



DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

# INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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<u>Sections</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction .....	2
Part I: Setting the Stage for Professional Learning .....	4
Part II: Making Professional Learning Have More Impact .....	6
• Need Assessment (worksheet) .....	9
• Setting Professional Learning Goals (worksheet) .....	12
Part III: Planning For Professional Learning .....	13
• Planning How Learning Will Occur (worksheet) .....	17
• Evaluating Professional Learning (worksheet) .....	20
Resources .....	21
Appendices .....	23

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The Oregon Department of Education gratefully acknowledges the Vermont Department of Education for their permission to modify "A Guide for Increasing the Effectiveness of Professional Development in

*Schools and Districts”*

## Introduction

This guide is for superintendents, principals, staff developers, teachers and professional development providers -- in short for anyone who has a stake in ensuring that professional learning has greater impact on improving practice and increasing student learning. The purpose of this guide is to help schools and districts put in place processes and supports needed to make professional development more effective to meet key student learning and district/school improvement goals.

Effective professional development depends upon the quality of planning, implementation and evaluation. Within this guide, planning, implementation and evaluation are presented in steps with research-based information and tools and worksheets that can be used to develop a professional development plan, ensure implementation, and evaluate results. The information and processes in this guide are based upon current research about educator learning, change, and organizational development as well as the Learning Forward (formerly National Staff Development Council) definition and standards for professional learning .

In this guide, the term “professional development” does not refer to an event or events, but rather to ongoing, sustained, inquiry-based learning that occurs throughout the school year. This type of professional learning provides focused, deep learning that builds upon prior experience resulting in positive changes in practice and increased student learning. For the purposes of this guide, the terms “professional development” and “professional learning” are interchangeable.

Research shows that effective leaders and teachers increase student success and that the primary contributor to making educators effective is high-quality, continuous professional learning. High-quality professional learning is different than professional development many educators have grown accustomed to. Research has identified key elements required for professional learning that will change professional practice and that can result in increased student learning. Often, professional development content is given most consideration but without a context that supports professional learning and an appropriate research-based learning process, there will be little change in educator practice.

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
Professional development as an event	Professional development as a learning process
Focus on planning, attending and evaluating a professional development event	Focus on planning, implementing and evaluating learning and change in educator practice
Adult need centered	Student need centered
Professional development through in-service day presentations	A continuum of learning throughout the year focused on student learning goals

Presenter transmits knowledge, skills and strategies	Facilitator leads inquiry into teaching and learning
Pull out training, workshop or course	Job-embedded learning featuring teacher collaboration and use of coaches
Fragmented, piece-meal, one-shot	Driven by clear, coherent, long-term strategic plan
The latest popular program	Evidence-based and standards-based

### Standards for Professional Learning

The Standards for Professional Learning, developed by *Learning Forward* (previously National Staff Development Council), outline the characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The standards make explicit that the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels.

