



Newsletter

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Join us on October 22, 2015 to learn from
Dr. Willard Daggett

It's not too late to register for our October 22nd Fall
Institute featuring Dr. Willard Daggett entitled:

***Rigor / Relevance to Meet the Demands of
the PA Core***

Where: The Holiday Inn, Grantville, PA

Time: 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

Cost: \$160 per registrant (Includes registration fee,
continental breakfast and buffet lunch)

Join us for the day as we learn together about how
to:

~Lead a school and/or district culture that promotes
rigor and relevance

~Align classroom instruction to meet the demands of
the PA Core Standards

~Reflect and plan for the implementation of a
rigorous and relevant curriculum in your
school/district

Register online today at

www.learningforwardpa.org



In this Issue

-
- Page 2 Message from Co-
Presidents

 - Page 3 2014 LF PA Mini
Grant Winner's Report

 - Page 4 LF PA Scholarship
Recipient

 - Page 5,6 May 2015 Regional
Networking Reports
-

Message from LF PA Co-Presidents Dr. Ann Appolloni and Dr. Marcy Hessinger

LF PA has aspired for every educator to have access to the professional learning that he or she needs to improve student achievement and teaching practice. In July of this year, the reauthorization of ESEA was passed with an 81-17 vote in the Senate. The words “professional development” appear several times in relation to a wide range of federal and school improvement initiatives.

The first part of the definition is most significant to educators. It begins: “Professional development means activities that (A) are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in the core academic subjects and to meet challenging state academic standards; and (B) are sustained (not stand-alone, one-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, classroom-focused...”

This definition is included in section 9101 of the version that passed the Senate.

Section B of the legislation continues with a detailed list of what activities – professional learning elements, experiences, and topics – may be considered professional development. For example, professional development “may include activities that improve and increase teachers’ knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach.” Or professional development may include activities that “are designed to give teachers of children who are English language learners...the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support services to those children.”

The placement of the word “may” is significant in the way the legislation is interpreted. Everything that comes before “may include” is essential and officially part of the definition. Everything after “may include” is dependent on the context and needs of the local educators planning and implementing professional learning. With the inclusion of the word “may,” educators are trusted to assess their needs and design their learning objectives and identify the priorities that best fit their circumstances. To define professional learning too tightly would overlook the differentiated needs of educators and could contribute to schools and systems addressing adult learning through one-size-fits-all solutions.

Moving forward, Learning Forward advocacy efforts will focus on several important issues that include evaluation of the impact of any professional learning, defining and including the cycle of continuous improvement, and recognizing and including the role of central office educators.

LF PA 2014 Mini Grant Award Winner Report

By Dr. Marcy Hessinger, Co-President Learning Forward PA

Dr. Linda J. Leib, Principal of Brandywine Wallace Elementary School in the Downingtown Area School District was the 2014 Mini-Grant recipient. The \$1000 grant was used to support professional learning for teachers to enhance their skills in collaborating around student performance data in a cycle of improvement.

The Brandywine Wallace Elementary School teachers used the grant to fund half-day substitutes to carve out large blocks of time to engage in deep and rich conversations around the PA Common Core and student performance data. Teachers identified areas of strength and need and identified focus and instructional strategies for RTII groups and targeted individualized instruction using a benchmarking assessment. The grant served as a kick-off for a series of shorter collaboration segments that were held before and after school.

Improved teacher learning: Dr. Leib assessed her staff by using the Learning Forward Standards Innovation Configuration Maps* of the professional learning standards before and after the collaboration. FYI, Level 1 is the highest skill level and 6 is the lowest skill level.

1.2.1 Advances collective responsibility- Teachers moved from Level 3 to Level 2, with a few at Level 1

1.2.2- Engages with colleagues to meet the needs of all students - Teachers moved from Levels 3/4 to Levels 1/2, with many at Level 1

4.1.1 Develops capacity to analyze and interpret data - Teachers moved from Level 3 to Level 2, with a few at Level 1

4.1.2 Analyzes and interprets multiple sources of student data to determine professional learning needs - Teachers moved from Level 3 to Level 2, with many moving toward Level 1

Improved student learning: Students' knowledge and skills, as measured by Study Island benchmarking assessments steadily increased throughout the year, and end of year results were higher than in prior years. Principal Leib attributes this growth to the increased teacher skills in collaboration and data application.

