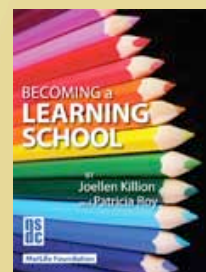




THE MAIN IDEA

current education book summaries



File: Professional
Development

Becoming a Learning School

By Joellen Killion and Patricia Roy (National Staff Development Council, 2009)

S.O.S. (A Summary Of the Summary)

The main ideas of the book are:

- This book provides a comprehensive resource guide for anyone – teachers, leaders, coaches, district staff – to launch, implement, and evaluate collaborative professional learning.
- Collaborative professional development is a results-driven form of professional development in which teams of teachers engage in professional learning in teams in order to improve student academic success.

Why I chose this book:

I think teachers working in teams is one of the most effective ways to improve teaching and learning. As Mike Schmoker says about collaborative professional learning, it is “the best, least expensive, most professionally rewarding way to improve schools.”

During the summer is a time when principals want to design workshops for the beginning of the year to either launch or improve teacher teams. The CD-ROM that comes with this book provides numerous tools for any instructional leader to use to train staff in the different aspects of collaborative professional learning. In fact, each chapter in the book is just a 5 or 6 page overview, but the workshop pages in the CD-ROM often number more than 20 pages in one chapter.

The workshop ideas on the CD-ROM are what really make this book stand out as a useful PD resource for instructional leaders.

The Scoop (In this summary you will learn about the various TOOLS to...)

√ *Conduct a workshop to introduce a new definition of professional development*

If your teachers are used to working in isolation, have them read a scenario of a school that uses collaborative professional learning and then come up with their own definition of PD based on the scenario.

√ *Help your teachers or leadership team figure out new ways to increase time for professional development*

Have them read one of several articles about the ways different schools and districts have made more time for PD as a way for them to begin to brainstorm ways your school can find more time as well.

√ *Conduct walk-throughs to evaluate team meetings*

Many principals use walk-throughs to evaluate teaching, but this tool provides a checklist instructional leaders can use when visiting team meetings to provide feedback on team organization, engagement, and the team’s work.

√ *Help teachers learn how to analyze student data to identify learning needs*

The tool not only presents a 10-step plan for gathering and analyzing data, but there is a workshop plan to help staff identify their own PD goals based on what their students need.

√ *Introduce data analysis protocols to teachers*

Learn two protocols – series of questions – that teachers can use to analyze student data from assessments.

INTRODUCTION

This book is about *collaborative professional learning*. The ideas behind it come from NSDC's (National Staff Development Council) definition of professional development and the belief that school problems are best solved by school-based educators collaborating together to address their particular needs. Defined by a set of standards that are drawn from the research, *collaborative professional learning* is results-driven, content-rich, and focuses on increasing student learning. Whether your school is just beginning to implement collaborative professional learning or has had it in place for some time, this book serves as a comprehensive resource guide to help you launch, implement, sustain, and evaluate collaborative professional learning.

This book is structured differently than most educational books. Each chapter only provides a short piece of text. The bulk of the chapter's materials are in the accompanying CD-ROM which provides tools to help you implement the chapter's ideas. The CD-ROM includes everything from workshops to additional articles/readings.

PART I – WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Chapter 1 – A New Definition

Where Are We Now?

Each chapter begins with a quick survey (WHERE ARE WE NOW?) to assess the school's current practice that relates to the chapter's topic. Staff members can complete the survey independently and the results can be compiled and brought to a meeting. The summary does not have the space to include all the questions, but there are a few sample questions in each chapter.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Teachers design professional development based on the needs of their students. _____

Teachers learn in teams several times a week. _____

Teachers' professional learning goals identify the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions to improve teaching and learning. _____

Few teachers experience the kind of professional development that actually improves their effectiveness. Teachers improve when they are involved in a cycle of continual improvement: analyzing data, determining learning goals, designing joint lessons with evidence-based strategies, receiving coaching and support, and then assessing results. NSDC has crafted a new definition of professional development based on this model of continuous improvement that will impact teaching and learning. When schools truly become "learning schools" every educator grows and every student benefits. *Collaborative professional learning* is a type of professional development that ensures great teaching and learning for every student every day.

The tools on the accompanying CD-ROM can be used to introduce the new NSDC definition of professional development and to help educators reflect on their current PD practices. Each chapter contains an excerpted list of useful tools to run workshops and implement the ideas in the chapter. Only a few tools from each chapter are highlighted due to space constraints.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
1.1	NSDC's Definition of Professional Development	This 1-page document provides a new definition in which PD occurs in teams, at school, using a cycle of continuous improvement, and focuses on teacher and student learning needs as determined by data. It can be used as a starting point for the rest of the tools below.
1.2	Three Levels of Text	This is a 45-minute protocol to help teams or a whole-school faculty discuss the definition.
1.3	How do we stand?	This tool helps staff assess the school's PD in relation to the definition in Tool 1.1.
1.5	Is and is not	This Venn diagram helps staff distinguish between traditional forms of PD and the new definition.

