

# 1

## Getting Ready to Champion Professional Development

*In This Chapter ...*

- ◆ Professional Development Is Learning
  - ◆ Bring Out the Best in Teachers
  - ◆ Effective Professional Development Supports Student and Teacher Learning
  - ◆ Focusing on Student Work as Professional Development
  - ◆ Lesson Learned from the Research on Professional Development
  - ◆ Linking Professionalism and Teacher Quality to Professional Development
  - ◆ Examining Standards to Frame Professional Development
  - ◆ Federal Legislation—No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—and Professional Development
  - ◆ Professional Development Is School Improvement
  - ◆ National Staff Development Council—The Standard-Bearer for Professional Development
  - ◆ Organization of This Book
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### **Professional Development Is Learning**

The primary ideas promoted in this book resonate with what Tienken and Stonaker (2007) so aptly share, “every day is a professional development day” (p. 24). For principals and other leaders, the direction is clear: schools that succeed are schools in which every participant is a learner. Atrophy and stagnation begin where growth ceases. Although no principal can “do it all,”

the principal is the *point of convergence* for all that the school is and does. The principal sets the tenor in all facets of the school. Students, teachers, and staff reflect the direction and motivation demonstrated by the principal, and Darling-Hammond (2003) shares “Great school leaders create nurturing school environments in which accomplished teaching can flourish and grow” (p. 13).

This book is for leaders who support and promote professional learning and development for and with teachers. Many people at the site and district levels promote professional development. Although not exhaustive at the site level, this list of professionals includes teachers, principals, assistant principals, grade-level leaders, team leaders, department chairs, mentors, and instructional and subject-specific coaches. There are personnel whose titles at the central office are just as diverse but whose primary work support professional development and learning. Given the subject matter in this book, all of these titles can be used interchangeably. The message is that professional development is an inclusive, highly collaborative adventure in which a variety of site-based and central office personnel provides the leadership, imagination, support, and mechanisms to help school personnel grow. As a learning tool, this book serves as a roadmap to a never-ending but fruitful journey.

In *Professional Development: What Works*, the reader is led through the necessary ingredients to promote teacher growth and development. This book assists principals and other school leaders in understanding several key concepts that support learning. Attending to professional learning is more than just arranging for professional development to occur on certain days. That type of professional development is counterproductive to what we know about how teachers learn. Moller and Pankake (2006) aptly state:

Professional learning models are tools to be used, but the real learning happens in the cycle of conversations, actions, evaluation, and new actions that is supported through intentional leadership that gently pressures and nurtures teachers. This inquiry process must be organizationally embedded rather than externally imposed to build teachers’ knowledge and skills or increase human capital, within the school’s social networks. (pp. 128–129)

It is this gentle pressure along with nurture, affirmation, and support that teachers will champion learning from each other, themselves, and the children they teach.

Effective professional development is learning at the site from the work teachers do. More importantly, however, effective professional development occurs in the company of others who support, encourage, and learn along in partnership. Professional development today is much different from yester-

day. The stakes are higher, accountability has led to frenetic methods to find the magic bullet, and often teachers and administrators are looking for answers to bigger-than-life questions related to school improvement, issues of diversity, and student achievement and performance on standardized tests. Principals need hope; they need to see that there is a way to deal with change; and they need to understand that their response to change sets the tempo for how others will respond to change.

The issues and challenges that school leaders and teachers face can be vexing, trying even the most patient and optimistic. The way that schools can thrive and go beyond the status quo is to challenge the status quo by supporting each other, by finding creative solutions, and by creating a forum for teachers to learn from each other—everyday. The principal is called to the challenge to cast a safety net in which teachers can learn from their work and conversations. Principals who accept this challenge become the warriors championing professional development and learning as the primary arsenal. Teachers and students will become the benefactors of these efforts. Leading and learning to promote growth and development will be a tremendous journey for you and your faculty and staff. I am glad you are here with a boarding pass for the nuggets of information in this book, *Professional Development: What Works*.

## **Bring Out the Best in Teachers**

Teachers grow, evolve, and emerge as professionals through the long-term and day-to-day work they do, and that is why job-embedded learning opportunities need to be the focal point of all professional development efforts.

### **Build a Culture to Support Professional Learning**

Tienken and Stonaker (2007) report the research that helped their school system change the culture in which professional learning opportunities were offered. They share:

- ◆ Teachers learn best outside of the constraints of large-group workshops.
- ◆ Participants in professional learning activities should demonstrate mutual respect.
- ◆ Learning is an outcome of personal interactions.
- ◆ Teachers are motivated by participating in a community of learners where knowledge is created and shared among its members.

- ◆ Small groups facilitate communication and learning. (p. 25)

## **Supportive Cultures Increase Efficacy**

Ferguson (2006) designed the *Effective Professional Development Framework* that details how people are more likely to be ambitious and industrious when five conditions are satisfied. These five conditions are critical to support a culture that engenders professional development and learning. The five conditions are:

1. Success seems feasible on goals that are clearly defined;
2. The goals seem important;
3. The experience is enjoyable;
4. Supervisors are both encouraging and insistent;
5. Peers are supportive. (Ferguson, 2006, p. 52)

These conditions parallel what we know about effective professional development and center on the core of what people need to feel successful while they are learning.

