

**MOUNTAIN BROOK SCHOOLS**  
***Locally – Approved Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Application***  
For an Individually Designed Professional Study

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of PLU: \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning date: \_\_\_\_\_ Completion date: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of all persons who will earn this PLU:

\_\_\_\_\_

Others involved (no PLU):

\_\_\_\_\_

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Briefly described the goal of the PLU, the learning in which you will participate, and the process of implementing new learning:

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Briefly explain which Instructional Leadership Standard will be addressed and how the key indicators will be included.

Briefly explain how the Professional Development Standards will be addressed:

Briefly describe how the PLU will be evaluated (how will you know that you have achieved your goal?) Use Guskey article (attached) as a guide:

**Locally – Approved Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Evaluation**  
For a State/Local/Individually Designed Professional Study

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of PLU: \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation of PLU Implementation – To be submitted when PLU is completed**

1. Reference the activities and strategies outlined in the application and/or describe what, how, and why other strategies were used
2. Use as much space as needed.
3. Attach documents as needed.

Goal/Purpose of Implementation:

New Learning Gained:

Strategies and Activities implemented as a result:

What worked well?

***Locally – Approved Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Evaluation***  
For a State/Local/Individually Designed Professional Study

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of PLU: \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation of PLU Implementation – To be submitted when PLU is completed**

1. Reference the activities and strategies outlined in the application and/or describe what, how, and why other strategies were used
2. Use as much space as needed.
3. Attach documents as needed.

What barriers did you encounter?

What was the impact of this implementation?

Describe challenges/modifications/additions for future:

## ***Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders***

To realize the mission of enhancing school leadership among principals and administrators in Alabama resulting in improved academic achievement for all students, instructional leaders will be held to the following standards:

### **Standard 1: Rationale**

This standard addresses the need to prepare instructional leaders who value and are committed to educating all students to become successful adults. Each instructional leader is responsible for creating and articulating a vision of high expectations for learning within the school or district that can be shared by all employees and is supported by the broader school-community of parents and citizens. This requires that instructional leaders be willing to examine their own assumptions, beliefs, and practices; understand and apply research; and foster a culture of continuous improvement among all members of the educational staff. Such instructional leaders will commit themselves to high levels of personal and organizational performance in order to ensure implementation of this vision of learning.

### **Standard 1: Planning for Continuous Improvement**

Engages the school community in developing and maintaining a shared vision; plans effectively; uses critical thinking and problem-solving techniques; collects, analyzes, and interprets data; allocates resources; and evaluates results for the purpose of continuous school improvement.

### **Standard 1: Key Indicators**

1. Knowledge to lead the articulation, development, and implementation of a shared vision and strategic plan for the school that places student and faculty learning at the center
2. Ability to lead and motivate staff, students, and families to achieve the school's vision
3. Knowledge to align instructional objectives and curricular goals with the shared vision
4. Knowledge to allocate and guard instruction time for the achievement of goals
5. Ability to work with faculty to identify instructional and curricular needs that align with vision and resources
6. Ability to interact with the community concerning the school's vision, mission, and priorities
7. Ability to work with staff and others to establish and accomplish goals
8. Ability to relate the vision, mission, and goals to the instructional needs of students
9. Ability to use goals to manage activities
10. Ability to use a variety of problem-solving techniques and decision-making skills to resolve problems
11. Ability to delegate tasks clearly and appropriately to accomplish organizational goals

12. Ability to focus upon student learning as a driving force for curriculum, instruction, and institutional decision-making
13. Ability to use a process for gathering information to use when making decisions
14. Knowledge to create a school leadership team that is skillful in using data
15. Ability to use multiple sources of data to manage the accountability process
16. Ability to assess student progress using a variety of techniques and information
17. Ability to monitor and assess instructional programs, activities, and materials
18. Knowledge to use approved methods and principles of program evaluation in the school improvement process
19. Ability to use diagnostic tools to assess, identify, and apply instructional improvement
20. Ability to use external resources as sources for ideas for improving student achievement

### **Standard 2: Rationale**

This standard addresses the need for instructional leaders to establish teaching and learning as the focal point of schools. It accepts the proposition that all students can learn given enough high-quality instruction, and that student learning is the fundamental purpose of schools. To this end, instructional leaders are responsible for ensuring that decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies (including instructional technology), assessment, and professional development are based on sound research, best practices, school and district data, and other contextual information and that observation and collaboration are used to design meaningful and effective experiences that improve student achievement. Successful instructional leaders must be able to identify, clarify, and address barriers to student learning and communicate the importance of developing learning strategies for diverse populations. In addition, this standard requires that instructional leaders be learners who model and encourage life-long learning. They should establish a culture of high expectations for themselves, their students, and their staff.

