

Chapter 1

A NEW KIND OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TOOL

Tool 1.1 Assessment of current reality of professional development. *3 pages*

Tool 1.2 The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop. *2 pages*

Where are we?

Most teacher professional development occurs outside the school day.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Most teacher professional development occurs outside the school.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Most teacher professional development is designed by teachers for teachers.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Today's professional development requires a shift from its more traditional form of adult pull-out programs or after-school and summer learning to a form that brings learning into the forefront of what teachers experience each day in school. If teacher learning continues to be separate from the work teachers do each day, most will continue to view it as irrelevant, dissatisfying, and disconnected from what they do in their classrooms. Moving professional development to the school means teachers can lead their own learning and use external learning opportunities to expand and extend their learning.

Schools that have made dramatic improvement in student learning have done so as a result of teachers learning together, focusing on core curriculum standards, and using common assessment data to measure student progress toward standards. Teachers work with one another and assess their own learning based on their students' classroom performance on teacher-designed, standards-referenced assessments. Teachers value opportunities to focus collaboratively on their "real" work, teaching and learning. When teachers' learning aligns strongly with the results they want for their students, they are far more likely to find the learning experience worthwhile. And, such learning for teachers produces stronger learning for students.

TRANSFORMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
FROM ACTIVITY-DRIVEN	TO RESULTS-DRIVEN
Consensus of opinions	Research-based standards
Pull-out	Daily job-embedded structures
Provider-driven	Teacher-driven
Individual learning	Team learning
Generic pedagogy	Content-specific pedagogy
Focus on adult work	Focus on student work
Process orientation	Results orientation
Professional development	Professional learning

Adapted from Roberts, S. & Pruitt, E. (2003). *Schools as professional learning communities: Collaborative activities and strategies for professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

This shift in professional learning can be characterized in the way shown in the box above.

Activity-driven to results-driven

When professional development is planned in isolation of data about student performance, it is merely an activity to meet requirements for professional development hours rather than a strategy to improve student learning. Teachers often dread professional development sessions, and or teacher absenteeism often is higher on old-style inservice days. Why? Because teachers perceive little or no value in the professional development delivered to them. They often have little involvement in the planning, design, or delivery of their learning experi-

ences. The process becomes an exercise in futility rather than a strategy to improve student learning.

Consensus of opinions vs. research-based strategies

What is a research-based strategy? In many cases, what is called research is really the opinion of an expert in the field. When the phrase “research-based” is used in education, it most often means the opinion of an expert who brings considerable knowledge and experience rather than the result of a clinical trial or comparison study. In the field of professional development, the number of “gold standard,” or randomized clinical trial studies, are limited. Professional development has historically relied on qualitative studies for its information base. While the research field views qualitative studies as valid, some educators dispute the validity and reliability of these studies.

To make decisions about professional development, it is preferable to use evidence of success from a rigorous study rather than from the opinion of one or two people and from multiple examples of success under different conditions.

The National Staff Development Council summarized professional development programs that have evidence of impacting student success in the three *What Works* books — *What Works in the Elementary School*; *What Works in the Middle*; and *What Works in the High School* (Killion, 2002).

By studying the successful programs identified in the core content areas, professional development leaders can determine which practices contribute to improved teacher and student learning.

Pull-out vs. daily job-embedded structures

The current practice of professional development continues to isolate learning for teachers from the work they do each day. Slowly, however, changes are occurring. Some schools are making significant progress in improving how learning happens for teachers. Rather than being focused on the occasional inservice day — a day when students are released from school so teachers can participate in occasional training programs — professional development is integrated into each day as teachers collaborate to plan, teach, assess, and analyze data about student performance.

Provider-driven vs. teacher-driven

As new evidence emerging from research on brain-

based learning confirms, learning is an active, social process of constructing understanding and meaning. Provider-driven professional development often fits the “sit and get” mode; you come and sit in the school library or the district training center and you get the wisdom imparted to you by knowledgeable, experienced providers who live and work outside of your district or school.

In teacher-driven learning, teachers determine what they need to know based on what they know about their students’ learning. They formulate their own learning experiences and call upon experts to provide information when they want it. Teachers in teacher-driven learning environments set common goals for learning, engage with one another to discover the answers to their questions, explore student work to learn how students are learning, and read and share their expertise to benefit one another. They also are committed to ongoing learning and development because it is meaningful, relevant, and results-oriented.

