



Indicator: Professional development is built into the school schedule by the district, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting training and consultation that fit the requirements of its improvement plan and its evolving needs. (5643)

Explanation: Professional development takes scheduled time, and the district can ensure that schools have sufficient blocks of time in their schools for this. The district may also directly provide some professional development, but it should leave ample room for each school to determine the professional development it needs to advance its improvement.

Questions: How does your district balance the district's goals for professional development with the school-specific needs for professional development aligned with that school's evolving improvement? Is sufficient time for professional development included by the district in school schedules?

The central office or district can play a role in developing strong professional development programs by addressing three important aspects:

1. Development opportunities should be linked to district initiatives—educate teachers in depth on one or two topics instead of trying to cover too many topics without much depth. Choices about what professional development is delivered should be informed by student achievement results and the improvement plans of the schools.
2. Gear professional development to what research shows as best practices for sound instruction.
3. Include such areas as in-class coaching, group lesson planning, or group analysis of student work in professional development.

Districts can also make it clear that schools should address their own particular needs – based on classroom observations—while keeping within district goals. Districts can also provide training for principals in providing good feedback to teachers to improve instructional skills (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2007).

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality offers multiple suggestions for districts wishing to support job-embedded professional development:

- Hire teachers who are prepared to engage in collaborative professional learning
- Make continued learning a part of the teacher contract, memorandum of understanding, the district's performance system, district employment policies, school handbooks and policies, and similar items.
- Offer incentives and supports for schools to provide and evaluate job-embedded professional development opportunities for their teachers.
- Help principals identify effective instructional facilitators through principal professional development and performance review discussions.

- Help principals plan and support implementations; monitor implementation in school walk-throughs.
- Help principals align teacher evaluation with job-embedded professional development.
- Help principals provide teacher collaborative learning time.
- Create policies that allow teachers to advance as instructional leaders, master teachers, and job-embedded professional development facilitators (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010, p. 11).

For English Language Learners

Because general education teachers and administrators often are provided very little preparation to serve the needs of ELLs, it is critical to design and implement a professional development program that addresses these needs. In schools with rising numbers of ELLs all teachers must prepare to teach language as well as content. Districts and schools must involve ESL, bilingual, and academic content teachers, parents and community members to assess needs and plan professional development initiatives that address instruction for ELLs.

According to the lessons learned from the Council of Great City Schools, the characteristics of high quality professional development for teachers working with ELLs tended to:

- be based on the best ELL (bilingual/ESL) and first and second language literacy research available;
- be sustained over a long period;
- involve hands-on strategies such as modeling, coaching and providing feedback;
- be available to all teachers in every subject as well as principals and other school leaders;
- contain specific training in the use of student data to diagnose needs and tailor instruction

The Promoting Excellence Guiding Principles recommend that the content of the PD for content and grade level teachers be focused on planning and delivering research-based instruction that addresses the following areas:

- Second language acquisition
- Differentiating instruction for ELLs
- Effective strategies for teaching academic content to ELLs
- Supporting ELLs to achieve grade-level academic standards
- Culturally responsive instruction
- Communicating with the families of ELLs

In addition, PD should be provided to school administrators that covers the following areas:

- Administrative issues related to ELL programs and services, especially federal and state legal parameters and research trends
- Foundations of second language acquisition
- Methods and strategies for English language development and bilingual development
- Knowledge for theories and research about teaching academic content instruction to ELLs
- Instructional practices strategies for teaching academic language and academic content instruction to ELLs
- Nature and role of culture in learning
- English language development standards and native language arts/development standards
- Teaching of English language development, native language development, and content standards to ELLs
- Appropriate, reliable, and valid assessment and accommodation of ELLs
- Collaboration among ELL and general education teachers
- Family involvement

References and Resources

Cawelti, G, & Protheroe, N. (2007). The school board and central office in district improvement. In H. J. Walberg (Ed.), *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp. 37–52). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

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