### **Standard 2: Teaching and Learning**

Promotes and monitors the success of all students in the learning environment by collaboratively aligning the curriculum; by aligning the instruction and the assessment processes to ensure effective student achievement; and by using a variety of benchmarks, learning expectations, and feedback measures to ensure accountability.

### **Standard 2: Key Indicators**

1. Knowledge to plan for the achievement of annual learning gains, school improvement goals, and other targets related to the shared vision
2. Ability to use multiple sources of data to plan and assess instructional improvement
3. Ability to engage staff in ongoing study and implementation of research-based practices
4. Ability to use the latest research, applied theory, and best practices to make curricular and instructional decisions

5. Ability to communicate high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of students
6. Ability to ensure that content and instruction are aligned with high standards resulting in improved student achievement
7. Ability to coach staff and teachers on the evaluation of student performance
8. Ability to identify differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of a variety of student populations
9. Ability to develop curriculum aligned to state standards
10. Knowledge to collaborate with community, staff, district, state, and university personnel to develop the instructional program
11. Knowledge to align curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments to district, state, and national standards
12. Ability to focus upon student learning as a driving force for curriculum, instruction, and instructional decision-making
13. Ability to use multiple sources of data to manage the accountability process
14. Ability to assess student progress using a variety of formal and informal assessments
15. Ability to monitor and assess instructional programs, activities, and materials
16. Ability to use the methods and principles of program evaluation in the school improvement process

### **Standard 3: Rationale**

This standard addresses the need for instructional leaders to recognize quality professional development as the key strategy for supporting significant improvements. Instructional leaders are able to articulate the critical link between improved student learning and the professional learning of teachers. Skillful instructional leaders establish policies and organizational structures that support ongoing professional learning and continuous improvement. They ensure an equitable distribution of resources to accomplish school goals and continuously improve the school's work through the ongoing evaluation of staff development's effectiveness in achieving student learning goals. They make certain that employee annual calendars and daily schedules provide adequate time for learning and collaboration as part of the workday. Instructional leaders also distribute leadership responsibilities among teachers and other employees. Distributed leadership enables teachers to develop and use their talents as members or chairs of school improvement committees, trainers, coaches, mentors, and members of peer review panels. These leaders make certain that their colleagues have the necessary knowledge, skills, and other forms of support that ensure success in these new roles.

### **Standard 3: Human Resources Development**

Recruits, selects, organizes, evaluates, and mentors faculty and staff to accomplish school and system goals.

Works collaboratively with the school faculty and staff to plan and implement effective professional development that is based upon student needs and that promotes both individual and organizational growth and leads to improved teaching and learning.

Initiates and nurtures interpersonal relationships to facilitate teamwork and enhance student achievement.

**Standard 3: Key Indicators**

1. Knowledge to set high expectations and standards for the performance of all teachers and staff
2. Ability to coach staff and teachers on the evaluation of student performances
3. Ability to work collaboratively with teachers to plan for individual professional development
4. Ability to use a variety of supervisory models to improve teaching and learning
5. Ability to apply adult learning strategies to professional development
6. Knowledge to use the accepted methods and principles of personnel evaluation
7. Knowledge to operate within the provisions of each contract as well as established enforcement and grievance procedures
8. Ability to establish mentor programs to orient new teachers and provide ongoing coaching and other forms of support for veteran staff
9. Ability to manage, monitor, and evaluate a program of continuous professional development tied to student learning and other school goals
10. Knowledge to hire and retain high-quality teachers and staff
11. Ability to provide high-quality professional development activities to ensure that teachers have skills to engage all students in active learning
12. Ability to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect, plan, and work collaboratively
13. Ability to create a community of learners among faculty and staff
14. Ability to create a personal professional development plan for his/her own continuous improvement
15. Ability to foster development of aspiring leaders, including teacher leaders

**Standard 4: Rationale**

This standard addresses the need for instructional leaders to understand and be able to operate within the larger context of community and beyond, which affects opportunities for all students. Instructional leaders must respond to and influence this larger political, social, economic, and cultural context. Of vital importance is the ability to develop a continuing dialogue with economic and political decision-makers concerning the role of schools and to build collaborative relationships that support improved social and educational opportunities for all children. Instructional leaders must be able to participate actively in the political and policy-making context in the service of education, including proactive use of the legal system to protect students' rights and improve opportunities for all students.

