

Tools *for* LEARNING SCHOOLS

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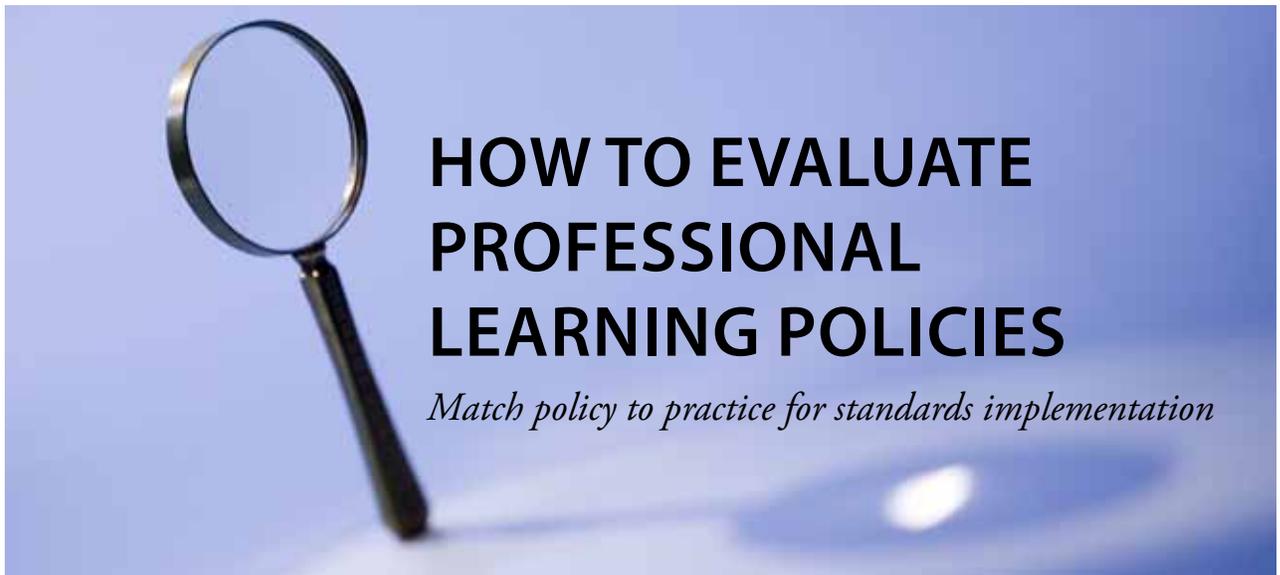
Current practices in professional learning, pp. 4-7:

Use the open-ended questions in this tool to gather information on stakeholders' perspectives on current professional learning practice.

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EVERY EDUCATOR ENGAGES IN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVERY DAY SO EVERY STUDENT ACHIEVES



By Anthony Armstrong

"Policies create a vision of what professional learning is, what standards guide quality, how educators know what quality practice is, and how to integrate ongoing assessment and evaluation for improvement," said Joellen Killion, senior advisor for Learning Forward. She understands that policy drives practice and learning.

Yet for many, while the link between effective professional learning and changes in educator practice and student outcomes may be clear, the importance of strong policy

to support professional learning may not be as clear. And, for educators in a range of positions, knowing how to even examine policies is still muddier.

Knowing about and advocating for effective professional learning is one challenge; working to create system-level policies is another step entirely. To help systems determine if their policies are aligned to the professional learning

required for today's school and school system challenges, Learning Forward created *Professional Learning Policy Review: A Workbook for States and Districts*. "The workbook allows people to move through a series of stages," said Killion, "providing a set of tools to evaluate what they have in place, assess it against a set of criteria, and then use that assessment to shape recommendations for changing policies."

High on the list of challenges in schools is the implementation of Common Core State Standards. According to the recent *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership*, a majority of principals (67%) and teachers (59%) rate implementing Common Core standards as challenging or very challenging for school leaders (p. 6).

Karen Kidwell is a member of a task force in Kentucky charged with developing a statewide, comprehensive professional learning system to support educators as the

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state implements the standards. The task force, part of the Transforming Professional Learning initiative (see box on p. 7), realized early in their development process the need to review state and local policies and assess how they supported teacher professional learning. And that's how the policy review workbook came about.

"As we looked at implementing Common Core standards, including English language arts, math standards, and other legislation, we knew we would be implementing standards in content areas over the next few years," said Kidwell, director of the Division of Program Standards for the Kentucky Department of Education. "We were looking to create a strong and systemic foundation for professional learning. We needed something that would help us implement and scale work across the state at the present and in the future as we implemented a new educator effectiveness system and the new Common Core standards."