Sample Reflection Questions

Each chapter contains a set of reflection questions that can be used for groups of staff members or for individual reflection. This summary does not have the space to include all of these questions, but each chapter will include a few sample reflection questions.

1. In what ways are our current practices different from the new definition of professional development?
2. What changes do we need to make to better align our practice with the definition? What policies need to change, who needs to lead the change, what steps are necessary, and what type of commitment will we make?

Chapter 2 – Collaborative Professional Learning

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Teachers work collaboratively on the routine tasks associated with teaching. _____

PD involves teachers working in teams to improve teaching and student learning. _____

Teachers meet multiple times per week in teams to learn, reflect, and extend teaching and student learning. _____

Traditionally, professional development has had little impact on teacher practices and student achievement. Professional development usually occurred in workshops that individual teachers attended outside of schools. Now, research is emerging that professional development that has the highest impact focuses on teachers' content, occurs in their own schools, involves all teachers rather than developing individuals, and is collaborative. Simply put, *collaborative professional learning* is when teachers work together to improve teaching and learning. Together teachers plan lessons, design curriculum and assessments, examine students' work to improve it, observe each other, and plan ways to improve based on various data. However, creating professional learning communities is *not* the goal, improving student learning is. To make sure that collaboration produces results for students, it is important to first develop a common understanding of *collaborative professional learning*. Teachers must recognize that collaborating about instruction, curriculum, assessment, and student learning *is* legitimate PD. The research shows there are a number of benefits to teachers learning together. When teachers collaborate there are higher-quality solutions to instructional problems, increased teacher confidence, shared responsibility for student learning, and higher student performance. As Mike Schmoker says about collaborative professional learning, it is "the best, least expensive, most professionally rewarding way to improve schools."

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
2.1	Team learning scenario task	Teachers read 1 of 4 scenarios describing the PD at a school (elementary, middle, high school, and district) and identify the characteristics of <i>collaborative professional learning</i> , discuss these with a partner, and come up with their own definition.
2.2	NSDC's Standards for Staff Development	A 1-page explanation of the rationale for using learning communities for PD and how this is different from a workshop-driven approach. Teachers spend 6 minutes reading the page and share reactions.
2.3	Collaborative Learning: Fears and Hopes	A 20-minute protocol for teachers to write, share, and discuss their fears and hopes when they think about implementing collaborative professional learning.
2.4	Assessment of current reality of PD	Teachers individually rate their school's PD and discuss in small groups. Results are compiled to get a comprehensive view of the staff's perspectives. Discussion about how they want PD to look at the school.
2.5	The best staff development is in the workplace...	A 2-page article by Rick DuFour that provides a rationale for why PD should be school-based and collaborative.

Sample Reflection Questions

1. How could we benefit from collaborative professional learning?
2. What aspects of collaborative professional learning do we already implement and what stands in the way of implementing the rest?

PART II – SETTING THE STAGE

Chapter 3 – A Culture of Collaboration

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

We believe the school's culture affects our willingness to be continuous learners. _____

Attaining student learning goals depends on staff's ability to work together. _____

A high level of trust exists between teachers and administrators in our school and district. _____

It is challenging to create the conditions to support collaborative professional learning. To become a high-performing school it is essential to have a strong collaborative culture that values continuous improvement. Research has increasingly shown the connection between a positive school culture and student academic success. However, it is important to distinguish between a *congenial* culture and a *collaborative* one. In a congenial environment teachers may care for one another, but in a collegial environment:

- Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and concrete talk about teaching practice.
- Staff frequently observe each other teaching and provide each other with useful evaluations.
- Staff plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together.

So, what comes first? Does teacher collaboration create a collegial culture or does a professional culture lay the groundwork for collaboration? There's no definitive answer as to whether it's best to begin by establishing a culture that values collegiality or to begin by creating communities of learners. It's best to accept where your school is and start there. The principal plays a crucial role in developing both culture and collegiality. To build culture, the principal can do the following:

- **Build trust** – Building trust is key to making a reform effort succeed
- **Assess the current culture** – Use the tools on the CD to assess the school's culture
- **Reinforce the positive** – Tell stories of success and confront the negative (see **Tools 3.6** and **3.11**)

To build collegiality the principal can develop collaborative norms by:

- **Announcing and describing** – Introduce the norms and practices of collegiality
- **Modeling or enacting** – Model collaborative skills and collegial interactions
- **Sanctioning** – Endorse collaboration and collegiality

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
3.1	Culture is...	This is a way to begin to discuss different aspects of the school's current culture. How does your school
3.2	Learning about your school's culture	A survey to help your staff assess your current school culture looking at 12 norms of a healthy school (such as collegiality, trust and confidence, high expectations, honest and open communication, etc.)
3.6 & 3.7	Collaboration is the key to unlocking potential and 'Collaboration lite'	Two articles by Rick DuFour. One outlines the 5 tasks principals must do to create a school culture that supports adult learning. The other pushes principals to implement the type of collaboration that actually changes teacher practice and produces results in achievement.
3.10	Student learning grows in professional cultures	Includes 4 PD activities: one to help your staff understand its present culture and where it came from, a 2 nd activity to prioritize what aspect of school culture they want to improve this coming year, and a 3 rd activity to create an action plan for the 2 nd activity, and a 4 th to assess the school culture at the year's end
3.11	Pull out negativity by its roots	This 3 page article provides examples of how staff contribute to a toxic school culture and what the principal can do to counter toxic attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

