



STEP ONE:
DESIGNING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

DESIGNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

Good professional development design includes both strong *content* and an effective *process* for making initial and ongoing decisions. Relevant content is essential to ensuring that PD helps you meet student learning goals. But good PD content without a strong decision-making and organizational process to support it will be short-lived. The award-winning steps for successful professional development design are summarized below:

1. Include participants and organizers in the PD design process.
2. Make a clear plan that includes:
 - a. How PD supports the school/district's long-term plan.
 - b. A PD needs assessment process.
 - c. PD goals, including at least the following: improving all students' learning, improving teacher effectiveness, setting high standards for teachers, promoting continuous staff learning, and enhancing staff intellectual and leadership capacity.
 - d. PD content, process, and activities and how each supports the goals.
 - e. Research that supports the chosen content/process for PD.
 - f. Resources available to support PD.
 - g. PD evaluation steps.
3. Share the plan with the school community.

Award winners ensured that key stakeholders had a voice in professional development from the start.

Stakeholders are all of the individuals and groups who might have an interest in how schools are run and in the impact schools have on staff, children, families, and the community.

INCLUDE PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZERS IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN PROCESS

Themes From Award Winners

Award winners have used a variety of processes for including critical stakeholders in decisions about professional development. They identify three basic participation decisions that need to be made:

Decide who is included in decisions. People who have input into the PD design process typically include some combination of the following: students, teachers, other staff, parents, principals, district PD staff, district management (e.g., superintendents), community members, and expert resources (e.g., professors, consultants).



Using a team to design professional development helps ensure a broad base of leadership for sustaining PD changes.

The working team is the group of people who hammer out the details of the proposed professional development plan and ensure that everyone is kept informed.



Be sure to clarify who will be responsible for improving PD after the initial design stage.

Decide what types of input each group or person has. The types of input groups or people may have include final decision-making authority; active involvement in developing design details (working team); input of ideas, either up-front or in review of proposed plans; and being informed about decisions and progress, but with no specific forum for providing input.

Schools and districts may use different types of input at different stages. For example, in several award-winning organizations, small teams developed the initial PD plan, but many more people participated in ongoing decisions about specific PD goals and activities.

The breadth of participation and level of decision-making authority for PD typically reflect the overall management structure and approach of each school and district. Organizations with more *centralized* PD control tend to be ones with more centralized management, accountability, and budgets. Organizations that put more PD control into staff hands tend to have more decentralized management, accountability, and budgets. It is important to note that award winners have aligned their PD decision process with the overall management process.

Decide what level of professional development design is affected by each participant group. The levels of professional development design typically are districtwide PD, schoolwide PD, team-level PD (e.g., grade-level teams, content-area teams), and individual PD.

As you prepare to lead change in your school or district's professional development, consider all of these issues. **Action Planner Tool 1** should help you clarify the decisions you need to make about how to include others in the PD design process. You can use this matrix for initial PD planning and for ongoing PD design changes. Use **Action Planner Tool 2** here and later for your general planning needs.

Examples From Award Winners

- In one school, three teachers took the lead, gained support from the principal, and got expert advice from local university staff to plan the initial framework for PD. Now that the new PD process has been implemented, all staff members provide up-front input (via annual surveys) and help make decisions (in large-group meetings). This approach worked well because staff members were skeptical of change and needed to see results before participating actively.
- In one district, a committee of school and community representatives, with the help of a university consultant, initially developed a needs assessment survey to identify overall goals for the district. These goals drive decisions about curriculum and PD offerings. Both school leadership teams and teacher study teams can propose PD topics and courses (as well as have input into school goals). A district-level committee with representatives from all schools makes the ultimate decisions about curriculum and PD offerings.
- In another school, six cross-disciplinary staff teams propose *schoolwide* PD to the school's Coordinating Council. The council consists of a representative from each team plus administrators, the union leader,

office staff, students, and parents. This group recommends action to the Steering Committee, composed of administrators, the Coordinating Council chair, and the union leader. Team-level PD is decided by the cross-disciplinary teams, each of which has its own PD budget. In addition, each staff member develops an individual development plan.

- Another school created a “Schoolwide Leadership Cadre,” which included the principal, teachers, parents, community members, and central office staff. This working team led the entire professional development cycle that included planning, research, implementation, evaluation, analysis, and improvement. Because of the knowledge they developed during this process, the cadre members also acted as teacher-leaders, staff developers, mentors, and champions for school improvement.



Organizers' Checklist

Include Participants and Organizers in the Professional Development Design Process

- ☐ Decide who should be involved in the initial PD design working team. (Use Tool 1.)
- ☐ Decide what role other stakeholders will have in PD design, both initial and ongoing. (Use Tool 1.)
- ☐ Invite/notify stakeholders to participate in PD design as decided.
- ☐ Determine leadership roles for the PD design working team.
- ☐ Determine the process for the PD design working team: When should you meet? Who will schedule meetings? What do you need in advance and who will provide it? Who will collect and distribute agenda items and supporting material? Are standing meetings mandatory? What happens if someone cannot attend—who updates, etc.? Who will ensure that you prioritize and get through all critical agenda items? How will you make decisions—by consensus, vote, or other? Under what circumstances will you make decisions outside of group meetings? How? Who is responsible for communicating decisions to those who cannot participate? What will each of you do when a decision or action with which you disagree is made without your participation? Other issues?
- ☐ Create a standing agenda for all PD working team meetings, including, at least, updates on work in progress; new issues/problems; identification of preparatory work for the next meeting; communication (who needs to be informed of decisions made in this meeting?); and documents from this meeting that need to be saved in the main file.

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 1, PART A— PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate whether you are discussing initial or ongoing PD design participation. Indicate the level for which you are planning PD design participation. Note: You may decide later who will participate in team and individual PD design, as this may depend on the district- and school-level PD design. Review the list of PD design stakeholders in the left column and modify as needed. Next, complete Tool 1, Part B, then fill in the summary below. Finally, review the summary to ensure that you have clarified how all stakeholder groups will be involved in PD design.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Check One: ☐ Initial PD Design ☐ Ongoing PD Design

Organization Level (*check one*): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team ☐ Individual

| Stakeholders | Summary of Role(s) in PD Design |
|--------------------------|--|
| Example: <i>Teachers</i> | Representatives: <i>Instruction team leaders on working team make final decisions</i> All: <i>Get initial input via survey; keep informed of progress in regular weekly staff meeting</i> |
| Teachers | Representatives: All: |
| Other School Staff | Representatives: All: |
| Principal | |
| District Staff | Representatives: All: |
| District Management | Representatives: All: |
| Students | Representatives: All: |
| Parents | Representatives: All: |
| Community | Representatives: All: |
| Experts | |
| Other | |
| Other | |

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 1, PART B— PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN PARTICIPATION PLANNER

