

Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond

A TOOL KIT FOR NEW JERSEY EDUCATORS



New Jersey Department of Education

Office of Professional Standards, Licensing and Higher Education Collaboration

New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board

In cooperation with the National Staff Development Council

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Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond:

A TOOL KIT FOR NEW JERSEY EDUCATORS

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Articles within the tool kit provide a wide range of strategies that have been used successfully across the nation. In some instances, the strategy may conflict with district or state policy. Please note these strategies are merely tools to spark discussion.

TOOLS BY CHAPTER

Note: All tools plus Annotated Bibliography appear on CD-ROM. (* = PDF and Microsoft Word formats)

Tool 1.1	Assessment of current reality of professional development.	Tool 9.1	Peeling a standard.
Tool 1.2	The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop	Tool 9.2*	Common assessment planning tool.
Tool 2.1	New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers.	Tool 9.3	Teamwork on assessments creates powerful professional development.
Tool 2.2	New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders.	Tool 9.4	Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together.
Tool 2.3	New Jersey Professional Development Standards for Teachers.	Tool 9.5	Success analysis protocol.
Tool 3.1	Team learning scenario task.	Tool 9.6	Descriptive review process.
Tool 3.2	NSDC's Standard for Staff Development on Learning Communities.	Tool 9.7	Collaborative assessment conference.
Tool 3.3	Set goals for learning with a sense of urgency.	Tool 9.8	Teacher research leads to learning, action.
Tool 3.4*	Fears and hopes.	Tool 9.9	Lesson study.
Tool 3.5*	Possible staff meeting agenda.	Tool 9.10	Profile of Bill Jackson.
Tool 4.1	A community of learners: One school's journey – two viewpoints.	Tool 9.11	Process: Select the strategy that works for your content and context.
Tool 5.1	School culture survey.	Tool 10.1	Sample team plan.
Tool 5.2	Audit of the culture starts with two handy tools.	Tool 10.2*	Team planning template.
Tool 5.3	Teacher and principal ICs on Learning Communities.	Tool 10.3*	Alternative team planning template.
Tool 5.4	What does your community know and believe about teacher learning? A survey.	Tool 10.4*	Team agenda template.
Tool 5.5	Frequently asked questions about professional development.	Tool 10.5*	Team summary report template.
Tool 5.6	Central office IC on Learning Communities.	Tool 11.1	Essays by Dennis Sparks.
Tool 6.1	Protocol for developing agreements.	Tool 11.2	Benefits of collaborative professional learning.
Tool 6.2*	Building effective teams.	Tool 11.3	Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams.
Tool 6.3	Transform your group into a team.	Tool 11.4	Principals' strategies for increasing staff capacities for continuous learning.
Tool 6.4	Which stage is your team in? A survey.	Tool 11.5	In the right context.
Tool 6.5*	Team agreement template.	Tool 11.6	Culture shift doesn't occur overnight – or without conflict.
Tool 6.6	Becoming a productive team.	Tool 11.7	How to launch a community.
Tool 7.1	Time use flows from school culture.	Tool 11.8	Getting everyone to buy in.
Tool 7.2*	Analysis of current time usage with time use log.	Tool 12.1	Backmapping model.
Tool 7.3	Think outside the clock.	Tool 12.2	If not a workshop, then what?
Tool 7.4	Time enough for teaching and learning.	Tool 12.3	Break the inservice habit.
Tool 7.5	Making time for adult learning.	Tool 12.4*	School professional development plan synthesis.
Tool 7.6*	Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning.	Tool 13.1	Eight smooth steps.
Tool 7.7*	Forming a recommendation.	Tool 13.2	Team meeting assessment.
Tool 8.1*	Types of data available.	Tool 13.3	Rate yourself as a team player.
Tool 8.2	Student data checklist.	Tool 13.4*	Protocol for discussing survey results about team effectiveness and/or team meeting..
Tool 8.3*	Data analysis protocol (informal).	Tool 13.5*	Logic model template.
Tool 8.4*	Data analysis protocol (formal).	Tool 13.6	Learning team survey.
Tool 8.5	Crafting data summary statements.	Tool 13.7	Summative reflection protocol.
Tool 8.6*	Fishbone diagram.	Tool 13.8	Professional learning communities: Getting started.
Tool 8.7*	Hypothesis-testing record keeping sheet.	Tool 13.9	Professional learning communities II: A focus on common assessments.