Sample Reflection Questions

1. Some say trust is more important than structural changes in building collaborative professional learning. Do you agree?
2. Do you believe school culture can be shaped? If so, why?
3. What roles do principals and teacher leaders play in developing a collaborative culture? How do they know if they are successful?

Chapter 4 – Promoting Change

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Teachers in our school embrace change. _____

We address resistance to collaborative professional learning using thoughtful strategies that honor different perspectives. _____

Resources are available to support the change to collaborative professional learning. _____

Change is never easy. When teachers have been used to working independently, collaboration may be particularly difficult for them. Research on educational change offers advice for leaders in helping teachers as they move from isolation to collaboration.

Understanding Change

The first thing a leader can do to help a new initiative is to *understand* how individuals experience change. They should keep in mind: *People respond differently to change* – Those who feel successful are less likely to accept new ideas. Those who embrace change are often frustrated by those who resist change. These differences between the two groups can cause divisiveness.

Conflict is a natural part of change – Without conflict little real change occurs. Disequilibrium is needed for systems to change.

Too many changes can derail improvement efforts – Trying to do too much often means that nothing gets done.

Organizations change only when the people in them change – For schools to change their results, it's not enough to change structures.

Keys to the Change Process

In order for change to be successful, as Michael Fullan writes, there need to be two forces, *pressure* and *support*.

Pressure – Pressure is not about force, it is about intentionality. It involves stating the purpose for the change, clarifying what is expected, setting a timeline, holding people accountable, identifying specific results, and monitoring implementation.

Support – Of course support involves providing resources, feedback, encouragement, troubleshooting, and enough time for the change to occur. But to provide *more tailored* support it is helpful for the person initiating the change to understand the seven stages of concern teachers go through as they encounter a new effort. If leaders understand these stages then they can provide the *specific*

support needed for each stage. For example, if a teacher says she doesn't understand how teaming will help her teaching, a leader who lists the ways students will benefit will not address her underlying concerns about not being heard. These stages, along with sample interventions for the leader, are in **Tool 4.7**.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
4.1	School's orientation to change	A 55-minute activity to assess how open your school is to change
4.4	Competing values from obstacles to change	A 5-page article that describes why it is so hard for people to change and a step-by-step process for individuals to see what impedes their ability to change
4.5	8 forces for leaders of change	A 6-page article by Michael Fullan and others outlining 8 important things leaders must do to insure effective and lasting change
4.7	A measure of concern	Descriptions of the 7 stages of concerns educators have about change and how to address those concerns. It also includes a list of 10 ways to handle resistance

Sample Reflection Questions

1. As a school what has been our experience with change – both successful changes and changes that have not gone well?
2. What forms of resistance are most troubling at our school and what are we doing to address resistance?
3. What is my personal response to changes at work and how does this differ from my colleagues?

Chapter 5 – Scheduling time for collaborative professional learning

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Our school includes time during the contract day for teachers to work together toward improving student learning. _____

Our principal uses staff meetings for professional development. _____

The leadership team ensures that time for collaborative professional learning is used to impact teaching and learning. _____

Because collaborative professional learning occurs *during the day* and *in the workplace*, this type of professional learning requires TIME scheduled during the work day. In fact, NSDC recommends that 25% of an educator's work time be used for professional learning. While this may seem high, opportunities for teachers to learn are all around them. Learning occurs when teachers reflect, share their experience with others, analyze results, plan with colleagues, and more. The NSDC specifically calls for time for:

- Individual lesson planning, review of student work, and preparation of materials
- Team learning 3 – 4 days a week to analyze student work, identify student needs, develop lessons, and reflect on practice
- Weekly school improvement committee meetings to analyze student achievement data, determine goals, plan for professional learning, and review progress on goals
- Whole-school learning once or twice a month to analyze student achievement data, plan goals, and celebrate progress

Educators claim time is the number one barrier to implementing collaborative professional learning. Schools that have succeeded with the issue of time either use currently available time, buy time, or add time. It involves being creative, flexible, and making tradeoffs. Because no single strategy works for all schools, there are a variety of suggestions for ways to use time in the tools below. However, people can be reluctant to change schedules and some schools have experienced backlash from parents and community members when changing the schedule. Below are steps to involve staff, parents, community, and the school board in understanding schedule changes.

