Standards for High Quality Professional Learning

The following information is taken from Learning Forward’s Standards of Professional Learning, 2011.

The new Standards for Professional Learning are based on a holistic view—the seven standards work in partnership to ensure effective professional learning. It is important for educators to realize that focusing on some of the standards, while ignoring others, can lead to failure in achieving the desired outcomes from professional learning activities.

PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT (the context)

1. **Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students** occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
   - Learning communities apply a cycle of continuous improvement to engage in inquiry, action research, data analysis, planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation.
   - Learning communities share collective responsibility for the learning of all students within the school or school system.
   - Learning communities provide an ongoing system of support for continuous improvement and implementation.

2. **Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students** requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
   - Skillful leaders recognize that high expectations for students, requires effective professional learning to expand educator’s knowledge, skills, practices and dispositions.
   - Skillful leaders demand effective professional learning focused on results for educators and students.
   - Skillful leaders have a deep understanding of and cultural responsiveness to the community they serve.
   - Skillful leaders embed professional learning into the organization’s vision by communicating that it is a core function to realizing results for students.
   - Skillful leaders align professional learning to classroom, school, and school-system goals for student and educator learning, using data to monitor and measure its effect on educator and student performance.
   - Skillful leaders clearly articulate the critical link between increased student achievement and educator professional learning.
   - Skillful leaders apply understanding of organizational and human changes to create the conditions, provide for the resources, and support professional learning and change.
   - Skillful leaders make their own learning very visible.
   - Skillful leader’s model attitudes and behavior they expect of all educators.
Skillful leader’s engage with all stakeholders within the educational community, with parents, business personnel, and community organizations to communicate the importance of professional learning to promote the success of all students.

3. **Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.**

- Decisions about resources for professional learning require a thorough understanding of student and educator learning needs, clear commitment to ensure equity in resource allocation, and thoughtful consideration of priorities to achieve the intended outcomes for students and educators.
- Effective professional learning requires a significant investment in time (15%). Education systems worldwide have schedules that provide time in the school day for teacher collaboration and planning to increase student learning.
- Use of high-speed broadband, web-based and other technologies, professional journals and books, software, and a comprehensive learning management system is essential to support individual and collaborative professional learning.
- Access to just-in-time learning resources and participation in local or global communities or networks available to individuals or teams during the workday expand opportunities for job-embedded professional learning.
- Investments in professional learning outside the school or workplace supplement and advance job-embedded professional learning.
- Tracking and monitoring resources used for professional learning is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of their allocation and use.
- Decisions about funding must specifically address inequities in learning needs and opportunities to learn.
- Coordination of resources is essential to their appropriate and effective use.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRACTICE (process)**

4. **Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.**

- Data from multiple sources inform decisions about professional learning that leads to increases in student and educator learning.
- Multiple sources of data could include: common formative and summative assessments, performance assessments, observations, work-samples, performance metrics, portfolios, and reflections (student, educator, and system)
- Educator support in the effective analysis and use of data to make informed decisions.
Other forms of data are useful in understanding student needs (demographics, engagement, attendance, student perceptions, behavior and discipline, extracurricular activities, etc.)

Knowing student learning needs helps guide decisions about educator professional learning.

School leaders and/or system administrators engage in data collection and analysis to determine changes in policy, procedures, fiscal resources, human resources, time, or technology, needed to support school- and team-based learning.

Data is used to monitor and assess progress against established benchmarks.

School teams use data to monitor implementation of professional learning and its effect on educator practice and student learning.

Frequent and ongoing collection and use of data about inputs, outputs, and outcomes of professional learning reinforce the cycle of continuous improvement by allowing for ongoing adjustments in the learning process to increase results for students, educators, and systems.

Well-designed, ongoing evaluation of professional learning addresses its worth, merit, and effectiveness.

5. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

- Integrating theories, research, and models of human learning into the planning and design of professional learning contributes to its effectiveness.
- Learning designs are influenced by goals of learning, characteristics of learners, the comfort level with the learning process and with each other, their familiarity with the content, the magnitude of the expected change, work environment, and resources available to support the learning.
- The design of professional learning affects its quality and effectiveness.
- Common design features are: active engagement, modeling, reflection, metacognition, application, feedback, ongoing support, and formative and summative assessment, that support change in knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practice.
- Professional learning occurs in face-to-face, online, and hybrid settings.
- Most professional learning occurs as a part of the workday, while other forms occur outside the school day.
- Some professional learning designs require team members or external experts as facilitators.
- Learning designs use synchronous or asynchronous interactions, live or simulated models and experiences, and print and non-print resources to present information, model skills and procedures, provide low-risk practice, and support transfer to the workplace.
- Job-embedded learning designs engage individuals, pairs, or teams of educators in professional learning during the workday.
Job-embedded learning opportunities include: analyzing student data, case studies, peer observations or visitations, simulations, co-teaching, action research, peer and expert coaching, observing and analyzing demonstrations of practice, problem-based learning, inquiry into practice, student observation, study groups, data analysis, constructing and scoring assessments, examining student or educator work, lesson study, video clubs, professional reading, or book studies.

Technology exponentially increases possibilities for personalizing, differentiating, and deepening learning, especially for educators who have limited access to on-site professional learning.

Educators choosing designs for professional learning, must consider:

- All phases of the learning process—knowledge and skill acquisition, application, reflection, refinement, assessment, and evaluation.
- The intended outcome drawn from student and educator learning needs
- Level of educator engagement required to move beyond comprehension to implementation
- Educators’ learning characteristics and preferences
- Research around adult learning theory

Educator professional learning must provide many opportunities (+50 hours) for educators to practice new learning with ongoing assessment, feedback, and coaching so the learning becomes fully integrated into routine behavior.

6. **Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students** applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

Those responsible for professional learning use change process research to support long-term change in practice by extending learning over time. They

- Commit to long-term change by setting clear goals and maintaining high expectations for implementation with fidelity
- Provide and align resources, including time, staff, materials, and technology
- Use metrics to gather evidence to monitor and assess implementation
- Model salient practices and maintain a sustained focus on the goals and strategies for achieving them
- Create and maintain a culture of support
- Engender community support for implementation by communicating incremental successes, reiterating goals, and discussing the complexities of deep change

Sustained support for implementation over-time produces changes in educator practice and student learning. It may be formalized through:

- Ongoing workshops designed to deepen understanding and refine educator practice
- Sustained coaching, reflection, or reviewing of results


- Educators planning, implementing, analyzing, reflecting, and evaluating the integration of professional learning into their practice
- Professional learning communities that meet to learn or refine instructional strategies, plan lessons, share experiences in implementation, analyze student work, reflect on results, and assess progress toward goals
- School and system-based coaches who provide extended learning opportunities, implementation resources, or demonstrations of the practices
- Peer support groups, study groups, peer observations, co-teaching, and co-planning opportunities to extend support for implementation

**Effective constructive feedback accelerates implementation by providing formative assessment through learning and the implementation process.**
- Assesses practice in relation to established expectations
- Allows educators to adjust or refine practice
- Is based on clearly defined expected behaviors
- Acknowledges progress toward expectations
- Provides guidance for achieving full implementation
- Is focused, objective, relevant, valid and purposeful

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IMPACT (content)**

**7. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.**

- Effective professional learning is aligned to educator performance standards which define expectations for an effective workforce, guide career-long professional learning, and set fair and reliable indicators of effectiveness for measuring educator performance.
- Effective professional learning deepens educators’ content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and understanding of how students learn the specific discipline.
- Effective professional learning uses student learning outcomes as its outcomes and models and engages educators in practices they can expect to implement within their classrooms and workplaces.
- Effective professional learning is coherent and builds on what educators already know; focuses on learning outcomes and pedagogy aligned with national or local curriculum and assessments for educator and student learning; aligns with educator performance standards; and supports educators in developing sustained ongoing professional communication with other educators who are engaged in similar changes in their practice.