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate whether you are discussing initial or ongoing PD design participation. Indicate the level for which you are planning PD design participation. Looking at the list of stakeholders from Part A, answer the questions below. Next, review the stakeholder list in Part A to ensure you have considered all stakeholders. Finally, summarize your decisions in Part A.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Check One: ☐ Initial PD Design ☐ Ongoing PD Design

Organization Level (check one): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team ☐ Individual

Who will participate on the working team to develop PD design details?

| Stakeholder group | All or representatives? | How are representatives chosen? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Example: <i>Teachers</i> | <i>Reps</i> | <i>Instructional Team Leaders</i> |
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Who will have input into PD design, up front or in review (e.g., via survey, focus group)?

| Stakeholder group | All or representatives? | How are reps chosen? | How is input obtained? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Example: <i>Teachers</i> | <i>All</i> | <i>N/A</i> | <i>Initial survey</i> |
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Who will have authority to make final decisions about PD design?

| Stakeholder group | All or representatives? | How are representatives chosen? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Example: <i>Teachers</i> | <i>Reps</i> | <i>Instructional team leaders</i> |
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Who else will we keep informed of our design decisions and progress?

| Stakeholder group | All or representatives? | How are reps chosen? | How is input obtained? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Example: <i>Teachers</i> | <i>All</i> | <i>N/A</i> | <i>Initial survey</i> |
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ACTION PLANNER TOOL 2— ACTION ACCOUNTABILITY PLANNER

Instructions: Complete each row for action steps where you are assigning specific accountability. Copy and distribute this form to all team members immediately after meetings. Note: This form can be used as substitute for traditional meeting minutes.

Team: _____ Date: _____

| Action Step | By Whom | With Help From | Status Report Due | Deadline |
|--|----------------------------|---|----------------------|---------------|
| Example: <i>Get commitment from instruction team leaders to serve on PD design team</i> | <i>Jane T. (principal)</i> | <i>Richard S. (teacher in organizing meeting)</i> | <i>1 week</i> | <i>1 week</i> |
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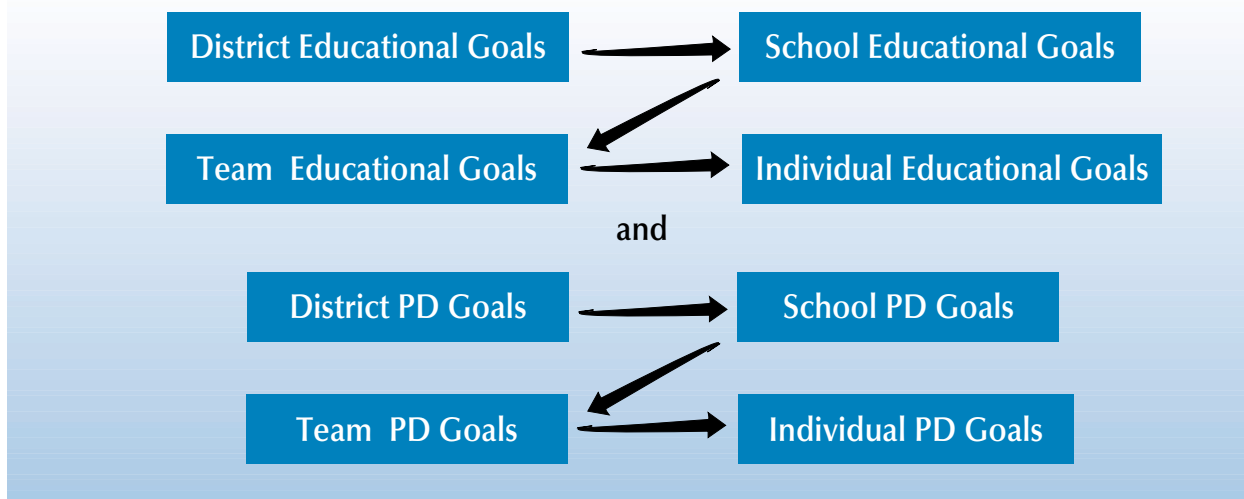
MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES HOW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT'S LONG-TERM PLAN

Award winners embedded professional development goals in district and school educational goals.

Themes From Award Winners

Make a plan. The first and most important learning theme from award winners is that they made planning a priority even though it takes time, tremendous mental energy, and coordination of resources. They carved out staff, leader, and volunteer time to ensure that PD *focused on the student learning results they really wanted*.

Align educational and professional development goals at all levels. In award-winning schools and districts, both student learning goals (educational goals) and staff learning goals (PD goals) that are further “upstream” drive those “downstream.” That is, district educational goals help determine school educational goals, which help determine instructional team educational goals, which help determine student learning goals for individual teachers.



Educational goals target *student learning* (and sometimes family and community) outcomes. They are driven by a variety of factors, such as selected state or national standards, current achievement level of students, and the educational vision of the school or district.

PD goals are the staff learning goals. They are driven primarily by the gaps between educational goals and actual student learning, the skills that staff members need to close those gaps, and the current staff skill level. (In some cases, individual staff career interests also influence selection of individual-level PD goals.) Some of the award winners’ “PD goals” look very much like “educational goals,” which helps ensure that PD always stays linked to student outcomes.

The specific planning process to ensure linkage between district educational goals and school-level PD goals varied. In some cases, schools built PD goals directly off district-level PD goals. In others, schools started the PD planning process with district educational goals. Either way, award-winning schools and districts ensured that school-level PD (including team and individual PD) ultimately supported district educational goals.

Examples From Award Winners

- In one large urban school district, the results of student performance on a number of standardized tests define the following years' priorities. These results and consequential priorities are reported to the school community in an annual "state of the district" address. Schools within the district must choose three priorities from the district list that best fit each school's needs. Schools also are required to create action plans, including PD activities, to achieve their three chosen priorities. Next, individual teachers throughout the district create individual development plans with the help of a formal mentor or the principal. Each staff member must show how the individual plan helps achieve his or her school's three priorities.
- One school adopted the same five "areas for improvement" as the district. Then, the school, via a diverse school management committee, set specific and measurable objectives within those five areas. Achievement of the objectives drives school and individual PD decisions.
- One school based its PD on the state's pay-for-performance plan. Each year, the school must outline very specific student learning goals that align with the state's objectives. The school is rewarded by the state in cash, which is distributed to staff for achieving the promised student learning goals. PD for all staff at the school is focused on achieving the goals. (Decisions also are guided by the school's vision, beliefs, and mission.) Individual teachers set personal development goals to help them achieve the pay-for-performance plan goals. At the end of the year, teachers must recount the specific activities they performed to meet their individual PD goals.



Organizers' Checklist

Make Sure the Professional Development Plan Supports the School/District's Long-Term Plan

- ☐ Review existing educational goals for the state, district, and school.
- ☐ "Map" district and school educational goals to ensure that they are linked. (Use Tool 3.)
- ☐ Make a plan for linking team and individual classroom educational (not PD) goals to school goals in the future, including who will ensure linkage, when, and using what tools; and who will review and approve the plan.