1. Form a task force – study possibilities for time and make recommendations
2. Explore current beliefs about time – how do personal beliefs and culture affect thinking about time
3. Analyze current time use – perhaps your school can use existing time -- such as faculty meetings – rather than finding new time
4. Establish and prioritize criteria – what needs to be held sacred: instructional time? a minimum amount of individual planning time?
5. Study other schools' and districts' solutions – **Tools 5.5 through 5.10** have several examples
6. Form recommendations and present these recommendations for input
7. Revise recommendations based on feedback, bring these to the decision-making body, and create an action plan for implementation

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
5.3	Analysis of current time usage with time use log	Questions to answer about how time is currently used for professional development. There is also a time use log to record how non-instructional time is used and whether it is spent alone or in collaboration.
5.5 – 5.10	A variety of articles and lists	Articles describing ways schools and districts have made time for PD, lists of ways to find more time in the schedule, and lists of web resources about finding more time
5.12	Forming a recommendation	A chart for the task force to write their recommendations for time use, goals the changes will accomplish, how goals are tied to student learning, and how the proposal impacts budget, transportation, and other factors.

Sample Reflection Questions

1. Who will be the biggest supporters and the biggest critics of a new time schedule? How can their issues be addressed?
2. How will you gain support from key stakeholders for a new schedule?
3. What obstacles exist in the school/district culture that would hinder efforts to change the schedule?

Chapter 6 – The role of central office

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Central office staff provide resources for school-based, collaborative professional learning. _____

The district comprehensive professional development plan designates schools' use of collaborative professional learning. _____

Central office staff share knowledge, research, and best practices about professional learning with principals and teachers. _____

With collaborative professional learning it is the schools, not the district, that will be responsible for teachers' professional learning. This does *not* mean that the district has less to do. In fact, instead of planning a few district-wide inservice days, now the district will be charged with ensuring there is a comprehensive system of professional learning for every educator to meet the needs in every school. How does the district do this and what exactly are the central office's new responsibilities? They:

1. Build the capacity of school staff to implement professional learning – they make sure schools understand what high-quality professional learning is and train teacher leaders and principals in implementing it (such as how to facilitate learning teams)
2. Provide research and models of best practices for teacher leaders and principals – such as a district resource bank of information
3. Allocate resources – primarily time and financial resources – to support this type of adult learning
4. Coordinate efforts between and among schools
5. Support collaborative professional learning teams by providing help, making district changes in policies, resources, or structures, allowing principals flexibility in their decisions about budgets and schedules, and conducting ongoing walk-throughs and coaching
6. Monitor implementation – hold schools accountable for their professional learning plans and give them ongoing feedback

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
6.1	New role for central office	A 50-minute workshop activity in which district staff read an 8-page article and discuss their new role in supporting schools in implementing collaborative professional learning
6.4	'Letting go' is essential for growth	A 1-page article describing why central offices must "let go" in order for schools and teachers to experience high-quality professional learning on a daily basis. It can be used to begin a conversation about the need for collaborative professional learning.
6.6	School PD plan synthesis	A 1-page template for districts to collect a summary of each school's professional development goals and actions to find communalities among building plans
6.7	Articles from <i>The Learning System</i>	A 30-45 minute workshop activity for district staff to read a 6-page article and discuss <i>how</i> the central office can build capacity among teachers and principals about effective professional learning
6.8	Identifying organizational support	A 45-60 minute workshop activity in which district staff, administrators, and teachers identify the types of supports (such as colleagues, materials, an openness to experimentation, etc.) needed for professional learning

Sample Reflection Questions

1. In what ways does a central office support collaborative professional learning in its schools?
2. What district policies and procedures might need to change to support collaborative professional learning?
3. How does central office engage school leaders in implementing collaborative professional learning?

Chapter 7 – The role of the principal

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

- Our principal demonstrates his/her support for collaborative professional learning.** _____
- Our principal develops teacher leaders' skills in planning school-based professional development.** _____
- Our principal provides regular feedback to teams about their learning plan and progress.** _____

The principal's role is absolutely essential in order for collaborative professional learning to succeed. Without the principal's commitment, involvement, and investment, this innovation can't work. To succeed, principals have ten crucial responsibilities:

1. **Nurture teacher leaders** – Effective principals share leadership. They need to rely on the teachers' expertise.
2. **Identify and provide organizational support** – A lack of support kills new innovations. Principals must supply materials, access to colleagues, time, protection from outside intrusions, recognition of success, an openness to experimentation, and other supports.
3. **Set clear expectations and define results** – Principals must clarify *who* is involved in collaborative professional development, *how many* teams teachers will belong to (grade level team? schoolwide team?), and that the goal is to improve academic success.
4. **Create time for collaborative professional learning in the schedule** – Chapter 5 addresses this.
5. **Provide training and development** – Teachers do not inherently know how to collaborate. Principals must provide opportunities to train teachers in the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate as well as the chance to learn about the *value* of collaborating.
6. **Receive and review team plans** – Principals review each team's plans for professional learning and periodically visit team meetings to learn about their work and offer support.
7. **Give feedback on team actions and results** – Principals review team meeting logs and meet with teams to provide feedback on the work, student achievement results, and members' interactions.
8. **Encourage "out-of-the-box" thinking** – Principals encourage the teams to look outside of the school for expertise. They provide print, human, and electronic resources to introduce new ideas. Principals also create an environment in which risks are encouraged and failures are something to learn from.
9. **Handle resistance** – Resistance is inevitable. Chapter 4 provides suggestions for understanding and handling resistance.
10. **Accept change as a process, not an event** – Principals understand that nothing is perfect right away.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
7.3	Collaborative professional learning team walk-through guide	A checklist principals can use to visit collaborative team meetings to assess team organization, engagement, and work as well as suggestions for providing feedback to the team
7.5	Leadership actions that help teams flourish	Two 1-hour activities. One helps leaders understand strategies to help learning communities and in the other principals create an action plan to help learning communities flourish
7.6	Key learnings for collaborative professional learning teams	A list of skills and knowledge principals need in designing training for teams and team leaders
7.8	In the right context	A 4-page article by Rick DuFour outlining structures principals should put in place to ensure collaborative professional learning succeeds