**Standard 4: Diversity**

Responds to and influences the larger personal, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in the classroom, school, and the local community while addressing diverse student needs to ensure the success of all students.



**Standard 4: Key Indicators**

1. Knowledge to involve school community in appropriate diversity policy implementations, program planning, and assessment efforts
2. Ability to conform to legal and ethical standards related to diversity
3. Ability to perceive the needs and concerns of others and is able to deal tactfully with them
4. Knowledge to handle crisis communications in both oral and written form
5. Ability to arrange for students and families whose home language is not English to engage in school activities and communication through oral and written translations
6. Knowledge to recruit, hire, develop, and retain a diverse staff
7. Knowledge to represent the school and the educational establishment in relations with various cultural, ethnic, racial, and special interest groups in the community
8. Knowledge to recognize and respond effectively to multicultural and ethnic needs in the organization and the community
9. Ability to interact effectively with diverse individuals and groups using a variety of interpersonal skills in any given situation
10. Ability to promote and monitor the delivery of instructional content that provides for diverse perspectives appropriate to the situation

**Standard 5: Rationale**

This standard addresses the fact that cooperation among schools, the district, parents, and the larger community is essential to the success of instructional leaders and students. Instructional leaders must see schools as an integral part of the larger community. Collaboration and communication with families, businesses, governmental agencies, social service organizations, the media, and higher education institutions are critical to effective schooling. Effective and appropriate communications, coupled with the involvement of families and other stakeholders in decisions, help to ensure continued community support for schools. Instructional leaders must see families as partners in the education of their youngsters and believe that families have the best interest of their children in mind. Instructional leaders must involve families in decisions at the school and district levels. Family and student issues that negatively affect student learning must be addressed through collaboration with community agencies that can integrate health, social, and other services. Such collaboration relies on good relationships with community leaders and outreach to a wide array of business, religious, political, and service agencies. Providing leadership to programs serving all students, including those with special and exceptional needs, further communicates to internal and external audiences the importance of diversity. To work with all elements of the community, instructional leaders must recognize, value, and communicate effectively with various cultural, ethnic, racial, and special interest groups. Modeling community collaboration for staff and then offering opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills maximizes positive interactions between schools and the community.

**Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships**

Identifies the unique characteristics of the community to create and sustain mutually supportive family-school-community relations

**Standard 5: Key Indicators**

1. Ability to address student and family conditions affecting learning
2. Ability to identify community leaders and their relationships to school goals and programs
3. Ability to communicate the school's vision, mission, and priorities to the community
4. Knowledge to serve as primary school spokesperson in the community
5. Ability to share leadership and decision-making with others by gathering input
6. Ability to seek resources of families, business, and community members in support of the school's goals
7. Ability to develop partnerships, coalitions, and networks to impact student achievement
8. Ability to actively engage the community to share responsibility for student and school success
9. Ability to involve family and community in appropriate policy implementation, program planning, and assessment efforts
10. Knowledge to make parents partners in their student's education

**Standard 6: Rationale**

This standard addresses the need for effective leadership for technology in schools. An underlying assumption of this standard is that instructional leaders should be competent users of information and technology tools common to information-age professionals. The effective educational leader should be a hands-on user of technology. While technology empowers instructional leaders by the information it can readily produce and communicates, it exponentially empowers the instructional leader who masters the tools and processes that allow creative and dynamic management of available information. Instructional leaders who recognize the potential of technology understand that leadership has a responsibility to ensure technological equity. They must also know that technology can unlock tremendous potential in learners and staff with special and diverse needs.

**Standard 6: Technology**

Plans, implements, and evaluates the effective integration of current technologies and electronic tools in teaching, management, research, and communication.