**Learning Communities:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

**Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

**Resources:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

**Data:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

**Learning Designs:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

**Implementation:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.

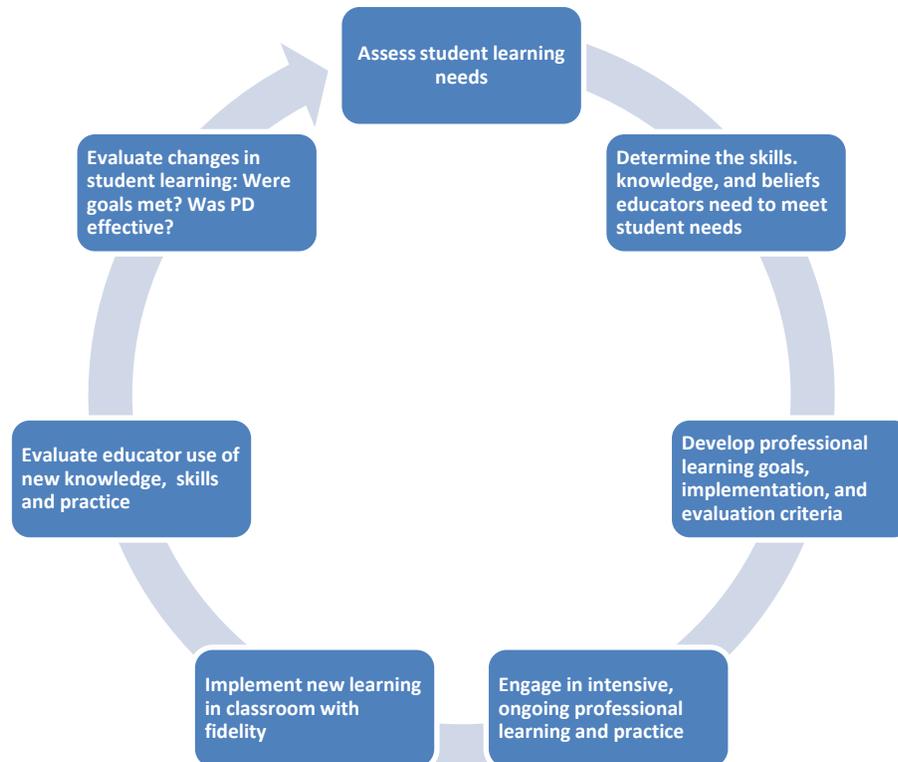
**Outcomes:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

For a complete version of these standards visit [www.learningforward.org](http://www.learningforward.org).

# Part I: Setting the Stage for Professional Learning that Improves Teaching and Student Learning

## Professional Development Planning Cycle

Planning for professional development is a careful process of examining data, determining needs (and causes as to why those needs exist), establishing goals and studying options to provide focused, specific, research-based professional learning. Strategies to meet those goals should be implemented carefully and evaluated for impact and progress toward meeting goals.



Often, professional development is provided in a “one size fits all” approach. What is not frequently considered is that there are multiple levels of need for professional development. Professional learning should be designed to address the needs of specific audiences, based on relevant data from a variety of levels.

- **District Level:** data from all schools’ assessment scores, new curriculum or initiatives, state or federal initiatives, etc.
- **School Level:** aggregated classroom data, perceptions of students and families, school-wide data, issues, or whole school initiatives
- **Grade, Subject, Team or Professional Learning Community (PLC) Level:** data indicating needs of a specific subgroup of students or in a specific content area
- **Individual Level:** classroom data, student perceptions, supervision/evaluation, teaching standards, or induction for new teachers or for new assignments, etc.

## **Part I: Setting the Stage for Professional Learning that Improves Teaching and Student Learning**

### **The Role of Leadership and a Professional Learning Team**

Leaders build capacity of individuals, teams, schools and districts to improve student learning through effective professional development. School leaders demonstrate their understanding of the importance of professional learning by setting high expectations and providing support for ongoing, job embedded, collaborative learning focused upon increasing student learning. School leaders participate with staff and hold staff accountable for improved student results.

To ensure professional learning that is systemic and cohesive to meet student achievement goals, district leaders may want to create a professional learning team. A professional learning team:

- Ensures coherence and that professional learning supports student learning and district/school improvement
- Brings a variety of perspectives, assists with staff buy-in, and spreads the work
- Oversees the entire professional development process including needs identification, planning, implementation and evaluation
- Works closely with school leadership and the school improvement teams
- Develops and/or revises the district's vision for professional development to direct the planning, implementing and evaluating of professional learning
- Elicits staff input at critical stages
- Communicates regularly with staff

When assembling a district professional learning team, leaders should:

- Choose members for the team who demonstrate a commitment to improving teaching and learning for all students
- Choose members who have high credibility with staff members to ensure buy-in
- Ensure team members are aware of the research on what constitutes high-quality professional development and understand the important components of an effective program
- Communicate to all staff who will have input into professional development design, what type of input that will be, and the decision-making process and how final decisions will be made
- Provide support and resources, including time and organizational structure, necessary for professional learning.