Sample Reflection Questions

1. How ready are principals to meet the high expectations described in this chapter?
2. What opportunities are available for principals to learn how to lead and facilitate collaborative professional learning?
3. What steps might principals take to build teachers' capacity for leadership so they can share some of these responsibilities?

Chapter 8 – The role of the coach

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Our school has a coach who supports teachers in refining their teaching. _____

Our school coach attends team meetings to support members' learning. _____

In establishing or improving collaborative professional learning, it is helpful to have a coach. There are many different ways a coach can support teacher teams. It doesn't matter if that coach is full- or part-time, or the position is occupied by the principal, a teacher leader, or another leader like a department chair. When schools are just transitioning into collaborative professional learning the coach's role is particularly important in working with *teams* as opposed to individuals. On pages 90-91 there are descriptions of 10 different roles coaches can play and how they can support the work of teacher teams. Below is an excerpt of three such roles:

Roles	Description	Examples of support for collaborative professional learning teams
Data coach	Facilitates access to data and use of that data to plan instruction and assess progress toward team goals	→ Teaches team to analyze data and do root cause analysis → Conducts full-school data conference to examine state test results → Guides teams in using data to write SMART goals to improve learning
Learning facilitator	Facilitates teachers' learning of content and pedagogy and their effectiveness in teams	→ Leads whole-staff training on the cycle of continuous improvement → Uses the book's tools to help staff understand collaborative learning
Catalyst for change	Engages colleagues in change by speaking honestly about student learning and identifies barriers	→ Engages colleagues in dialogue about their beliefs and assumptions → Talks about goals, action plans, and celebrates success to keep vision alive

It is important for the coach to provide the type of assistance that teams need based on what stage of collaborative professional learning they are currently at. Below is an excerpt of an example of how that assistance might differ for a learning facilitator:

Stage	Characteristics	Strategies for coach-as-learning facilitator
Beginner	Has not yet started or is in an early stage of collaborative professional learning	→ Provide training on what collaborative professional learning is → Share research on collaborative professional learning
Novice	Etc.	Etc.
Proficient	Etc.	Etc.
Advanced	Teams use the cycle of continuous improvement, produce student results, and challenge the status quo	→ Video the team in action and debrief the meeting with the team → Facilitate inter-team visitations to learn from other teams

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
8.1	Coaching request form	A form for teams to request different type of coach support such as feedback or training
8.3	Team professional learning plan	A planning guide for coaches to use as they assist teams in achieving their goals
8.4	Lesson planning	Guides coaches in facilitating lesson planning sessions with teams

Sample Reflection Questions

1. What roles that were mentioned in the chapter does our school coach play?
2. In the absence of a coach, who besides the school principal supports the teachers as they improve their instruction?

PART III – STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Chapter 9 – Planning effective professional learning

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

We identify the focus of our professional development by analyzing a variety of student achievement data. _____

Our PD goals are written in SMART goal format and outline improvements in teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices . _____

Despite the fact that 25 years of research says that workshops are *not* effective, they still remain the gold standard of professional development. The solution isn't just to replace workshops with another form of professional development. Instead, we need to take the time to determine students' learning needs and what educators must know and be able to do to address those needs. Below is a 7-step process for planning professional learning called the Backmapping Model for Planning Results-Based Professional Learning. What is different about this approach is that the professional learning is *results-based*: it focuses on improving student learning and achievement. This process is most effective when school, department, or grade-level staff actually analyze the data and plan the professional learning themselves. The 7 steps are outlined below:

Step 1: ANALYZE STUDENT LEARNING NEEDS – *Before* designing professional development it’s important to examine student achievement data to determine where students need improvement. There are 12 specific data questions to ask in the text. It’s important to ask what types of data the school has and how the students performed in as specific terms as possible. It’s not useful to simply note that students were weak in “mathematics.” Teachers need to know the specific knowledge and skills that students lack.

