

Tools for Quality Practice: Professional Development



A Framework for School-Focused Professional Development

Why use this section?

- To understand the link between professional learning and student achievement
- To use research-based practices that help all staff reach all students
- To help each school understand that changes in practice occur at the school level.
- To build a strong network of instructional expertise among teachers and principals.
- To use a framework for easier planning, implementation, and evaluation of school-focused professional development.

Where have we come from?

During the past twenty years staff development has gone by many names, including in-service education, staff development, professional development, or human resource development. No matter what it was called, it was too often the same thing: educators (usually teachers) listening passively while an “expert” “exposed” them to new ideas or “trained” them in new practices. The success was usually measured by a “happiness quotient” that measured participants’ satisfaction. Fortunately much of this is changing.

Every year, many research studies, reports, articles, and books are published with the good intention of improving the quality of professional learning within schools. A special research study was conducted within Kansas in the fall of 2003. This study was an initiative of Kansas Learning First Alliance (KLFA) and coordinated through the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). That full report, *Kansas Learning First Alliance Study of the Impact on Student Achievement of Quality Professional Development. Phase I: Challenge and Comparison School, Professional Development Survey Results*, can be found in the Planning and Research Documents section on the KSDE website (<http://www.ksde.org/pre/documents.html>)

Unfortunately, even with significant information about quality professional development available, limited progress has been made both in changing professional development programs and in influencing the work of teachers in their classrooms. The lack of high-quality professional development for teachers is a major factor cited for the failure of past school reforms. In the absence of substantial professional development, many teachers return to traditional methods of teaching. There are exceptions of course, but all too often, professional

development is also like it has been in the past: unfocused, insufficient, not tied to student performance needs, and lacking in follow-up. States cannot improve schools through mandating high standards and high stakes tests unless they provide teachers the tools, support, and training to help them change their practice.

Quality teaching in all classrooms and skillful leadership in all schools will not occur by accident. Tinkering around the edges of improvement is insufficient. The National Staff Development Council has set the goal, **“All teachers in all schools will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work by 2007.”** How can this goal be achieved in Kansas? What do we need to know and do?

This resource will include five common “themes” based on the twelve NSDC research-based standards, beliefs, observable actions, questions to discuss and examples of school-focused quality professional development.

THE FIVE THEMES:

THEME 1: DETERMINE DATA-DRIVEN ADULT LEARNING PRIORITIES

NSDC Standards: Data-driven and Evaluation

We believe:

- Achievement gaps are evident among populations of students in Kansas schools.
- High quality professional learning for Kansas educators is a critical factor leading to increased student learning and closing achievement gaps.

Actions Related to Standards: NSDC standards rely on the use of a variety of data and ongoing evaluations.

- Use aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data as the focus for staff development efforts included in school improvement plan
- Identify learning needs for staff and create short and long-term goals.
- Use research to design interventions for teachers to impact student achievement.
- Evaluate the impact of staff development programs using a variety of data.
- Provide a variety of follow-up activities to enhance knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors.
- Use formative and summative evaluation to measure impact of school-based staff development.
- Use a variety of data sources to conduct evaluations.

Questions for discussion:

- Who is involved in data analysis and how does it impact the school improvement plan?
- How is the disaggregated data used ?
- How is the data communicated to board/community?
- What data is available to evaluate effectiveness of professional development?

Examples of data-driven adult learning priorities.

- School staff work collaboratively by grade levels or teams to analyze their own data to drive future planning and instruction.
- All educators are provided ongoing assistance to develop new skills.
- Principals and staff ask questions such as, “What impact did this professional development have on the adult and student learning/” as opposed to, “Did the teachers like the training?”

Additional Research and Resources:

Bernhardt, Victoria L., Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement Second Edition (1998) Eye on Education, Larchmont, New York. With clear and concrete examples from elementary and high schools, this book shows how to effectively gather, analyze, and use data to improve student learning. It demonstrates how to make better decisions, identify root causes of problems, and communicate and report results.

www.eyeoneducation.com/Merchant2/merchant.mv?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=st104&Product_Code=1-930556-74-8

Guskey, Thomas R., Evaluating Professional Development (2000) Corwin Press, Larchmont, New York. Address the two challenges of evaluating the quality of staff development and the types of evidence of effectiveness that policymakers and school leaders require to judge improvements in student achievement.

www.corwinpress.com

Holcomb, Edie L. Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion, and Proof. (1999) Corwin Press, Inc.

