

# ACTION GUIDE

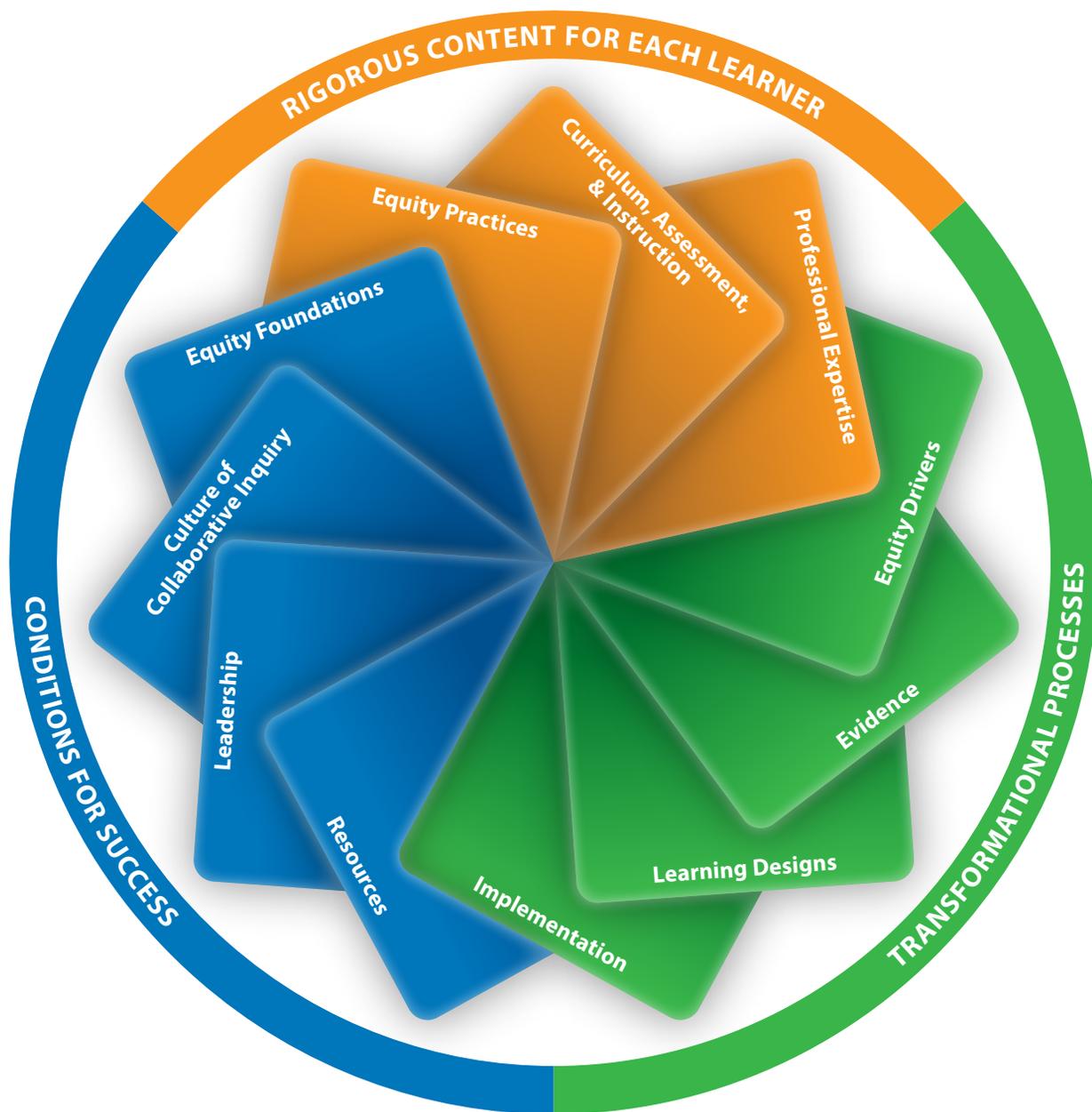
for the  
**EXTERNAL PARTNER**

## Standards for Professional Learning

**External partners offer essential expertise** and support as educators in a range of contexts seek to leverage professional learning for maximum impact. While the roles and tasks of external partners or technical assistance providers vary widely depending on the purpose of their partnership with educators, those leading and supporting professional learning are responsible for helping school and system leaders establish and sustain learning systems that lead to improved and equitable outcomes for each and every educator and student.

Working in cooperation with the educators who enlist their expertise, external partners use Standards for Professional Learning to plan, facilitate, support, and evaluate professional learning that is aligned to their client's strategic vision, goals, and priorities. Standards offer external partners guidance in implementing evidence-based professional learning approaches and practices and a common framework and language around which to anchor agreements and conversations with clients.