## ***Feasibility***

Just like the traveler on a long journey, teachers want a clear road map to be able to arrive at the final destination. Although there are often bumps in the road, travelers with a map and compass arrive safely at the destination. Although professional development is learning and professionals never cease to learn, people need feedback along the way. Teachers want to know if they are making progress toward the end-goal, and teachers need to feel a sense that what they are being asked to do makes sense—that the work is doable—that they can achieve what they set out to do.

## ***Important Goals***

The work of teachers must have importance and value for the individual and for the organization. The goals of professional development need to be grounded in data to frame the important issues of teaching and learning within the context of the school. Teachers do not want to waste their time “sitting in a workshop” that has little relevance to their daily work. Teachers want professional development that helps them become better teachers, engages them intellectually in the topic, and has immediate application to the work they do with students. Effective professional development has a specific set of goals and learning objectives, activities that support the goals and objectives, and the results from ongoing formative and summative evalua-

tion that extends, adds, or improves skills while simultaneously extending knowledge.

### ***Supportive and Insistent Supervisors***

Like students, teachers want supervisors who are supportive of the work they do and the challenges they face; however, teachers need and want leaders who are insistent about leading with a vision focused on learning and development. Teachers will not thrive in an environment where learning—student and adult—is not the top priority. It is my belief that teachers do not want to survive in an environment that merely maintains the status quo—teachers want to exceed that benchmark in their own learning and the learning of their students.

### ***Supportive Peers***

Equally important to teachers are their peers. Schools that evolve as a learning community create an ethos of care for the individual and for the collective. Teachers want opportunities to learn alongside each other. They crave conversations and opportunities to engage in practices that will give them more data to make informed decisions about the work they are doing with students. Inquiry, reflection, and conversations need to be the staple of professional learning opportunities for teachers. Golja and Schaverien (accessed October 23, 2007) cite Clark's (2001) work related to the value of conversations as professional development:

Conversation feels more like an exploratory, wandering walk around a mutually interesting place than a direct journey from one point to another....As a genre for learning and professional development, conversation groups have the wonderful quality of being controlled by the participants. (p. 2)

Collaboration is a key norm that supports and sustains a learning community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). DuFour (2004b) poses four questions for principals to ask as they move forward with planning and designing professional development at the site. These four questions can serve as a guide in the work of the principal.

1. Does the professional development increase the staff's collective capacity to achieve the school's vision and goals?
2. Does the school's approach to staff development challenge staff members to act in new ways?
3. Does the school's approach to staff development focus on results rather than activities?

4. Does the school's approach to staff development demonstrate a sustained commitment to achieving important goals? (p. 6)

## **Professional Development Supports Teacher Voice**

Teachers need to have a tremendous voice—they need to be heard and supported in their learning endeavors. Professional development must be grounded in a carefully conceived and clearly stated sense of purpose and be embedded in core beliefs that are under constant scrutiny by the members of the learning community. The core beliefs and sense of purpose will allow teachers to listen as their voices guide them in creating learning opportunities for themselves, their students, and the school. In *The Courage to Teach* (1998), Palmer writes: “The only way to get out of trouble is to go in deeper. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace...to serve our children well” (p. 2).

The principal's role is to assist teachers in finding their “learning” voices. Without continuous growth for adults, students are shortchanged: “What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn” (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, p. iv). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future's report concludes “...schools that have found ways to educate all students well have done so by providing ongoing learning for teachers and staff” (p. 9).

## **Professional Development Is Based on Data**

Data are important in the framing of professional development. Data sources for framing professional development goals need to come from the site. Data could include:

- ◆ Student work samples;
- ◆ The results of quizzes, tests, standardized tests;
- ◆ The results of action research
- ◆ Information gathered from formal and informal classroom observations made by peer coaches, administrators, and other school leaders; or
- ◆ Standardized test results.

The possibilities for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data are endless. In subsequent chapters, data sources and approaches are examined. Chapter 6 includes an extended case study on what one school does with ana-

lyzing student data—and this type of learning is embedded within the work-day and serves to assist the school leaders frame professional development.

## **Teachers Are Central to Leadership and Decision Making**

Borko (2004) states that professional development is “woefully inadequate...fragmented, intellectually superficial, and do[es] not take into account what we know about how teachers learn” (p. 3). Principals do not have to repeat this history. Although budgets continue to tighten, and in many states professional development funds are among the first to be allocated to other needs, principals have one key resource—teachers. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) assert “leadership among teachers thrives when they are involved in planning and delivering professional development” (p. 5). The credibility of professional development at the site will yield results that are more positive if principals involve teachers in the planning of professional development (Youngs & King, 2002). Faculty involvement in decision making is essential because “collective decision making results in increased morale, ownership, understanding about the direction and processes of change, shared responsibility for student learning, and a sense of professionalism, all of which help to sustain improvement efforts” (MCREL, 2003, n.p.).

## **Effective Professional Development Supports Student and Teacher Learning**

Professional development is about learning—learning for students, teachers, and other professionals who support children. Professional development is needed because “in the end, the quality of education that will be available in our public schools will depend on the quality of professional learning opportunities available to teachers” (Randi & Zeichner, 2004, p. 221). Learning to teach is a lifelong pursuit and Danielson (1996) indicates that “continuing development is the mark of a true professional, an ongoing effort that is never completed. Educators committed to attaining and remaining at the top of their profession invest much energy in staying informed and increasing their skills” (p. 115).

