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

## The implementation imperative

Typically ask principals about their most pressing challenges around professional development. More often than not, they comment on how difficult it is to attain classroom implementation of new practices. A little more probing reveals that many feel there should be *immediate* use of new practices — even though the professional development involved only a single session. These same principals are shocked to learn that most research indicates it can take two to three years before new classroom practices are used at a high level of quality (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

If the principal expects implementation of new practices, he/she needs to **provide long-term, in-depth, sustained staff development efforts** (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 87). We cannot expect most adults to change habits built up over years or decades with only a limited amount of learning. The principal, therefore, **needs to ensure that staff development provides extensive support over a two- to three-year period**. This support includes a variety of professional learning experiences and job-embedded designs with a focus on helping teachers use new practices. A study group could be formed to learn about new reading comprehension practices followed by demonstration lessons. Next, these learning teams might jointly develop new reading lessons and units that incorporate the new practices.

**Celebrations of effort and progress** also are another aspect of long-term support. Having explicit measures and milestones to mark people's efforts and progress toward new practices is important to any change effort (Kanter, 2002). These progress checks provide information that recognize progress as well as identify barriers to change and allow for mid-course corrections.

The principal also **provides multiple classroom coaching experiences to assist with the implementation of new instructional practices**. Research conducted 30 years ago found that powerful classroom observation and feedback can be conducted by peers not just outside experts (Mohlman, 1983). Learning team members can conduct classroom observations and provide

### Design:

Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.

feedback of those lessons especially when they share the same technical language and understanding of new practices. Peers need to have some skill in collecting data and providing non-evaluative feedback so that the line between feedback and formal evaluations is clear.

Implementation is more likely to occur when there is an explicit plan of action to support educators' use of new classroom practices and materials. Support needs to go beyond the typical one-year plan. The likelihood of professional development improving student learning can only occur when new classroom practices are used. A plan that supports implementation is one way to ensure that result.

### REFERENCES

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