We have all heard these criticisms of professional development: Too many teachers complain it is ineffective and a waste of their time; too little research documents its impact on educator practice or student results; well-constructed and respected research studies are too complicated and expensive for people whose first responsibility is to run schools.

A challenge that comes to mind for me is: Because effective professional learning is part of a larger continuous improvement system, it is difficult and expensive to isolate its effect on the system. So how do we talk with authority about professional learning’s impact on school improvement and student learning?

One of Learning Forward’s three strategic priorities is impact and accountability. That means that we’ll be providing not only resources and information that help you make an impact, but also resources to help you document the impact of professional learning.

This is why Learning Forward is launching an effort this year called “Tell Your Story,” which invites you to detail your professional learning journey and its results. We’ll partner with organizations such as My Learning Plan and The Teaching Channel that have the capacity to help you capture the information that documents the impact of professional learning on your school, team, or individuals in the system.

Your stories will help build the case for why professional learning matters, how it makes a difference for educators and students, and why it merits the attention and investment of policymakers and education leaders alike.

Professional development is the best strategy we have for helping all educators improve their performance and helping all students achieve. Too frequently, we are distracted by those who would reallocate professional learning resources, including personnel and time, to other, sexier ideas. Professional learning requires serious and substantive commitment. When it is aligned with the Standards for Professional Learning, professional learning makes the level of difference schools require.

As you think about documenting your success with professional learning this year, I suggest this process:

- Specify the professional learning plan, including content and strategies for building knowledge and skills. Describe how you will collaborate with others at the school to build collective responsibility and knowledge so that all other educators and students benefit.
- Keep track of your growth. What benchmarks can you identify along the way to show progress?
- Finally, share your results at the end of the year with your colleagues and community. Acknowledge the challenges and recognize your deeper expertise in advancing closer to your highest goals. Think about what will take you further next year.

Imagine if, by the end of this school year, we have 100 stories to share, and hundreds more the next year. The professional learning landscape will shift, and your conversations and state and national conversations should shift as well.

I hope that you take our challenge and join us in this effort. Call on Learning Forward for help in thinking through your plan — we are ready to assist you.

**What professional learning story will you tell at the end of the school year?**

**TELL YOUR STORY**

For more information about how to gather and share your success stories, visit [www.learningforward.org/get-involved/tell-your-story](http://www.learningforward.org/get-involved/tell-your-story).
16. Tell me something you want me as a teacher to know about you. 17. How do you study? 18. If you were the teacher, a leader or someone who influences society, what will you do differently? 19. What does your daily life look like? This year might be a little different since one week seems to be a repeat of the last, but in one short sentence, your student will give you insight into their private lives. It might be a most unusual thing like creating a favorite family recipe. This is one of those icebreaker questions that might reveal something more serious or weighty. It will also point to how a student would like to learn. 18. If you were the teacher, a leader or someone who influences society, what will you do differently? The reply will indicate the student’s aspirations and ambition in life. These end of year assignments provide activities for those final days on the school calendar, with both in-person and virtual ideas to fit every kind of classroom. Let the countdown begin! 1. Serve up a scoop of memories. Here’s a sweet way to celebrate the end of the year! What a great way to look back over what kids have learned! For each letter of the alphabet, have them write and illustrate something they learned or did throughout the year. Hit the link below to get a free printable template for this project. Learning virtually? Then, at the end of the year, each student chooses their favorite items to display in a portfolio like a binder or display board. Invite parents and friends to come to view everyone’s achievements. 33. Put together time capsules. The end of any school year can be a bittersweet time for both teachers and students. This year, these feelings are heightened as we consider how to have closure with our students when we might not be physically together with them in school. It is important to begin with a review of the entire school year. So much energy has been placed on the current pandemic situation, and this may be overpowering students’ memories of the first two-thirds of the school year. Students will benefit from reminders of the first seven or eight months you were all together in school. In this inspiring story, a young rabbit travels through the wide world, experiencing joy and sorrow and wonder. Along the way, he chooses a path and explores the unknown. Providing closure at the end of the school year allows both students and teachers to let go of the past and move forward into the future. Story share Have each student write a story about his or her favorite memory of the school year. The memory can be something funny or special; it can be about another student (no hurtful stories -- only positive), an event, a teacher or administrator, or something that happened in the classroom that was especially memorable. Give students enough time to write a good solid story. EW Professional Development. Online PD Courses with dozens of topics to choose from for your CEU credits and building new skills! EW Worksheets.