**Standard 6: Key Indicators**

1. Ability to implement a plan for the use of technology, telecommunications, and information systems to enrich curriculum, instruction, and assessment
2. Ability to develop a plan for technology integration for the school community
3. Knowledge to discover practical approaches for developing and implementing successful technology planning
4. Ability to model the use of technology for personal and professional productivity
5. Ability to develop an effective teacher professional development plan to increase technology usage to support curriculum-based integration practices
6. Ability to promote the effective integration of technology throughout the teaching and learning environment
7. Knowledge to increase access to educational technologies for the school

8. Ability to provide support for teachers to increase the use of technology already in the school/classrooms
9. Ability to use technology to support the analysis and use of student assessment data

### **Standard 7: Rationale**

This standard addresses the need to enhance student learning through effective, efficient, and equitable utilization of resources. Instructional leaders must use their knowledge of organizations to create a learning environment conducive to the success of all students. Proper allocation of resources such as personnel, facilities, and technology is essential to creating an effective learning environment. Resource management decisions should give priority to teaching, student achievement, and student development. Also, operational procedures and policies must be established to maintain school safety and security and to strengthen the academic environment. All management decisions, including those regarding human resources, fiscal operations, facilities, legal issues, time management, scheduling, technology, and equipment, should be based on sound organizational practice. Instructional leaders must monitor and evaluate operational systems to ensure that they enhance student learning and reflect the school's and district's accountability to the community. They also actively seek additional sources of financial, human, and physical support. They involve stakeholders to ensure the management and operational decisions take into consideration the needs of multiple constituencies while at the same time focusing the entire community on student achievement as the ultimate goal. To include stakeholders in management decisions, instructional leaders must be competent in conflict resolution, consensus-building, group processes, and effective communication.

### **Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization**

Manages the organization, facilities, and financial resources; implements operational plans; and promotes collaboration to create a safe and effective learning environment.

### **Standard 7: Key Indicators**

1. Knowledge to develop and administer policies that provide a safe school environment
2. Ability to apply operational plans and processes to accomplish strategic goals
3. Ability to attend to student learning goals in the daily operation of the school
4. Knowledge to identify and analyze the major sources of fiscal and nonfiscal resources for the school including business and community resources
5. Knowledge to build and ability to support a culture of learning at the school
6. Knowledge to manage financial and material assets and capital goods and services in order to allocate resources according to school priorities
7. Knowledge to use an efficient budget planning process that involves staff and community
8. Ability to identify and organize resources to achieve curricular and instructional goals
9. Ability to develop techniques and organizational skills necessary to lead/manage a complex and diverse organization

10. Ability to plan and schedule one's own and others' work so that resources are used appropriately in meeting priorities and goals
11. Ability to use goals to manage activities
12. Knowledge to create and ability to empower a school leadership team that shares responsibility for the management of the learning organization

**Standard 8: Rationale**

This standard addresses the educational leader's role as the "first citizen" of the school/district community. Instructional leaders should set the tone for how employees and students interact with one another and with members of the school, district, and larger community. The leader's contacts with students, parents, and employees must reflect concern for others as well as for the organization and the position. Instructional leaders must develop the ability to examine personal and professional values that reflect a code of ethics. They must be able to serve as role models, accepting responsibility for using their position ethically and constructively on behalf of the school/district community.

**Standard 8: Ethics**

Demonstrates honesty, integrity, and fairness to guide school policies and practices consistent with current legal and ethical standards for professional educators.

**Standard 8: Key Indicators**

1. Knowledge and ability to adhere to a professional code of ethics and values
2. Knowledge and ability to make decisions based on the legal, moral, and ethical implications of policy options and political strategies
3. Knowledge and ability to develop well-reasoned educational beliefs based upon an understanding of teaching and learning
4. Knowledge to understand ethical and legal concerns educators face when using technology throughout the teaching and learning environment
5. Knowledge and ability to develop a personal code of ethics embracing diversity, integrity, and the dignity of all people
6. Knowledge and ability to act in accordance with federal and state constitutional provisions, statutory standards, and regulatory applications
7. Ability to make decisions within an ethical context

## ALABAMA STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The following list of Standards for Effective Professional Development were adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education on June 13, 2002. These state standards are embedded in the NCLB definition of professional development in Title IX, Section 9101 (34). They should be used as a guide in developing your LEA Professional Development Plan and implementing activities under that plan.