## Part II: Making Professional Learning Have More Impact

### Step 1: Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment.

You must know your needs in order to plan how to meet them. For professional development to improve student learning, professional learning needs must be based upon student learning needs (or factors that affect learning).

A needs assessment:

- Helps build on existing strengths.
- Helps develop a vision and imperative for improvement and/or reform.
- Helps determine what kind of help is needed.
- Helps determine whether outside help is needed.

A good needs assessment should:

- Include input from a variety of data sources.
- Provide *specific details* about student learning needs.
- Help you prioritize needs allowing you to focus on a few most strategic areas.

**A needs assessment, in the context of designing professional learning, is not a survey.** In the section that follows, a robust needs assessment process is outlined. While surveys can be useful data points in this process they do not, by themselves, provide the breadth and depth of information that is required to identify professional learning needs.

**A. Review Student Data:** The first step in the planning process is to identify a need for professional development through review of student learning outcomes. The planning team can review at least three kinds of data on student learning outcomes, disaggregated by subgroup, including:

- **Results from the statewide assessment.**
- **Results from end-of-course assessments and formative or benchmark assessments.** Effective use of these data requires that the assessments be explicitly aligned with district curriculum based on state academic standards. If these assessments are not aligned with the standards-based curriculum, they will be of limited value for this review.

**Planning Tip: Learn what the data say, but don't take on too much.** A thorough analysis of a variety of disaggregated student data may result in the identification of a wide range of needs that could be addressed through teacher professional development programs and initiatives. At this point, planners may be tempted to try to address all of the needs at once. Doing so could result in frustration as planners tackle too much. More importantly, it could result in designing professional development activities that are too broad in focus and too limited in depth to have an impact on practice.

## Part II: Making Professional Learning Have More Impact

- **Samples of student work (e.g., completed assignments, projects).** Looking at student work complements the review of assessment data and provides insights about instructional practices that may require improvement. Reviewing student work is especially useful in content areas that are not included in state or local assessments.

Other important information to study includes student, parent, community satisfaction/perception surveys, discipline referrals, absenteeism, special education referrals, graduation and dropout rates as well as post-graduation activities. For more information on data types go to [www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title\\_ii/a\\_teacherquality/multiple-measures-of-data.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_ii/a_teacherquality/multiple-measures-of-data.pdf).

**B. Conduct a Gap Analysis:** This analysis will help pinpoint the gaps between what students know and are able to do (as evidenced by a variety of assessments) and what they are **expected**, based on state standards, to know and be able to do.

- Identify the specific areas in which students are not meeting standards. Instead of stating that student reading scores are low, state the specific areas such as summarizing or vocabulary. This will lead to the development of a specific professional development goal.
- Identify which students need to improve their learning. Is it all students or specific subgroups?
- Determine whether gaps exist between leadership and staff perceptions of school success and perceptions of students, parents, and community.
- Identify which specific group(s) of students need to improve in a specific area of knowledge or skill.

**Planning Tip: Think ahead but map backward to ensure that professional development is of the highest quality.** Think carefully about the student outcomes but think just as carefully about what teachers need to know and be able to do to help students achieve those outcomes. As goals and objectives for improving student learning become more ambitious, so, too, should the goals and strategies for teacher learning.

**C. Consider the Context and Possible Barriers to Student Success:** Results of the gap analysis can help identify the reasons for the gaps, including (1) disconnects between teacher content knowledge and/or instructional strategies and the desired student learning outcomes and (2) factors in school and classroom environments that impede learning.

### Questions to consider:

- Does the written curriculum support student outcomes?
- Is the written curriculum being taught in all classrooms prior to testing?
- Are students in the identified subgroups meeting goals in some teachers' classes? If so, look carefully at successful teacher practices, attitudes and beliefs to determine what is

## Part II: Making Professional Learning Have More Impact

different in their classes.

