

Professional learning: key principles and features

Leadership of and for learning

Leaders in the widest sense understand that people are the drivers and enactors of change for improvement. Professional learning and development is the means by which this is put into action. As a priority, leaders commit to and invest in their own professional learning and development, creating the conditions where professional learning can thrive – space, time, culture and trust.

- Develop the strategic vision to lead and support learning for all
- Develop a learning culture and ethos based on trust, honesty, challenge and support; one which supports and promotes the growth of professional capital through professional learning
- Support and provide time for meaningful engagement in sustained professional learning and development with opportunities to share
- Lead learning conversations underpinned by coaching approaches to stimulate, challenge and support thinking
- Have professional courage
- Enact collaborative and enquiring approaches to practice
- Encourage, challenge and question to ensure development and progress
- Be committed to and recognise the importance of developing individual and collective knowledge

Learning-as-collaborative

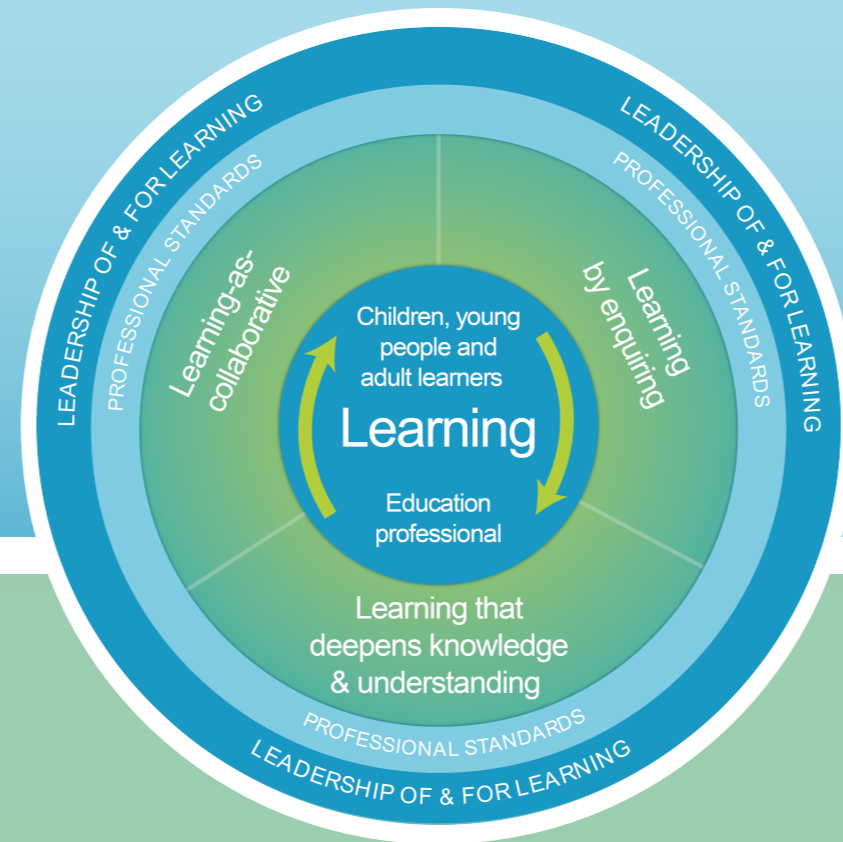
Learning with and from colleagues, partners and learners as part of an active learning community:

- Learning is an interactive and active process
- The educator as learner reflects on professional practice and shares professional learning
- The educator as learner self-evaluates and considers own assumptions, context, relationships with others and is self-aware
- Conversations about learning are:
 - Frequent and prioritised
 - Productive and focused
 - Based on feedback loops between and for educators, learners, colleagues, leaders and relevant partners
- Knowledge is developed by and with educators, learners, family/carers and learning community
 - Engaging learners and their families/carers/relevant partners
 - External knowledge and other expertise and perspectives
 - Learning with and from colleagues, learners and others

Education professional as learner

There is a dynamic relationship between learners (the learning of children, young people and adults) and the educator's professional learning. These are deeply interconnected through the learning feedback loop at the heart of the model.

- The educator's professional learning should be informed by the learner's experience, voice and needs. In turn, the professional learning of the educator should impact positively upon the experiences of learners
- Professional learning should take account of and reflect the unique circumstances of the learning community



Learning by enquiring

There is an ethical prerogative to taking an enquiry stance, to try to improve outcomes for children, young people and adult learners:

- Asking critical questions about self, and learners within your context
- Reflecting on professional practice, learning and the learning of learners within your context encourages metacognitive knowledge and skills
- Supporting dispositions around risk-taking, being open to change and ready to innovate
- Critically examining a wide range of sources of information to inform knowledge and understanding
- Asking questions about impact, about the progress of learners and their learning
- Enquiry based professional learning encourages informed decision making and clearer articulation of 'why' we are teaching and learning in the way we are, promoting voice around the 'so what?' and 'what now?'
- Develops professional agency and voice – educators as leaders of change

Professional standards and policy

Professional standards and educational policies both support and inform professional learning. It is important to examine and consider them in action and understand the connections and coherence across educational policies and the professional standards. Should be used:

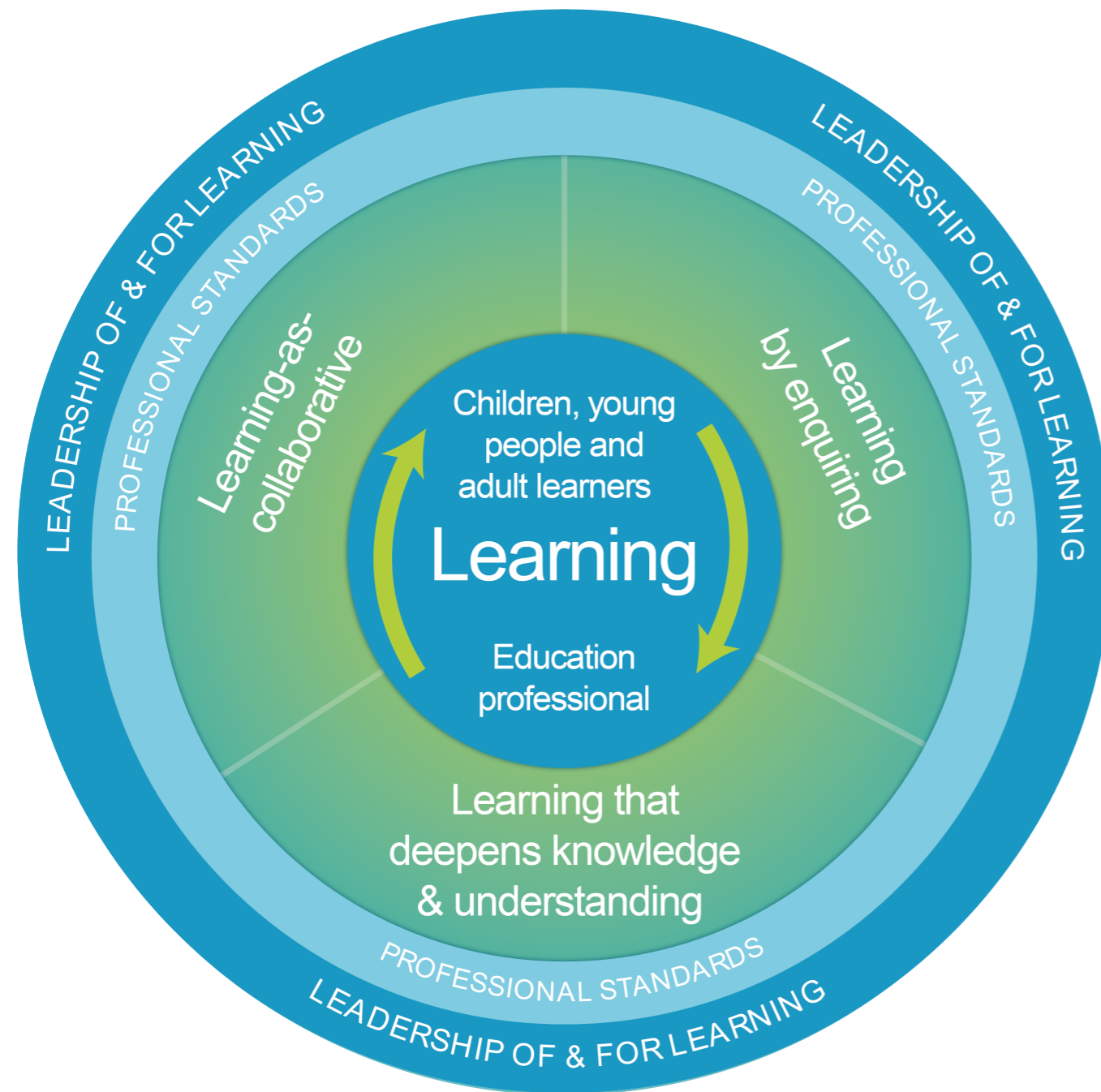
- To self-evaluate and engage in critically reflective thinking about practice as part of regular, planned and ongoing professional learning dialogues and development
- To support professional growth and agency
- To ask critical questions of self, school or organisation and system
- As a catalyst for learning
- To frame and support thinking and practice
- As a way to signpost and plan learning
- To challenge and consider beliefs, values and professional actions
- To explore professional identity

Learning that deepens knowledge and understanding

Professional learning should inform, challenge and help to understand why we do what we do. Enquiry is the basis for reflective and strategic thinking (metacognition) about practice and becomes the methodology for professional learning.

- Understanding and developing self as a learner and as a professional:
 - What interests, informs and influences you?
 - How do you examine your own assumptions and beliefs?
 - How is your professional voice shaped by professional values?
- Developing depth of knowledge about:
 - Learning and teaching
 - Subject, curriculum and policy
 - Own assumptions, values and beliefs
 - Self as a learner
- Developing skills, expertise and experience
- Regarding problems and failures as learning opportunities
- Seeking solution focused approaches from an informed, problem solving perspective

National model of professional learning



Professional learning must focus on the education professional as a learner and how this is related to and impacts upon the learning of children, young people and adult learners.

Professional learning should be:

- Challenging, and develop thinking, knowledge, skills and understanding
- Underpinned by developing skills of enquiry and criticality
- Interactive, reflective and involve learning with and from others.

Professional learning is informed and supported by professional standards and education policy.

Leadership of and for learning is essential to ensure it is well supported, promoted and sustained.