Individual learning vs. team learning

While individual learning has the benefit of improving a teacher’s practice, team learning impacts multiple classrooms rather than a single classroom. Teachers learning in a team build a support system for implementation and are motivated to implement what they are learning and to work through problems associated with implementation. Teams of learners have the capacity to spread learning more broadly and in a more systemic way.

Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert (1993) found that schools where strong teacher communities exist are able to produce results for teachers and students. Others found similar results in research and practice. When schools want to reform enabling teams, rather than individuals, to focus collectively on improvement just makes more sense.

Generic pedagogy vs. content-specific pedagogy

Teaching is both a science and a craft and teaching mathematics is not the same as teaching reading. Yet for many years, professional development was not content-oriented and offered whole-faculty training in generic instructional processes. Today, it is clearer how the disciplines differ in structure, why teaching matters, and how content-specific pedagogy aligned to the core curriculum content standards enhances student learning. While contemporary research offers excellent understanding of

instructional pedagogy (for example, Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2002), unless teachers learn how to select instructional strategies based on content standards, instruction is still likely to be less effective.

When teachers have deep understanding about pedagogy and curriculum, their actions are more likely to lead to results more quickly. Content-specific pedagogy, rather than generic pedagogy, allows teachers to streamline instruction with a more laser-like focus. This, in turn, produces more time for additional content learning and/or advanced proficiency.

Focus on adult work vs. focus on student work

To shift a school's focus on teaching to a focus on learning is both essential and challenging. Schools in which teachers begin to think more about student learning and less about teaching are schools in which more students learn. Most professional development focuses on what teachers know and do and lacks emphasis on the next step — what students learn. Dennis Sparks, in thinking about how deep change happens in schools, talks about the importance of the final two percent. “The final two percent is that cluster of experiences that literally change the brains of teachers and administrators,” asserts Sparks. “Educators have these experiences when they read, write, observe, use various thinking strategies, listen, speak, and practice new behaviors in ways that deepen understanding, affect beliefs, produce new habits of mind and behavior, and are combined in ways that alter practice. Such professional learning produces complex, intelligent behavior in all teachers and leaders and continuously enhances their professional judgment” (Sparks, 2005, p. 159).

Starting by emphasizing the work students produce gives adults in schools information for making better decisions about their actions. Examining student work to develop a clearer understanding of what contributes to student success or failure will help teachers choose appropriate instructional strategies and resources to foster learning by all students.

Process orientation vs. results orientation

Focusing on results, rather than processes alone, ensures that the processes selected for professional learning are not only enjoyable, but also productive. For years, evaluators of professional development have collected end-of-event participant reaction to learning experiences to document the success of professional development. Yet, evidence about how well professional

development is designed or received will not reveal how it impacts student learning.

Another common practice in professional development is to focus excessively on the delivery of professional development and inadequately on its content and follow-up. A good deal of professional development insufficiently develops deep content and rarely emphasizes what teachers will see as students begin to benefit from implementation of the practices.

Mistakes commonly occur when delivery of a service or teachers' acquisition of knowledge and skills are the goals of professional development. For example, if the goal of professional development is to help teachers learn new strategies for teaching reading, student learning is left to chance. On the other hand, if the goal of professional development is to improve students' performance in reading, helping teachers acquire new strategies becomes a step on the pathway to this goal.

Professional development vs. professional learning

The term professional development conjures an image of teachers sitting around tables in a classroom, school library, cafeteria, conference room, or conference center meeting room. At the front of the room is a speaker, a noted expert in his or her subject area. The speaker talks to teachers, often telling them how to do their work. Typically, teachers listen respectfully, consider what the speaker recommends, and — silently or aloud — wonder if what the speaker suggests will work in their classrooms.

This form of professional learning assumes educators are passive recipients of knowledge and that some information and perhaps skills will be sufficient to transform their classroom practice. However, for more than 20 years, the research studies of Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1988) have reminded us of the importance of follow-up that includes study groups, coaching, or problem solving as essential elements in transforming new learning to classroom practice.

Professional learning, on the other hand, emphasizes learning rather than delivery. Just as the emphasis on student work supersedes the emphasis on adult work, professional learning focuses on the learning of professionals rather than on didactic development of educators. The former emphasizes the cognitive process associated with transformation of knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors, while the latter connotes the actions associated with the development process.