- i. Do successful teachers spend more time on this content?
- ii. Do successful teachers ensure students have mastered pre-requisite knowledge and skills before beginning this content?
- iii. What differences exist in instructional materials? Instructional approaches?
- iv. What knowledge and skills do the successful teachers have that less successful teachers lack?
- v. Do successful teachers demonstrate different beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward students and the subject area?

### ***D. Determine Educator Learning Needs:***

Once the planning team has identified the student learning needs that represent the long-term focus of the professional development, the team should identify what teachers need to know and be able to do to address these student learning needs. **This is a very important step.** Careful identification of specific knowledge, beliefs or teaching practices that enable non-achieving subgroups to be successful is key to planning professional learning that will lead to student success. The prioritized, educator learning needs serve as the foundation to which all professional learning opportunities are tied.

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**Planning Tip: Remember the focus of the plan.**

While the ultimate goal of teacher professional development is to improve student learning, the more immediate goal (as reflected in the goals and indicators) is improved teacher knowledge, skills and practice. Planners are well-advised to focus on goals for teachers and proximal learning outcomes for students, with the latter being reflected in student work samples and results on locally developed benchmark assessments.

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Data gathered from educators can also play an important role in determining professional learning needs. In addition to surveys, data gathered through district educator evaluation and support systems are valuable resources that can be used to inform professional learning needs.

### Questions to Consider:

- a. What are teachers' current levels of knowledge of the content and effective teaching practices?
- b. What are teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the subgroups that are not successful and how might that influence their behavior toward and expectations for those students?
- c. Which teachers do not have the necessary specific knowledge, skills, and beliefs to ensure all students learn the content?
- d. Which teachers have students that are succeeding?

***A Needs Assessment Worksheet is provided on the following page.***

### Needs Assessment Worksheet

Using the prompts in Step 1, fill in the information below.

**Data Sources:**

What student data was analyzed?

What educator data was analyzed?

**Did the data analysis identify gaps?**

On which specific content?	For which sub-groups of students?	Were any barriers identified?	What specific group of students will increase achievement in what knowledge or skill by what percent by when?	What knowledge, skills, and beliefs do teachers need to close the learning gap? <b>(Educator Learning Needs)</b>

## Part II: Making Professional Development Have More Impact

### Step 2: Be clear about goals for professional learning and how you will know goals have been achieved.

In completing the needs assessment in Step 1, you determined the specific areas in which students were not achieving and the knowledge, skills and beliefs teacher need to close student achievement gaps. In Step 2, the planning team translates these professional learning needs into specific goals and, in doing so, should further clarify the content and focus of the professional development.

#### A. Reflect on the knowledge, skills and beliefs teachers need to close the gaps, develop desired outcomes, and identify evidence to measure the effectiveness of the professional learning.

- **Desired outcomes** of professional learning should be stated in terms of what the educators will know and be able to do as a result of professional learning and should be very specific in order to close the gaps between the required teacher knowledge, skills, and beliefs and their current practice. Desired outcomes are evaluated at the end of the professional learning to determine to what extent the new knowledge and skills have been fully integrated into routine practice.
- **Measures of effectiveness** are used to help determine if the professional development was successful. Measures of effectiveness should include benchmarks to be checked regularly (formative evaluation) to determine if the professional learning is succeeding or needs any changes. An evaluation plan should include a description of how and when progress monitoring will occur and who will be involved.

#### Questions to Consider:

- What changes will be seen in teacher practice?
- How often will teachers implement their new learning in the classroom and how will they know if they are implementing correctly?
- How will information on teacher implementation be collected?
- What changes will there be in student learning and what will the indicators be?

**Planning Tip: Consider creating rubrics, protocols, or similar tools to determine whether the expected goals have been achieved.** These instruments, which define expected levels of mastery of new knowledge or “appropriate” use of particular instructional strategies can be used by participants to rate their own learning or they can be used by others, including peers, to inform observations and feedback.