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 3— ALIGN EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. In the left column, list major district educational (student learning, not PD) goals that your school will actively support. In the next column, list your school's educational goals and ensure that they align with the district's goals. As you plan your goals for staff teams and individual staff members, ensure that the goals support at least one goal of the next largest entity (e.g., each team educational goal supports at least one school goal).

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

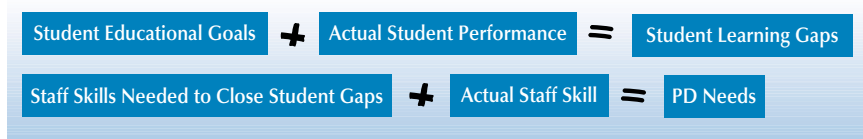
| District Educational Goals | School Educational Goals (Align with district goals) | Team Educational Goals (Align with school goals) | Individual Educational Goals (Align with school/team goals) |
|--|---|--|---|
| Example: <i>Improve reading in elementary years to levels that prepare all students for successful middle school learning</i> | <i>75% of students in third and sixth grade get a score of 4 or above on state test; improve or maintain scores of all students</i> | <i>75% in third and sixth grades get scores ≥ 4 on state tests; maintain or improve all students over last year (reading instructional team)</i> | <i>Raise scores of the five students in my class who barely missed target last year to 4 this year; maintain or improve others (individual teacher)</i> |
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MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Themes From Award Winners

Determine student and teacher gaps. Needs assessment at its best measures both student and staff learning needs. Focused PD must have two critical inputs: actual student learning versus educational goals, and actual staff skill/competency levels versus the levels needed.

Identifying student learning gaps helps define precisely the level and type of skill that staff members need to help a particular set of students meet learning goals. Likewise, identifying staff gaps helps schools focus PD on areas of teacher skill and competence most needing development to meet student learning needs.



In some cases, needs assessment might reveal a staff strength where the supported educational goal is *not* being met by students. This discrepancy should lead to a discussion of whether the school's policies allow staff members to use their skills (e.g., teachers may understand "experiential learning," but the school must provide the transportation and tools for students to learn outside of the classroom).

Some award winners assessed parent needs as well, seeing parents as critical enablers of student learning. These winners sought to determine what critical skills and knowledge parents needed to help their children learn. They informally (or via survey) assessed how parents stood in these critical areas and used this input to identify parent development opportunities.

In summary, most award winners who expressed satisfaction with their needs assessment process covered both student and teacher (and sometimes parent) needs to determine the focus for professional development.

Make needs assessment the first step in ongoing evaluation and improvement. In many cases, initial needs assessments included a broader range of data sources than was required later, once a specific set of learning goals was chosen. Some award winners found the needs assessment process challenging. While the major steps are clear, they are not always easy to execute. These steps include the following:

1. Choose your comparison groups, i.e., decide whom you want to be measured against. Initially this might include a variety of groups: other public schools (local, state, national); local private schools; or published standards to which you aspire.
2. Determine your sources of data for comparing your school or district to each group (e.g., state or national standardized test scores). Data sources

Needs assessment is the process of determining the gaps in student and staff performance and figuring out what staff skills and competencies are necessary to close the performance gaps.

Great needs assessments link student and staff learning needs.



Use the initial needs assessment process to learn and prepare for using data wisely in the evaluation process later.

available both for the comparison groups and your own students are best, but you may choose some that provide information about your school/district only (e.g., parent survey). Make sure the measurement tools (tests, questionnaires, and so on) meet basic testing quality standards for validity (do they measure what you want?) and reliability (do they measure consistently?).

Data sources used by winners to assess student learning and teacher skill/competence include the following:

Student Learning

- ✓ standardized tests
- ✓ teacher surveys
- ✓ portfolios
- ✓ activity logs
- ✓ parent surveys
- ✓ student surveys/self-reporting
- ✓ teacher discussions

Teacher Skill/Competence

- ✓ supervisor observation
- ✓ peer review (observation, portfolio)
- ✓ portfolios
- ✓ activity logs
- ✓ parent and student surveys
- ✓ teacher surveys/self-reporting
- ✓ teacher discussions/focus groups

3. Make sure your *implementation* of tests, questionnaires, and so on, is good. For example, if you survey parents to see what strengths and gaps they perceive in staff, make sure your administration encourages responses from a representative range of parents. Several award winners hired consultants or obtained volunteer assistance from local colleges and universities to ensure that test comparisons and survey administration were executed well.

Although doing a good needs assessment that unearths the most valuable PD opportunities takes work, the skills and tools your school or district develops during this time may be used later in the ongoing evaluation process. In fact, many award winners turned initial “needs assessments” into the benchmarks for later evaluation and improvement. They typically narrowed the focus to a specific set of student learning standards for ongoing evaluation.

The tools at the end of this section will help you organize the information you gather through various needs assessment data sources to clarify student learning gaps and teacher skill gaps.

Examples From Award Winners

- One suburban district’s own curriculum goals provided student learning standards. To assess student learning strengths and gaps, the district used standardized test scores to compare itself to various groups. It also hired a consultant to help compare student performance with local private schools. To assess teacher development opportunities, the

district looked to the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and the curriculum goals for standards. It surveyed teachers and administrators for input and evaluated each teacher using peer monitoring and supervisor observation. Based on these inputs, the district organized workshops on topics of common concerns and invited specific teachers who needed development in each workshop topic area.

- One rural elementary school relied upon a thorough needs assessment of the entire district conducted by a local university. Because the outcomes fit their school and the methodology was excellent, the school used the results as a starting point. Later, they recognized that it would be helpful for evaluation purposes to have school-specific measures in their chosen focus curriculum areas as a benchmark. As a result, they implemented benchmarking assessments at the beginning of each year.
- An urban school used local colleges and universities to develop good assessment instruments. They used the assessments as the benchmark for ongoing, frequent evaluation and improvement. They now analyze performance data student-by-student and teacher-by-teacher and make frequent PD decisions based on this analysis. They also conduct regular surveys of parents and teachers.



Organizers' Checklist

Make a Clear Plan That Includes a Professional Development Needs Assessment Process

- ☐ Plan and implement a student needs assessment process. (Use Tool 4.)
- ☐ Identify expert sources to assist with needs assessment, if required.
- ☐ Choose comparison groups.
- ☐ Choose sources of data, both existing and customized.
- ☐ Develop tools as needed to gather data.
- ☐ Gather data.
- ☐ Complete a summary of student needs after student assessments are complete. (Use Tool 4.)
- ☐ Plan a teacher/staff needs assessment process. (Use Tool 5.)
- ☐ Identify expert sources to assist with staff needs assessment, if required.
- ☐ Identify staff skills/competencies needed to close student achievement gaps.
- ☐ Identify the *actual* skill/competency level of staff.
- ☐ Complete a summary of your staff's gaps and strengths after assessments are complete. (Use Tool 5.)

