

Introduction

School-level planning of professional development with "best practice" characteristics is necessary to access federal professional development funds under the new guidelines resulting from the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Best practice professional development aligns activities with school-level priorities, whether they are engaged in by the entire faculty, groups of educators, or individuals.

The purpose of professional development is improving the learning of all students. Therefore, best practices call for professional development priorities to be significantly related to and aligned with student learning priorities.

A paradigm shift has occurred in the learning of professional educators. Best practice professional development gives on-going attention over an extended period of time to important school priorities related to teaching and learning. These priorities are identified as the result of a needs assessment that involves a systematic review of data by administrators and teachers.

Best practice professional development activities use delivery systems that actively engage educators with expanding their knowledge, expanding their skills, and exploring their beliefs about teaching and learning. Such activities involve collaboration with other educators and reflection on what one has learned. These activities also provide educators with opportunities to practice new skills, apply new learning, and receive support during the process of implementation.

The paradigm shift extends to the evaluation of professional learning activities. No longer is it sufficient to assess the value of professional development by obtaining participants' reaction to the logistics, the facilitator or the program. It is not even sufficient to assess the knowledge the participants' gained or the increase in collaboration that resulted from the program. Best practice evaluation needs to gather information over time on the extent to which the professional development resulted in changes in practice and improvement in students' learning.

School-Level Professional Development Plan Components

School-level professional development plans must have the following components:

1. Professional development committee membership
2. Mission statement for professional development
3. List of school improvement priority areas that relate to teaching and learning
4. Needs assessment method(s) for determining professional development priorities
5. Statement of goals for school-sponsored and/or school-supported professional development
6. Description of professional development activities that will be undertaken to achieve the professional development goals
7. Evaluation method(s) for determining the effectiveness of professional development activities and the extent to which professional development goals are met

School-Level Professional Development Plan Outline

School name

Principal's name

Date plan was created (e.g., July, 2003)

Dates plan is in effect (e.g., July, 2006 through June, 2009) [Maximum of three years]

Date by which plan will be revised (e.g., July, 2009)

1. Professional development committee membership

List the members of the school's professional development committee who collaborated on the preparation of this plan.

2. Mission statement for professional development

Briefly articulate the school's beliefs about and commitment to professional development.

3. List of school improvement priority areas that relate to teaching and learning

List all current school improvement priority areas that relate to teaching and learning.

4. Needs assessment method(s) for determining professional development goals

Describe how the school determines its professional development goals.

5. Statement of goals for school-sponsored and/or school-supported professional development

List the school's goals for professional development.

6. Description of professional development activities that will be undertaken to achieve the professional development goals

For each professional development goal identified in #5, describe the professional development activities that will be undertaken to achieve its professional development goals.

7. Evaluation method(s) for determining the effectiveness of professional development activities and the extent to which professional development goals are met

For each professional development goal identified in #5, describe how the school will determine the degree to which its professional development goals have been met.

Guidelines for and Examples of School-Level Professional Development Plan Components:

1. Professional development committee membership

Identify members by name and position. The committee must include at least one administrator and at least three teachers who will represent the faculty.

2. Mission statement for professional development

3. List of school improvement priority areas that relate to teaching and learning

These school improvement priorities may originate from:

- accreditation-related school improvement processes
- the school's technology plan
- patterns in the areas a significant number of teachers are working on as part of their teacher evaluation process
- reviews of student achievement and performance data
- the school's strategic plan
- other evaluative reviews of the school's instructional program
- other needs assessments related to teaching and learning
- needs assessments specifically related to professional development.

Examples of school improvement priorities related to teaching and learning include:

- Technology integration
- Students with special needs
- Reading in the content areas.

4. Needs assessment method(s) for determining professional development priorities

Include what information is gathered, how the data are analyzed, and who is involved in the process.

Common methods of gathering information include:

- school documents and other archival material
- surveys, and
- interviews and discussions
- observations

The results of the needs assessment should identify both strengths of the school's professional development program and areas for which there is a gap between the current level of faculty knowledge and skills and the level necessary to address the priorities identified in #3.

5. Statement of goals for school-sponsored and/or school supported professional development activities

The goals should reflect the school's specific priorities for professional development. Each goal should clearly relate to one or more school improvement priorities identified in #3 and should be derived from or confirmed by the needs assessment methods identified in #4.

The goals should address aspects of faculty knowledge and skills for which there is a gap between the current status and the proficiency necessary to address the priorities identified in #3.

The goals should state what knowledge and skills teachers will acquire, increase, or improve in order to address the priorities identified in #3. The goals should include a number of specific instructional strategies that the school intends to focus on for school-wide emphasis.

Examples of goals for school-sponsored and/or school-supported professional development include:

- Faculty members will increase their ability to design and implement instructional activities that use the Internet as a source of information.
- Faculty members will increase their understanding of the types of special needs present among our students, how those needs affect learning, and how to differentiate instruction to address the needs.
- Faculty members will increase their ability to use advanced organizers as a method for teaching students how to read content area materials.

6. Description of professional development activities that will be undertaken to achieve the professional development goals

These activities should include current and planned professional development activities that will contribute to the achievement of each professional development goal. Identify what changes in educational practice and what changes in student achievement are expected to result from the professional development activities. Be sure to include any activities for which the school intends to apply for Title II Part A funds.

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING SCHOOL LEVEL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Include all professional development activities that the school will provide and that the school will support teachers in accessing. Professional development activities must go beyond activities that increase awareness only to activities that provide opportunities for practice and for feedback and coaching during the implementation of new learning.

Include how the professional development activities are or will be organized. State the expectations or requirements for participation. State the estimated cost and estimated timeline for each activity. Identify the resources available to support implementation of the activities (e.g., amount and sources of funds, amount and allocation of time, etc.)

Describe how the activities relate to best practices in teaching and learning. If available, cite relevant research that supports the focus of the activities. Describe how the delivery systems for the activities reflect best practices in professional development. Best practice delivery systems include:

- study groups
- peer coaching and mentoring
- lesson study
- analysis of students' work
- action research
- effective journaling
- portfolio development
- teacher networks
- design teams

Examples of activities that will be undertaken to achieve the professional development goals are:

- The technology coordinator will plan and implement a series of five workshops in both face to face and on line to acquaint teachers with appropriate Internet resources for their grade levels and content areas. The technology coordinator will provide coaching to participants in between the workshop sessions. Participants will maintain a portfolio of lessons developed during the workshop series.
- The principal will organize the faculty into study groups by grade clusters. These study groups will design, implement, and evaluate lessons that use the Internet.
- The school will send three teachers to the Midwest Education Technology Conference sessions related to using the Internet and allocate time for these teachers to teach and coach other faculty members the skills they acquired at the conference.

7. Evaluation method(s) for determining the effectiveness of professional development activities and the extent to which professional development goals are met

Include what information will be gathered, how the data will be analyzed, and who will be involved in the process. Specifically address how changes in educational practice and student achievement will be determined. Identify the criteria that will be used to determine success.

Common methods for determining the effectiveness of professional development activities include:

- teacher questionnaires or tests
- teacher interviews/conferences and written reflections
- teacher artifacts and portfolios
- teacher implementation logs
- individual and/or "walk through"