## Part II: Making Professional Development Have More Impact

As the team identifies the goals and observable and measurable indicators, the group should also begin thinking about when the goals will be achieved and about how the activity will be evaluated to determine whether the participants achieved the intended goals.

### **B. Determine who needs to participate.**

A common teacher complaint about professional development is that it is a “one-size-fits-all activity.” Therefore, it is important to differentiate which teachers need which professional development to avoid frustration. Data gathered as part of the district evaluation and support system can be valuable information that can help ensure all teachers receive professional learning that meets their needs.

Evaluation system data can also be used to help identify those individuals whose strengths can be tapped to provide professional learning. They can be excellent resources and the experience of collaborating with other adults will foster a culture in which all teachers are responsible for the learning of all students.

#### Questions to Consider:

- Is this an initiative in which all teachers need to participate? (e.g. a new student behavior program to be implemented district wide)
- Is it appropriate only for specific grades or content areas?

**C. Limit Learning Initiatives:** Focus on a few areas of professional learning to ensure deep implementation to achieve results. Superficial implementation of professional learning will not improve student results. Sometimes too many initiatives are pursued at once, leaving many teachers feeling overwhelmed and spread so thin they cannot engage in the depth of learning required for change.

***A Worksheet on Setting Professional Learning Goals follows.***

## Worksheet on Setting Professional Learning Goals

District Professional Learning Goal based on identified need:

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS	OUTCOMES	TIMELINE/PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS
What evidence-based strategies/activities will be implemented to meet the identified educator goal? <i>Include as many activities as needed.</i>	To which <a href="#">Learning Forward</a> standards do these activities align to?	What will educators know and be able to do as a result of the professional learning?	What is the timeline for completing activities and who will provide oversight for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation?	How will you know that the professional learning was effective? What results do you expect to see?
1.		Initial:  Intermediate:	Initial:  Intermediate:	
2.				
3.				

Who will participate in the professional learning? (Check all that apply.) Estimated number of participants:

Grade level:     PreK-2     Gr. 3-5     Gr. 6-8     Gr. 9-12

Subject area     English     Math     Science     Health/P.E.     Social Sciences     Second Language  
 The Arts     Special Ed     English Language Learners     Career and Technical Education     Other

Other     Principals/other school leaders     Resource teachers, mentors, coaches     Paraprofessionals

How will the professional learning be differentiated if the needs/experience of participants warrants it?

## Part III: Planning For Professional Learning

### Planning to Support Educators in Implementing Their New Learning

*“One of the most common and serious mistakes made by both the administrators and leaders of a change process is to presume that once an innovation has been introduced and initial training has been completed the intended users will put the innovation into practice. A second serious mistake is to assume that all users ... will react in similar ways.”* Marcia Kalb Knoll in Forward to Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W., Huling-Austin, L., Hall, G.E. (1987). *Taking Charge of Change*.

Expectations for implementation need to be made clear at the outset of a professional learning experience. Leadership should establish their expectations that the new learning will become regular classroom practice and that teachers will be monitored on implementation of new knowledge, skills, and practices. The support of leadership is essential to encourage teachers to implement new practices and to provide teachers time to observe each other’s classes and meet to discuss their practice.

Understanding that the goal of the professional learning will not occur as the result of the initial training, establishing initial and intermediate outcomes provides benchmarks by which to measure progress toward the goal and allow for adjustments as needed.