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 4— NEEDS ASSESSMENT: STUDENT LEARNING GOALS VERSUS ACTUAL PERFORMANCE

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the level of planning (i.e., district, school, team, or individual). In column one, list major student learning (not PD) goals at this level. In column two, make a note of actual student performance indicators from your needs assessment or evaluation sources. In the third column, indicate whether each student learning area is a gap or strength.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Organization Level (*check one*): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team ☐ Individual

| Student Learning Goals | Actual Student Performance Indicators | Gap or Strength? |
|---|---|---|
| Example: <i>Elementary school: School-level goal was that 75% of students in third and sixth grade get score of 4 or above on state test; improve or maintain scores of all students</i> | <i>Mid-year pretest: 70% of third and 78% of sixth graders scored ≥ 4; same students last year, 45% third and 37% sixth missed targets. Overall, 80% maintained or improved over last year. Of those who declined, 75% (or 15% of overall) were classified as “gifted.”</i> | <i>Third-grade gap in % meeting target. Schoolwide gap for top-performing students.</i> |
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ACTION PLANNER TOOL 5— NEEDS ASSESSMENT: TEACHER SKILL/COMPETENCE VERSUS ACTUAL PERFORMANCE

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the level of planning (i.e., district, school, team, or individual). In column one, list major student learning gaps (see Tool 4). In column two, indicate the skills/competencies that staff members need most to close each student learning gap. In the third column, indicate how skilled staff members are using data from your needs assessment and follow-up discussions. (Note: Answers for column three may vary for different groups, such as new and veteran teachers.) In the last column, indicate whether each teacher skill/competency is a gap or strength. For staff strengths, put a note on a later meeting agenda to discuss organization barriers that prevent staff from improving student learning results.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Organization Level (*check one*): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team ☐ Individual

| Student Learning Gaps | Staff Skills/ Competencies Needed | Actual Staff Performance | Gap or Strength? |
|---|--|---|---|
| Example: <i>Schoolwide reading progress gap for top-performing students.</i> | <i>a. Techniques for instructing gifted readers</i> <i>b. Skills for motivating and influencing gifted students</i> <i>c. Techniques for identifying slowed progress early</i> | <i>a. According to a survey, teachers use the same content for gifted and average readers</i> <i>b. A student survey revealed that 70% of gifted readers were bored with the material; it seems that staff members don't know how to motivate gifted students.</i> <i>c. No structure in place for staff to identify student slippage early</i> | <i>a. Gap</i> <i>b. Gap</i> <i>c. Gap</i> |
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| | | | |

MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Themes From Award Winners

Set goals to get the results you want. Award winners consistently set goals in advance of making major changes in PD activities and processes. This strategy made selection, evaluation, and improvement of PD activities much simpler since they already had a standard—the goals—to measure against.

Include two kinds of goals. Most award winners had two kinds of goals for professional development. First, they had a set of *principles* that acted as guideposts for the PD design and implementation process. Some called these principles “beliefs”; others called them a “vision” or “mission.” Some just called them “goals.” And still others used a combination of these terms to describe the general parameters within which PD (and sometimes the whole school) needed to operate. These principles were not necessarily easy to measure or quantitative in nature. Whether PD met them often was the subject of discussion and multiple perspectives. Nonetheless, these principles were critical for guiding the PD design and implementation processes.

All award winners’ PD goals of this type included at least the following award criteria (although not always phrased exactly this way). PD efforts will:

- Improve *all* students’ learning.
- Improve teacher effectiveness.
- Set high standards for teachers.
- Promote continuous staff learning.
- Enhance staff intellectual and leadership capacity.

While seemingly general, these goals actually changed PD behavior in award-winning schools and districts. For example, for many award winners, focusing on *all* students meant doing a student-by-student analysis. They chose PD activities for specific teachers to help them target the performance of specific students who were lagging, even if only a few students were involved.

Second, award winners also had very specific, *measurable objectives* for student learning and for professional development. If PD activities did not lead to the specified objectives, then they were improved or replaced. Typically, these specific goals were quantifiable, such as student test scores or frequency of certain staff activities.

These specific objectives for PD usually are driven by specific student learning goals. In fact, many award winners combined their curriculum and professional development planning teams (at district, school, and/or team levels) to ensure this linkage. Most award winners assumed that the failure of students—even a small set—to meet specified goals meant PD efforts needed improvement.

Underlying the award criteria is an assumption that all students can learn. For award winners, ensuring that staff members have the capability to tap student potential is one major goal of PD, measurable by whether students do, in fact, meet learning goals.

Professional Development Goals

- Improve all students’ learning
- Improve teacher effectiveness
- Set high standards for teachers
- Promote continuous staff learning
- Enhance staff intellectual and leadership capacity

Award winners set clear goals based on both lofty principles and nitty-gritty objectives.



Goal setting is the first step toward later evaluation and improvement.



Clearly stated principles can help you keep consistent themes in your professional development, even as specific objectives change over time.

Examples From Award Winner

- In one district, a large population of underperforming special-needs learners prompted the district to seek ways of using technology to address the needs of all students. Integrating technology into all learning became one of four major student education improvement areas. As a result, one of the PD goals for new and veteran teachers was to “integrate technology into teaching and learning.” The district required all new staff to pass a technology competency test, and they provided training and on-site assistance to help people acquire the required skills. The school raised funds from the state and private sources to establish the technology program. Technology training sessions were evaluated and staff members were required to submit a form telling how they had used the technology. The district actively used technology not only in the classroom, but also for staff development (e.g., online mentoring, videoconferencing). Since the program was implemented, student test scores have risen.
- In one school, staff content area teams (e.g., math team) wrote standards for both teachers and students, set the curriculum in each area, and conducted evaluations of both student learning and staff development. Inherently, this structure met one of the award criteria by developing staff intellectual and leadership capability: All staff had to make decisions that principals or leadership teams make in many schools.
- In another district, a committee with school representatives first created professional development principles. Then they drafted a tool called “What All Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do” to spell out in precise terms the skills and competencies teachers needed to meet education goals. Individuals were ultimately responsible for ensuring that their development helped them progress in these defined areas.
- In one elementary school, professional development goals flowed directly from the specific grade-level student expectations and curriculum. In addition, enhancing staff leadership capacity was a major principle. Teachers who were “stars” in key areas provided training for others who needed development. Thus, the school saved money and the stars were able to develop their facilitation skills. In addition, stars were invited to a district-level academy to further build their teaching strengths, receiving credits toward master’s degrees. They brought their newly enhanced skills back to the school and shared them with others in structured settings.
- In another school, PD goals were clearly identified as part of the pay-for-performance program. These PD goals were linked to specific school performance goals and objectives. PD goals were required to be specific and measurable so that the staff could evaluate whether PD activities were effective. Linking dollars to performance gave this school a reason to ensure that all PD goals were specific and measurable. In addition, the school had a vision, a mission, and beliefs that acted as guideposts for all school activities.
- In yet another school, PD goals cover content expertise, instruction process, and school leadership. These PD goals are based on the school’s five major goals and on the needs assessment process. This

school identified specific activities to support each PD goal. Some goals are very specific and quantifiable, others are more “cultural.”