Step 2: IDENTIFY CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY, DISTRICT, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT, AND STAFF – In order to choose an *appropriate* course of action to address student needs, educators must consider characteristics of the students such as mobility levels, family support, and motivation as well as characteristics of the staff (years of experience?), as well as others.

Step 3: DEVELOP IMPROVEMENT GOALS AND SPECIFIC STUDENT OUTCOMES – When creating a goal for professional learning, it should be stated in terms of student results. For example, “100% of the staff will participate in training in brain-based learning” is not a good goal because it does not identify the impact of the PD on student learning. A better goal would be, “In three years 90% of students will read o grade level as a result of teachers learning and implementing new brain-based instructional strategies.” Goals should be as clear and specific as possible (see **Tool 9.3** about writing SMART goals).

Step 4: IDENTIFY TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR LEARNING NEEDS – Rather than asking teachers what they want to learn, it is more effective to determine what they *need* to learn in order to address the student needs identified earlier. Classroom walk-throughs are a useful tools to determine what teachers need to learn.

Step 5: STUDY THE RESEARCH FOR SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS, STRATEGIES, OR INTERVENTIONS – Rather than enthusiastically grabbing onto the first solution, educators should critically review any programs that might address their needs and use research-based evidence in choosing one. NSDC has published a series of *What Works* that looks at the impact on student learning of several professional development initiatives. Or use the questions on p. 103 to help as well.

Step 6: PLAN INTERVENTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION – Before implementing a professional development program/initiative it is important to do some *planning*. What kind of support is needed? What resources? What’s the timeline? Furthermore, planning evaluation *at the same time* as planning implementation will improve the quality of the professional learning. Identify what data will be collected, who will conduct the evaluation, and set a timeline ahead of time. Ask questions such as, “Are the program activities being implemented as planned?” and “Has the learning achieved the intended results?”

Step 7: IMPLEMENT, SUSTAIN, AND EVALUATE THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION – First there needs to be a clear understanding of what high-quality performance looks like. Then, staff development leaders and the principal are responsible for monitoring and making adjustments to the initiative.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
9.1	The numbers game	A 10-step plan describing how to gather and analyze student data to identify needs. Includes sheets to fill out the collected data and a workshop plan for staff to identify PD goals based on student needs from the data
9.3	Work smarter, not harder	Explains SMART goals and gives examples to help teachers develop SMART goals.
9.6	Probing for causes	A one-hour workshop adapted from Senge’s work to get at the underlying reasons for learning problems

Sample Reflection Questions

1. Which of the steps of the backmapping model are you currently using? How can you improve your approach?
2. How many sources of student data do you have for analysis and how comfortable are staff in analyzing it?

Chapter 10 – Using data

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)
In our school, we use data to drive decisions at both the school and classroom levels. _____
Teachers use data almost daily to assess where students are in the learning continuun. _____
Data are displayed throughout the school in classrooms, offices, and faculty rooms. _____

Educators have data all around them but only slowly are they beginning to turn that data into useful information to inform their decisions. Looking at data together as a *team* helps them understand student problems and identify possible causes for those problems. For example, world history teachers analyze student essays and find the students struggle with critical thinking. They identify four key critical thinking skills, decide how to teach these more directly, and use lesson study to develop and refine a model lesson. In order to use data effectively, educators must have a certain set of skills. They must know what data exist and how to access it. Secondly they must know how to analyze that data. Some schools have data conferences or data days to demonstrate how to do this. Finally, they must know how to analyze data regularly (some do this daily) to find student problems and refine instruction.

Types of Data – To identify problems in student learning, teachers should access a wide variety of data. They can look at everything from state tests to benchmark assessments to performance tasks, journals, and more.

Data Analysis Process – Data analysis usually includes steps such as those below and the chapter tools help with these steps:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1. Gather data | 5. Collect additional data | 9. Take action |
| 2. Analyze the data | 6. Analyze and interpret additional data | 10. Collect data |
| 3. Summarize the analysis | 7. Identify a student improvement goal | 11. Repeat the process |
| 4. Brainstorm possible causes | 8. Determine a course of action | |

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
10.1	Data use reflection guide	10 questions to help identify the school’s current data use – what kind of data, how often analyzed etc.?
10.4-5	Data analysis protocols	A series of questions a team can use when looking at student data from classroom or annual assessments
10.7	Fishbone diagram	Data only identify the problems, not the causes for student learning problems. This blank fishbone diagram template and directions help educators identify the possible causes.

Sample Reflection Questions

1. How can we strengthen our use of data?
2. What barriers do we face in analyzing data?

Chapter 11 – Designs for professional learning

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)
Most teacher professional learning occurs during the school day and year. _____
Teachers determine the focus of their professional learning. _____

In collaborative professional learning, teachers decide *how* they will learn to meet their agreed-upon goals. If they have *multiple designs* for professional learning to choose from, the process will be more effective. Skeptics of professional learning don’t believe that it can replace traditional professional development and often call it “shared ignorance” among those collaborating. However, collaborative professional learning, using the designs below, helps teachers deepen both their content and pedagogical knowledge. Learning teams set goals based on the needs of their own students and then create an action plan to accomplish those goals. The action plan defines the professional learning that will take place and answers the questions, “What do teachers need to know and do for students to achieve the established goals?” and “How will we as a team design our collaborative learning to meet our goals?” Teachers then explore a variety of professional learning designs, described below, to decide *how* they will learn. Note that the collaborative professional learning designs listed below are *part* of the school’s comprehensive professional development program which may be supplemented by outside experts, conferences, or other types of learning.

