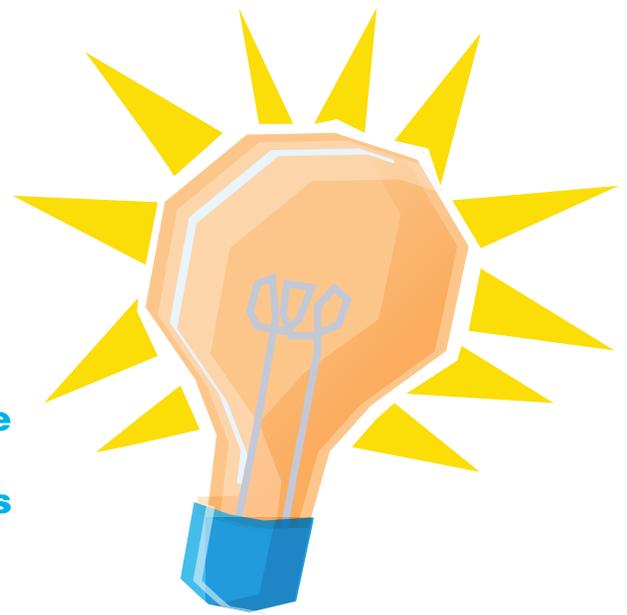


# The Learning School Initiative

**Empowering Teachers and Principals to Take Charge of Their Own Professional Learning as Members of Collaborative Learning Teams**



## What is a learning school?

It is a school where everyone is learning, including students, administrators and teachers. In learning schools educators engage in a cycle of continuous improvement in which they analyze data, determine student and educator learning goals based on that analysis, engage in collaborative learning that leads to application of their learning in practice, receive school- and classroom-based support, and assess how their learning and teamwork affect student achievement.

## What is the Learning School Initiative?

It is a long-term initiative, begun in 2014 by the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) with support from the Benedum Foundation, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, and Learning Forward. It is based on the principles that schools are the center of learning for educators and students and that building collective responsibility for the success of all students among educators within a school strengthens students' opportunity to learn. Over the next five years, district central offices, RESAs, the West Virginia Department of Education, and the Center for Professional Development will support all public schools in West Virginia to become learning schools.

## What do schools gain by becoming involved in the Learning School Initiative?

Schools engaged in the initiative gain additional flexibility in scheduling time for professional learning, and in allocating resources to support collaborative learning teams. They do not receive additional funds, but they do gain decision-making influence about how professional learning funds are spent and how they structure their school days. In return, they agree to establish and strengthen collaborative learning teams that will enter into a continuous cycle of learning and improvement.

**ONE VOICE**  
**ONE FOCUS**  
All Students Achieving



## What are the standards for professional learning underpinning the initiative?

Learning schools organize their professional learning in alignment with the Learning Forward *Standards for Professional Learning*. The standards were adopted by the WVBE in 2012, which paraphrased them as follows:

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students—

- Occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- Requires skillful leadership to develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
- Requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
- Uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
- Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning into learning designs to achieve its intended outcomes.
- Applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
- Aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

## What are catalyst schools?

They are schools selected for their readiness to engage in the initiative, using the following basic criteria:

- Strong school-level leadership support and relationships with RESAs;
- Established and well-functioning professional learning communities;
- Interest in exploring how to reallocate time and resources; and
- Willingness to be transparent about the process, funding, and challenges.

Catalyst schools are, first and foremost, learning schools. Their experiences will inform and contribute to the development of a process and framework that will be shared with all of West Virginia's schools in order to scale the effort. Catalyst schools will serve as inspiration and examples of the different approaches learning schools can take with regard to organizing their teams, allocating time and resources, seeking training or other input to move them forward toward their goals, and keeping students always at the center of their decision making.

## What is the catalyst school research study?

The WVDE is studying the Catalyst Schools in order to provide information that will be useful to districts, RESAs, and other agencies involved in supporting professional learning. The researchers are also providing information back to the catalyst schools to use in their own planning.

## How can I learn more?

To learn more about the Learning School Initiative, contact Christina Bailey or Teresa Hammond at the WVDE Office of Professional and Personalized Learning ([crbailey@k12.wv.us](mailto:crbailey@k12.wv.us) or [thammond@k12.wv.us](mailto:thammond@k12.wv.us); 304.558.9994). For more information about the research study, contact Patricia Cahape Hammer at the WVDE Office of Research, Accountability, and Data Governance ([phammer@k12.wv.us](mailto:phammer@k12.wv.us); 304.558.7881).