- In one district, a joint teacher association and administrator team produced guiding principles (“staff development beliefs”) and objectives (“staff development outcomes”) for professional development. The objectives were phrased so that the specifics (e.g., numerical targets, content area focus) could easily change from school to school and from year to year.



Organizers' Checklist

Make a Clear Plan That Includes Professional Development Goals

- ☐ Create professional development principles (general goals and parameters). (Use Tool 6.)
- ☐ Create professional development objectives (specific goals). (Use Tools 3, 5, and 7.)

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 6— CLARIFY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the level of planning (i.e., district, school, or team). In column one, identify sources of principles. In column two, list the school/district principles that act as guideposts for educational activities and student learning. In column three, describe the PD principles that will support each general principle or goal. In column four, note potential measures for each PD principle (i.e., How will you know when you are abiding by each principle?). Note: principles are presumed to be at the organizational or team, not individual, level.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Level (check one): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team

| Source | Principle or Goal | Supporting PD Principles | Measures for Principles |
|--|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Example: <i>Vision statement</i> | <i>All students can learn</i> | <i>PD will help staff ensure that all students do learn and improve</i> | <i>% students meeting/exceeding minimum standards; % students improving</i> |
| Vision, Mission, Beliefs | | | |
| General Student Learning Goals (see Tool 3) | | | |
| Award Criteria: Professional Development Principles | | PD will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve <i>all</i> students' learning. b. Improve teacher effectiveness. c. Set high standards for teachers. d. Promote continuous staff learning. e. Enhance staff intellectual and leadership capacity. | |
| Other | | | |

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 7— CLARIFY SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Instructions: Fill in name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the level of planning (i.e., district, school, team, or individual). Using Tool 5, in column one list the skills and competencies staff need to close student learning gaps. In column two, indicate whether this skill is a strength or gap. In column three, state your PD objectives. For example, “All teachers will achieve X skill or Y outcome” to close a staff gap. Or “Teachers will do X activity at Y frequency” to increase implementation of a strength. Finally, in column four identify how you will measure achievement of each goal. Many award winners use direct assessment of teacher skill/competence and student performance.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Level (check one): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team ☐ Individual

| Needed Teacher Skills/Competencies (Tool 5) | Gap or Strength (Tool 5) | Supporting Professional Development Goals | Measures for This Goal |
|--|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Example: Gifted-reader instruction techniques</i> | <i>Gap</i> | <i>Staff will learn and use gifted-reader instruction techniques to sustain high achievement levels of gifted readers</i> | <i>% top scorers maintain/increase scores; staff knowledge of gifted-reader teaching techniques; frequency and quality of use by staff of gifted-reader teaching techniques</i> |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT, PROCESS, AND ACTIVITIES

Themes From Award Winners

If you have followed the planning tools up to this point, you are capable of defining specific PD content, process, and activities that will help you meet your professional development goals, just as award winners have done. Defining PD goes far beyond deciding what workshops staff will attend. You must decide how you want PD (and staff) to be integrated into other school activities. Then you can design the PD process, and possibly your other school instruction and management activities, around this decision.

Plan professional development content. The “content” of PD is the topic knowledge, skills, or competencies staff members need to meet PD goals. In other words, this is “what staff members need to know.” In award-winning organizations, the content of PD at the district, school, and team levels was driven almost exclusively by the PD goals and underlying student education goals. The career goals and interests of individual staff members also affected the content of individual development.

Plan the professional development process. Most award winners used a two-part PD process. Part one, the PD organizing process, is the set of steps staff or others go through to ensure that the right content is addressed and activities are chosen, with all stakeholders involved and informed. Part two is the process used in activities such as workshops, team discussions, observation, and so on. In some cases, the “process” is the “content.” One example is when a school’s goal is to “integrate PD with daily classroom activity.” Teacher teams whose primary mode of staff development is frequent discussion of student performance use this “process” both to learn “integration” and to organize resulting PD activities.

While both parts of the process were seen as important, award winners were more focused on making the PD organizing process a learning event in itself than on making sure that workshops were well taught. Many noted that even workshops with great “process” were limited (although still useful) in their impact. In contrast, embedding PD organizing in daily staff work developed staff leadership and technical knowledge while linking PD more closely to classroom results.

Plan professional development activities. Award winners used numerous kinds of activities, many of which are not new. The critical factor was that award winners selected activities to meet their school or district’s specific PD goals. They defined development activities to support both their PD *principles* and their *specific goals* (see Tools 6 and 7). Many award winners also found ways to embed PD learning into ongoing school activities and management. One of the critical themes from award winners is that the very best PD can be quickly applied to daily work in the classroom (or other places that most directly affects students).

The highest-impact professional development activities were ones that directly and immediately improved staff and management work.



Some award winners found frequent evaluation and improvement discussions to be valuable professional development activities.



Using your technology is critical for organizing data for frequent review of student progress.

Example activities from award winners include:

- Team work, including test development, grading, student performance analysis and problem solving, curriculum development, and school management in teams
- Curriculum development (requiring research and planning)
- Action research (forming and testing a hypothesis in the classroom)
- Workshops and conferences
- Individual or small-team research (using mini-sabbaticals or other time)
- Staff study groups
- Mentoring—veterans mentoring new teachers; internal or external (e.g., university) experts mentoring staff
- Observation of others (e.g., “stars” in a skill area; demonstration teaching)
- Peer or supervisor observation, with or without feedback
- Model classrooms for PD innovation testing
- Parent/community learning activities

Award winners typically organize different activities at different organizational levels. For example, award-winning districts often offer workshops on topics needed by many teachers (or other staff or parents). Districts have the clout and funds to get top-grade speakers and facilitators to serve a large number of district staff at one time. Even then, most award winners have very few mandatory development activities taking place at the district level; typically (although not always), district offerings are voluntary. Individual staff members and their supervisors determine which district offerings fit their needs, based on school goals and the skills that individuals need to develop to meet them.

In contrast, award winners typically organize individual research within schools, with both content and specific research activities determined either by work teams or the individual and his or her immediate supervisor (depending on the PD decision process at the school).

Examples From Award Winners

- One district offers minigrants of up to \$350 to encourage innovation. The two major criteria are the level of innovation and the potential to improve student learning. For teaching staff, the district favors PD activities that can be used directly in the classroom. The “ideal” minigrants go to teachers who want to try a new classroom project or program that is “innovative, original, and beneficial” to students; grants in this case go directly for materials needed for the new approach. Funding is available only for materials, speakers, and other needs not already available within the schools. The district’s PD committee makes monthly decisions about any new minigrant applications and provides feedback to unsuccessful applicants about how to improve their approach to obtain future funding. Examples of funded projects include special field

trips for students (e.g., musical performances, museums) and a program that explored math concepts in literature.