Determine Scope and Sequence – Team members learn a great deal when they analyze standards and the district curriculum to determine what content knowledge and skills students must learn in each grade. **Tool 11.1** helps with this.

Use Common Assessments – Another way teacher teams learn is by developing, administering, and scoring common assessments. They learn how other teachers teach and assess their students, determine what good work looks like, develop a better understanding of the standards, and more. When teachers meet together to review assessment results and make instructional and curricular changes based on the data, they can learn instructional strategies from the teachers whose students scored better.

Examine Student Work – A third way teachers can learn a tremendous amount is by looking at student work *together*. To do this, teachers bring samples of student work to a meeting and use a discussion guide (see tools below) to discuss the sample. Doing this helps them improve their understanding of how their students are learning and how colleagues structure assignments.

Two other professional learning designs include **action research** and **lesson study** (**Tools 11.8** and **11.9** describe these). When teams are just forming, it is better to use more structured professional designs. However, as the team becomes more comfortable with collaboration, they can use designs that allow for more critical feedback.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
11.1	Peeling a standard	Helps a team take apart a content standard to identify the skills and knowledge students must learn
11.2	Common assessment planning	A 1-page planning tool for a group to use to plan for creating a common assessment
11.4	Group wise: Strategies for examining student work together	Shows teams of teachers several strategies to use when examining student work as a group
11.6, 11.7	Protocols	Two protocols – structures to guide discussion – which help teams discuss student work productively. One is the Descriptive Review Protocol and the other is the Collaborative Assessment Conference
11.12	Selecting the design that works with context and content	An overview of various designs for professional learning (from action research and classroom walk-throughs to mentoring and using video). Also includes criteria for selecting designs.

Sample Reflection Questions

1. How will the school leadership team help teachers learn about various designs for professional learning?
2. Of the designs discussed in this chapter, which are most appropriate for accomplishing our team’s learning goals?

Chapter 12 – Facilitating collaborative professional learning teams

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)
Teachers use structures and processes to make their collaborative learning teams efficient and productive. _____
Teams have strategies for resolving conflict that occurs among team members. _____

Collaborative professional learning does not occur by chance. Instead, it requires planning and commitment. Teams commit to working together to achieve a common goal and establish systems to make sure the team is efficient and effective. Teams do this by:

Identifying roles and responsibilities – Assigning roles to team members provides structure to help teams succeed. The most common roles are team member, facilitator, recorder, and timekeeper.

Establishing agreements and setting norms – An important contributor to a team’s success is whether they take time, early on, to set norms for member behavior. Often these agreements focus on time (starting on time), location (where to meet), communication processes (how to listen, how to challenge each other), responsibilities, and decision making (what constitutes a majority decision).

Sharing leadership – Early on it helps to have a strong facilitator to help members develop leadership and collaboration skills. Over time this leadership becomes shared.

Creating and maintaining a sense of team – At first, a team is just a collection of individuals who prioritize their own interests and needs above all. Soon conflict inevitably arises and if the team is unfamiliar with the stages of team development or has no skills in resolving conflicts, they will just choose to leave the team. It takes time for a group of individuals to become a team and it helps if the team is aware of common stages in team development: forming, storming, norming, and finally performing (see **Tool 12.3**). They also need tips for resolving conflict (see **Tool 12.7**). It also helps for the team to get regular feedback on how they are functioning. They can spend a few minutes at the end of each meeting to assess their own functioning. Teams that understand the stages of team development and know how to handle conflicts smoothly will reach the performing stage more quickly.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
12.1	Protocol for developing agreements	To help teams develop their own list of norms, this tool provides a sample list of norms for how teams should function such as: be open and honest and listen to each others’ perspectives.
12.2	Building effective teams	A survey to help team members assess the strengths and weaknesses of the team.
12.3 – 12.4	Transform your group into a team	A 3-page article describing the 4 stages of team development – forming, storming, norming, and performing. Also included is a survey to determine which stage your team is in.
12.5	Becoming a productive team	A 1-page list of suggestions for teams at each of the 4 stages of development (forming, storming, etc.)
12.7	Articles on conflict resolution	Resources on conflict, including suggestions for resolving conflict, a survey to help individuals handle conflict, a checklist for resolving conflict, and a tool to identify positions and interests of each member

Sample Reflection Questions

1. What stages of development characterize most teams at our school?
2. How has conflict enhanced or derailed a team you have served on?
3. What skills and knowledge do you have to facilitate a team?