## **Student Learning Is a Primary Focus of Professional Development**

The message across the literature and research is that a major factor in improving students’ achievement is teacher performance and development (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Marzano, 2003; Randi & Zeichner, 2004). Focusing

more on teacher performance is the relationship of teacher knowledge coupled with the ability to differentiate instructional methods to deliver this knowledge (content) (Borko, 2004; Guskey, 2003; Kent, 2004; Marzano, 2003).

It is Darling-Hammond's belief that student learning can be positively enhanced in schools and systems that "provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that build their capacity to teach ways that are congruent with contemporary understandings about learning, use sophisticated assessments to inform teaching, and meet differing needs" (2004, p. 1081). The lynchpin to improving teacher quality and seeing gains in student achievement rests, in part, to the overall professional development made available to teachers.

A caveat is offered here. It is not just the professional development offered to teachers. The everyday work of teachers should focus on assisting teachers to learn from

- ◆ the work they do
- ◆ the work students do, and
- ◆ the work teachers do with other teachers.

Professional development must support and connect to these aspects of learning. Teachers need

- ◆ follow-up support to ensure that lessons learned in formal and informal professional development are being transferred into practice;
- ◆ the opportunity to learn from their actual work through job-embedded learning opportunities; and
- ◆ the learning community structure that is marked by trust, care, and concern for the members of the community.

### ***Connecting to the Research Base on Professional Development and Student Learning***

In 2005, the American Educational Research Association published a policy and research brief entitled, *Teaching Teachers: Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement*. The framers of this report, succinctly state:

It is suggested that professional development can influence teachers' classroom practices significantly and lead to improved student achievement when it focuses on (1) how students learn particular subject matter; (2) instructional practices that are specifically related to the subject matter and how students understand it; and (3) strengthening teachers' knowledge of specific subject-mat-

ter content. Close alignment of professional development with actual classroom conditions also is key. (pp. 1–2)

Although optimistic about the gains we have made in understanding learning over the past 20 years, Borko (2004) provides caveats about the impact of professional development on learning. Borko (2004) offers, “we have evidence that professional development can lead to improvements in instructional practices and student learning. We are only beginning to learn, however, about the impact of teacher change on student outcomes” (p. 3). Earlier, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) shared the same concern about the paucity of research related to the “effects of professional development on improvements in teaching or on student outcomes” (p. 917). Both Borko and Garet et al. (2001) report that the results of professional development have not been large scale enough to generalize, and Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) report that historically, “evidence supporting the effectiveness of professional development is often anecdotal” (p. 28). However, the small-scale nature of many professional development studies have paved the way for the emergence of numerous “best practices” (Borko, 2004; Birman et al., 2000; Garet et al., 2001).

Borko (2004) identifies three phases in which the research on professional development has unfolded:

- ◆ Phase I: Research at the site with one facilitator;
- ◆ Phase II: Research at the site with multiple facilitators;
- ◆ Phase III: Research comparing “multiple professional development programs, each enacted at multiple sites” (p. 4).

Borko further elaborates that to conduct sound research on professional development researchers must attend to studying

- ◆ the professional development program;
- ◆ the teachers, who are the learners in the system;
- ◆ the facilitator, who guides teachers as they construct new knowledge and practices; and
- ◆ the context in which the professional development occurs (Borko, 2004, p. 4).

The base of research points to a strong correlation between effective professional development and gains in student achievement, particularly in the areas of math and science. Much of the research in math and science has been related to large-scale reform efforts. The research has been to scale including a larger number of participants (teachers) and the results of larger numbers of students whose teachers have participated in professional development (Birman et al., 2000; Garet et al., 2001).

## Focusing on Student Work as Professional Development

Effective professional development is job-embedded where the work of teaching and learning how to teach, to improve, and to meet the needs of students coalesce into opportunities to see live the impact of efforts on student learning. Examining student work leads teachers to learn more about the efforts of their teaching based on the student work.

When teachers examine student work alone or in the company of others, they can reflect on how and why students are or not learning. The National Educational Association believes, “when teachers analyze and discuss instructional practice and the resulting samples of student work, they experience some of the highest caliber professional development available” (2003, p. 2).

Teachers can identify the gaps in their own teaching and student understanding. Teachers can identify cues on what instructional practices or curricular materials need to be modified. When teachers examine student work together, they can share ideas, approaches, and instructional materials; they can co-develop curricular materials and they can make comparisons about which materials or approaches appeared to work. Examining student work can help teachers make better decisions relating to the curriculum and its development, instructional strategies, and assessments.

In their large-scale study of professional development, Garet, Porter, Desiome, Birman, and Yoon (2001) found that active learning occurs when teachers can learn from their own work, and this type of learning had greater levels of impact on academic gains of students. One of the strategies that constituted active learning was reviewing student work. Garet et al., report, “examining and discussing examples of student work may help teachers develop skills in diagnosing student problems and designing lessons at an appropriate level of difficulty (p. 926). Similarly, Kazemi and Franke (2003) report:

Close analysis of student work can provide opportunities for teachers to pause and see ideas in their students’ thinking that the day-to-day rush of instruction may not necessarily foster. Discussions of student work allow teachers to raise their own questions about practice and to deliberate about what it is that they want and need students to learn. Such professional inquiry can allow teachers to form generalizations and conclusions from the particular instances of students’ reasoning that would guide future interactions in their classrooms. In this way, the study of student work can also stimulate discussions about how and what to teach. By collectively engaging in the study of student work, teachers can make public their own assumptions about teaching and learning

and deliberate differences they see in the ways their practices affect students' thinking. (p. 6)

## **Studying Student Work Is Professional Development**

Studying and examining student work promotes key constructs that are at the heart of professional development—inquiry, site-based research, and collaboration—situating the teacher as active learner. The National Education Association (NEA, 2003) reports, data can be used in two equally important ways to improve professional development:

1. As the actual substance of professional development, as educators convene with each other to study student work and analyze the instructional practice that produced such results; and
2. As a basis for making decisions about educators' on-the-job learning, including decisions pertaining to professional development resource allocation, content, and delivery (p. 2).