**Example: All students will score proficient or higher on common assessments of math numbers and operations**

Activities/Processes	Initial Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Intended Results
Data team trained in analyzing student achievement data	Team determines specific areas and specific students needing greater support	Teachers are grouped according to their levels of knowledge and skills for differentiated professional learning	All students receive strong initial instruction in numbers and operations with re-teaching as needed
Math teacher leader trains teachers in a specific set of strategies for sound first instruction and re-teaching -Math teacher leader models strategies -Teachers practice strategies	Teachers have increased knowledge and good skills for consistent instruction of numbers and operations	Teachers implement the new strategies in their classroom with coaching support	
Special Educator works with teachers and math teacher leader to develop strategies for specific students	Math teacher and special educator co-teach the unit	All students receive more attention and differentiated instruction to meet individual needs	

### Part III: Planning For Professional Learning

Data team develop common assessments -Regularly examine student data to determine growth -Problem solve and develop interventions	All teachers regularly conduct progress monitoring on all students' learning with timely interventions	Students receive support so they do not fall behind	
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### Learning Designs

When designing and presenting lessons teachers take into consideration the learning styles of their students, as well as the nature of the content they are delivering. Planners of professional learning for educators should keep in mind these same considerations. A number of factors should be considered when determining learning design including the goals of the learning, characteristics of the learners, and their familiarity with the content. In the Learning Forward publication [\*“Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts, and Schools”\*](#), author Joellen Killion writes:

*“After establishing educator learning objectives, planners spend time examining research and evidence about professional learning to inform decisions about content and design of educator learning. In their urgency and enthusiasm to improve student performance, planners may pass over this critical step and rely on or adapt long-standing, comfortable practices. Or they may purchase programs of professional learning that fail to meet the standards or have little evidence of success.*

*There is no absolutely right learning design; however, there are learning designs that are more appropriate than others in given circumstances. First, planners use what they know to identify the appropriate learning designs. Then, they use formative feedback and data to adjust and adapt learning designs so that they achieve the intended outcomes. Most importantly, planners, leaders, and others facilitate and support learners to select and use learning designs of their choice, because they ultimately are responsible for implementing the professional learning.*

*Choosing appropriate learning designs is a significant decision. It requires thought, input, and thorough discussion from those who are primarily responsible for implementing the professional learning. For example, in a school district that is implementing new mathematics instructional practices aligned with Common Core math standards, teachers’ voices are essential in planning, selecting, or designing the professional learning. In addition, they should be given a significant responsibility for facilitating their own professional learning so that it is relevant to their day-to-day classroom responsibilities, their students’ needs, and the curriculum they teach.”*

Killion, J. (2013). *Professional learning plans: A workbook for states, districts, and schools*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward. (pp. 23-24)

Pages 85- 90 of the Learning Forward document referenced above are provided as an appendix to this

### **Part III: Planning For Professional Learning**

document as a resource for districts to consider in selecting the design that works with the context and content of the professional learning.

#### **Advantages to Job-embedded Professional Development**

When done well, with support from school leadership, job embedded professional development can result in powerful learning. Teachers feel a greater sense of ownership and investment in their learning. In many schools and districts educators engage in job-embedded professional learning through data teams or professional learning communities. The term “Professional Learning Communities” has many interpretations, however to be effective certain elements should be in place including:

- Leadership support and oversight
- clearly defined goals and expectations
- trained facilitation
- designated meeting time
- agendas
- meeting notes to track new learning, progress toward goals, and decisions

Because most teachers have functioned in relative isolation, they will need training in:

- group work
- effective collaboration and facilitation
- use of protocols to guide discussions, problem solving and study of student work

To be successful, PLCs need to be carefully purposed, structured, facilitated and evaluated. Two guides to consider for implementing PLCs are *A Facilitator’s Guide to Professional Learning Teams*, written by Ann Jolly and *Learning by Doing, A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Thomas Many.

#### **Do you need an external provider?**

As with any professional development experience and provider, before identifying an internal or external provider, you need to be clear on the outcomes you want for student learning and the changes needed in educator practice to produce student learning. If the knowledge and expertise can’t be found in the school or district, you may need to bring in a consultant. Be sure the external (or internal) provider will create a customized program to meet your needs instead of expecting you to buy into an existing course or program that may have little correspondence to your needs.

