learningforward
THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Standards for Professional Learning

RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction

Equity Practices

Professional Expertise

Equity Foundations

Culture of Collaborative Inquiry

Equity Drivers

Leadership

Evidence

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Resources

Implementation

Learning Designs

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

LEARNING FORWARD

Implementation

Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.

Educators leverage the power of scaled and sustained implementation to realize the promise of professional learning to advance a particular intervention or initiative. They prioritize long-term support for educators as well as for teams, schools, and systems as changes take place over time. Educators use change management research to guide how they design and sustain improvement efforts, with an understanding of how change affects learners and teams of learners.

Educators' roles in the implementation of professional learning vary substantially across a school or system.

[System] leaders typically bear the responsibility for creating structures and policies that embed and sustain professional learning for the long term. Coaches at the school or [zone] level, or educators who perform a coaching function, provide the day-to-day support for learning, whether by offering feedback to individuals or facilitating co-teaching and practice opportunities for teams.

Leaders at any level, whether [directors, assistant directors, education officers], principals, or teacher leaders, contribute to high-quality learning for their colleagues and themselves when they understand and apply principles of change management. Educators appreciate how the change process impacts learners differently and at different rates and create multiple opportunities for progress within school or system plans for professional learning.

Here are the main constructs of the Implementation standard.

Educators understand and apply research on change management.

Educators understand that meaningful change is a complex, multifaceted process that requires sustained effort over time, and they learn how to support and encourage ongoing individual and collective change. They integrate knowledge about the theoretical and technical aspects of how change happens into planning and sustaining professional learning. Educators design professional learning to develop new knowledge, strengthen existing knowledge and practices, and address any ingrained misconceptions or biases that might hinder progress.

Educators recognize that school and system leaders accelerate change by articulating and clearly communicating a vision and reasons for change. As change leaders, educators have a plan that describes individual and collective action, clear indicators of progress, and aligned supports for both individual and collective improvement.

Educators experience sustained support when leaders embrace a professional learning plan and articulate the links between system, school, and team actions.

Learning leaders and teams identify potential structural, policy, and organizational barriers to scaling and sustaining improvements when they plan and implement professional learning. They understand that fostering deep engagement and meaning-making is more effective in achieving positive outcomes through change than relying on willpower or compliance.

Leaders of professional learning understand that educators' concerns can impact how they approach change. They regularly assess how well learners understand the vision and rationale for change and their commitment to changing behaviors to achieve the desired results.

Educators recognize that taking into account the stages and levels of change — with educators moving from being resistant to or merely interested in change to embracing and considering the consequences of change — will result in professional learning that leads to consistent improvements for educators and students. Leaders of professional learning use their understanding of how change happens when determining timing, plans for scaling, and expectations for sustainability.

Educators embark on change efforts from multiple perspectives and with varying levels of expertise and experience. In addition, sustaining change requires an understanding that shifting beliefs and practices is not linear. Some educators may shift their beliefs when they achieve success through changed actions, while some may change their practices because they have acquired new beliefs.

Educators rely on change management theory to determine colleagues' readiness for change as well as define and recognize progress in the individual and collective knowledge building and improvement process. They appreciate and respond to the fact that learners respond to change in myriad ways and have varying comfort levels with learning, risk-taking, vulnerability, and collaboration.

Educators use evidence-based change management processes and protocols such as the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) to build understanding and make explicit the sequence of steps and supports that will guide individual learners and teams through the change process.

Because change requires that individuals move from a theoretical understanding of what the change requires to an appreciation for what it means for them as individuals and practitioners, educators deserve and appreciate the need for sustained attention, reminders about goals, and structures that provide guidance and constructive feedback.

Educators engage in feedback processes.

Educators embrace and contribute to a culture that values and regularly engages in meaningful, constructive feedback. Individually and collectively, they engage in periodic assessment about what new knowledge and skills they need to achieve their intended goals, how they are progressing toward their goals, and what learning they require to strengthen their skills or build their knowledge.