## **Getting Started with Examining Student Work**

Getting started examining student work can be awkward. A teacher shared with me that the first time she and her colleagues examined student work together, it was “awkward, awkward, awkward.” She elaborated that the team members had never worked together in ways that their “vulnerabilities” were in full view of one another. However, she shared that after a few meetings, the defensiveness associated with sharing student work was replaced with learning about how to teach better, how better to develop curricular approaches, and how to modify instructional and curricular approaches based on what members were learning from each other while examining student work.

The NEA (2003) underscores that “data are more than test scores” (p. 1). Teachers, who are at the beginning stages of examining student work, can be assisted with agreeing on a single standard (curricular/learning) and then by examining student work samples that reflect that standard. Work samples could include

- ◆ essays;
- ◆ quiz or test sample responses;
- ◆ video-clips of students completing tasks; or
- ◆ drawings

Any item that is a sample of student work can be studied. The objective is to study not only the artifact but also the learning objective, the standard, and the instructional approach to see how students perform, what have they mas-

tered, and what shifts in instructional practices need to be made. A primary objective behind studying student work is to “invite conversations about the work and the teaching associated with it” (McDonald, 2001, p. 121). However, McDonald offers that the conversations are “highly structured,” employ some type of “protocol” and that “the activity of talking productively with peers about the intentions behind and the actual effects of one’s work demands assertiveness and frankness but also requires delicacy and some buffer against quick judgments and harsh words” (p. 121). McDonald believes “the discipline and structure make the process safe” (p. 122). The intent of predetermined protocols is to allow members of the group to “suspend judgment” so “that the teacher finds her capacity to make judgments enriched by other perspectives” (McDonald, 2001, p. 122). ATLAS Learning Communities, Inc. (2007) offers sound strategies (Figure 1.1.) to get teachers reflecting, listening, and collaborating while studying student work

### **Figure 1.1 Thinking, Listening and Reflecting with Colleagues about Student Work**

#### **Reflecting on the Process**

Looking for evidence of student thinking...

- ◆ What did you see in this student’s work that was interesting or surprising?
- ◆ What did you learn about how this student thinks and learns?
- ◆ What about the process helped you to see and learn these things?

Listening to colleagues thinking ...

- ◆ What did you learn from listening to your colleagues that was interesting or surprising?
- ◆ What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?
- ◆ How can you make use of your colleagues’ perspectives?

Reflecting on one’s own thinking ...

- ◆ What questions about teaching and assessment did looking at the students’ work raise for you?
- ◆ How can you pursue these questions further?
- ◆ Are there things you would like to try in your classroom as a result of looking at this student’s work?

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A suggested process offered by ATLAS (2007) supports teachers Learning from Student Work in Figure 1.2.

## Figure 1.2. ATLAS—Learning from Student Work

### 1. Getting Started

- ◆ The facilitator reminds the group of the norms: no fault, collaboration, and consensus and, with the group, establishes time limits for each part of the process.

*Note: Each of the next four steps should be about 10 minutes in length. The presenter is silent until the “Reflecting on the Process,” step 5. The group should avoid talking to the presenter during steps 2–4. It is sometimes helpful for the presenter to pull away from the table and take notes.*

- ◆ The educator providing the student work gives a very brief statement of the assignment. The educator should describe only what the student was asked to do and avoid explaining what he or she hoped or expected to see.
- ◆ The educator providing the work should not give any background information about the student or the student’s work. In particular, the educator should avoid any statements about whether this is a strong or weak student or whether this is a particularly good or poor piece of work from this student.

*Note: After the group becomes more familiar with this process for looking at student work, you may find it useful to hear the educator’s expectations. However, this information will focus more of the group’s attention on the design of the assignment, the instruction, and the assessment, rather than on seeing what is actually present in the student’s work.*

### 2. Describing the Student Work

- ◆ The facilitator asks: “What do you see?”
- ◆ During this period the group gathers as much information as possible from the student work.
- ◆ Group members describe what they see in the student’s work, avoiding judgments about quality or interpretations about what the student was doing.
- ◆ If judgments or interpretations do arise, the facilitator should ask the person to describe the evidence on which they are based.
- ◆ It may be useful to list the group’s observations on chart paper. If interpretations come up, they can be listed in another column for later discussion during Step 3.

### 3. Interpreting the Student Work

- ◆ The facilitator asks: “From the student’s perspective, what is the student working on?”
- ◆ During this period, the group tries to make sense of what the student was doing and why. The group should try to find as many different in-

interpretations as possible and evaluate them against the kind and quality of evidence.

