



## Districts can take a powerful first step by adopting the new Standards for Professional Learning

We're so proud that we've just released the Standards for Professional Learning. The previous version of standards was adopted or adapted into policy in more than 30 states; however, only four or five districts did the same. We know that most professional learning decisions are made at the local level, and that the standards can influence those decisions.

I'd like to ask you to make a commitment today to determine the steps you can take to see that the standards are adopted into your local policy. Consider the following reasons.

Adopting the standards for professional learning:

- **Informs a community of the importance of professional learning.** School board members get frequent questions about a district's investment in professional learning. The phrase that opens each standard — "Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students" — makes it clear that a district is investing in professional learning with the intention to improve teacher and student performance. The adoption of standards demonstrates an expectation that the district investment will achieve this outcome.

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- **Makes explicit a district's commitment to continuous improvement.** Continuous professional learning throughout an educator's career provides the knowledge, skills, and support necessary to achieve desired results. Adopting standards for professional learning that call for learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning, implementation, and outcomes signals a district's commitment to effective professional learning. Research has documented and practice has demonstrated the important relationship between high-quality professional learning and improved performance at the individual, school, and system levels.
- **Clarifies expectations for professional learning.** The standards state clearly that professional learning advances educator competencies and student learning. The Outcomes standard indicates that the focus of the professional learning must be on the performance competencies the district sets for its employees and its students. The standards focus professional learning on these competencies. School board members as well as community stakeholders can expect regular evidence on how local learning meets this expectation.

- **Leverages the expertise of researchers and practitioners.** If a school board agrees standards are important, it can have confidence in this revised set of standards. More than 40 educators representing the most prestigious education associations reviewed research and best practices to identify standards appropriate for their own constituencies, including teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members. Hundreds of practitioners weighed in on draft documents. Rather than developing and debating its own set of standards, a district can devote its energies to implementing quality professional learning and thereby move faster in its improvement efforts.
- **Delineates a powerful role for school board members.** As you advocate for local adoption, school boards are a significant partner and audience. The standards and the subsequent resource documents describe the actions school boards must take to ensure standards-based professional learning. Helping board members understand their roles will be a critical step in underlining the importance of the standards. Adoption alone does not guarantee professional learning will improve overnight, but it is a powerful first step. ■