# A systemwide approach to professional learning



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

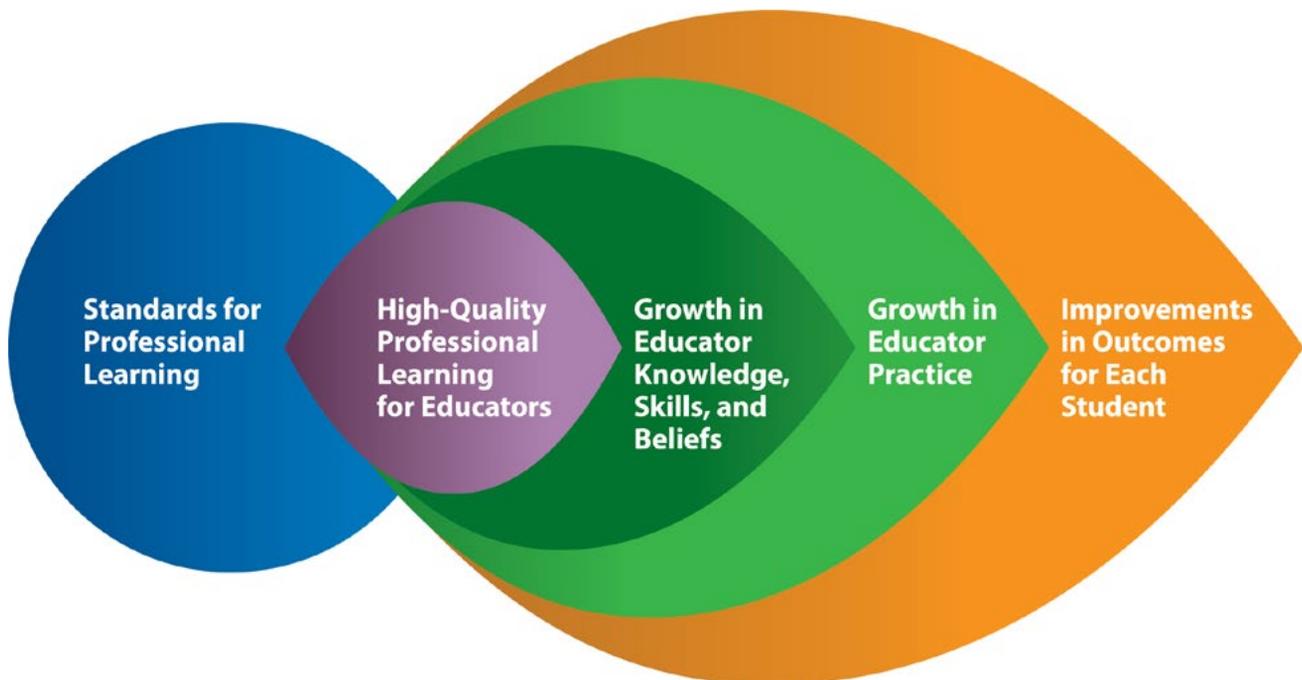
- The **Rigorous Content for Each Learner** standards describe the essential content of adult learning that leads to improved student outcomes.
- The **Transformational Processes** standards describe process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant 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.

# Foundations for standards

Several foundations underlie Standards for Professional Learning. Understanding these foundations is critical to understanding the standards as well as the contexts and support within which they can flourish.

- High-quality professional learning improves educator practice and student results.
- Professional learning systems drive high-quality professional learning.
- Equity is both an outcome of and focus threaded throughout learning.
- High-quality curriculum and instructional materials are a critical priority for professional learning.
- Educators are responsible for leading learning for self and others.
- Policy guides practice.
- Research informs revised Standards for Professional Learning.

## How standards lead to improvement for all learners



As the graphic above illustrates, Standards for Professional Learning lead to high-quality professional learning, which leads to positive changes in educator knowledge, skills, and dispositions, which lead to improvements in educator practice, which in turn

lead to accelerated student results. Monitoring progress at each step contributes to continued improvement throughout the system, with student and educator data providing evidence about how professional learning evolves to lead to excellence and equity.

# Standards for Professional Learning

*Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...*

## **EQUITY PRACTICES**

... understand their students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts, embrace student assets through instruction, and foster relationships with students, families, and communities.

## **CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION**

... prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE**

... apply standards and research to their work, develop the expertise essential to their roles, and prioritize coherence and alignment in their learning.

RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

*Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...*

## **EQUITY DRIVERS**

... prioritize equity in professional learning practices, identify and address their own biases and beliefs, and collaborate with diverse colleagues.

## **EVIDENCE**

... 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.

## **LEARNING DESIGNS**

... set relevant and contextualized learning goals, ground their work in research and theories about learning, and implement evidence-based learning designs.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

... understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

*Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators ...*

## **EQUITY FOUNDATIONS**

... establish expectations for equity, create structures to ensure equitable access to learning, and sustain a culture of support for all staff.

## **CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY**

... engage in continuous improvement, build collaboration skills and capacity, and share responsibility for improving learning for all students.

