



Learning Forward Academy: Launching the 1st Canadian Cohort!

Strengthening educator practice and student success through effective professional learning



“My experience in the Academy caused me to deeply reflect on my beliefs in regard to professional learning and the large-scale implementation of educational interventions. Our Academy team was able to identify solutions to systemic problems we face as educators, and we are now focusing our efforts on the deep implementation of targeted interventions we know will work.”

– Jenni Donohoo, Greater Essex County District School Board, Windsor, ON





Learning Forward Academy Overview:

In 1991, as part of an effort to increase educator effectiveness at the provincial, state, district, division, and school levels, Learning Forward (then National Staff Development Council) launched its first Academy. This inaugural group of 28 principals, teacher-leaders, and central office staff went on to become the first to graduate from our premier program for professional learning. Over 20 cohorts have followed, with 1200 total graduates representing five Canadian provinces¹, 48 states², and four countries outside of North America³.

The Academy is an extended learning experience that models Learning Forward's vision for professional learning and teamwork in schools. Academy members work collaboratively to solve significant "problems of practice" that occur within their organizations. Through immersion in a model of inquiry-based and problem-based learning, participants gain solutions to the problems they and others bring; experience a model of professional learning that exemplifies the Learning Forward *Standards for Professional Learning*; and construct knowledge and develop skills necessary to transform their organizations. Academy participants describe the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from other provinces and states as one of the program's most important features.

Academy members include district/division administrators, superintendents, principals, teachers, and personnel from local, provincial, state, and national educational agencies, as well as university faculty, independent staff development providers, and leaders from nonprofit educational organizations.

¹Provinces include British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

²Only Montana and New Hampshire are not represented from the US.

³Other countries include China, Colombia, and Taiwan.

Vision for a Canadian Academy

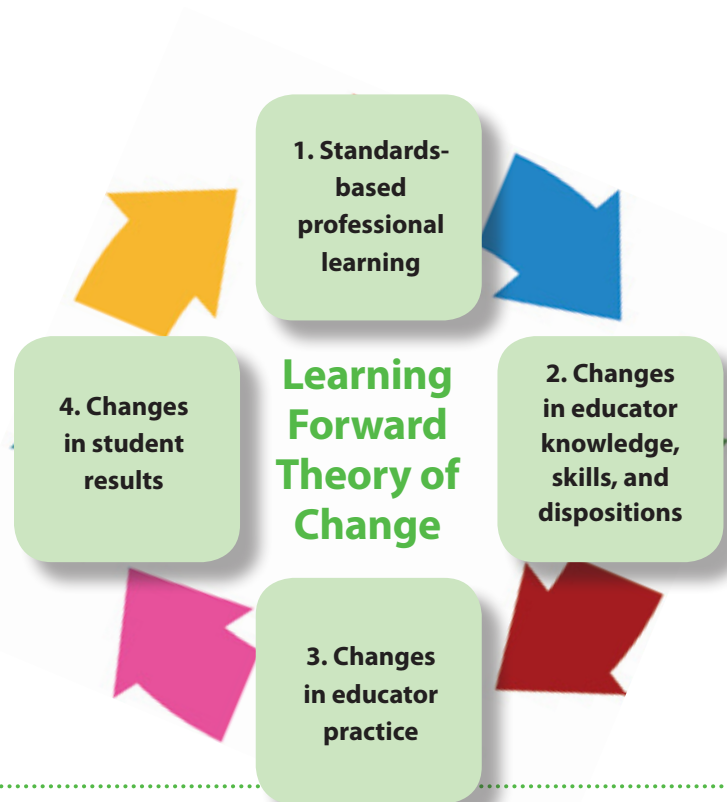
Although dozens of Canadian members have graduated from the Academy, there has never been a Canada-based cohort. Even though Canadian participants in the general Academy program have stressed the benefits in learning with their colleagues from the United States, many have also expressed a desire to discuss “problems of practice” with more colleagues from other Canadian provinces. Canadian participants have often shared that the Canadian perspective on education can differ in some fairly significant ways from the American views. This is particularly true with regard to how Americans manage accountability systems and student standards. A Canada-focused Academy gives participants an opportunity to explore other country’s educational systems when appropriate but do so from a Canada-centric perspective.

Two models were considered for the Canadian Academy. Model #1 involved holding spring sessions in Canada (aligned to events of various provincial affiliates) and holding winter sessions aligned to Learning Forward’s Annual conferences (as is the case with the general Academy). Model #2 involved holding all sessions in Canada. A poll was conducted among Learning Forward’s Canadian members, and the vote overwhelmingly supported Model #1. Members stated the desire to maintain the connection to the Learning Forward conference as well as the opportunity to join members of the other Academy cohorts. Model #1 was seen as the “best of both worlds” as one member described it.

The proposed schedule for the Canadian Academy is as follows:

- **Participant Application Deadline: March 1, 2014**
- **Session One:** May 2-4, 2014 in Niagara Falls, ON
- **Session Two:** Dec. 5-7, 2014 and Annual Conference in Nashville, Tenn.
- **Session Three:** April 24-26, 2015 in Winnipeg, MB
- **Session Four:** Dec. 4-6, 2015 and Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- **Session Five & Graduation:** Dec. 4, 2016 at Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia

For more information about the Learning Forward Canadian Academy, please visit: <http://learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/academy/canadian-academy>



Learning Forward Background:

Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council) was formed in 1969 and remains today as the only professional association focused solely on ensuring effective professional learning for all K-12 educators so that all students achieve. Each day, Learning Forward supports its 10,000+ members and 37 state and provincial affiliates by providing the vision, leadership, and

resources necessary to enhance student learning by increasing the knowledge and skills of educators. Through its research and advocacy, Learning Forward has pioneered the development of Standards for Professional Learning, focused the field on the need to evaluate professional learning, and mobilized and educated school-based staff developers and school leaders as a new and creative force for classroom and school-wide improvement.



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

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