- In one school, ongoing coaching, feedback, and reflection are the primary PD activities, in addition to more traditional summer institutes and inservice days. Teaching staff members have weekly 30-minute meetings with the lead teacher in their content area. They review their individual PD action plans and progress. Quarterly, each teacher presents a report of student progress to the school's leadership team (which includes administrators, lead teachers, and teaching specialists). They also have weekly, voluntary group discussions on various PD topics of interest to multiple staff.
- In another school, coaching and team work—including planning, analysis of student progress, and problem solving—are the primary forms of PD. Students are assessed on a six-week cycle, and teachers decide in teams what staff development is needed to focus on opportunities and gaps seen in student assessments. Extensive formal and informal coaching by peers, the principal, and external experts is critical to this school's success.
- In one district, most professional development occurs during other activities, including curriculum and lesson development, instructional adjustments, analysis of student work, student assessment development, ongoing research and review of instructional methods, reference to standards, and team discussion and presentations. More traditional content skill training to support school and district goals supplements these activities.
- In an award-winning elementary school, standardized achievement scores were at only 33 percent in 1994, driven largely by low literacy scores. Therefore, the school developed two major educational goals: It wanted students to become better (1) readers and (2) writers. The resulting professional development goal was for staff to improve student achievement in reading and writing (along with two other process goals). They researched and found that the New Zealand Model for Balanced Literacy best fit their diverse student population's needs for reading instruction, and that the Six Trait Writing program met their writing needs. PD activities, including formal training and on-the-job implementation, have centered on helping staff understand and use these instructional programs.



Organizers' Checklist

Make a Clear Plan That Includes Professional Development Content, Process, and Activities

- ☐ Plan a process for selecting PD content and activities at each organization level (i.e., district, school, team, and individual staff). (Use Tool 8.)
- ☐ Complete the following tasks for each organization level:
 - ☐ Identify the specific PD content required to meet each PD goal. (Use Tool 9.)
 - ☐ Identify potential activities to learn PD content. (Use Tool 9.)
 - ☐ Research potential activities. (Use Tools 9 and 10.)
 - ☐ Select activities at each organizational level. (Use Tools 9 and 10.)

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 8— PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZING PROCESS PLANNER

The purpose of this tool is to help you define how you will make specific PD content and activity decisions to meet PD goals.

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. For each organization level listed in column one, answer each of the questions. When you are finished, review your answers to make sure that the decisions at all levels make sense together. Do these decisions fit with how you make other decisions in your school or district? If not, consider other changes that may be needed.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

| Organization Level | Who identifies potential PD content and activities? How? | Who else has input into content and activities? How? | Who researches activity costs and benefits? | Who makes final decisions about PD activities? How? |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Example: <i>Schoolwide PD activities</i> | <i>School leadership team for instruction, leadership, and technology (all academic content chosen at team level)</i> | <i>Other staff via annual survey and review at staff meetings</i> | <i>Leadership team members (including instruction leaders) accountable for research, but may ask other staff for help</i> | <i>Principal, in consultation with leadership team</i> |
| District | | | | |
| School | | | | |
| Team | | | | |
| Individual | | | | |

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 9— PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT AND ACTIVITY PLANNER

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the organization level and the PD goal you are addressing. (See Tools 6 and 7 for your PD goals.)

On a separate sheet, generate ideas for topics that support the PD goal. Useful sources include skills and competencies from Tool 7; surveys of staff, students, and parents; a group brainstorming session; and research that you conduct. Then, narrow down your topics to focus on one or two that best support this PD goal for the next 12 months.

For each topic, brainstorm and research potential activities. For each activity, you need a description that includes activity content and process (column one); staff time required and deadlines (column two); resources needed (column three); and the expected impact on the PD goal (column four). Use the information you gather to help you decide which activities will best help you meet this goal with the available resources.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Level (check one): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team

PD Goal: _____

| Topic | Potential Activity (content and process) | Time: a. Deadlines b. Staff time | Required Resources (funding, expertise, facilities) | Impact on Goal (high, medium, or low) |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Example: <i>Reading for gifted students</i> | <i>Training for reading team to implement individualized reading program for gifted students, using ABC Program. Monthly review of gifted students using ABC method.</i> | <i>a. Initial training 3 hours (January) b. Initial 3 hours; 30 minutes/month</i> | <i>Materials for training, \$400; Can train and do ongoing work in weekly team block time, so no substitutes needed; no special expertise or facilities needed</i> | <i>Expect will maintain "steep," individualized learning curve for gifted readers; help catch problems early; high impact, low cost</i> |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES RESEARCH THAT SUPPORTS THE CHOSEN CONTENT/PROCESS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Themes From Award Winners

Award winners conducted research to ensure that their approach to PD was supported by the experiences of other successful schools and districts. (See Appendix D for a literature review supporting the award criteria and Appendix B for other resources that may be helpful.) They used research results to design professional development and to support grant-writing efforts. Their methods varied, depending on available staff time and on the specific focus of professional development. The common themes included the following:

Assign responsibility for research. Winners were methodical about assigning responsibility for conducting research. They did research to learn how to gather information about how to use a particular approach successfully and to evaluate its likely success. The side benefit was that winners created “experts” within their school who knew the ins and outs of new approaches.

Build on the work of others. Winners used existing sources of information rather than do all research from scratch. Winning schools looked to district PD staff for prior research. They also used national groups such as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

Plan to use action research. Some winners saw themselves as the best source of ongoing research, and they used “action research” methods to test the effectiveness of PD within their own schools.

Examples From Award Winners

- One district assigned PD staff members to conduct ongoing, comprehensive research. It summarizes results and disseminates them to schools regularly.
- One school looked first to NSDC standards and to the research already available to support them. It conducted independent research into PD best practices, as well. The school researched content issues and different ways to organize the PD decision-making process. To get the work done, PD committee members took responsibility for specific research topics. These people keep up with current findings in their topic areas and make ongoing recommendations about new activities to support PD goals.
- Another school obtained initial “best practice” research from a local university involved in school improvement. Later, they conducted action research to test how well best practices worked when applied at the school. The school learned from its internal research that implementation was as important as design; and it made subsequent changes in how to help teachers learn to improve students’ problem-solving skills.

Award winners built their innovations on top of the successful experiences of others.



Use the Internet to visit key professional development Web sites for current information on best practices. See Appendix B for suggested sites.

Action research is using the real results in your own school or district to draw conclusions about what approaches to staff and student learning work for you (and why). Action research applies formal “laboratory” steps, but uses “real world” data that you collect in your own school(s).



