

THE LEARNING System

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF DISTRICT LEADERS ENSURING SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

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BOOST THE LEARNING POWER OF SCHOOL-BASED STAFF

Innovation Configuration maps guide the way

BY PATRICIA ROY

Today, the concept of job-embedded staff development has come to mean that educators in many roles — superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum supervisors, principals, and teacher leaders ... — must all see themselves as teachers of adults and must view the development of others as one of their most important responsibilities. These individuals are increasingly being held accountable for their performance as planners and implementers of various forms of staff development. (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p. 83).

A decade ago, NSDC leaders began to describe a necessary shift that school systems would be required to make to ensure powerful, effective professional development that improved student learning



through enhancing the knowledge and skills of their teachers. One of those shifts is for central office staff members to build the *capacity* of school-level personnel to design, manage, and implement improvement efforts.

When it comes to educational reform, schools are considered the “center of change” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 203). In other words, the school — not the district — needs to

be in control of the change process. Marzano (2003) found in his meta-analyses of educational research that “the school (as opposed to the district) is the proper focus for reform. Indeed, this is a consistent conclusion in the research literature (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993)” (p.10).

Yet, this finding should not be misinterpreted

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While the purpose statement reflects the general direction in which professional development is now (finally!) moving, NSDC's intention is to accelerate the pace.

Learn more about NSDC's purpose: www.nsd.org/purpose.cfm

NSDC has a brand-new purpose

The great soul singer, James Brown, once had a big hit titled “Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag.” This year, the National Staff Development Council also has a new “bag,” but whether it will be a hit depends on readers of this column.

NSDC’s new statement of purpose is: “*Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.*” Note this is not a goal but a statement of purpose describing why NSDC exists. During the next several years, the organization will organize and align all its activities to fulfill this purpose.

While the purpose statement reflects the general direction in which professional development is now (finally!) moving, NSDC’s intention is to accelerate the pace. For example, the first half of the statement — “*Every educator engages in effective professional learning*”— appears to be straightforward. Yet, in three important ways it challenges the current practices of most school systems.

First, it is the exception rather than the rule when school systems intentionally organize and support professional learning for “every educator.” The sad truth is that, on the whole, much of what passes for professional development is a ragged, hit-or-miss experience. All of a school’s teachers may participate in sessions to learn how to integrate reading instruction into their subjects, but administrators may choose not to attend. A group of highly motivated teachers may collaborate to pursue learning that is stimulating and useful while their colleagues only reluctantly participate in compulsory workshops. Ironically, even though many school systems employ school-based coaches to facilitate all teachers’ professional development, many of the systems fail to support professional learning for the coaches themselves. Until school systems

make high-quality professional learning a reality for *every* educator, they will not fully capitalize on the educators’ potential to increase student achievement.

Second, all educators must “engage,” not merely “participate” in professional learning. There is a difference. “Participate” simply means that one takes part in or shares an experience, but “engage” means to bind oneself to an experience and be engrossed in it. Educators may *participate* in professional development, but only some of them *engage* it. This is not entirely the fault of the educators. Many professional development experiences are not engaging because they neither take into account educators’ needs nor draw on their knowledge and experience. But engaging professional learning is a two-way street. Engaging professional learning requires educators who are willing to make the effort to shape and use their learning experiences to produce maximum benefits, and it requires experiences that engage educators’ minds as well as their hearts.

“Effective professional learning” continues to be one of the greatest challenges facing school systems, even if they don’t know it. Far too many are accepting of professional development as a series of disconnected events with ambiguous results. The tragedy is that this is not necessary. There are impressive examples of how school systems and schools are ramping up to high-quality professional learning that educators use to improve their performance and that of their students. Through its publications, conferences, and technical assistance, NSDC provides ready access to these productive initiatives and the educators responsible for conceiving and implementing them. These learning opportunities are available to every school system, and it is their responsibility to take advantage of them. In any case, NSDC will continue to doggedly pursue its purpose, indeed, its calling.



