

Selecting Professional Development Guidance

What is Effective Professional Development?

In their evidence-based review of effective practices, Linda Darling Hammond and colleagues (2017) define effective professional development “as structured professional learning resulting in changes in teacher practices and student learning outcomes” (p. v). The challenge arises when a traditional teacher workshop on a single occasion to address an identified need is considered sufficient. Effective professional development means confronting this reality and building significant support during the critical implementation phase in classrooms. Teachers need to understand how students develop content knowledge AND which teaching strategies are most effective in guiding students to apply that knowledge.

What are the Essential Questions you should consider?

- What is the top priority to address based on the most recent data analysis?
- What is effective professional development, and how can it apply to student learning?
- How will we know if professional development impacts teacher practice and student achievement?
- What is the role of the principal and district leaders in our professional development?
- What other essential questions could guide your team’s decision-making within the strategic plan?
- How are adult learners' characteristics and prior knowledge factored into the Professional Development (PD) design?

How do school and district leaders ensure effective professional learning?

- Develop high professional development standards that connect to the core mission and school improvement goals and plan.
- The selection of professional development is based on the most recent data analysis.
- Use evidence-based professional development proven to make a difference in adult learning.
- Have clear expectations for the implementation and provide needed support.
- Supervise teachers to ensure full implementation.
- Model practices and attend the same professional learning as teachers.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the new learning and its impact on student learning.

What are the key adult learner characteristics that should be considered?

- Motivation: Adults need to know the purpose of the PD and how they will benefit.
- Readiness: Adults need relevant PD now...not sometime in the future.
- Experience: Adults will filter new PD with their prior knowledge. Presenters must help adult learners connect to prior experiences/knowledge; otherwise, PD info may only be accepted if it is consistent with past experiences

- Self-Direction: Adult learners need to feel in control by having choices, collaboration opportunities, and various ways to reflect and assess their learning
- Orientation to Learning: Adults learn best by doing and designing authentic tasks like practice role-playing, case studies, etc., to apply learning to problem-solving strategies.

What are the Elements of Effective Professional Learning?

Darling Hammond and colleagues (2017) identified these seven critical elements based on their extensive review of professional studies.

1. Is content focused

Effective professional development must be relevant and content-focused, focusing on teaching methods, strategies, and content specific to teachers' classroom content.

2. Incorporates active learning

Effective professional development is active and models pedagogical approaches. Teachers need time to practice implementing them, not just repeatedly providing content.

3. Supports collaboration

Effective professional development supports collaboration. Collaborative professional learning can take many forms, such as student work analysis, lesson development,

4. Uses models of effective practice

Effective professional development provides and supports teachers with a clear vision of best practices. Teachers may view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, working with other teachers, shoulder-to-shoulder work with an expert in an evidence-based model, and video and written case studies of teaching.

5. Provides coaching and expert support

Effective professional development provides expert coaching and support. Supporting teachers to experience success in how they teach in their classroom with their students gives the teacher the support to change their practice.

6. Offers feedback and reflection

Effective professional development offers feedback and reflection. Reflection is critical if a teacher wants to improve their teaching. Reflection time should be part of professional learning individually, in groups, or with a coach.

7. Is of sustained duration

Effective professional development must occur over time. It is not a one-shot event but an ongoing process. Schools need to create a culture of continuous learning and support teachers as they

implement new strategies based on best practices. Professional development is a continuing process of monitoring and adapting instruction in effective schools.

How is Professional Development Evaluated?

- The impact of teacher practice on student achievement is essential when evaluating professional development. These may include the following (Guskey, 2002):
 - Student learning outcomes – a positive impact on student learning
 - Participants' reactions – was the time meaningful and well spent
 - Participants' learning – a measure of knowledge and skills gained
 - Organizational support and change – policies in place to ensure sustained PD learning
 - Participants' use of new knowledge and skills – differences in professional practice

What are some examples of professional learning to support your strategic plan?

- Reading/study/research shared during faculty, grade-level, or departmental meetings
- Study groups among peers focused on a shared need or topic
- Peer Observation: teachers observe other teachers
- Coaching and Mentoring
- Professional Learning Communities
- Coursework that supports school improvement goals and initiatives
- A series of workshops to dig deeper into a subject
- Conferences to learn from experts from around the state or country
- Whole-school improvement programs

Resources

Gulamhussein, A. (2016). *Teaching the Teachers: Effective Professional Development In an era of high-stakes accountability*. National School Boards Association: Center for Public Education. Retrieved from 5/20/24. National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

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Project Learning Tree. *5 + Guiding Principles for Professional Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.plt.org/trainings/faq/5-guiding-principles/#>:Retrieved 4/14/24

Principles for High-Quality, *Standards-Aligned Professional Learning: Student Achievement Partners: Achieve the Core*. <https://achievethecore.org/page/3242/principles-for-high-quality-standards-aligned-professional-learning>. Retrieved 4/14/24

Selecting Professional Development Chart

Using the information from this Guidance, schools can complete this chart as they research professional development opportunities that align with their school improvement plan.

	PD #1	PD #2	PD #3	PD #4
Name/Title				
Aligned with Strategic Plan				
Content Focused				
Active Learning				
Collaborative				
Uses Models of Effective Practice				
Provides Coaching & Expert Support				
Offers Feedback & Reflection				
Sustainable overtime				
Notes				