Organizers' Checklist

Make a Clear Plan That Includes Research That Supports the Chosen Content/Process for Professional Development

- ☐ Include research into best practices in the initial PD design. (Use Tools 9 and 10.)

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 10— RESEARCH SUMMARY

Instructions: Indicate the research topic, researcher's name, and the date below. See Tool 8 for decisions you may already have made about how you will choose people to conduct research on specific activities. Consider sources of existing research, e.g., district-level PD staff, national organizations such as the National Staff Development Council, and local university professors specializing in staff development or school improvement. Use the table below to record your answers to each question.

Topic or Question: _____ Researcher: _____ Date: _____

| Research Questions | Notes |
|--|-------|
| Where else has this PD approach been tried? | |
| How are these schools/districts similar or dissimilar to ours? | |
| What are the benefits of this PD approach? | |
| What are the weaknesses of this PD approach? | |
| How costly is this approach in money and staff time? | |
| What are other reasons this approach might (or might not) work in our school/district? | |
| What are some alternatives to this approach that we might research further? | |

MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Themes From Award Winners

Award winners used three essential resources to support their PD efforts: money, expertise, and facilities. Obtaining and using each of these resources well was critical to their success.

Get and use money well. Award winners generally cited three critical elements for funding PD: focusing on high-impact priorities, spending wisely, and tapping a variety of funding sources. These elements are described below.

1. Award winners focused resources on the highest-impact priorities. Many (but not all) award winners said that how they allocated dollars was almost as critical as how much they had available. These winners were methodical about prioritizing funds, no matter what the source, to focus on high-impact efforts. They focused more of the school's overall budget on professional development and ensured that money went to the highest-priority PD activities first. Winners vary in how they made decisions about PD priorities. In some organizations, this decision was made at the district or school level. In others, instructional teams with their own budgets made PD spending decisions. Most award winners made PD spending decisions on a combination of levels, typically district, school, and team.
2. Award winners were good at spending money wisely. For example, more than one winner collaborated with other schools in the district (or other districts in the state) to provide large-group training with high-quality speakers. Most used some version of a train-the-trainer method, sending staff "stars" in a content area to national conferences and having them share lessons with other staff upon return.
3. Award winners were very good at raising money. They found a variety of funding sources in addition to regular allocations: corporate foundations and direct corporate funding; private foundations (local, state, and national); federal grants (both PD-focused and general funds for special student populations); and budget line items related to PD (e.g., funds allocated for staff planning time). Many said that aggressive grant writing is essential; it forces you to make a good plan and it adds money to your PD budget. Grant-writing resources include district-level staff, teachers (typically on paid release time), and university staff for joint grant applications. Winners used their earlier research to demonstrate the strength of their PD approaches and to increase chances of obtaining support. Forming a research partnership with a local university or community college to try innovative approaches to PD was a common approach.

Obtain expertise. In addition to direct funding, award winners sought volunteer or inexpensive expertise. Sources included their own staff, district-level experts, parents, university faculty, community college faculty, and union staff. Many of these sources also had a mission to train and educate; thus, partnerships helped everyone meet their goals.

Award winners rigorously set priorities to focus resources for maximum impact.



Some of the best sources of funds are your current funders. Make sure they know what impact their funds are having in your school(s).



Using local experts from universities or other sources was a common way for award winners to improve data gathering for evaluation.

Obtain facilities. Finally, physical space was an asset that some winners sought either to boost PD directly or to save money in other budget areas. Sources included community colleges and universities (for large-group, off-site PD), local corporate training and retreat facilities, and local community agency space.

Examples From Award Winners

- One urban school uses local resources extensively to support PD directly and free up funding. It uses local university professors to mentor and train teaching staff as well as to help design evaluation instruments. The school uses local YMCA space (for physical education) and museums (for art) to free up funds that could be focused on PD. Budgeting is critical. All funds from all sources go into the same large pool, which they draw from according to the school's overall priorities. Since many PD activities are very high priority, they are well funded.
- A very isolated rural school uses external partnerships with organizations around the country to support its PD efforts. These partners provide funding and special training opportunities for staff. In addition, this award winner draws on the resources of six local community colleges and universities. The school also obtains grants from foundations for specific purposes. It uses a train-the-trainer approach extensively to spread the benefit of training while keeping costs down. It keeps a "wish list" of specific needs (PD and other), even ones that are not top priority, so that when special-purpose funds become available via grants or through the district, it can quickly take advantage of the opportunity.
- One award-winning district provides internal staff development consultants at the district level who are available to work with schools and even individual teachers. The district also makes competitive grants available to teachers for individual research. It boosted its own funds by applying for private foundation grants.



Organizers' Checklist

Make a Clear Plan That Includes Resources Available to Support Professional Development

- ☐ Identify sources and uses of financial resources. (Use Tool 11.)
- ☐ Identify needs and sources of expertise for each selected PD activity. (Use Tool 9.)
- ☐ Identify needs and sources of expertise for PD design, implementation, and evaluation processes as needed.
- ☐ Identify needs and sources for PD-related facilities.

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 11— FINANCIAL RESOURCE PLANNING

Instructions: Use budgeting spreadsheets available to you to assist with planning. In Table A, identify both existing funds and high-potential additional funds for the next year for all purposes (not just PD). Add up the total expected funds available.

In Table B, identify mandatory expenditures for legal purposes or basic organizational effectiveness. Then, in priority order, list discretionary expenses. Include PD activities where they fit in the overall priority order of expenditures for the district or school. Be sure to consider both direct costs and indirect costs, such as replacement staff or overtime. Keep a running total (sum of all costs to that point in list) so you can see how far down your priority list expected funds will take you. Where in your priority list do the funds run out? Do you need to rethink your priority order?

Your actual list probably will be much longer than indicated here. Use these tables as a guide to focus and prioritize your resource allocation.

| <i>Table A: Sources of Funds</i> | |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Source | Amount |
| Existing Funds in Budget | \$ |
| Potential Additional Sources | |
| 1. | \$ |
| 2. | \$ |
| 3. | \$ |
| Total Funds (sum of above) | \$ |

| <i>Table B: Uses of Funds</i> | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Priority Uses of Funds | Direct Costs | Add'l Staff Cost* | Running Total |
| Nondiscretionary Expenses | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Discretionary Priorities | | | |
| 1. | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 2. | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 3. | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 4. | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 5. | \$ | \$ | \$ |

*For staff overtime or substitute time not included in nondiscretionary expenses.

MAKE A CLEAR PLAN THAT INCLUDES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION STEPS

Themes From Award Winners

Most award winners found that the evaluation steps looked somewhat like the initial needs assessment, although they were more focused on chosen PD goals and activities. Their lessons include the following:

Measure how well activities help meet professional development goals.

Evaluation typically combined simple tools to evaluate specific activities, more extensive analysis of teacher effectiveness and student learning progress, and a process for making PD improvements based on evaluation results.