- ◆ From the evidence gathered in the preceding section, try to infer: what the student was thinking and why; what the student does and does not understand; what the student was most interested in; how the student interpreted the assignment.
  - ◆ Think broadly and creatively. Assume that the work, no matter how confusing, makes sense to the student; your job is to see what the student sees.
  - ◆ As you listen to each other's interpretations, ask questions that help you better understand each other's perspectives.
4. Implications for Classroom Practice
- ◆ The facilitator asks: "What are the implications of this work for teaching and assessment?"
  - ◆ Based on the group's observations and interpretations, discuss any implications this work might have for teaching and assessment in the classroom. In particular, consider the following questions:
    - What steps could the teacher take next with this student?
    - What teaching strategies might be most effective?
    - What else would you like to see in the student work? What kinds of assignments or assessments could provide this information?
    - What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your own practice? About teaching and learning in general?
5. Reflecting on the ATLAS
- ◆ The presenter shares back what they learned about the student, the work, and what they're now thinking. The discussion then opens to the larger group to discuss what was learned about the student, about colleagues, and self.
6. Debriefing the Process
- ◆ How well did the process work—what went well, and what could be improved? If the group has designated someone to observe the conversation, this person should report his or her observations.

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## **Lesson Learned from the Research on Professional Development**

Professional development can take many forms such as action research, lesson study, critical friends, and peer coaching—all covered in this book. A research base supports what we know about effective professional development. Throughout this text the word *effective* is used to describe practices that are research based, tied to standards, and present a coherent structure for

teachers who work in an environment in which the work of teaching is rooted in learning. To this end, professional development is not an add-on, and professional development is not a series of discreet activities.

## **What Does Research Tell Us About Effective Professional Development?**

Regardless of its form, professional development is effective if it is ongoing, long-term, and related to the teacher's content area (AERA, 2005; Garet et al., 2001; NSDC Standards). Moreover, effective professional development becomes a part of the workday steeped in the work of teachers. This type of professional development creates opportunities for job-embedded learning. The research is clear:

Professional development leads to better instruction and improved student learning when it connects to the curriculum materials that teachers use, the district and state academic standards that guide their work, and the assessment and accountability measures that evaluate their success. (AERA, 2005, p. 2)

Figure 1.3 (p. 16) details the lessons learned from key research on professional development.

Corcoran (1995) offers *Guiding Principles* built on the research of others. Corcoran reports that effective professional development

- ◆ stimulates and supports site-based initiatives. Professional development is likely to have greater impact on practice if it is closely linked to school initiatives to improve practice.
- ◆ supports teacher initiatives as well as school or district initiatives. These initiatives could promote the professionalization of teaching and may be cost-effective ways to engage more teachers in serious professional development activities.
- ◆ is grounded in knowledge about teaching. Good professional development should encompass expectations educators hold for students, child-development theory, curriculum content and design, instructional and assessment strategies for instilling higher-order competencies, school culture and shared decision-making.
- ◆ models constructivist teaching. Teachers need opportunities to explore, question and debate in order to integrate new ideas into their repertoires and their classroom practice.

**Figure 1.3 Lessons Learned from Key Research on Professional Development**

<b>Lessons and Practices</b>	<b>Research</b>
Professional development extends over time	Garet et al., 2001; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000
Professional development includes planned follow-up	Corcoran, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Joyce & Showers, 1995
Professional development is job-embedded connecting to the work of teaching (relevance)	AERA, 2005; Ancess, 2000; Borko, 2004; Wood & Killian, 1998; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999
Professional development is content-specific and related to subject matter	Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Corcoran, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2003
Professional development promotes reflection and inquiry	Guskey, 1999; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998.
Professional development includes multiple modalities of learning— active engagement	Joyce & Showers, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2003
Professional development is site-based including teachers from the same grade level and subject area	Corcoran (1995); Garet et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2000
Professional development is based on student performance data	Kazemi & Franke, 2003; McDonald, 2001; Sparks, 1995

- ◆ offers intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas, materials, and colleagues. If teachers are to teach for deep understanding, they must be intellectually engaged in their disciplines and work regularly with others in their field.
- ◆ demonstrates respect for teachers as professionals and as adult learners. Professional development should draw on the expertise of teachers and take differing degrees of teacher experience into account.

- ◆ provides for sufficient time and follow-up support for teachers to master new content and strategies and to integrate them into their practice.
- ◆ is accessible and inclusive. Professional development should be viewed as an integral part of teachers' work rather than as a privilege granted to "favorites" by administrators. (§ 12)

## **Linking Professionalism and Teacher Quality to Professional Development**

Teacher professionalism is examined here and throughout the text from a very narrow point-of-view—teachers increase their professionalism *when* they increase their capacity to lead, teach, and learn from the professional work they engage. It is difficult to separate professionalism, teacher quality, and student achievement. Haycock (1998) asserts that "if education leaders want to close the achievement gap, they must focus, first and foremost, on developing qualified teachers" (p. 12). The relationship between student achievement, teacher quality, and professional development is interdependent (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2004; Haycock, 1998; Randi & Zeichner, 2004). To achieve highly qualified teaching and learning, it falls to school leaders to "provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that build their capacity to teach in ways that are congruent with contemporary understandings about learning, use sophisticated assessments to inform teaching, and meet differing needs" (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 1081).

Teacher quality and teacher professionalism has been on the forefront of the national agenda since the release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, from the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). Soon after this publication, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was established (Danielson, 1996). Moving forward, the federal policy, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, became law that, in part, addressed "highly-qualified" teaching and also provided leverage for research-based professional development. NCLB focuses on four areas for recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Those areas are teacher certification, recruitment, compensation for teachers, and professional development.