Dr. Leib summarized the results of the grant: "The LF PA grant money was so valuable to our collective goal of improving student achievement on a daily basis. It allowed us to connect professional learning to student learning. We were able to focus on students and staff at the same time!" Additional comments from Dr. Leib: "Don't hesitate to apply for this grant! Just the idea of providing this support to teachers raised their morale and made them feel valued. The grant only took a couple hours to complete! Where else can you get \$1000 in two hours?"

*The Innovation Configuration Maps can be purchased from Learning Forward here: <http://learningforward.org/standards/innovation-configurations#.VhR74rRVikp>

Learning Forward PA Scholarship Award 2015 By Angela Ryan, Learning Forward PA Board Member and Teacher of Spanish, Milton Hershey School

Congratulations to Nikki Alwell, our Learning Forward PA Scholarship recipient!

A scholarship was established by Learning Forward PA to acknowledge the partnership the organization has with the Milton Hershey School. Milton Hershey School has generously hosted our quarterly Board meetings for many years, as well as several Learning Forward PA Institutes. The scholarship honors the school by awarding a scholarship to a deserving Milton Hershey School graduating senior who plans to pursue a career in education.

At graduation ceremonies held in June, Learning Forward PA's Past Co-President Angie Ryan, a Spanish teacher and a yearbook advisor at Milton Hershey School, presented the scholarship to Alwell, who will begin her studies at Elizabethtown College where she plans to double major in Special Education and Math. The Scholarship is funded through proceeds from the LF PA Annual Fall Institute.



LF PA Western Region Networking Session - May 20, 2015: So How Did Your SLO Go?

By Dr. Stefan Biancanello, Learning Forward PA Board

The Western Region of Learning Forward PA, held a Networking Session May 20, 2015 on the Campus of Duquesne University. Fifteen educators representing nine school districts from Allegheny, Westmoreland and Beaver Counties participated in a focused discussion on The Student Learning Objective (SLO) requirement for teachers during the 2014-15 school year. The session focused on the question: So how did your SLO go?

The discussion uncovered some very interesting information regarding how various districts and schools within districts were conducting the SLO process. There was a significant variance in the process from school to school. Some district established the focus for all SLO projects, and in others, the focus was left up to the individual teachers. What we discovered through our discussion was that a lack of communication and guidance was at the core of the situation producing misconceptions and confusion.

Many, if not most of the participants in the networking session had only minimal understanding of how the SLO projects were to be defined and what role they played in the teacher evaluation process. For the most part however, the session participants were confident that they had learned much from their experiences during the year.

The session was designed around several questions that helped the participants reflect on how they established their SLO, how they evaluated their activities within the SLO and what results were achieved. Perhaps the most insightful piece of the session evolved from a very active discussion around how the SLO can be Action Research within the classroom and how that process can be used to inform instruction, assessments and demonstrate student learning growth. We came to the conclusion that it was that part of the SLO process that was never clearly defined for the teachers, at least for those who participated in the networking session and their colleagues back in their districts.

At the conclusion of the networking session we asked for feedback and what the participants were taking away from the session. Almost to a person, the participants shared that they had learned much about how the SLO process can be used to more effectively focus instruction and provide evidence of student learning growth. To that end, the networking session was a success, providing information, ideas and strategies for teachers as they look forward to refining thinking and actively preparing for their SLO process in the 2015-16 school year.

LF PA Eastern Region Networking Session May 5, 2015 By Dr. Ann Appolloni, Co-President Learning Forward PA

The Eastern Region of Learning Forward PA held a Networking Session on May 5, 2015, at the Chester County Intermediate Unit. Ten educators representing educational entities from Bucks, Chester and Montgomery Counties participated in a focused discussion on The Student Learning Objective (SLO) requirement for teachers, during the 2014-15 school year. The session focused on sharing the implementation of SLO's and plans to move forward.

After taking a fun and challenging quiz via Kahoot and cell phones, the group took turns sharing lessons learned during this first year of the implementation of Student Learning Objectives. Participants discussed what they would consider changing and plans for the future. Each school had a different focus of implementation to share. Schools shared data collection techniques, holding conferences with teachers, the setting of performance measures, and the Danielson framework. Feedback from the networking session was very positive. All those in attendance reported the experience to be valuable and appreciated learning what other schools are doing.

★ Join us in 2016 for our
next series of
networking sessions in
your region! ★