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## Make staff development pay off

Not long ago, a report to the school board concerning professional development consisted primarily of the number of hours, number of teachers, and number of courses offered. These reports documented *activity* rather than *impact*. The thickness of the course catalog seemed to be the strongest measure of a successful program.

Reporting on results was not even attempted nor requested. That reality is slowly changing. Now, many school boards are asking whether their investment in professional development is paying off in improved classroom practices, deeper content knowledge for teachers and students, and improvements in student learning.

One of the underlying assumptions in NSDC's Standards for Staff Development is that the school is the center of change (Sparks, 2002). Reporting on the results of staff development, then, requires that central office staff **develop the capacity of school-based leaders to conduct evaluations of school-based professional development** (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 132). To accomplish this outcome, central office staff members **provide learning experiences about the development of evaluation question(s) that focus on the impact on student achievement**. The ultimate goal of professional development is enhanced student learning and that goal should be reflected in evaluation questions.

School-based leaders also need to use **multiple data sources** and **data collection methodology**. While data on student learning is essential, school-based leaders also will want to be comfortable using and analyzing surveys, interviews,

focus groups, walk-through observations, and Innovation Configuration maps that help monitor implementation and collect formative evaluation data, which leads to program improvements.

Central office staff also need to provide learning experiences for school-based leaders about **data analysis and interpretation processes**. The variety of evaluation data collected

will include both qualitative as well as quantitative information. School-based staff need to be comfortable with the analysis and interpretation processes for both types of data.

Central office and school-based staff also need to be knowledgeable about **dissemination strategies**. There are a variety of report formats and ways to share the results with different types of audiences. Central office staff may request written reports from

schools while school board members may only require an executive summary and teachers a short PowerPoint™ presentation. The community may want a short summary that could be published on a web site or in a school newsletter.

As budgets become strained and expenditures questioned, it is critical that central office staff prepare school-based leaders to collect and analyze information that demonstrates the impact of professional development on student learning. The return on investment will come full circle and also help staff members understand that their investment of time and energy has returned a benefit to their students — the very reason why teachers value professional development.

### Evaluation:

Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

Learn more about NSDC's standards:  
[www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm)

### REFERENCES

- Roy, P. & Hord, S. (2003).** *Moving NSDC's staff development standards into practice: Innovation configurations, Volume I.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.
- Sparks, D. (2002).** *Designing powerful professional development for teachers and principals.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.