You need to be in the driver’s seat and interview potential providers to determine:

- If their services will be aligned with your established goals.
- How their services will contribute significantly to your long-term school improvement strategy.
- How willing and able they are to customize their services to meet your theory of change.

### **Part III: Planning For Professional Learning**

- If the content of their professional development is research based.
- If their services will result in building capacity of your educators instead of making you dependent upon their services in the future.
- How the professional development they provide will meet the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning.

***A Worksheet on Planning How Professional Learning Will Occur follows.***

## Planning How Professional Learning Will Occur Worksheet

Fill in the professional learning goals, decide which learning mode(s) is best *for each* learning component, determine necessary resources, time for learning, and measures of success.

Professional Learning Goal	5 Learning Components Needed to Implement New Learning in Classrooms	Learning Modes and Timeline (e.g.; Book studies, Webinars, Podcasts, Videos, Lesson Study, Action research, Coaching, PLCs, Workshops, classroom/school visitations, coursework)	Resources Needed (e.g.; Internal facilitator, External Facilitator, Learning Materials, Technology, Training in collaborative group work, Protocols)	How Time Will be Allocated (e.g.; common planning time, substitutes, early student release or late start, combining classes)	Measures of Success <u>and</u> How These Will be Monitored
	How will we learn theory to understand research-based practice?				Understand Learning Theory
	How will we observe the practice/ have it modeled?				Observe
	How will we practice using the new learning/practice?				Practice
	How will we receive regular feedback and coaching to implement this in our classroom?				Implementation Feedback and Coaching
	How will we collaborate with colleagues using the new practice?				Collaboration about Implementation

Adapted from Joyce and Showers, and Dana and Yendol-Hoppey

## Part III: Planning For Professional Learning

### Step 4: Evaluate professional development.

*(This section is adapted from Thomas Guskey, Evaluating professional development.)*

Planning to evaluate professional learning is an often neglected part of the professional development planning process. Evaluating change in educator practice and student learning cannot occur after professional development unless it has been carefully addressed during the planning process. The ability to evaluate the impact of professional learning relies to a good extent upon the clarity of purpose and goals defined in Step 2: Setting Professional Learning Goals.

- From which professional learning initiatives are we seeing the best results?
- Have educators' practices improved? How do we know?
- Is our district culture improving and becoming more focused on learning for everyone?
- Are more students meeting standards?
- Are some professional learning initiatives producing little change in educator practice and student learning?
- Was the investment of time, energy and funds in the professional development worth it?

**Planning Tip: Consider using products and artifacts from learning activities and follow-up as evaluation data.** Feedback to participants on their mastery of new knowledge and skills can be aggregated to provide an overall sense of how effective the activity was. Similarly, if either the initial learning activities or follow-up include observations of teachers, using rubrics for those observations and feedback to the teachers can generate quality data to gauge the impact of the activities.

Thomas Guskey tells us that there are five critical levels of professional development evaluation. Levels 1 and 2 are important parts of formative evaluation and can indicate if changes are needed in the content, process, or context to make the professional development more successful.

**Level 1** evaluation looks at participants' reactions and their level of initial satisfaction with the experience. Its purpose is to improve the program design or delivery and is the most often used evaluation measuring things such as comfort of participants, participants' views of the presenter, the content and activities. It is important to use this lens for job embedded professional development such as professional learning communities, action research, etc. as well as the more traditional workshops or courses. If participants are not satisfied at this level, chances for success are limited.

**Planning Tip: Evaluations that focus solely on participant satisfaction and ratings of quality have limited value in assessing the impact of professional development on participants' knowledge, skills, and performance or the impact on student learning.** These evaluation strategies can, however, contribute to your assessment of whether the activity took place as planned and whether teachers "think" that the activity will lead to changes in practice and student outcomes. If the plan does include these kinds of evaluation strategies, it is better to administer surveys or conduct interviews about these topics at least to 6-8 weeks after the end of the activities.