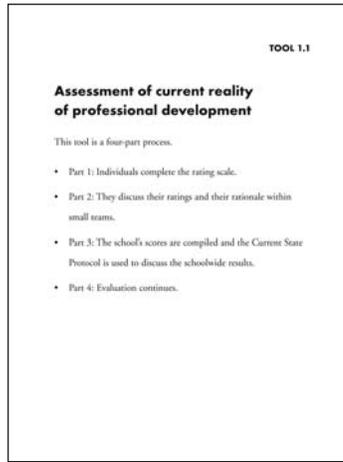
Tool 1.1 provides a guide to engage staff members in analyzing the current state of professional learning in their school. This four-part tool includes a brief survey, recommendations for using the survey results, a discussion protocol to analyze the survey's results, and recommendation to repeat.

This new kind of professional development means changing the school's culture and many of its current professional development practices. Change is challenging, yet the results of this change will increase teachers' sense of satisfaction, professionalism, and professional judgment. Teachers' expertise will be acknowledged, tapped, and used to improve teaching and student learning. Schools will be places where teachers and students want to come each day to learn and perform at high levels. Teachers will feel supported, encouraged to use their professional judgment, and given latitude to take risks for the benefit of their students. The culture in schools will be transformed.

This new kind of professional development also works best in a culture that supports collaboration, professionalism, and experimentation. However, not all schools currently have such a culture. Fortunately, there is a recursive relationship between collaborative professional learning and the culture of a learning organization. Working on one improves the other. It doesn't matter whether teachers and principals decide to take action to improve the school's professional culture or whether they decide to implement collaborative professional learning teams. Doing one simultaneously leads to the other. Improving the school's culture is a proven result of implementing collaborative learning teams. Improving the school's culture leads to teacher collaboration and deprivatization of practice. Working on both only accelerates the results. Chapters 5, 9, 11, and 12 offer ideas for creating a supportive culture for collaboration.

Tool 1.2 describes the value of teachers working in communities. It offers a brief and easy-to-read overview of the rationale for this new kind of professional learning.

Even though the benefits of this approach to professional development comes with many benefits, there will be problems along the way. Change requires



Tool 1.1



Tool 1.2

patience, persistence, and planning. Michael Fullan, perhaps one of the greatest authorities on school change, encourages leaders to approach change in three stages — initiation, implementation, and institutionalization.

- **Initiation** includes clarifying expectations, informing key stakeholders, defining parameters, introducing the rationale and expected results, and identifying the plan for implementation.

- **Implementation** includes developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors of those involved with the change, supporting early implementation, providing ongoing support for refinement, responding to resistance in a productive manner, and supporting integration of the new behaviors into routine practices.

- **Institutionalization** involves continuous evaluation and improvement.

Change takes time. Fullan reminds us that there will be ups and downs along the way. To keep moving ahead, it is important to celebrate success, log lessons learned, admit mistakes, never give up, listen thoughtfully to criticisms, work collaboratively rather than alone, measure progress toward the end, raise concerns in a public forum and in a constructive way, and keep the goal in sight at all times. It is also helpful to remember that there will be resistance; no change is exempt from it.

What makes a difference, though, is how resistance is handled. Usually resisters have legitimate concerns that merit a hearing and problem solving. It is also helpful to remember that not all people approach change in the same way. Some will do so with great

enthusiasm while others will be slower to act. A useful rule of thumb is to apply the what's-in-it-for-me principle to keep focused on the individual needs and differences among adults as learners. With these actions, educators can achieve their goals.

Despite the challenges, the rewards are great, as former New Jersey teacher Beth Warren reports.

“The staff had been on one big roller coaster ride. After several principals, each with a different style and philosophy, the staff was scattered in their thinking and practice. Although we were a group of talented professionals, we were all working in different directions. There was an overall feeling of negativity and a lack of common goals . . .

“Although I was receptive to the development of new committees, I was skeptical that they would make a significant impact. Throughout the years, I had served on numerous groups charged by the leader with the responsibility for some school change. Rarely did the leader take part in the actual committee work. I was impressed with the new principal's full participation in committee discussions. This led to decisions that actually had an impact on the daily life of the school. For example, her participation in our character education initiative allowed her to effectively reinforce those lessons when dealing with discipline in the office. What a novel idea! Everyone was on the same page! I was eager to participate because I knew my ideas were valued. As trust built, more teachers took responsibility for their group's work by voicing concerns and sharing ideas. I could see everyone finally taking ownership for our school's improvement.”

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TOOL 1.1**Assessment of current reality
of professional development**

This tool is a four-part process.