NCLB is the first time that professional development in federal legislation has been enacted. Darling-Hammond (2004) suggests that student achievement could be realized in school systems that "provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that build their capacity to teach ways that are congruent with contemporary understandings about learning, use

sophisticated assessments to inform teaching, and meet differing needs” (p. 1081).

The topic professionalism could fill an entire book but as overview, teacher professionalism has focused on

- ◆ teacher certification (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001);
- ◆ levels of education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1997a);
- ◆ comparisons of the teaching profession to other professions such as medicine and law (Sullivan (1995);
- ◆ the relationship between teachers and community, parents, and students (Fenstermacher, 1990); and
- ◆ decision-making patterns of National Board Certified teachers (Schulz, 2008).

## **What Is a Professional?**

First, a professional must possess

- ◆ knowledge and competence acquired from highly specialized training and formal education
- ◆ the respect and trust of community and peers that leads to a degree of autonomy and self-direction, and
- ◆ a set of values, moral and ethical, that allow the performance of the job to become more service-oriented rather than profit-oriented (Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993; Sullivan, 1995).

The next few sections lead the reader through examining professionalism, teacher quality, and the relationship to professional development.

## **Professionalism and Teaching**

Studies indicate that teachers need not only content knowledge but also pedagogical knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1997a; Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993); consequently, acquisition of a broad body of knowledge becomes a key component in achieving professional status in education. These notions are often at odds with the typical bureaucratic system found in many schools. Bureaucratic systems lack the ability to treat teachers as highly skilled and trained professionals (Darling-Hammond, 1989) and little time is devoted to teacher induction, further learning, or opportunities for collaborative and collegial discussion about the work of teaching and learning from the work of teaching. Darling-Hammond (2004, p. 1079) states, “schools and districts need to provide systematic supports for ongoing teacher learning.”

New policies and procedures will need to be implemented to align professional development activities with school improvement goals (Darling-Hammond, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

## **Professionalism and Decision Making**

Policies prescribed by political agencies hinder the ability for teachers to make decisions that are in the students' best interests (Darling-Hammond, 1997a; Schulz, 2008). Darling-Hammond (1997b) states, "teachers who most faithfully follow rationalistic curriculum schemes are least likely to teach for understanding" (p. 72). Laursen (1996) also reiterates the need for a more reflective approach to instruction as opposed to the rationalistic curriculum as not only a means for gaining professional status but for increasing the "teachers' awareness of the learning of students and the creativity of teaching" (p. 54).

Schulz' (2008) examination of National Board Certified Teachers and their coverage of curriculum and decision making shows an unintended consequence—teachers did not feel as if they could make decisions about students and their progress and what was taught, and that at key times during the year, the curriculum was narrowed. In other words, for these teachers, their professional knowledge about the curriculum and the learners they taught was muted.

## **Standards**

Well-trained professionals improve the quality of the profession as a whole through self-evaluation and continual refinement of best practices (Vinson, 2006). A key study by Clarke et al. (2003) reports that lack of capacity as one of the largest barriers for teachers when implementing standards, particularly in low performing schools. They recommend for states to invest in quality professional development and training, especially in the area of classroom assessment techniques. The premise is that for students to show progress, teachers must be knowledgeable in interpreting tests results, monitoring and diagnosing student progress, and familiar with effective strategies for fostering a motivation of student learning.

## **Examining Standards as a Source to Frame Professional Development**

Within the framework for examining the research on professional development, it is essential to examine curriculum and standards. Effective professional development is grounded in standards and the curriculum. For example, standards such as the *National Science Education Standards* not only pro-

vide the standards for the teaching of science, but also outline how professional development for science teachers must align to the standards and how this alignment points to gains in student learning. The professional development standards for science hold four major premises:

- ◆ Professional development for a teacher of science is a continuous, lifelong process.
- ◆ The traditional distinctions between “targets,” “sources,” and “supporters” of teacher development activities are artificial.
- ◆ The conventional view of professional development for teachers needs to shift from technical training for specific skills to opportunities for intellectual professional growth.
- ◆ The process of transforming schools requires that professional development opportunities be clearly and appropriately connected to teachers’ work in the context of the school.  
(<http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/nse/4.html>)

The national organizations that set content standards should be consulted as these organizations often include professional development standards that support not only the content but also the instructional strategies and approaches to support the curriculum.

## **Federal Legislation—No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—and Professional Development**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 established provisions for federal funding for professional development. The mandates related to professional development include:

- ◆ All professional development must relate to the school improvement plan.
- ◆ The professional development activities must be research-based practices.
- ◆ Professional development must be tied back to student achievement.
- ◆ Professional development must also include activities related to the subject area of the individual teachers.
- ◆ Ongoing, long-term professional development activities that enhance classroom instruction must be provided.
- ◆ Evaluation of the professional development activities must be conducted.

Following the lead of the NCLB legislation, state departments of education have followed suit with framing professional development standards that align with the federal guidelines for highly qualified teaching and learning. For example, the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Education (2004) introduces their standards with the following statements:

High-quality professional development is defined by several interacting factors. It implies rich content that is specifically chosen to deepen and broaden the knowledge and skills of teachers, principals, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other key education staff. High-quality professional development should be based on substantive, well-defined objectives. High-quality professional development requires structure, reflecting well-thought out delivery; efficient use of time; varied and effective styles of pedagogy; discourse and application; and the use of formative and summative assessment to promote understanding. High-quality professional development demands the guidance of experienced educators and other professionals who have a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the content themselves and who can fully engage the participants in the desired learning. (p. 2)

## **Professional Development Is School Improvement**

Professional development can be targeted to support school improvement efforts. Universal rules and formulas that encompass school improvement do not exist because a plan developed for one school may not work for another school. This lack of applicability across school systems occurs, in part, because school improvement addresses gaps—needs—that are as individualistic as the schools for which the plans are developed. Development is the key word in school improvement, and Tobergte and Curtis (2002) assert, “School improvement begins with development—development of people and the school culture to keep the organization vibrant and prepared to meet new needs and challenges” (p. 771). Professional development can become the glue to support individual and collective learning; both support school improvement.