## Part III: Planning For Professional Learning

**Level 2** evaluation looks at participants' learning – did the participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills? The purpose of this level of evaluation is also to improve the program. Participants' learning includes observing demonstrations or modeling of the new practice and being able to practice using the new knowledge with feedback. This level of evaluation should carefully look at these areas.

**Level 3** evaluation focuses upon the impact of the professional development on the organizational (school/district) climate and procedures and the level of organizational support and change. The purpose is to improve organizational support, the professional learning culture, and to inform future school change efforts.

**Level 4** evaluation studies participants' use of new knowledge and skills, in other words, the degree and quality of implementation. The purpose here is to document and improve the implementation of program content. When this evaluation occurs will depend upon the expectations for implementation and the duration of the professional development. This can serve formative as well as summative purposes.

**Level 5** evaluation looks at student learning outcomes. Has the professional development met the original goals and increased student knowledge, skills or behaviors to the desired extent?

When looking at issues of school improvement and improved teaching and learning, evaluations of levels 3, 4 and 5 are most critical but Tom Guskey is clear that "...each higher level builds on the ones that come before. In other words, success at one level is necessary for success at the levels that follow."

### Conclusion

A good evaluation will explain whether the plan was implemented successfully. If the professional development did not follow the plan, a good evaluation can help identify the reasons why and perhaps even yield insights about what could have been done differently. A good evaluation can also explain whether the professional development achieved the intended goals. Evaluation results can pinpoint areas where additional professional development and support may be necessary. These results can help determine if the professional learning efforts are on track or if mid-course corrections are necessary.

**Planning Tip: Think about the possible evaluation results and who will use them.** Principals and other school leaders will want to know the extent to which the professional development appears to have paid off in terms of improved instruction and student outcomes. Central office staff and others will be interested in progress on improvement initiatives and the results for students. Finally, don't forget that evaluation results can be helpful in meeting reporting requirements and garnering support for professional development from external sources.

### ***A Worksheet on Evaluating Professional Learning follows.***

## Worksheet on Evaluating Professional Learning

District Professional Learning Goal based on identified need:

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF PARTICIPATION	DATA SHOWING EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION	EVIDENCE OF IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING	GOAL ATTAINMENT
What evidence-based strategies/activities will be implemented to meet the identified educator goal? <i>These should be the same activities included in the Planning Form.</i>	What evidence do you have that the targeted audience participated?	What evidence do you have that the strategy/activities were implemented?	What evidence will you use to determine whether the activities had an impact on student achievement?	What evidence do you have that intended results were met?
1.				
2.				
3.				

## Resources

- Beers, S. (2007). *Strategies for designing, implementing and evaluating professional development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Bernhardt, V.L. (2002). *The school portfolio toolkit. A planning, implementation, and evaluation guide for continuous school improvement*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.
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## Appendix A

### Learning Forward Definition of Professional Development

The term “professional development” means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement

(A) Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:

(1) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals;

(2) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders;

(3) primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a continuous cycle of improvement that —

(i) evaluates student, teacher, and school learning needs through a thorough review of data on teacher and student performance;

(ii) defines a clear set of educator learning goals based on the rigorous analysis of the data;

(iii) achieves the educator learning goals identified in subsection (A)(3)(ii) by implementing coherent, sustained, and evidenced-based learning strategies, such as lesson study and the development of formative assessments, that improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement;

(iv) provides job-embedded coaching or other forms of assistance to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom;

(v) regularly assesses the effectiveness of the professional development in achieving identified learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting challenging state academic achievement standards;

(vi) informs ongoing improvements in teaching and student learning; and

(vii) that may be supported by external assistance.

(B) The process outlined in (A) may be supported by activities such as courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences that:

(1) must address the learning goals and objectives established for professional development by educators at the school level;

(2) advance the ongoing school-based professional development; and

(3) are provided by for-profit and nonprofit entities outside the school such as universities, education service agencies, technical assistance providers, networks of content-area specialists, and other education organizations and associations