Pat Roy is co-author of *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (NSDC, 2003)

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

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DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

READ MORE ABOUT IC MAPS

- The Aug/Sept. *Tools for Schools* offers an introduction to developing and using IC maps to improve instruction.
- The September issue of *The Learning Principal* shares the story of how principals in one school district embraced and used the IC maps for NSDC's standards.
- The September issue of *Teachers Teaching Teachers (T3)* includes an article about IC maps for school-based staff developers. NSDC members can access that article in the members-only area of www.nsd.org.

One of the key concepts undergirding the creation of a shared vision is that a mental picture is created that describes what the change would look like when fully implemented. The Innovation Configuration maps can be used to help every role group in the district see what they would be doing when implementing one of the standards. The following activity can be used to accomplish that goal.

Purpose: To develop a shared vision about the implementation of one of NSDC's Standards for Staff Development

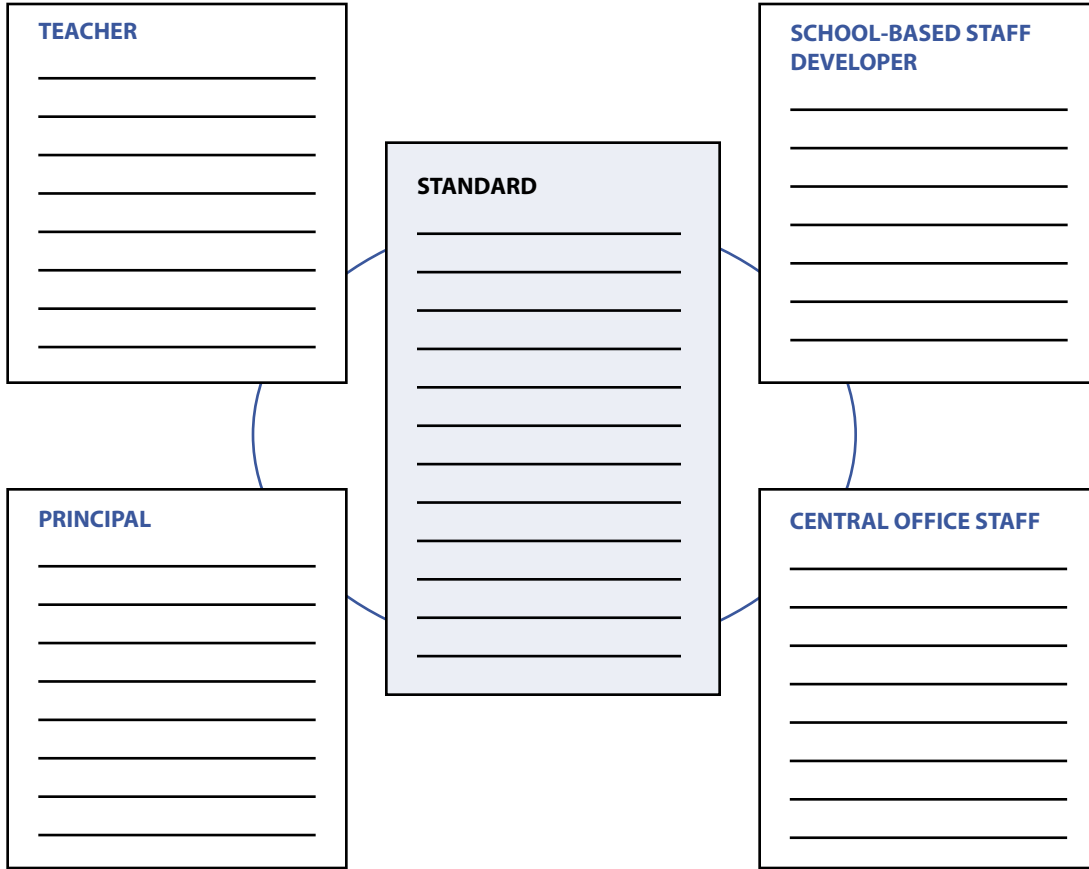
Group Size: 4-5 people

Time: 50-60 minutes

Materials: Copies of the IC maps for each of the role groups for one standard (group decides which standard to work on), rationale for the selected standard

DIRECTIONS

1. Each group selects one of the 12 staff development standards to learn more about.
2. Group members divide and read the IC maps for all of the role groups as well as the rationale for the selected standard.
3. Divide the readings among group members.
For example:
 - a) Person 1 reads the Teacher IC map — Learning Communities
 - b) Person 2 reads the School-Based Staff Developer IC map — Learning Communities
 - c) Person 3 reads the Principal IC map — Learning Communities
 - d) Person 4 reads the Central Office Staff IC map — Learning Communities
 - e) Person 5 reads the Rationale — Learning Communities
4. Each person reads the Desired Outcome statements and Level 1 variation and prepares to explain the tasks and responsibilities required of this role group.
5. Share the information within the group. Each person can use the following page for notes on what he or she has heard.