### **Change**

School improvement is a type of purposeful change, and Harris (2002a) believes “successful school improvement is dependent upon the school’s ability to manage change and development” (p. 2). The purposeful nature of change and school improvement is critical to distinguish as change as envi-

sioned by Harris is related directly to building capacity by “...enhancing student achievement and strengthening the school’s capacity for change” (p. 50). School improvement not rooted in changes in classroom practices will more than not likely endure. There are two types of school improvement—in the classroom and the other, school-wide—and both types of improvement need to be melded (McTighe & Thomas, 2003).

## Leadership That Supports Change

Baker (1997) asserts that school leaders can increase the likelihood of long-term success through

1. Shared decision-making;
2. Coordinated staff development;
3. Strategic plans and small-win tactics; and
4. Persistence for the long-term. (p. 1)

The school improvement process provides an opportunity for the principal to share power through openness, dialogue, and a sincere desire to build trust.

Leaders build authentic relationships with teachers, students, staff, and other stakeholders, and effective leaders work to promote an environment that supports:

1. *Interaction and participation*. People have many opportunities and reasons to come together in deliberation, association, and action.
2. *Interdependence*. These associations and actions both promote and depend on mutual needs and commitments.
3. *Shared interests and beliefs*. People share perspectives, values, understandings, and commitment to common purposes.
4. *Concern for individual and minority views*. Individual differences are embraced through critical reflection and mechanisms for dissent and lead to growth through the new perspectives they foster.
5. *Meaningful relationships*. Interactions reflect a commitment to caring, sustaining relationships. (Westheimer, 1998, p. 17, emphasis in the original)

Fullan (2002) believes that building relationships is a prerequisite to efforts to improve schools:

The single factor common to successful change is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, schools get better. If relationships remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus, lead-

ers build relationships with diverse people and groups—especially with people who think differently. (p. 18)

Given the complexities with bringing about school improvement, cohesion is needed, and cohesion is built on more than linking the work of instructional leadership and the management of school improvement tasks. A more powerful force, relationships with others, builds cohesion and this “connective leadership” is what will help to bind people and their values to the work they do in the process of working with one another.

## **Leaders Value Professional Development and Learning**

Professional development is the primary vehicle for supporting school improvement efforts, and Joyce and Showers (2002) believe:

Selecting the content of staff development is one of the most critical decisions in the school improvement process. If you are to attain your student achievement goals, the content of staff development needs to be aligned with those goals. And the content needs to be robust enough to effect the type of change envisioned. (p. 59)

Teachers need the opportunity and time to work with one another; they will learn more from sustained discussion on classroom practices, coaching opportunities, and the formal and informal mentoring they can provide to one another. Thompson (1992) believes “School improvement demands recognition of the link between schooling and resource effects, and the result should be a model for school improvement which places staff development at the apex of priorities” (p. 174).

Related to school improvement, Section 9101(34) of the NCLB provides guidelines for professional development (Figure 1.4, pp. 24–25).

## **Professional Development That Supports School Improvement**

Implementing school improvement requires a commitment to professional development. What should professional development that supports school improvement look like? In the report by the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (1999), *What Learner-centered Professional Development Looks Like: Revisioning Professional Development*, the authors make several suggestions (Figure 1.5, p.26 ).

*(Text continues on page 27.)*

## Figure 1.4 Professional Development Related to NCLB

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: [Section 9101(34)]

The term “professional development:”

1. Includes activities that:
  1. Improve and increase teachers’ knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified;
  2. Are an integral part of broad schoolwide and district-wide educational improvement plans;
  3. Give teachers, principals, and administrators the knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet challenging State academic content standards and student academic achievement standards;
  4. Improve classroom management skills;
  5. Are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher’s performance in the classroom and are not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences;
  6. Support the recruiting, hiring, and training of highly qualified teachers, including teachers who became highly qualified through State and local alternative routes to certification;
  7. Advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies that are:
    - a. Based on scientifically based research (except that this sub-clause shall not apply to activities carried out under Part D of Title II); and
    - b. Strategies for improving student academic achievement or substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers; and
  8. Are aligned with and directly related to:
    - a. State academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, and assessments; and
    - b. The curricula and programs tied to the standards described in sub-clause (a) [except that this sub-clause shall not apply to activities described in clauses (ii) and (iii) of Section 2123(3)(B)];
  9. Are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, parents, and administrators of schools to be served under this Act;
  10. Are designed to give teachers of limited English proficient children, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support services to those children, including the appropriate use of curricula and assessments;
  11. To the extent appropriate, provide training for teachers and principals in the use of technology so that technology and technology ap-

plications are effectively used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in the curricula and core academic subjects in which the teachers teach;

12. As a whole, are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional development;
13. Provide instruction in methods of teaching children with special needs;
14. Include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice; and
15. Include instruction in ways that teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents; and
16. May include activities that:
  - a. Involve the forming of partnerships with institutions of higher education to establish school-based teacher training programs that provide prospective teachers and beginning teachers with an opportunity to work under the guidance of experienced teachers and college faculty;
  - b. Create programs to enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance under Part A of Title I) to obtain the education necessary for those paraprofessionals to become certified and licensed teachers; and
  - c. Provide follow-up training to teachers who have participated in activities described in subparagraph (A) or another clause of this subparagraph that is designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned by the teachers are implemented in the classroom [*Title IX, Part A, Section 9101(34)*].