## **LEADERSHIP**

... 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.

## **RESOURCES**

... allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize equity in their resource decisions, and monitor the use and impact of resource investments.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

# Key roles and responsibilities for external partners

**T**hese key roles and responsibilities, aligned to each frame within the standards, are not meant to be used as an all-inclusive checklist but rather to drive critical actions to achieve client and partner goals and priorities. They complement and support the responsibilities of educators in other roles. Collaboration with other educators is embedded in many of these responsibilities. Learning Forward recognizes that external partners may carry a range of titles and work from a variety of organizations, including technical assistance providers, vendors, university faculty, and consultants, among others.

## RIGOROUS CONTENT FOR EACH LEARNER

- **Help clients understand student and family contexts and life experiences and their potential impact on teaching, learning, and interactions at school.**
- **Help clients and self apply inclusive education practices.**
- **Support clients in using professional learning to implement high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and aligned assessments.**
- **Focus professional learning for self and clients on relevant and role-specific standards, guidelines, and research.**

## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

- **Help clients leverage inclusive professional learning practices in the school, removing barriers that result from historical or systemic inequities.**
- **Address with clients how bias, assumptions, and beliefs about aspects of educator identity impact teaching and learning and collaboration with colleagues.**
- **Help clients set professional learning goals tied to student needs to engage in or create aligned professional learning.**
- **Help clients use multiple types of data and evidence to plan, design, implement, and evaluate professional learning.**
- **Apply change management theories and tools as part of the learning process with clients.**
- **Sustain learning with clients, supporting processes for practice, feedback, and follow-up.**

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

- **Help clients connect professional learning to each student's opportunity for and access to rigorous learning.**
- **Help clients create a vision for how professional learning enables educators to achieve system goals.**
- **Help clients maximize use of professional learning resources, particularly time, money, people, and technology.**
- **Advocate for adoption of Standards for Professional Learning.**
- **Prioritize and model learning in the presence of clients.**
- **Help clients embed continuous collaborative learning in each educator's workday.**

# Identifying the external partner’s first actions

Use the reflection questions below and on p. 7 to determine action steps you will prioritize to develop, strengthen, transform, and sustain professional learning. Collaborate with colleagues to complete this table and clarify how you will move forward.

QUESTION	REFLECTIONS	FIRST STEPS
After reviewing the responsibilities on p. 5, what would we say is our highest learning need as a team or individuals?		
How well does our vision for professional learning describe how to achieve improved teaching and student learning?		
In what ways do we promote a systemic approach to professional learning with our clients and align our support with clients’ strategic priorities?		
How well do we support the use of data and evidence to inform professional learning priorities, selection, and design?		

QUESTION	REFLECTIONS	FIRST STEPS
<p>In what ways can we align the professional learning we offer or support with equity-focused outcomes?</p>		
<p>What aspects of professional learning focused on understanding the contexts and experiences of our clients' educators and students might be strengthened, and how?</p>		
<p>How do we ensure our clients understand continuous improvement, and what structures are in place to support that work?</p>		
<p>How do we support clients to monitor investments in professional learning to determine whether they are allocated to high-priority needs based on educator input?</p>		
<p>How can we strengthen the ways we evaluate professional learning and document its impact?</p>		

# Additional resources

## FOR STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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

### Standards for Professional Learning

Read the full contents of the standards themselves, with an overview of the three critical constructs in each standard, links to related standards, and references to selected resources.

### Role-Based Action Guides

Created for educators in multiple roles, Action Guides are intended to support educators in understanding and fulfilling their responsibilities in putting Standards for Professional Learning into motion in their contexts. Each Action Guide outlines high-level responsibilities and includes a tool to help educators identify the first steps they can take to implement standards. There are Action Guides for the following roles:

- State commissioner
- Superintendent
- System/central office
- Principal
- Coach
- Teacher
- External partner

Action Guides for those in coach, system/central office, principal, and external partner roles also include Innovation Configuration maps, which describe in detail specific behaviors educators undertake in fulfilling their responsibilities related to standards.

### Quick-Start Guide

This four-page overview is ideal for sharing Standards for Professional Learning widely with stakeholders and can serve as an introductory piece across schools, systems, and other contexts.

### Research Resources

Learn more about the research and evidence foundational to Standards for Professional Learning. Links include a position paper framing Learning Forward's approach to and use of evidence in developing standards and a meta-analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

### Policy Tools

Explore how to advance Standards for Professional Learning in policy at any level and why standards in policy matter.

Some resources are available in full to anyone who visits [standards.learningforward.org](https://standards.learningforward.org), while others require membership in Learning Forward.

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:

Learning Forward

504 S. Locust St.

Oxford, OH 45056

Telephone: 800-727-7288

Email:

[office@learningforward.org](mailto:office@learningforward.org)

[www.learningforward.org](https://www.learningforward.org)