www.corwinpress.com

Killion, Joellen, Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development (2002) NSDC. This resource guide will assist schools, district-level staff development leaders, and other program coordinators to plan and conduct evaluations of their staff development programs. Learn how planning influences the quality of the evaluation, how to plan and conduct practitioner-based evaluations designed to focus on results for students and improve staff development programs, how to increase the usability of evaluations, how to build the capacity of program stakeholders to adopt "evaluation think", and how the role of various stakeholders relates to the evaluation of staff development.

store.nsd.org/merchant.mv?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=NRC&Product_Code=B164&Category_Code=ESD

Killion, Joellen with Linda Munger, Patricia Roy, & Parker McMullen, Training Manual for Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development, (2003)

Companion to Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development

store.nsd.org/merchant.mv?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=NRC&Product_Code=B222

What Works in Schools: Why do students perform the way they do? (2005) ASCD The What Works in Schools Online Survey asks teachers and administrators to create a profile of how their school or district addresses the factors that influence student achievement.

www.whatworksinschools.org/ and www.whatworksinschools.org/research.cfm

Staff Development Library, National Staff Development Council, 2005 This library contains articles that originally appeared in one of the NSDC publications, Results, Tools for Schools or the JSD, related to all areas of high quality staff development.

<http://www.nsd.org/library/>

The Knowledge Loom, developed by the LAB at Brown University, *Principles of Practice for Successful Professional Development* (2005) Many factors contribute to an effective and successful professional development program. The following 8 principles of effective professional development are among those identified from the findings of recent research and reports of expert opinion. These 8 principles focus attention on professional development strategies for improving students' learning over time.

<http://knowledgeloom.org/practices3.jsp?location=1&bpinterid=1034&spotlightid=1034&practicelisttype=1>

THEME 2: CREATE JOB EMBEDDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

NSDC Standards: Design and Learning

We believe:

- Only a small portion of what is known about quality staff development is regularly used in schools.
- Powerful professional development engages all teachers in sustained, intellectually-rigorous study of what they teach and how they teach it.

Actions Related to Standards: NSDC standards reflect the importance of understanding learning styles and designing strategies to reach intended goals.

- Provide on-going, in-depth and sustained professional learning opportunities as a regular part of the school day.
- Understand and apply knowledge about the change process when planning and implementing professional learning.
- Provide a variety of professional learning strategies to achieve school improvement goals and support individual/staff learning.
- Establish goals for implementation of new classroom practices.
- Design learning experiences using strategies that mirror what teachers should do.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to practice new skills and receive feedback.
- Use feedback from individuals' reflections of staff development activities when designing interventions and follow-up activities.

Questions for discussion:

- How are professional development experiences designed for staff at all stages of learning?
- Explain how participants' feedback about staff development activities is taken into consideration when designing interventions and follow-up activities.
- Are staff development designs aligned with expected outcomes?
- Describe the sustainability of staff development initiatives over time throughout the building/district?
- How is job embedded learning supported by the use of appropriate technology?

Examples of effective job imbedded learning opportunities:

- Teachers and administrators are engaged in professional learning that is standards-focused, intellectually rigorous and part of their daily work.
- Teams of educators, grouped by grade level, content area or mixed levels, meet regularly to plan lessons, critique student work, and collaborate to solve important problems related to teaching and learning.
- Teachers are engaged in reflective practice to monitor progress toward learning goals.

Additional Research and Resources:

Easton, Lois Brown, Editor, [Powerful Designs for Professional Learning](#) (2003) NSDC. Written by educators who have successfully done this work, each chapter describes how one of the 21 significant learning strategies works in practice, a rationale for its use, the steps involved in introducing and using the strategy, and a list of resources for more information. Among the 21 strategies are action research, lesson study, data analysis, study groups, walk-throughs, peer coaching, curriculum design, and tuning protocols. Includes a CD-ROM with more than 150 handouts in PDF format can be converted into transparencies, imported into PowerPoint presentations, or copied for other uses.

http://store.nsd.org/merchant.mv?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=NRC&Product_Code=B248

Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards into Practice: Innovaton Configurations, National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (2003).

www.nsd.org

Professional Development. (2005), NCREL, Learning Point Associates. This content is designed for school and district-level teachers, administrators, and others interested in improving professional development. It includes a comprehensive view of professional development and links to a variety of professional development tools.

www.ncrel.org/info/pd/

Staff Development Library, National Staff Development Council, 2005 This library contains articles that originally appeared in one of the NSDC publications, [Results](#), [Tools for Schools](#) or the [JSD](#), related to all areas of high quality staff development.

www.nsd.org/library/

By Your Own Design. Find everything you need to support your professional development. Create your learning plan, read the standards, and find tips for getting grants, Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education (ENC) and the National Staff Development Council (NSDC)

www.enc.org/professional/?ls=sn

This planning tool is based on *By Your Own Design*, a web site and CD-ROM developed by the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education (ENC) and the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). You will find a wealth of resources, additional planning tools, and all the materials included on the CDROM at (www.enc.org/pdguide). To order copies of the CD-ROM, visit the NSDC bookstore at (www.nsd.org).

