Leadership for Professional Learning:

Common Challenges, Shared Solutions

UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Education

Professional
Development
in Education

UF | Lastinger Center
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
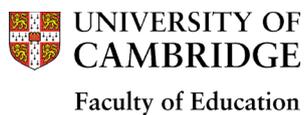
Are you involved in or responsible for improving teachers' professional learning for the benefit of student learners?

This is an opportunity to share innovations, research and dilemmas, and to contribute to a range of professional and academic outputs, through collaborative and supportive dialogue. Taking the view that **leadership is an activity that can be exercised by anyone**, regardless of status, the symposium will convene a diverse, international group of educational leaders. This will include anyone who influences and shapes policy and practice, including students, teachers, coaches, teacher educators, academics, school and system leaders, policy influencers and policy makers, and funders. International perspectives on professional learning (including teacher leadership) will be explored with a focus on leading and enabling sustainable professional learning cultures. Participants will share their experiences, identify common challenges and seek creative solutions. The symposium builds on work by the three lead organizing partners:

- The Leadership for Learning Network at the University of Cambridge (http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/networks/lfl/)

- The journal *Professional Development in Education* (http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjie)

- The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning (http://www.lastingercenter.com)

The two-day symposium is structured in focused strands to allow preK-12 educators, school and system leaders, academics and political thought leaders an enriched experience that will inform their work. Furthermore, the symposium is a working session in which participants are expected to host a dialogue; bring an artifact, document, or other material to contribute to that dialogue; and participate in other dialogues within up to two selected symposium strands.

Symposium Strands:

1. **Focusing on, and conditions for, professional learning**
Amid the busyness of schools and the overriding concern with student outcomes, giving due attention to the learning of teachers and related professionals can be difficult. Yet teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, reflective practices and modeling as lifelong learners are essential for student learning, and all can be nurtured through context-sensitive deliberate activities. Work within this strand of the symposium should focus on, and address the conditions for, educators' formal and informal continual learning that enhances their own development as well as contributing to
student achievement and growth.

2. **DIalogue, professional learning and leadership**
Dialogue is key a tool for teaching, learning and leadership, that helps bring about change but also enables it to be seen from different perspectives, to be shared, understood and built on. Going beyond casual chat, disciplined dialogue is purposeful, inclusive, based on trust and respect, enabling of collegial enquiry, and may be scaffolded by protocols, data, artifacts or shared experiences. Work within this strand of the symposium should focus on these ideas related to professional learning and leadership, and may address one or more 'who? why? what? when? where? how?' questions.

3. **Shared leadership and mutual accountability for professional learning**
When leadership is conceived as activity guided by moral purpose that anyone can exercise through their own agency, it becomes evident in the flow of everyday practice among staff, students, parents and others. A shared sense of accountability links individual initiatives to the collegial so that, for example, personalized professional learning is configured in such a way as to also build team knowledge and capacity. Work within this strand of the symposium should focus on shared leadership and professional learning in the context of a shared sense of accountability that prioritises the interests of students, followed by the interests of an enhanced education profession, while acknowledging and addressing system interests.

4. **Student learning and leadership**
The notion of student leadership is often overlooked in discussions of educational leadership, where we focus on the actions of teacher, school and system leaders. Nevertheless, students are not only the object of our efforts to enhance teaching and learning, they are also agents in their own right. Work within this strand of the symposium should focus on the engagement of student learners and leaders as collaborators in the enhancement of educational practices.

5. **Leadership within a virtual learning space:**
Increasingly, learning is moving into virtual spaces as educational technology augments our teaching and learning capacities by providing students and teachers greater access to resources and collaborators both within their immediate contexts and beyond. The use of learning and content management systems as well as videoconferencing and video annotation tools allow for new possibilities for interaction among educational colleagues that are largely ill-defined to date. Work within this strand of symposium should focus on imagining frameworks to make sense of new methods for collaboration within virtual learning spaces and exemplars of how leadership can be enacted within them.

Proposed Outcomes:

The international symposium is intended not only as an exchange of practices and perspectives but also as a catalyst for new ideas that will emerge from the dialogue around participants' contributions. We anticipate 'common challenges, shared solutions' will figure throughout. The symposium will end with a plenary, drawing together insights and other outcomes of the earlier small group work. We will reflect on and possibly elaborate the Leadership for Learning framework, allowing us explicitly to encompass the theme of professional learning in co-constructing a broader conception of educational leadership. We expect to propose a special issue of *Professional Development in Education* and/or *Practice *journals. These would be based on the proceedings of the symposium, enabling us to share and build on the contributions of participants and their colleagues.