- Standard 1: Effective professional development organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school, the district, and the state.
- Standard 2: Effective professional development requires knowledgeable and skillful school and district leaders who actively participate in and guide continuous instructional improvement.
- Standard 3: Effective professional development requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.
- Standard 4: Effective professional development uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- Standard 5: Effective professional development uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
- Standard 6: Effective professional development prepares educators to apply research to decision making.
- Standard 7: Effective professional development uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.
- Standard 8: Effective professional development applies knowledge about human learning and change.
- Standard 9: Effective professional development provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.
- Standard 10: Effective professional development prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
- Standard 11: Effective professional development deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
- Standard 12: Effective professional development provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

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Redesigning Professional Development Pages 45-51

## Does It Make a Difference? Evaluating Professional Development

*Thomas R. Guskey*

**Using five critical levels of evaluation, you can improve your school's professional development program. But be sure to start with the desired result—improved student outcomes.**

Educators have long considered professional development to be their right—something they deserve as dedicated and hardworking individuals. But legislators and policymakers have recently begun to question that right. As education budgets grow tight, they look at what schools spend on professional development and want to know, Does the investment yield tangible payoffs or could that money be spent in better ways? Such questions make effective evaluation of professional development programs more important than ever.

Traditionally, educators haven't paid much attention to evaluating their professional development efforts. Many consider evaluation a costly, time-consuming process that diverts attention from more important activities such as planning, implementation, and follow-up. Others feel they lack the skill and expertise to become involved in rigorous evaluations; as a result, they either neglect evaluation issues completely or leave them to “evaluation experts.”

Good evaluations don't have to be complicated. They simply require thoughtful planning, the ability to ask good questions, and a basic understanding of how to find valid answers. What's more, they can provide meaningful information that you can use to make thoughtful, responsible decisions about professional development processes and effects.

### **What Is Evaluation?**

In simplest terms, evaluation is “the systematic investigation of merit or worth” (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994, p. 3). *Systematic* implies a focused, thoughtful, and intentional process. We conduct evaluations for clear reasons and with explicit intent. *Investigation* refers to the collection and analysis of pertinent information through appropriate methods and techniques. *Merit or worth* denotes appraisal and judgment. We use evaluations to determine the value of something—to help answer such questions as, Is this program or activity achieving its intended results? Is it better than what was done in the past? Is it better than another, competing activity? Is it worth the costs?

Some educators understand the importance of evaluation for event-driven professional development activities, such as workshops and seminars, but forget the wide range of less formal, ongoing, job-embedded professional development activities—study groups, action research, collaborative planning, curriculum development, structured observations, peer coaching,

mentoring, and so on. But regardless of its form, professional development should be a purposeful endeavor. Through evaluation, you can determine whether these activities are achieving their purposes.

### Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation

Effective professional development evaluations require the collection and analysis of the five critical levels of information shown in Figure 1 (Guskey, 2000a). With each succeeding level, the process of gathering evaluation information gets a bit more complex. And because each level builds on those that come before, success at one level is usually necessary for success at higher levels.

Figure 1. Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation

Evaluation Level	What Questions Are Addressed?	How Will Information Be Gathered?	What Is Measured or Assessed?	How Will Information Be Used?
1. Participants' Reactions	<p>Did they like it?</p> <p>Was their time well spent?</p> <p>Did the material make sense?</p> <p>Will it be useful?</p> <p>Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful?</p> <p>Were the refreshments fresh and tasty?</p> <p>Was the room the right temperature?</p> <p>Were the chairs</p>	Questionnaires administered at the end of the session	Initial satisfaction with the experience	To improve program design and delivery

	comfortable?			
<b>2. Participants' Learning</b>	Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?	<p>Paper-and-pencil instruments</p> <p>Simulations</p> <p>Demonstrations</p> <p>Participant reflections (oral and/or written)</p> <p>Participant portfolios</p>	New knowledge and skills of participants	To improve program content, format, and organization
<b>3. Organization Support &amp; Change</b>	<p>Was implementation advocated, facilitated, and supported?</p> <p>Was the support public and overt?</p> <p>Were problems addressed quickly and efficiently?</p> <p>Were sufficient resources made available?</p> <p>Were successes recognized and shared?</p> <p>What was the impact on the organization?</p> <p>Did it affect the</p>	<p>District and school records</p> <p>Minutes from follow-up meetings</p> <p>Questionnaires</p> <p>Structured interviews with participants and district or school administrators</p> <p>Participant portfolios</p>	The organization's advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition	<p>To document and improve organization support</p> <p>To inform future change efforts</p>