Most winners evaluated specific activities with short evaluation forms (typically one page) that assessed the quality of both the process and the content. The process questions addressed the quality of speakers and materials. The content questions addressed how well the activity taught specific knowledge and how well the content helped participants meet PD goals.

More extensive analysis included looking at student progress—student-by-student, teacher-by-teacher, grade-by-grade—and making simple comparisons within the school (or district) as well as to external comparison groups (e.g., state averages). Also included in the “extensive” category were more qualitative means of assessing staff progress in target skills/competencies via many of the same methods as the initial needs assessment.

Frequent evaluation and improvement is best. The process for making improvements varied widely among award winners and typically depended on how the school or district was managed generally. Staff involvement in PD *improvement* tended to be similar to staff involvement in PD *planning*. In some schools/districts, a working team analyzed results and presented them to a leadership team with recommendations. This activity often occurred on an annual basis. In other schools/districts, staff teams made regular changes in PD based on feedback. Schools doing both frequent and annual evaluation/improvement reported that the frequent feedback was the most helpful for ensuring that PD resulted in immediate improvement in student performance.

Examples From Award Winners

- One school combines several evaluation elements: frequent peer and self-evaluation in the school’s staff instructional teams using teacher portfolios and student outcomes; periodic student evaluations of teachers; and annual review of student achievement versus goals.
- Another school uses this combination: evaluations immediately following workshops; team-level assessment of whether staff members are using training ideas and materials in the classroom with success; teacher portfolios showing teacher progress against individual development goals; and a broad, annual “needs assessment” survey.

Evaluation means figuring whether you are meeting your goals, why or why not, and what you should do next to improve.

Award winners’ evaluation plans addressed not just data gathering, but the PD improvement process as well.



What works this year might not address next year’s needs. Frequent evaluation and improvement will help keep your staff and students moving forward.



Frequent evaluation requires using technology to make sense of data quickly and effectively.

- Still another school uses “action research” to test PD efforts, forming and testing their hypotheses about what would improve teacher and student performance. They also use simple feedback forms to evaluate specific activities, and they conduct a broad annual survey.



Organizers' Checklist

Make a Clear Plan That Includes Professional Development Evaluation Steps

- ☐ Identify success measures for each PD goal and each supporting activity. (Use Tool 12.)
- ☐ Identify data sources and a gathering method for each measure. (Use Tool 12.)
- ☐ Plan a process for reporting evaluation findings. (Use Tool 12.)
- ☐ Determine who will lead the process for making PD. (Use Tool 12.)

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 12— EVALUATION PLANNER

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the organization level. In column one, list the PD goals you are evaluating. In column two, list the activities associated with each PD goal. In column three, indicate the measures of success for each activity (see the needs assessment section and Tool 7). Consider results (does activity help you meet PD goals) and process (speaker quality, etc). In column four, describe how you will gather data for these measures. Include both the sources of data and the method (e.g., students via questionnaire). In columns five through seven, indicate who will gather and report data (as well as who might provide assistance), when it will be gathered, and who will ensure that results are used to improve PD.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Level (check one): ☐ District ☐ School ☐ Team

| PD Goal | Activities | Measures of Success | Data Sources and Gathering Method | Who Will Gather and Report? | When? | Who Will Lead Improvement Planning? |
|---|---|---|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Example: Staff will learn and use gifted-reader instruction techniques to sustain high achievement levels of gifted readers | ABC gifted program for reading instructional team | % top scorers maintain/increase scores; staff knowledge; frequency, quality of staff use of ABC | Test score statistics; peer observation, team leader observation, team report to principal | Team leader; principal | Test scores mid- and end of year; observation, team report October, February | Team leader; may ask principal for facilitation assistance |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

SHARE THE PLAN WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Themes From Award Winners

Do more than communicate facts. Award winners found a variety of ways to keep the school community informed about professional development, starting with the planning stage. In fact, most award winners sought to get the school community excited about PD to encourage active support for PD and related school improvement efforts.

At a bare minimum, award winners kept parents, staff (many of whom were already involved in PD organizing), students, and other community members informed about PD basics, along with other high-priority school news. They used a variety of communication media, depending upon their resources (see examples below). In addition to sharing the plan for PD improvements, award winners found it motivating to focus on student learning results once PD had been implemented.

Media for sharing PD news with school community:

- School newsletters
- PTA meetings and newsletters
- Open forums
- Press releases
- Open presentations
- Postings on school bulletin boards
- School handbooks
- Special celebration events throughout year
- Letters and memos to parents
- Parent conferences
- End-of-year events to celebrate yearlong efforts
- E-mail updates
- District calendars
- Local radio programs
- Web pages

Award winners started off on the right foot by sharing their plans for professional development change with the school community.



Professional development is easier to continue over the long haul if you have a broad base of support for your efforts.



Use technology to keep parents informed and to encourage more parents to learn the technology that will be essential in their children's lives.

Help parents understand professional development. Many award winners wanted to give parents and community members a taste of PD. In addition to involving parents and others directly on the PD organizing team, award winners:

- Invited parents to attend staff development events.
- Provided special parent development sessions that mimic group staff development activities.
- Involved parents in academic extracurricular activities, to learn or to share expertise.
- Got input into PD planning from parent advisory committees.

Examples From Award Winners

- One award winner goes to great lengths to inform parents about and include them in a variety of ways in PD and other school activities. It holds family nights to focus on curriculum topics and works hard to get 100 percent attendance. Parents are heavily involved in extracurricular activities, including academic clubs. The school newsletter and letters to parents keep them informed about the school's mission, PD efforts, results, and activities. In addition, the school holds special events to celebrate student results and other successes. School information is shared in person at parent conferences.
- In an award-winning district, parents are invited to attend some group staff development activities. In addition, the district uses a combination of media to inform parents about PD: periodic reports, open forums, press releases, presentations, campus newsletters, posting the mission statement, campus handbooks, campus-level celebrations, and others.



Organizers' Checklist

Share the Plan With the School Community

- ☐ Make a plan for ongoing communications, including information about the initial PD plan, with school community. (Use Tools 1 and 13.)

ACTION PLANNER TOOL 13— KEEPING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY INFORMED ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. In column one, list the stakeholders from Tool 1 that you want to keep informed about PD. Answer the questions at the top of each column for each stakeholder. Tailor your answers to make the desired impact on each stakeholder. Remember, you may want send different messages using different kinds of media. Also, consider the special needs of each stakeholder (e.g., parents who read and speak in languages other than English).

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

| Stakeholder | What do we want to communicate? | How often? | What media will we use? | Who is accountable? |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|--|
| Example: <i>Parents</i> | <i>PD change process, new PD design with role for parents, student results</i> | <i>Monthly at minimum</i> | <i>PTA meetings; school newsletter; end-of-year celebration</i> | <i>Parent/staff communication team, with guidance from principal</i> |
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