TOOLS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

A community of learners: One school's journey – two viewpoints.	Tool 4.1	New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders.	Tool 2.2
Alternative team planning template.	Tool 10.3	NSDC's Standard for Staff Development on Learning Communities.	Tool 3.2
Analysis of current time usage with time use log.	Tool 7.2	Peeling a standard.	Tool 9.1
Assessment of current reality of professional development.	Tool 1.1	Possible staff meeting agenda.	Tool 3.5
Audit of the culture starts with two handy tools.	Tool 5.2	Principals' strategies for increasing staff capacities for continuous learning.	Tool 11.4
Backmapping model.	Tool 12.1	Process: Select the strategy that works for your content and context.	Tool 9.11
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Break the inservice habit.	Tool 12.3	Profile of Bill Jackson.	Tool 9.10
Building effective teams.	Tool 6.2	Protocol for developing agreements.	Tool 6.1
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If not a workshop, then what?	Tool 12.2	Think outside the clock.	Tool 7.3
In the right context	Tool 11.5	Time enough for teaching and learning.	Tool 7.4
Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams.	Tool 11.3	Time use flows from school culture.	Tool 7.1
Learning team survey.	Tool 13.6	Transform your group into a team.	Tool 6.3
Lesson study.	Tool 9.9	Types of data available.	Tool 8.1
Logic model template.	Tool 13.5	What does your community know and believe about teacher learning? A survey.	Tool 9.3
Making time for adult learning.	Tool 7.5	Which stage is your team in? A survey.	Tool 6.4
New Jersey Professional Development Standards for Teachers.	Tool 2.3		
New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers.	Tool 2.1		

“True learning communities are characterized by disciplined, professional collaboration and ongoing assessment. This is the surest most promising route to better school performance, and the reasons are compelling. Teachers do not learn best from outside experts or by attending conferences or implementing ‘programs’ installed by outsiders. Teachers learn best from other teachers in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching. For this to happen, collaboration had to occur in a radically different way . . . Productive collaboration could not be casual or general; it was instead characterized by: Frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice . . . adequate to the complexities of teaching and capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtue from another.”

Judith Warren Little

Professor, Graduate School of Education

University of California, Berkley

(Little, as cited in Schmoker), pp. 141-142.

Reference

Schmoker, M. (2005). No turning back. In R. DuFour, R. Eaker, & R. DuFour (Eds.), *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities* (pp. 141-142). Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

OVERVIEW

“My colleagues and I were excited. We realized that we had the power to affect change by working collaboratively. I was taking ideas directly from our book club sessions and immediately applying the strategies in my classroom. Book club members were impressed with each other's abilities and we realized we could learn more from each other than we could from any one-day workshop. The sharing of craft knowledge fostered an excitement for professional learning. Other teachers from the district, as well as other school communities visited our classrooms, extending our learning community outside our own school's walls.”

– Beth Warren, former teacher,
in *A Community of Learners: One School's Journey – Two Viewpoints* in Chapter 4

In the last five years, New Jersey teachers have committed to a significant amount of professional growth and development. As required by regulation, all teachers participate in 100 hours of professional development every five years to refine their knowledge, skills, and behaviors as professionals. Together with New Jersey's Professional Development Standards for Teachers, this new requirement and teachers' overwhelming response to it have heightened the focus on professional development and required districts to improve and expand learning experiences available for teachers. Working through Local Professional Development Committees (LPDC), teachers have raised their expectations and are demanding high-quality professional development.

The Commissioner's Task Force on Quality Teaching and Learning recommends teacher professional development that is engaging, relevant to the work they do, more specific to their practice, and occurs closer to the classroom and within the school day. The concept of school-based professional development recognizes that the school is the primary center of learning and that teachers can often learn best with and from one another. This does not exclude opportunities for learning across schools, within a district, region, or state, or in national conferences or programs. It does recognize that a part of each teacher's professional responsibility is continuous improvement and active membership in a learning organization. Further, it recognizes that teachers within schools have enormous knowledge and skill that often remains untapped while districts seek outside experts to solve complex problems within their schools.

Collaborative professional learning addresses some

of these unfortunate contradictions. Collaborative learning engages teachers in learning — at their school, with their colleagues, and about their content and students. It seeks to redesign work that teachers do in isolation into opportunities for them to learn from one another. It strives to build a community of adult learners within a school and transform the culture of a school from one of isolation and competition to one of collaboration and interdependence. Thus, if a teacher successfully develops her students' understanding of fractions, she can then be a resource to other teachers who want to expand their capability to teach fractions in the same way. Collaborative learning is everything teachers want in high-quality professional development — teacher-directed, engaging, relevant, work-related, and meaningful.