RATIONALE:

HOW DOES AN IC MAP DIFFER FROM A RUBRIC?

There are two major differences between a rubric and an Innovation Configuration map. A rubric lists the optimal situation in the far right column and has a specific number of levels for each component. Teachers generally create a rubric to measure the quality of student work.

An Innovation Configuration map lists the optimal situation in the far left column and the number of levels varies with each component based on observation and actual practice. There is no defined number of levels for each component. IC maps are developed to measure the implementation of a new practice or program and provide support and assistance to improve the quality of implementation.

— Patricia Roy

Boost the learning power of school-based staff

A CHALLENGE

Do you believe that:

- **Schools are** the center of change?
- **Central office** staff members are responsible for developing the capacity of school-level personnel for high-quality implementation of new programs and practices to occur?
- **District office** administrators are responsible for providing support for school improvement activities rather than mandating changes?
- **The system** will need to shift its ideas about the role and responsibility of central office administration to attain high levels of learning for students?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, the IC maps for NSDC's standards will be a valuable resource as you improve your system. The maps will help you determine strengths and needs within the system and also actions that will move your system toward higher quality implementation of professional learning.

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to mean that district-level staff have no responsibility for school-level change. The “district administrator’s task is to increase the basic capacity of the system to manage change effectively” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, p. 191). Neither *top-down* nor *bottom-up* strategies are adequate to leverage changes in schools and classrooms. Centralized (top-down) change seems not to work because it uses a uniform or one-size-fits-all approach “that is inappropriate and ineffective except for the narrowest of goals” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, p. 200). Decentralized (bottom-up) change can be difficult because of the “lack of capacity to manage change” (p. 200). These findings suggest that a combined effort will most likely result in increased learning for students. Fullan and Stiegelbauer further recommend that the district administrator’s goal is not to install a specific program but to “build the capacity of the district and the schools to handle any and all innovations” (p. 214).

EMBEDDED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

What, then, is the central office staff members’ role and responsibility in professional development? With a movement toward school-based, job-embedded professional development, their typical responsibilities — identifying programs, arranging courses, managing registrations and credit hours — shift to building the capacity of school-based personnel to use data to make improvement decisions, to identify job-embedded designs that match desired outcomes, and to design evaluation methods to assess whether

professional learning has improved student learning.

Soon after NSDC published a revised set of professional development standards in 2001, work began to help describe the roles and responsibilities that an entire system would need to adopt if it was to accept and implement these standards. One piece of this work was the development of Innovation Configuration (IC) maps (Roy & Hord, 2003). An IC, developed by Hall and Hord (2001), identifies the major components of an innovation and provides a continuum of practices that begins with ideal or high-fidelity implementation and ends with non-use. Two underlying assumptions of IC maps are that change is incremental and that implementing new practices with reliability or high-fidelity will have greater impact than using new practices at a lower level of quality.

NSDC developed IC maps for all 12 standards and eventually for 11 roles within a district system: teachers, school-based staff developers, principals, central office staff members, superintendent, school board members, director of staff development, external technical assistance provider, institution of higher education, professional association, and state education agency.

The maps begin with the teacher and students at the center because the nucleus of NSDC’s standards describes a school-based system of professional development that ensures that all educators are learning everyday with and from their colleagues. (See box at bottom of page.) The IC map describes the desired outcomes/actions

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Design standard, Desired Outcome 7.1				
Teacher	Principal	Central office staff members	Superintendent	School board
Participates in a variety of appropriate staff development designs aligned with expected improvement outcomes.	Ensures that staff development designs align with expected outcomes.	Prepare administrators and teachers to design effective professional learning experiences.	Ensures that administrators and teachers design and apply effective professional learning strategies.	