- Part 1: Individuals complete the rating scale.
- Part 2: They discuss their ratings and their rationale within small teams.
- Part 3: The school's scores are compiled and the Current State Protocol is used to discuss the schoolwide results.
- Part 4: Evaluation continues.

PART 1

After reading the descriptions of the various attributes of the new form of professional development, use the following rating scale to indicate where your school’s professional development program is in relationship to each attribute.

Is your school’s current professional development more like the attributes on the left or right?

In the Notes column, jot some notes about evidence that you have to support your rating.

COLUMN A						COLUMN B	NOTES
Activity-driven	1	2	3	4	5	Results-driven	
Consensus of opinions	1	2	3	4	5	Research-based standards	
Pull-out	1	2	3	4	5	Daily job-embedded structures	
Provider-driven	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher-driven	
Individual learning	1	2	3	4	5	Team learning	
Generic pedagogy	1	2	3	4	5	Content-based pedagogy	
Focus on adult work	1	2	3	4	5	Focus on student work	
Process orientation	1	2	3	4	5	Results orientation	
Professional development	1	2	3	4	5	Professional learning	

PART 2

Choose Column A or B.

OPTION A

- Ask individual staff members to meet with a team of three or four other staff members to share their ratings and the evidence to support it. Teams are sharing their ratings, NOT reaching consensus.
- After the discussion, collect the individual rating sheets to use to compile the schoolwide results.

OPTION B

- Mark individual responses on a large piece of chart paper.
- Make general observations about the distribution of responses.
- Identify attributes for which there is agreement (most responses within one point).
- Identify discrepancies in responses.
- Share evidence used by individuals to support the areas where more consistency exists.
- Identify where you want your professional development to be along the continuum in three months, six months, one year, two years.
- Identify three or four strategies to get to the three-month benchmark.

PART 3

After each staff member rates the school’s professional development program, compile the results into a frequency distribution or bar chart to get a comprehensive view of the staff’s perspectives. Make copies of the schoolwide results and use the following protocol to guide discussion within the school’s professional development committee or whole school staff to assess the current state of professional development within the school.

ANALYZE CURRENT REALITY PROTOCOL

- What do you notice about the results of the assessment? _____
- What do we want professional learning to produce in our school? _____
- How do we want professional learning to look in our school? _____
- As we consider what we want, who else do we want to involve in this discussion? _____
- What are some steps we might take to move in the direction we want to go? _____
- Who will be responsible for these actions?

PART 4

Repeat assessment in three months.

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

Repeat assessment in six months.

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

Repeat assessment in one year.

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

Repeat assessment in two years.

- Compare new distribution to previous one to assess progress.
- Repeat steps of analysis and planning.

The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop

Most schools and districts have created an artificial distinction between working and learning. They operate in a way that suggests teachers work (teach) 180 or so days a year and learn (attend programs) on four or five days each year set aside for professional development. School leaders must end this distinction between working and learning and create conditions that enable staff to grow and learn as part of their daily or weekly work routines.

The traditional notion that regarded staff development as an occasional event that occurred off the school site has gradually given way to the idea that the best staff development happens in the workplace rather than in a workshop. When teachers work together to develop curriculum that delineates the essential knowledge and skills each student is to acquire, when they create frequent common assessments to monitor each student's learning on a timely basis, when they collectively analyze results from those assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses, and when they help each other develop and implement strategies to improve current levels of student learning, they are engaged in the kind of professional development that builds teacher capacity and sustains school improvement.

Job-embedded staff development, by definition, will move the focus of professional learning to the school site. It is critical, however, that leaders understand that simply shifting to site-based staff development does not ensure improved learning for either adults or students. Site-based staff development can be, and often is, ineffective.

Leaders can increase the likelihood that site-based staff development will enhance the school's capacity to improve student learning if they address four questions.

1. Does the professional development increase the staff's collective capacity to achieve the school's vision and goals?

Schools' tradition of individual teacher autonomy has

worsened the traditional approach to staff development. This approach is based on the premise that schools will improve if individual teachers are encouraged to pursue professional growth opportunities that reflect their personal interests. Thus, the goal becomes providing a potpourri of options to reflect the diverse interests of a staff.

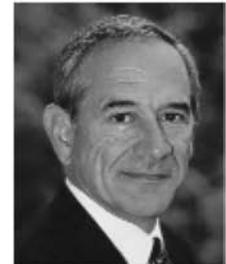
Developing individual teachers' knowledge and skills is important but not sufficient. The challenge facing schools is expanding the ability of a team of teachers to achieve goals for all their students and developing the ability of the entire faculty to move the school toward its vision. Leaders should insist that site-based professional development represent a focused, coherent effort to develop the collective capacity of school personnel to solve problems and sustain continuous improvement.