	organization's climate and procedures?			
<b>4. Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills</b>	Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?	<p>Questionnaires</p> <p>Structured interviews with participants and their supervisors</p> <p>Participant reflections (oral and/or written)</p> <p>Participant portfolios</p> <p>Direct observations</p> <p>Video or audio tapes</p>	Degree and quality of implementation	To document and improve the implementation of program content
<b>5. Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>What was the impact on students?</p> <p>Did it affect student performance or achievement?</p> <p>Did it influence students' physical or emotional well-being?</p> <p>Are students more confident as learners?</p> <p>Is student attendance</p>	<p>Student records</p> <p>School records</p> <p>Questionnaires</p> <p>Structured interviews with students, parents, teachers, and/or administrators</p> <p>Participant portfolios</p>	<p>Student learning outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive (Performance &amp; Achievement)</li> <li>• Affective (Attitudes &amp; Dispositions)</li> <li>• Psychomotor (Skills &amp; Behaviors)</li> </ul>	<p>To focus and improve all aspects of program design, implementation, and follow-up</p> <p>To demonstrate the overall impact of professional development</p>

	improving?			
	Are dropouts decreasing?			

### Level 1: Participants' Reactions

The first level of evaluation looks at participants' reactions to the professional development experience. This is the most common form of professional development evaluations, and the easiest type of information to gather and analyze.

At Level 1, you address questions focusing on whether or not participants liked the experience. Did they feel their time was well spent? Did the material make sense to them? Were the activities well planned and meaningful? Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful? Did the participants find the information useful?

Important questions for professional development workshops and seminars also include, Was the coffee hot and ready on time? Was the room at the right temperature? Were the chairs comfortable? To some, questions such as these may seem silly and inconsequential. But experienced professional developers know the importance of attending to these basic human needs.

Information on participants' reactions is generally gathered through questionnaires handed out at the end of a session or activity. These questionnaires typically include a combination of rating-scale items and open-ended response questions that allow participants to make personal comments. Because of the general nature of this information, many organizations use the same questionnaire for all their professional development activities.

Some educators refer to these measures of participants' reactions as "happiness quotients," insisting that they reveal only the entertainment value of an activity, not its quality or worth. But measuring participants' initial satisfaction with the experience can help you improve the design and delivery of programs or activities in valid ways.

### Level 2: Participants' Learning

In addition to liking their professional development experience, we also hope that participants learn something from it. Level 2 focuses on measuring the knowledge and skills that participants gained. Depending on the goals of the program or activity, this can involve anything from a pencil-and-paper assessment (Can participants describe the crucial attributes of mastery learning and give examples of how these might be applied in typical classroom situations?) to a simulation or full-scale skill demonstration (Presented with a variety of classroom conflicts, can participants diagnose each situation and then prescribe and carry out a fair and workable solution?). You can

also use oral personal reflections or portfolios that participants assemble to document their learning.

Although you can usually gather Level 2 evaluation information at the completion of a professional development activity, it requires more than a standardized form. Measures must show attainment of specific learning goals. This means that indicators of successful learning need to be outlined before activities begin. You can use this information as a basis for improving the content, format, and organization of the program or activities.

### **Level 3: Organization Support and Change**

At Level 3, the focus shifts to the organization. Lack of organization support and change can sabotage any professional development effort, even when all the individual aspects of professional development are done right.

Suppose, for example, that several secondary school educators participate in a professional development program on cooperative learning. They gain a thorough understanding of the theory and develop a variety of classroom activities based on cooperative learning principles. Following their training, they try to implement these activities in schools where students are graded “on the curve”—according to their relative standing among classmates—and great importance is attached to selecting the class valedictorian. Organization policies and practices such as these make learning highly competitive and will thwart the most valiant efforts to have students cooperate and help one another learn (Guskey, 2000b).

The lack of positive results in this case doesn't reflect poor training or inadequate learning, but rather organization policies that undermine implementation efforts. Problems at Level 3 have essentially canceled the gains made at Levels 1 and 2 (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). That's why professional development evaluations must include information on organization support and change.

At Level 3, you need to focus on questions about the organization characteristics and attributes necessary for success. Did the professional development activities promote changes that were aligned with the mission of the school and district? Were changes at the individual level encouraged and supported at all levels? Were sufficient resources made available, including time for sharing and reflection? Were successes recognized and shared? Issues such as these can play a large part in determining the success of any professional development effort.