Turner, Laura, *20 Technology Skills Every Educator Should Have*, T.H.E. (Technological Horizons in Education) Institute (2005) A Comprehensive listing of the technology skills that every educator should have with websites to support the learning of the skills!

<http://thejournal.com/magazine/vault/A5387.cfm>

Research-Based Innovations, McREL (2000). A source book of short readings to support discussion of varied topics including: Comprehensive Design, Resource Allocation, Evaluation, Professional Development, Staff Support, Family and Community Involvement, and External Support and Assistance.

<http://www.mcrel.org/topics/productDetail.asp?productID=130>

Teaching Teachers: Professional Development To Improve Student Achievement, Research Points, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Summer 2005, volume 3, Issue 1. Good teachers form the foundation of good schools, and improving teachers' skills and knowledge is one of the most important investments of time and money that local, state, and national leaders make in education. <http://www.aera.net/>

The Science of Quality, Education Research in School Reform, NorthWest Regional Educational Laboratory, NWREL, A wide range of materials relating to teaching quality.

<http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/09-04/>

THEME 3: CONTENT-FOCUSED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

NSDC Standards: Research and Quality Teaching

We believe:

- The professional learning of teachers is a central factor in determining the quality of instruction in classrooms.
- Expanding teachers' repertoire of instructional practices assists them in meeting diverse learning needs of their students.
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Actions Related to Standards: NSDC standards reflect the importance of understanding learning styles and designing strategies to reach intended goals.

- Develop staff capacity to analyze research that supports school-wide instructional decisions.
- Examine research before adopting improvement strategies.
- Structure learning so educators increase their knowledge, content-specific pedagogy and developmental appropriateness.
- Use a variety of classroom assessments as a high priority within the school.
- Incorporate training on assessment skills to effectively monitor gains in student learning.
- Assess changes in student performance related to professional development.

Questions for discussion:

- How are research-based strategies used to make instructional decisions?
- Who is involved in reading and interpreting the research?
- What resources are you using to access and select research-based programs and best practices?
- How do you help staff have a deep understanding of subject matter and how can they deliver instruction in a variety of ways to reach all students?
- How do staff monitor progress on the state standards?

Examples:

- Staff are provided opportunities to expand their repertoire of research-based instructional skills for content teaching.
- Teachers focus their learning on content knowledge and pedagogical skills.
- Administrators and teachers use data from multiple assessments to monitor the progress of their efforts and student achievement.

Additional Research and Resources:

Teacher Quality, Research shows that good teaching matters. Research Center, edweek.org, (2005) Editorial Projects in Education <http://www.edweek.org/rc/issues/teacher-quality/>

Staff Development Library, National Staff Development Council, 2005 This library contains articles that originally appeared in one of the NSDC publications, [Results](#), [Tools for Schools](#) or the [JSD](#), related to all areas of high quality staff development. <http://www.nsd.org/library/>

By Your Own Design., Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education (ENC) and the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Find everything you need to support your professional development. Create your learning plan, read the standards, and find tips for getting grants <http://www.enc.org/professional/?ls=sn>

Killion, Joellen, [What Works in the Elementary School](#) (2002) NSDC and NEA

Killion, Joellen, [What Works in the Middle School](#) (1999) NSDC

Killion, Joellen, [What Works in the High School](#) (2002) NSDC and NEA

This series shows that well-designed staff development with appropriate content and powerful processes for adult learning can lead to improvement in student learning. It addresses Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Interdisciplinary content at each level and provides support for teams decision making processes. www.nsd.org

Marzano, Robert, [What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action](#) (2003) ASCD, Focuses on the 11 factors that have a significant effect of student achievement and outlines action steps for schools to improve their standing in each area. Online survey available to assess current practice in schools and additional professional development. www.ascd.org and click on Programs.