2. Does the school's approach to staff development challenge staff members to act in new ways?

Effective professional development will do more than help a staff acquire new knowledge and skills. It will push the staff to act in new ways. Teachers in professional learning communities are expected to go beyond reading the same article from a professional journal or attending the same workshop. They are expected to work together to apply new knowledge in the context of their school. They understand that improving the school means improving the practices of the people within the school. Therefore, they work together to implement and assess the impact of new strategies for achieving their goals. Building shared knowledge is a critical element in professional development, but shared knowledge will improve schools only when people apply that knowledge. Furthermore, it is only when a staff begins to apply new learning that teachers will come to the deeper level of understanding that enables them to adapt new practices to their own setting.

3. Does the school's approach to staff development focus on results rather than activities?

Many schools seem to approach staff development as if there is a prize for presenting the most new programs. When called on to provide evidence of the quality of their site-based staff development initiatives, they point to the number of topics covered, the number of faculty who attended workshops, or the level of satisfaction participants express. The real test of staff development, however, is



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whether “it alters instructional behavior and practices in ways that benefit students” (Sparks, 1994). Leaders must help schools shift their emphasis from amassing programs and projects to creating a collaborative culture in which teachers work together to improve student learning. Leaders who assess site-based staff development by asking how many teachers have been trained in “whole language” or “constructivist teaching” are asking the wrong question. The best way for leaders to help schools focus on what matters is by asking the question, “What evidence can you provide that staff are helping more students achieve at higher levels?”

4. Does the school’s approach to staff development demonstrate a sustained commitment to achieving important goals?

One of the challenges of leadership is to bring coherence to the myriad pressures and initiatives bearing down on schools. Leaders bring coherence to organizations when they establish clear goals, coordinate efforts to achieve

those goals, and *sustain the effort over an extended period of time*. In her study of innovation in the business world, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983) found one of the most common causes of a failed initiative was that leaders had given up on it too

soon. Nearly 20 years later, Jim Collins (2001) arrived at a similar conclusion in his study of successful companies. He found that, inevitably, successful innovation was the result of patient, persistent, sustained effort over time rather than a short-term, groundbreaking program.

The shortness of most staff development programs is the opposite of the kind of sustained commitment needed to embed change within the school’s culture. It takes time for a change initiative to take root within the culture of any organization, and until the initiative takes root, it is extremely fragile and subject to regression. Dennis Sparks advises that the key to school improvement is sustained effort over three to five years in which the entire staff seeks incremental annual improvements related to important school goals.

Leaders who hope to foster powerful site-based staff development in their schools may consider these tips:

- **Recognize that you will never build a collaborative culture simply by inviting or encouraging staff to work together.** Create structures that require teachers to work together, and build time for that work into the school day and annual calendar. The structures and culture of the school should resonate with the message that collaboration is nondiscretionary; it is the way we do things around here.

HE SAID

“Learning is always an on-the-job phenomenon.”

— Peter Senge

- **Ensure that teams focus on learning by calling on them to respond to the following questions for every unit of instruction:** What is it we want all students to know and be able to do as a result of this unit? How will we know when each student has demonstrated proficiency? What will we do to address the needs of students who initially have difficulty mastering the intended learning? If the team’s work does not address these critical questions, there is little reason to anticipate the changes in practice that lead to improved results.

- **Insist that every team establish norms** or protocols to clarify their commitments for how they will work together.

- **Insist that every team develop** and pursue a student achievement goal that is measurable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bound, and aligned with school and/or district goals.

- **Provide every team** with timely, user-friendly, relevant data and information that will allow its members to assess the impact of their various improvement strategies.

- **Monitor the teams’ work** by reviewing both the products they generate at each step of the process and the progress they make toward their student achievement goals.

- **Celebrate the teams’ progress** and be prepared to confront teams or individuals who are not honoring this collaborative approach to continuous improvement.

- **Solicit feedback from teams** about the resources and training they need to become more proficient in this collaborative process.

It is clear that job-embedded, site-based professional development offers the best venue for educators’ ongoing learning. It is equally clear, however, that leaders can and must play a pivotal role in ensuring that the staff development program of any school is designed to achieve the objective of higher levels of learning for both its adults and its students.

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