Leaders establish a culture of feedback that prioritizes supportive relationships in which educators can share challenges, build trust, and examine beliefs and practices in a compassionate and productive environment. They hold the shared expectation that feedback processes lead to improved learning for educators and students.

Educators invite, provide, and experience feedback in the contexts where they practice application of new skills and strategies. Educators may use formal protocols to structure and tailor feedback or less formal processes depending on relationships and goals. Feedback incorporates observations, dialogue about exemplars, and self-reflection as highly valued practices.

Feedback processes and relationships vary by role and context. For instance, classroom-level feedback relationships might include team conversations based on minilessons, co-teaching in the classroom, or technology-enabled coaching or guided observations of time with students. Feedback among district-level colleagues might include formal coaching cycles using leadership protocols and benchmarks.

Educators benefit from a range and combination of feedback relationships and learn from discussions with students, peers, supervisors, principals, consultants, coaches, and mentors.

Leaders of professional learning are clear about whether feedback is evaluative or nonevaluative and whether the focus is formative and related to continuous improvement or summative and related to end-of-year or unit goals. In all processes and relationships, educators value and prioritize feedback that provides specific, clear, action-oriented information that is aligned to and supportive of achieving educator and school or system goals.

Educators implement and sustain professional learning.

In sustained professional learning, educators continually apply new learning to improve practice and internalize those improvements over time. Educators ensure the quality and impact of professional learning by tracking their progress against their comprehensive theory of action or logic model set forth in the design phase, as well as against the shared purpose and goals of the professional learning and change process.

Educators move toward successful implementation when they design professional learning sequentially to achieve long-term goals, allowing for opportunities to incorporate student and educator input, adjust scaling plans, and assess sustainability.

Individuals' development is guided by benchmarks that delineate the steps to attain new knowledge, change mindsets, or develop deeper understanding of a practice, depending on the overall plan.

Educators deepen their understanding through professional learning with or led by experienced educators, over time, and via a variety of modalities, including application of new knowledge in various contexts and in response to diverse student needs. Coaches, in particular, offer implementation support throughout the learning process. In the absence of or in addition to educators filling formal coach roles, teacher leaders, principals, or subject-matter specialists may fulfill a coaching function to sustain learning.

Applying new learning requires multiple cycles of practice, reflection, and adjustments as well as support structures to guide educators as they transform new learning into practice. This ongoing process requires educators to adapt procedures, calendars, meeting agendas, staffing arrangements, substitute assignments, and other structures. They may need to collaborate with new colleagues and learn new technologies. Educators in systems that leverage competency-based approaches have additional options for demonstrating the achievement of particular skills or practices.

Recognizing the power of voice and choice to increase investment and efficacy, educators express their opinions and personalize how and, in some cases, when they access new knowledge or demonstrate an understanding of a change in practice.

Educators appreciate the need for some supports to be useful immediately while others address longer-term growth or sustainability. To mark and encourage progress, educators recognize quick wins and celebrate achievements along the way to achieving their vision.

Selected research
American Institutes for Research. (2010, December 8). *Levels of Use: Concerns-Based Adoption Model.* www.air.org/resource/levels-use-concerns-based-adoption model

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Hord, S. & Hall, G. (2015). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles and potholes* (4th ed.). Pearson.

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Links to other standards

Educators use the Standards for Professional Learning together to inspire and drive improvement. Each of the 11 standards connects to the other standards to support a high-functioning learning system. **Here are some of the ways the Implementation standard connects to other standards:**

The **Learning Designs** standard describes the design for professional learning that will require effective implementation to lead to sustained improvements.

The **Resources** standard outlines the ways in which sustained implementation can be supported with financial investments, time allocation, and human resources.

The **Leadership** standard highlights the importance of educators creating a culture where ongoing professional learning is the norm.