Gathering information at Level 3 is generally more complicated than at previous levels. Procedures differ depending on the goals of the program or activity. They may involve analyzing district or school records, examining the minutes from follow-up meetings, administering questionnaires, and interviewing participants and school administrators. You can use this information not only to document and improve organization support but also to inform future change initiatives.

### **Level 4: Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills**

At Level 4 we ask, Did the new knowledge and skills that participants learned make a difference in their professional practice? The key to gathering relevant information at this level rests in specifying clear indicators of both the degree and the quality of implementation. Unlike Levels 1 and 2, this information cannot be gathered at the end of a professional development session. Enough time must pass to allow participants to adapt the new ideas and practices to their settings. Because implementation is often a gradual and uneven process, you may also need to measure progress at several time intervals.

You may gather this information through questionnaires or structured interviews with participants and their supervisors, oral or written personal reflections, or examination of participants' journals or portfolios. The most accurate information typically comes from direct observations, either with trained observers or by reviewing video-or audiotapes. These observations, however, should be kept as unobtrusive as possible (for examples, see Hall & Hord, 1987).

You can analyze this information to help restructure future programs and activities to facilitate better and more consistent implementation.

### **Level 5: Student Learning Outcomes**

Level 5 addresses “the bottom line”: How did the professional development activity affect students? Did it benefit them in any way? The particular student learning outcomes of interest depend, of course, on the goals of that specific professional development effort.

In addition to the stated goals, the activity may result in important unintended outcomes. For this reason, evaluations should always include multiple measures of student learning (Joyce, 1993). Consider, for example, elementary school educators who participate in study groups dedicated to finding ways to improve the quality of students' writing and devise a series of strategies that they believe will work for their students. In gathering Level 5 information, they find that their students' scores on measures of writing ability over the school year increased significantly compared with those of comparable students whose teachers did not use these strategies.

On further analysis, however, they discover that their students' scores on mathematics achievement declined compared with those of the other students. This unintended outcome apparently occurred because the teachers inadvertently sacrificed instructional time in mathematics to provide more time for writing. Had information at Level 5 been restricted to the single measure of students' writing, this important unintended result might have gone unnoticed.

Measures of student learning typically include cognitive indicators of student performance and achievement, such as portfolio evaluations, grades, and scores from standardized tests. In addition, you may want to measure affective out-comes (attitudes and dispositions) and psychomotor outcomes (skills and behaviors). Examples include students' self-concepts, study habits, school attendance, homework completion rates, and classroom behaviors. You can also consider such schoolwide indicators as enrollment in advanced classes, member-ships in honor

societies, participation in school-related activities, disciplinary actions, and retention or drop-out rates. Student and school records provide the majority of such information. You can also include results from questionnaires and structured interviews with students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

Level 5 information about a program's overall impact can guide improvements in all aspects of professional development, including program design, implementation, and follow-up. In some cases, information on student learning outcomes is used to estimate the cost effectiveness of professional development, sometimes referred to as "return on investment" or "ROI evaluation" (Parry, 1996; Todnem & Warner, 1993).

### **Look for Evidence, Not Proof**

Using these five levels of information in professional development evaluations, are you ready to "prove" that professional development programs make a difference? Can you now demonstrate that a particular professional development program, and nothing else, is solely responsible for the school's 10 percent increase in student achievement scores or its 50 percent reduction in discipline referrals?

Of course not. Nearly all professional development takes place in real-world settings. The relationship between professional development and improvements in student learning in these real-world settings is far too complex and includes too many intervening variables to permit simple causal inferences (Guskey, 1997; Guskey & Sparks, 1996). What's more, most schools are engaged in systemic reform initiatives that involve the simultaneous implementation of multiple innovations (Fullan, 1992). Isolating the effects of a single program or activity under such conditions is usually impossible.

But in the absence of proof, you *can* collect good evidence about whether a professional development program has contributed to specific gains in student learning. Superintendents, board members, and parents rarely ask, "Can you prove it?" Instead, they ask for evidence. Above all, be sure to gather evidence on measures that are meaningful to stakeholders in the evaluation process.

Consider, for example, the use of anecdotes and testimonials. From a methodological perspective, they are a poor source of data. They are typically highly subjective, and they may be inconsistent and unreliable. Nevertheless, as any trial attorney will tell you, they offer the kind of personalized evidence that most people believe, and they should not be ignored as a source of information. Of course, anecdotes and testimonials should never form the basis of an entire evaluation. Setting up meaningful comparison groups and using appropriate pre- and post-measures provide valuable information. Time-series designs that include multiple measures collected before and after implementation are another useful alternative.

