



Summary of the 2011 Annual Conference  
Charlottesville, VA  
November 4, 2011

**VIRGINIA**

### **A Day with the DuFours**

The changing colors of fall leaves in Charlottesville created a vibrant backdrop for more than 250 educators to convene at Learning Forward Virginia's 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference. The conference this year featured Rick and Becky DuFour who facilitated an effective day of learning to advance the understanding of Professional Learning Communities.

The conference started with a few business items and then turned to recognizing those who exemplify quality professional development around the state. The 2011 Learning Forward Virginia awards and winners are:

- Professional Learning Advocacy Award:
  - Dr. Nancy Ryan Iverson, University of Virginia
- Professional Learning Team Award:
  - Riverbend High School, Spotsylvania County Public Schools
- School Administrator Professional Learning Award:
  - Mrs. Guylene Wood-Setzer, Montgomery County Public Schools
  - Mrs. Melvina Michie, Prince William County Public Schools
- Teacher-Leader Professional Learning Award:
  - Mrs. Andrea Lund, Henrico County Public Schools
- Professional Development Research Award:
  - Dr. Brad Bizzell, Virginia Tech

Following the awards, Rick and Becky DuFour took the stage and presented an engaging overview of the features that create successful professional learning communities. One of the main points of their presentation was that professional learning communities are teams of teachers working together for the good of students. They compared this to the professionalism at the Mayo Clinic where doctors are expected to work as part of a team for the benefit of the individual patients. One robust example contrasted Hollywood's image of successful schools with reality. Rick DuFour pointed out that movies about good scholastic experiences portray extraordinary individuals; while in actuality successful schools are comprised of hard working teams of educators. Professional learning communities fostered by Learning Forward and affiliates focus on student achievement and encourages teams of teachers to draw on individual strengths to better instruction for all learners.

The afternoon sessions allowed participants to focus on their respective communities. The DuFours enjoyed a working lunch to meet with participants from universities and higher education institutions. Then, Becky DuFour led the elementary group drawing on her background of building a successful learning community in a Virginia elementary school. While Rick DuFour's experience in secondary education allowed him to speak from experience and lead a session with middle and high school representatives. These

breakout sessions gave attendees the chance to focus on the areas that will be addressed when they return to their professional learning communities and implement ideas sprouted at the conference.

Learning Forward Virginia thanks all the participants of the 2011 annual conference. The professional learning community that comprises the Learning Forward Virginia organization continues to grow each year.

Resources:

<http://www.allthingsplc.info/>

<http://www.learningforwardvirginia.org/>