Rosenshine, Barak, *Advances in Research on Instruction*, University of Illinois at Urbana (1996) Scholarly look at effective instruction. <http://epaa.asu.edu/barak/barak.html>

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality seeks to contribute to and synthesize research findings related to teacher development and its relationship to the profession and improved student achievement. A wide range of articles is available at this site. <http://www.teachingquality.org/research/research.htm>

Stiggins, Richard J., [Student-Involved Classroom Assessment](#), Third Edition (2001) Merrill Prentice-Hall, New Jersey. Designing classroom assessments that support student learning and motivation. www.prenhall.com/stiggins

Viadero, Debra, *Pressure Builds for Effective Staff Training: Teachers' on-the-job learning seen as path to greater student gains.* Education Week, July 27, 2005. <http://www.edweek.org/>

THEME 4: LEARNING COMMUNITIES

NSDC Standards: Leadership, Learning Communities, Collaboration

We believe:

- Improving the quality of professional learning in Kansas schools focuses on learning not teaching, working collaboratively and holding everyone accountable for results.
- Successful professional learning communities have at their core collegiality, reflection, risk-taking and collaborative problem solving.

Actions Related to Standards: NSDC standards reflect the importance of learning communities whose goals align with those of school and district and requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.

- Create and maintain a collaborative school culture that supports continuous improvement and ongoing learning for staff and students.
- Work with a community of learners that continuously improve instruction and assessment to meet the needs of individual students.
- Utilize learning teams to monitor progress in meeting school and district goals.
- Create experiences and provide training and support for teachers to serve as instructional leaders within the school.
- Identify the knowledge and skills needed by the Leadership Team to become leaders in professional development.
- Involve the faculty in planning and implementing high quality professional learning for the school.
- Support a collegial school culture characterized by collective responsibility for student learning.
- Promote a culture where group members can recognize and manage conflict.

Questions for discussion:

- How does the work schedule support professional learning?
- How do we collaborate and who is participating?
- What incentives are implemented to reward accomplishments of the teams?
- How are staff encouraged to take leadership positions?
- Who articulates the intended results of staff development programs?
- Who is involved in the planning?
- How is quality professional development modeled in your building/district?
- How are staff collectively responsible for a culture of learning?
- What experiences does the district provide for staff to learn how to work successfully with colleagues?

Examples:

- Groups of teachers meet regularly to improve their craft.
- Educators are engaged in collegial sharing of new ideas, practices and the results of their efforts.
- Team members accept collective responsibility for the academic achievement of all students.
- Teachers use a variety of protocols to examine student learning.

Additional Research and Resources:

Borders, Denise Glyn, “Veteran teachers: The Linchpin of school reform”, October 6, 2004, Education Week Using Veteran teachers in collaboration, particularly coaching and teaming, self-assessment, and use of technology.

www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=Borders.h24

DuFour, Richard – personal website and links to work on building professional learning communities.

www4.district125.k12.il.us/faculty/rdufour/

Lambert, Linda, Building Leadership Capacity in Schools (2002) ASCD. Leadership involves far more than a single leader. Lambert defines leadership as the learning processes among participants in a community--processes that lead toward a shared sense of purpose.

shop.ascd.org/productdisplay.cfm?productid=198058

Lambert, Linda, Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement (2003) ASCD. When schools are being hit with staff turnover, budget cuts, and changing priorities, how do you ensure that improvements stick, educators keep learning, and student performance continues to advance and explains how to sustain a learning community where everyone takes ownership of improvement efforts and acts with a shared sense of purpose. Use the charts and action steps to analyze your school’s leadership capacity, spot the participation patterns in your community, and identify new professional development opportunities for building leadership.

shop.ascd.org/ProductDisplay.cfm?ProductID=102283

Waters, Tim, Robert J. Marzano, & Brian McNulty Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us about the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement (2004) McREL. Research report detailing the outcomes of a meta-analysis of research on the effects of principal leadership practices on student achievement

mrel.org/topics/productDetail.asp?topicsID=7&productID=144

McREL A number of researched papers on effective leadership.

mrel.org/topics/topics.asp?topicsid=7

Effective professional development is seen as increasingly vital to school success and teacher satisfaction. *Professional Development*, Research Center, edweek.org, 2005 Education Projects in Education.

www.edweek.org/rc/issues/professional-development/

Staff Development Library, NSDC, 2005 This library contains articles that originally appeared in one of the NSDC publications, *Results*, *Tools for Schools* or the *JSD*, related to all areas of high quality staff development. <http://www.nsd.org/library/>

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www.enc.org/professional/?ls=sn

Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools (2003). The report outlines lessons from five high poverty districts with a record of increasing student achievement. The report identifies a set of practical steps that schools and districts can take to move beyond a few excellent schools to success across entire systems.