Keep in mind, too, that good evidence isn't hard to come by if you know what you're looking for before you begin. Many educators find evaluation at Levels 4 and 5 difficult, expensive, and time-consuming because they are coming in after the fact to search for results (Gordon, 1991). If

you don't know where you are going, it's very difficult to tell whether you've arrived. But if you clarify your goals up front, most evaluation issues fall into place.

### **Working Backward Through the Five Levels**

Three important implications stem from this model for evaluating professional development. First, each of these five levels is important. The information gathered at each level provides vital data for improving the quality of professional development programs.

Second, tracking effectiveness at one level tells you nothing about the impact at the next. Although success at an early level may be necessary for positive results at the next higher one, it's clearly not sufficient. Breakdowns can occur at any point along the way. It's important to be aware of the difficulties involved in moving from professional development experiences (Level 1) to improvements in student learning (Level 5) and to plan for the time and effort required to build this connection.

The third implication, and perhaps the most important, is this: In planning professional development to improve student learning, *the order of these levels must be reversed*. You must plan “backward” (Guskey, 2001), starting where you want to end and then working back.

In backward planning, you first consider the student learning outcomes that you want to achieve (Level 5). For example, do you want to improve students' reading comprehension, enhance their skills in problem solving, develop their sense of confidence in learning situations, or improve their collaboration with classmates? Critical analyses of relevant data from assessments of student learning, examples of student work, and school records are especially useful in identifying these student learning goals.

Then you determine, on the basis of pertinent research evidence, what instructional practices and policies will most effectively and efficiently produce those outcomes (Level 4). You need to ask, What evidence verifies that these particular practices and policies will lead to the desired results? How good or reliable is that evidence? Was it gathered in a context similar to ours? Watch out for popular innovations that are more opinion-based than research-based, promoted by people more concerned with “what sells” than with “what works.” You need to be cautious before jumping on any education bandwagon, always making sure that trustworthy evidence validates whatever approach you choose.

Next, consider what aspects of organization support need to be in place for those practices and policies to be implemented (Level 3). Sometimes, as I mentioned earlier, aspects of the organization actually pose barriers to implementation. “No tolerance” policies regarding student discipline and grading, for example, may limit teachers' options in dealing with students' behavioral or learning problems. A big part of planning involves ensuring that organization elements are in place to support the desired practices and policies.

Then, decide what knowledge and skills the participating professionals must have to implement the prescribed practices and policies (Level 2). What must they know and be able to do to

successfully adapt the innovation to their specific situation and bring about the sought-after change?

Finally, consider what set of experiences will enable participants to acquire the needed knowledge and skills (Level 1). Workshops and seminars, especially when paired with collaborative planning and structured opportunities for practice with feedback, action research projects, organized study groups, and a wide range of other activities can all be effective, depending on the specified purpose of the professional development.

This backward planning process is so important because the decisions made at each level profoundly affect those at the next. For example, the particular student learning outcomes you want to achieve influence the kinds of practices and policies you implement. Likewise, the practices and policies you want to implement influence the kinds of organization support or change required, and so on.

The context-specific nature of this work complicates matters further. Even if we agree on the student learning outcomes that we want to achieve, what works best in one context with a particular community of educators and a particular group of students might not work as well in another context with different educators and different students. This is what makes developing examples of truly universal “best practices” in professional development so difficult. What works always depends on where, when, and with whom.

Unfortunately, professional developers can fall into the same trap in planning that teachers sometimes do—making plans in terms of what they are going to do, instead of what they want their students to know and be able to do. Professional developers often plan in terms of what they will do (workshops, seminars, institutes) or how they will do it (study groups, action research, peer coaching). This diminishes the effectiveness of their efforts and makes evaluation much more difficult.

Instead, begin planning professional development with what you want to achieve in terms of learning and learners and then work backward from there. Planning will be much more efficient and the results will be much easier to evaluate.

### **Making Evaluation Central**

A lot of good things are done in the name of professional development. But so are a lot of rotten things. What educators haven't done is provide evidence to document the difference between the two.

Evaluation provides the key to making that distinction. By including systematic information gathering and analysis as a central component of all professional development activities, we can enhance the success of professional development efforts everywhere.

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