To have the greatest impact on a school's culture and student learning, all adults in a school, not some, participate in collaborative professional learning teams. All teaching staff and administrators learn and work together to improve their practice and student learning. Unfortunately, in some schools where collaborative professional learning occurs, only some staff participate. However, when all teaching staff, including content-area teachers, nurses, librarians, counselors, technology teachers, and other teaching staff contribute their expertise to solve complex problems related to student learning jointly, results for students increase.

Collaborative Professional Learning in School and Beyond is designed to assist all teaching staff members, principals, supervisors, school leadership teams, central office staff, Local Professional Development Committee members, and professional development providers. It will help them transform professional learning from occasional events that occur outside the school or outside the regular work of teachers into an integral part of what teachers do each day in coordination with their colleagues. Sections of the tool kit address the major decision areas a school and district will encounter as they consider the benefits of shifting the center of learning for adults closer to their work.

The tool kit provides chapters that are specifically devoted to understanding the concept of collaborative professional learning, as well as the critical implementation issues to establish professional learning teams. Each chapter provides an overview of a key issue and practical tools for implementation. Three types of tools are included:

1. Articles to build foundation knowledge and provide opportunities for deeper conversation;

2. Process maps to make implementation decisions;
3. Tools for team work.

The accompanying CD-ROM contains all of the tools in PDF format, and some tools in both PDF and Word formats. The tool kit is a versatile resource that includes multiple tools from which users can choose. School and district personnel who are new to the concept of school-based or collaborative professional development, as well as those more experienced with this form of professional learning will find helpful resources in the tool kit to develop and extend their understanding and practice in professional development.

New frontier for professional development in New Jersey

Recommendations contained in the Commissioner's Task Force on Quality Teaching and Learning are creating a new frontier for professional learning in New Jersey.

New Jersey is among the first of the states to recognize the potential of collaborative professional development that:

- Occurs primarily at school;
- Is more closely linked to New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS);
- Occurs over time;
- Offers ongoing school- and classroom-based support for application of learning;
- Involves educators in collaborative learning;
- Links to a teacher's teaching assignment;
- Links to a school's and district's identified improvement targets;
- Engages teachers in collaborative learning with and from each other;
- Recognizes some of the routine work teachers do as powerful opportunities for professional learning;
- Deepens teachers' content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy;
- Is intensive and rigorous;
- Builds cultural competence; and
- Recognizes models throughout the state (*Quality Teaching in New Jersey: A Report*, 2005).

Reference

Commissioner's Task Force on Quality Teaching and Learning. (2005). *Quality Teaching in New Jersey: A Report*. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education.

This tool kit is designed to assist the following audiences:

<p>Teaching staff so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take an active role in learning with and from one another at school and about issues related to their content areas, their students, their instruction, and area of responsibility.
<p>Teacher leaders so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of the structure, support system, and culture for collaborative professional learning linked directly to teaching and student learning.
<p>Principals so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work actively with teachers and teacher leaders to provide the structure, support, and culture for collaborative professional learning linked directly to teaching and student learning.
<p>Supervisors so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate collaborative professional learning teams; • Ensure that teams have adequate resources and strategies to improve teaching and student learning; and • Work actively with teachers and teacher leaders to provide the structure, support, and culture for collaborative professional learning linked directly to teaching and student learning.
<p>District administrative staff so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools in creating collaborative professional learning opportunities that align with school and district goals; • Ensure that school staff have access to resources for collaborative professional learning; • Provide expertise and resources about content areas, instruction, assessment, data, and professional development; and • Oversee the development of a Local Professional Development Plan that reflects the needs of individual schools and teaching staff and supports collaborative professional learning.
<p>Local Professional Development Committees so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Local Professional Development Plan that reflects the needs of individual schools and teaching staff and supports collaborative professional learning; • Use professional development plans from local schools to drive the design of district support; • Serve as local experts about state and district policy and provide research about professional learning; and • Ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality collaborative professional learning.
<p>Professional development providers so they can ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model collaborative professional learning; • Integrate collaborative professional learning strategies into all their work; • Support schools in developing collaborative professional learning teams; • Focus on the needs of individual schools; and • Provide school-based support and follow-up to enhance transfer of learning and results for students.