behind standards.
- Policy tools suggest steps to advance adoption and use of standards in a range of contexts.