Source: *No Child Left Behind* (2002). Improving Teacher Quality State Grants. Title II, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance. Retrieved February 17, 2003 from <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SIP/TitleIIGuidance2002.doc>

### **Figure 1.5. Professional Development, Research-based Principles**

- ◆ The content of professional development focuses on what students are to learn and how to address the different problems students may have in learning the material.
- ◆ Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
- ◆ Professional development should involve teachers in identifying what they need to learn and in developing the learning experiences in which they will be involved.
- ◆ Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.
- ◆ Most professional development should be organized around collaborative problem solving.
- ◆ Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning—including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.
- ◆ Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes involved in implementing lessons learned through professional development.
- ◆ Professional development should provide opportunities to understand the theory underlying the knowledge and skills being learned.
- ◆ Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Source: *Revisiting Professional Development: What Learner-Centered Professional Development Looks Like*. National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (1999, p. 3). Available at: <http://www.nsd.org/library/policy/npeat213.pdf>

School improvement signals change and one of the most important roles of the principal is to support teachers' efforts to change. A comprehensive professional development program that prepares teachers for change and supports their learning needs during change must employ a variety of learning opportunities for teachers. Professional development is essential because "*Students learn only from teachers who are themselves in the process of learning*" (McCall, 1997, p. 23, emphasis in the original). According to Abdal-Haqq (1996), effective professional development that ensures learning:

- ◆ is ongoing;
- ◆ includes training, practice, and feedback; opportunities for individual reflection and group inquiry into practice; and coaching or other follow-up procedures;
- ◆ is school-based and embedded in teacher work;
- ◆ is collaborative, providing opportunities for teachers to interact with peers;
- ◆ focuses on student learning, which should, in part, guide assessment of its effectiveness;
- ◆ encourages and supports school-based and teacher initiatives;
- ◆ is rooted in the knowledge base for teaching;
- ◆ incorporates constructivist approaches to teaching and learning;
- ◆ recognizes teachers as professionals and adult learners;
- ◆ provides adequate time and follow-up support; and
- ◆ is accessible and inclusive.

Professional development needs to be job-embedded, promote discussion, and supported through peer coaching, study groups, action research, and other forms of learning from the work of teaching.

## **National Staff Development Council—The Standard-Bearer for Professional Development**

Although examined in detail in Chapter 3, the work of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has proven to be the national leader in the work of professional development. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) reflect the commonalities of the NSDC standards in their vision. They have identified paradigm shifts in staff development from:

- ◆ Individual development to individual development and organizational development;

- ◆ Fragmented, piecemeal improvement efforts to staff development driven by a clear, coherent strategic plan for the school district, each school, and the departments that serve schools;
- ◆ District-focused to school-focused approaches to staff development;
- ◆ A focus on adult needs and satisfaction to a focus on student needs and learning outcomes, and changes in on-the-job training;
- ◆ Training conducted away from the job as the primary delivery system for staff development to multiple forms of job-embedded learning;
- ◆ An orientation toward the transmission of knowledge and skills to teachers by “experts” to the study by teachers of the teaching and learning processes;
- ◆ Focus on generic instructional skills to a combination of generic and content-specific skills;
- ◆ Staff developers who function primarily as trainers to those who provide consultation, planning, and facilitation services as well as training;
- ◆ Staff development provided by one or two departments to staff development as a critical function and major responsibility performed by all administrators and teacher-leaders;
- ◆ Staff development directed toward teachers as the primary recipients to continuous improvement in performance for everyone who affects student learning; and
- ◆ Staff development as a “frill” that can be cut during difficult financial times to staff development as an indispensable process without which schools cannot hope to prepare young people for citizenship and productive employment. (pp. 12–16)

## **Organization of this Book**

The journey now starts for the practitioners reading this book. The struggle was more in deciding on a title that would fit accurately the contents of this book. The title, *Professional Development: What Works*, suggests that professional development is a journey. The chapters in this book serve as a compass to guide principals, teachers, and other leaders in the work of designing professional development that supports learning. The first six chapters serve as a road map.

Chapters 7 through 13 explore very specific forms of professional development that can complement the overall learning needs of adults. These forms of professional development can stand-alone or can be used in conjunction with other professional development initiatives. These forms of professional development are highly collaborative and rest on the premise that professional learning is job-embedded. Chapter 14 provides final perspectives about professional development and the work that needs to be sustained to ensure that professional development supports the high-stakes nature of learning.

With seat belts on, a full tank of gas, and a roadmap and compass, we begin the journey of learning together.

## Suggested Readings

- Guskey, T. R. (2003). Analyzing lists of the characteristics of effective professional development to promote visionary leaders. *National Association of Secondary School Principals, NASSP Bulletin*, 87(637), 4–20.
- Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Sparks, D. (2007). *Leading for results: Transforming teaching, learning, and relationships in schools* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Sparks, D., & Hirsh, S. (1997). *A new vision for staff development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.