www.learningfirst.org/publications/districts/

Beyond Islands of Excellence – A Leadership Brief (2003) The Brief is geared to district leaders and policymakers and highlights key finds and recommendations from the complete Beyond Islands of Excellence study.

www.learningfirst.org/publications/districts/

Breaking Ranks II, National Association of Secondary School Principals (2005) Downloadable resources to support the high school reform model of Breaking Ranks II.

www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=706&DID=49788

THEME 5: SYSTEMIC CHANGE

NSDC Standards: Resources, Equity and Family Involvement, Leadership

We believe:

- Changes in the system drive changes in the culture of the school and the community.
- Deep changes in practices & school structures need to be initiated, applied, and assessed for sustainability if ambitious goals for both student and adult learning are to be achieved.
- Improving student learning requires an ongoing system that initiates, implements, assesses and sustains significant changes in the educational environment.

Actions related to Standards: NSDC standards reflect professional development that sets high expectations for student achievement, involves families, and is supported by required resources.

- Create school wide practices that convey respect for students, families and diverse backgrounds.
- Establish a safe school environment that communicates high expectations for all staff and students.
- Adjust instruction and assessment to match the needs of individual students.
- Align time, structures, personnel, and materials to support professional growth.
- Allocate money and provide incentives to support quality professional development.
- Prepare teachers to create relationships with families to support student learning.

Questions to discuss:

- How does staff communicate that academic excellence is prized for all students?
- How does the district provide experiences for staff to develop skills and knowledge related to educational equity?
- How might we get access to a clearinghouse of best practice options to address educational equity?
- What are some of the methods used by the school/district to develop partnerships amongst staff, families and community stakeholders?
- In your district/school, who articulates the intended results of staff development programs?
- What are some of the external and internal supports available that are related to the chosen learning priorities?
- How are staff development participants' concerns taken into consideration when learning a new teaching practice?
- How are professional development resources allocated to buildings?
- How are all staff (certified/classified) involved in professional development activities?
- In what ways does your district seek outside funding for staff development?

Examples:

- Teachers are an integral part of analyzing, planning, and evaluating all school improvement efforts.
- School leaders understand systems; change efforts are aligned.
- Principals keep schools focused on student improvement issues.
- School leaders from all levels of the organization make a significant difference toward improvement through their actions and participation in professional development.
- The staff involves parents and the broader community in discussions and activities related to educational concerns and follows with actions based on the discussions or activities.

Additional Research and Resources:***Change processes:***

Wheatley, Margaret J. and Geoff Crinean, “Solving, not attacking, complex problems a five-state approach based on an ancient practice”, RESULTS, Feb. 2005, NSDC, p. 4. Available online at www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/solvingnotattacking.html

All Students Reaching the Top: Strategies for Closing Academic Achievement Gaps, *A Report of the National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability*, 2004, NCREL www.ncrel.org/gap/studies/thetop.htm

Staff Development Library, National Staff Development Council, 2005 This library contains articles that originally appeared in one of the NSDC publications, [Results](#), [Tools for Schools](#) or the [JSD](#), related to all areas of high quality staff development. www.nsd.org/library/

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Richardson, Joan, From the Inside Out: Learning from the positive deviance in your organization, (2004) National Staff Development Council (NSDC) A look at the commonalities in a sampling of high achieving schools. www.nsd.org

Leadership Development in system change:

Leadership Folio Series: Guiding Comprehensive School Reform, McREL (2000) Folio series designed to assist school leaders in initiating comprehensive school reform www.mcrel.org/topics/productDetail.asp?productID=130

Leaving a Legacy a leadership development conference, provides video-clips of discussions from the conference.

gatesfoundation.org/nr/public/media/education/statechallenge/event.htm

There is wide recognition that school leaders exert a powerful, if indirect, influence on teaching quality and student learning. *Leadership*, Research Center, edweek.org, 2005 Editorial Projects in Education.

www.edweek.org/rc/issues/leadership/

Fullan, Michael, *Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action*, 2005, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, California, www.corwinpress.com

Second-order changes identified in leadership. New research has identified 11 school leadership “responsibilities” that appear to be essential for guiding difficult changes in schools. *Balanced Leadership*, (2005) McREL.

www.mcrel.org/newsroom/second_order_changes.asp, April 14, 2005

Leithwood, Kenneth, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson and Kyla Walstrom, “How leadership influences student learning” a review of research from the Learning from Leadership Project. www.wallacefoundation.org under Educational.

Note: This document, “Tools for Quality Practice: A Resource Guide for School Improvement” was developed by the Kansas Learning First Alliance. All seven parts of this resource library are available on the web at www.teachkansas.org.