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**NSDC believes
that every student
learns when every
educator engages
in effective
professional
learning.**

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about NSDC's
purpose
statement at:
[www.nsd.org/
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Students learn when adults learn

Earlier this year, the National Staff Development Council Board of Trustees developed and adopted six one-sentence belief statements to guide Board, staff, and members as they seek to achieve NSDC's purpose. Each month during the remainder of the 2007-08 school year, this column will describe one of the belief statements and reflect on its implications for school systems.

The first statement is: "*Every student learns when every educator engages in effective professional learning.*" While this is an inversion of NSDC's statement of purpose, this places the emphasis on students rather than educators. This belief statement is a useful reminder that *every student*, not just students in general, should be the intended beneficiaries of professional learning.

System leaders who are wedded to the old paradigm of staff development will have difficulty understanding the "*every student*" belief statement. It does not mean, for example, that a workshop for a limited number of teachers should affect all students. That was the problem with the old model; only some teachers and some students benefited from even the most effective professional development sessions.

In contrast, NSDC believes that when a school organizes educators to participate daily in small learning teams, the learning of everyone, including students, will increase. This is not, as they say, rocket science. The more often educators are engaged with their peers in effective professional learning, the more they will learn and the more likely it is their practice will improve. This does not occur by happenstance. Schools, with the encouragement and support of their central offices, must plan carefully, devote sustained attention to quality control, and assess outcomes. The results will be worth it: a true

culture of learning that benefits "*every student.*"

There is also an important equity dimension to NSDC's belief statement. Because most professional development currently targets a particular group of teachers, or a particular type of student learning challenge, the professional learning has disproportionate effects. Not all of a school's English and language arts teachers may participate in a workshop focused on their subject. Other teachers may participate in professional development to improve their instruction of low-performing students while still other teachers attend training addressing only the needs of more able students. Assuming the teachers incorporate their respective learning into their instruction, and that they do so effectively, some students reap the benefits while others do not.

This is not to suggest that it is inappropriate for professional development to focus on a narrow issue, but identifying the issue and the best available professional learning to help address it should be the consensus decision of a learning team. If the team subsequently learns together, and agrees on how its members will implement what the team has learned, that will ensure that the students of all team members benefit. An additional advantage is that the learning team structure will foster accountability for follow-up. If the team meets daily, participating educators will be able to report on efforts to apply their learning, the team can analyze the educators' implementation progress and problems, and then make suggestions for further strengthening application of the team's learning. In this way, the learning process is ongoing and better results accrue for students.

"*Every student learns*" has not typically been the centerpiece of school systems' professional development, as the results have demonstrated. A new day lies ahead, but preparing for it requires new thinking and action.