How the IC maps can be used

1. Establish a clear vision of NSDC's standards in action.

For example, to understand what full and high-fidelity implementation of the Leadership standard would entail for the entire system, each member of a team of six would read one of the role group maps for Leadership. One person reads the teacher IC maps for Leadership, a second person reads the principal Leadership maps, etc. They reassemble and share their group's primary roles and responsibilities for Leadership and discuss how those roles interconnect. This activity would help all parts of the system understand their part in implementing the Leadership standard. See the tool on Pages 4 & 5 for more direction on how to establish a clear vision of a standard.

2. Assess implementation of the standards.

Use the IC maps to determine the *current*

level of implementation of the standards. Compare current practices — as determined through interviews, focus groups, or direct observation — to the descriptions of high-fidelity implementation included in the IC maps. Individuals also can use the IC maps as a self-assessment tool.

3. Set goals and plan for continuing assistance.

When the IC maps are used to assess the current level of implementation, users will identify areas of strength and of need. Because the IC maps describe high-fidelity practice, users can clarify their next steps by examining the levels between their current practice and the ideal. They can plan for appropriate steps to help the system reach reliable implementation of the standards. Individuals can use the same process to decide their next steps for improving their practice.

Each month, *The Learning System*

carries a column by Patricia Roy, co-author of the IC maps for NSDC's standards, which focuses on the work of system leaders in improving professional learning. Roy examines one of the 12 standards each month and provides specific guidance about system leaders' roles in implementing each standard. All of those columns are available on NSDC's web site, www.nsd.org/standards/about/columns.cfm

NSDC has created Innovation Configuration maps for 11 role groups: teachers, school-based staff developers, principals, director of staff development, central office staff, superintendent, school board members, institutions of higher education, professional associations, external technical assistance providers, and state education agencies.

CD-ROMs are available for each of the individual roles. For details, visit store.nsd.org.

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for each role. A crosswalk between the roles was developed for the first set of five roles to illustrate a clear system of support among the roles. For example, the crosswalk for the Design standard describes one teacher outcome/action as participating in a variety of appropriate staff development designs/strategies that are aligned with expected improvement outcomes. (See Page 6.) The ICs map out how individuals in other roles are responsible for making this teacher action possible. The principal ensures the availability of a variety of professional development designs/strategies that align with expected outcomes. The central office staff members prepare administrators and teachers to design effective professional learning experiences. The superintendent ensures that administrators and teachers design and implement effective professional learning strategies related to school improvement goals. The school board's roles and responsibilities focus on the context standards because their primary role is to develop policies that guide the system.

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ISSN 0276-928X

The Learning System is published eight times a year by the National Staff Development Council, 5995 Fairfield Road, #4, Oxford, OH 45056, for \$49 of each membership. Periodicals postage paid at Wheelersburg, Ohio, and additional offices.

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NSDC EMBRACES A NEW PURPOSE

For the first time, the National Staff Development Council has adopted a bold new purpose that connects professional development and student learning. The purpose also emphasizes that all educators have a responsibility to learn in order to improve student performance.

NSDC's new purpose statement says the organization exists to ensure that "*every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.*"

"At NSDC, we believe that when educators engage in effective professional learning every day, then students will achieve," said NSDC President Sue McAdamis of Rockwood, Mo. "That belief requires that educators have a clear vision of what such learning will look like in their schools. Once they have that vision, they will be able to become skillful advocates to achieve what they envision. Individual educators can make a profound difference, no matter what their role, when they believe that all students and teachers can learn and

perform at high levels, when they possess a deep understanding of effective professional development practice, and when they consistently and persistently act on these beliefs and understandings.

"We want to make sure that everyone understands that learning is for everyone and that it's all of us learning that will impact student achievement. If educators can really engage in learning every day, then we firmly believe that student learning will improve," McAdamis said.

The board shifted from a "goal" to a "purpose" to send a message that NSDC's reason for existence is ensuring effective professional learning, McAdamis said.

"Goals are important because most individuals and organizations believe they are essential for improvement in schools. A purpose, however, is the essence of what we believe and what we are deeply committed to. Our purpose establishes the reason we exist as an organization and focuses on the essence of our work," McAdamis said.

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