Chapter 13 – Team planning and reporting

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)
We include time in all schoolwide meetings to discuss what collaborative professional learning teams are doing. _____
Structures exist within our school to make it possible for teams to learn from what other teams are studying. _____

Collaborative teams may end up creating a new type of isolation within schools. However, if they *plan* what they are doing and *report* what they are learning to other teams, this creates a schoolwide culture of collaboration and responsibility for high-quality instruction and student achievement. Leaders can establish planning and reporting *processes* to increase this collaboration.

Processes to help with TEAM PLANNING

1. *Action Plans* – After teams analyze student data, set goals, and identify strategies for collaboration, then they need to develop a plan of action. An action plan is a road map with a timeline and may include – goals, tasks, indicators of accomplishment, who’s responsible, timeline, and resources requested. Principals receive a copy of the plan and provide feedback. It is vital that the principal look for commonalities and encourage teams to share ideas. They might consider posting a copy in the staff lounge or the web site.
2. *Meeting Agendas* – Preparing an agenda keeps the team organized. It might include the date, time, location of the meeting as well as the meeting purpose and actions to take (such as report student scores on the math assessment), and a time assigned for each action.

Processes to help with TEAM REPORTING

1. *Team logs* – Creating a brief log or summary at the end of each meeting is a way to keep other teams informed about the progress, challenges, and needed resources of each team. It's best to take the last few minutes of a meeting to note who's there, date and time, topics addressed, summary comments, and resources needed.

2. *Sharing* – Below are some suggestions for ways teams can share their work with other teams:

- Fishbowl: Have one team model a sample meeting in the middle of the room while others sit on chairs outside the circle to observe. Afterwards, observers and participants share observations and feedback.
- Team Intervisitation: Invite others to observe actual team meetings in action to help teachers learn how other teams operate.
- Team Walk-Throughs: Have three to five people do short visits to several teams and take notes to share observations after.
- Videotaped Presentations: Teams can video one of their meetings and share this at a full faculty meeting.
- Facilitator Meetings: The facilitators of each team meet to share ideas, agendas, professional learning, and challenges. Sometimes at these meetings facilitators learn a new protocol or learning design and bring these back to their own teams.

Without interacting frequently, teams become isolated and lose track of schoolwide goals. While time is a scarce resource, it is important for leaders to make time for sharing among teams.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
13.1 & 13.2	Sample team plan and blank template	A sample plan shows how a team organizes its work (data analyzed, goals, tasks to improve student learning, etc.). It is also a concise summary that can be shared. There is a blank template of the plan.
13.4	Team agenda template	A blank template for an agenda for a team plan
13.5	Team summary report template	A blank template for creating a summary of a team meeting

Sample Reflection Questions

1. How would you assess your school's current cross-team interaction?
2. How are current planning and reporting tools used in your school to support the work of teams?

Chapter 14 – Evaluating collaborative professional learning

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (Teachers enter STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NO OPINION, DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.)

Collaborative professional learning teams use evidence to evaluate the impact of their work. _____

Members of collaborative professional learning teams assess their team's productivity and efficiency. _____

In order to improve, teams need to regularly evaluate their work. Traditionally, staff development was considered successful if teachers enjoyed it. Today we consider it successful if it impacts teaching and learning. It doesn't require an academic research study to determine if teams are meeting their goals. The CD provides a number of tools for assessing each team's work. Teams usually conduct two types of evaluations. Formative evaluations help assess the team's efficiency and whether they've met initial goals while summative evaluations help determine whether teaching quality and learning have improved. In order to do this, it must be clear what outcomes are to be measured. Below is an excerpt of a model to use to identify what formative outcomes might look like:

Inputs/resources	Actions	Initial outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Results
Support from district language arts specialist to design units	Design 3 common instructional units for ideas and organization to use between Oct. and Febr.	Teachers use units in their classrooms.	Students practice applying ideas and organization in writing assignments in all content areas.	20% increase in student scores on state writing in 2 years
Cooperation of science and social studies teachers to embed the use of ideas, organization, and conventions in their writing scoring tools	Develop daily practice activities for language conventions.	Students complete daily activity to practice language conventions.	Students demonstrate increased accuracy in use of language conventions in both oral and written language.	
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	

A number of the tools provide surveys and models for assessing the efficiency and productivity of a team's actions and methods for compiling those results and discussing them. To determine if a team has met a goal in the end, sometimes it is too late to wait for state assessment results as a form of summative assessment. Instead, many teams use common assessments as a measure of student achievement. The tools and surveys on the CD are just examples; they can be adjusted for different schools.

TOOL	TITLE	EXPLANATION
14.4	Protocol to discuss survey results	A list of discussion questions to help a team look at the results of a survey about their effectiveness
14.7	Learning team survey	A survey in which each team member gets to assess (on a scale of 1-5) the effectiveness of the team
14.9	Professional learning communities: Getting started	A survey on the early implementation of collaborative professional learning teams

Sample Reflection Questions

1. Given our school's involvement in collaborative professional learning, what kind of evaluation best suits our needs?
2. What do we hope to learn about our work from our evaluation?