The state of Kentucky is not alone in seeing the urgency of professional learning as the linchpin to achieving the standards. From *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Professional Learning Required* (Learning Forward, 2012),

"It is clear that these changes (full implementation of the college- and career-ready standards) cannot wait for a new generation of teachers and school administrators to emerge from teacher and principal preparation programs. Teachers and principals who are employed in schools need intensive and ongoing professional learning to develop and refine their existing practices to meet their new responsibilities related to educator evaluation; Common Core State Standards or college- and career-ready standards; rigorous, more personalized education for every student; and new assessments."

Killion, one of two lead facilitators of the Kentucky task force, says that traditional forms of staff development are less likely to move teaching practices or student learning forward, so educators need to implement richer and deeper professional learning designs. "We have to move beyond surface knowledge and awareness to focus on deep understanding, where we change assumptions and beliefs, and modeling and coaching practices that are aligned with Common Core themselves," she said. "If we aren't willing to do that, then we are not going to be able to meet our results or goals. Change equals learning, and learning equals change, so we have to learn how to support and coach changing mindsets to align with a new way of acting," said Killion.

From the MetLife survey, 93% of teachers say that "strategies and coaching to teach content more deeply"

Learning Forward BELIEF

Improving student learning and professional practice requires ongoing systemic and organizational change.

BUDGET DECREASES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH DECLINES IN A SCHOOL'S PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT.

- Teachers who report that their school's budget has decreased in the past 12 months are three times as likely as others to report that there have been decreases in time to collaborate with other teachers (35% vs. 11%) and in professional development opportunities (27% vs. 8%).
- Principals at schools with decreased budgets are also more likely than principals at schools with increased or steady budgets to say that professional development opportunities (21% vs. 5%) and time for teachers to collaborate with each other have decreased (18% vs. 3%) (MetLife, 2012).



would be helpful or very helpful in implementing Common Core standards, but half of teachers (49%) and principals (50%) agree that providing "guidance and opportunities for teachers to build their competence and skills" is challenging for school leaders to do (MetLife, 2012).

GETTING STARTED

The workbook engages and guides stakeholders through six stages of reviewing policies and making recommendations, using research-based elements of effective professional learning. *See p. 7 for six phases of a policy review.*

Tina Tipton, chief academic officer and deputy CEO for the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC), a consortium of 13 school districts serving more than 50,000 students in north central Kentucky, sees the primary value of the policy workbook as a comprehensive guide for a complicated process. "Without the policy review tools, it would be overwhelming to go through the process. Additionally, you have the work of having to explain the 'why' of reforming policies to folks who have been doing policy for a long time, and having to look at how the policies affect practice and kids. The tools and agendas in the workbook take you through this process step-by-step. It has it all laid out and user-friendly. I've done a lot of revision work before, but I never thought through the steps of the change process."

Tipton has used the workbook to help align the districts OVEC serves so they are moving in the same direction

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with their professional learning policies. “In my position, I support leaders at various levels, such as superintendents, principals, and teacher leaders. Their teams have monthly meetings with time on the agenda for me to share district support services. I usually share two resources from Learning Forward so we’re not sharing everything all at one time. We spread them out over the year in bits in pieces. They see their agenda as their time, so I left it that way because they spend a lot of time sharing and supporting each other.”

KNOWING WHERE POLICIES STAND

The audit of Kentucky’s professional learning policies revealed several areas that needed strengthening. “A lot of the results we saw were not surprises,” said Kidwell, “but they did confirm and validate that we needed to make some improvements.” While Kentucky had a set of standards written into their policies, she said, they were unknown to many people and did not offer guidance as to what practices were acceptable for professional development providers.

“We had no real monitoring or guidance or quality control around what people would offer and claims they would make for their professional learning, how it should be conducted, or how they would follow up,” said Kidwell. Through its work, the task force was able to identify several inconsistencies.

“Our final recommendations don’t call for eliminating policies or practices wholesale,” said Kidwell. “We just

needed a way to tighten up the pieces we have and leverage other opportunities for teachers to learn.”

“For example,” explained Kidwell, “we had a requirement of 24 hours of professional development per year. According to the old policy, teachers couldn’t count anything that occurred during the workday as professional learning, so even when teachers engaged in lesson study or team planning or data analysis, they could not count that if it happened during the school day. So we revised those kinds of policies because we knew that was the type of work that moved schools forward. We kept the 24-hour requirement but ensured that teachers could work during the day in collaboration or teams. We have also recommended adding 50 hours, not so they are tracking hours, but to drive the policy in how master schedules are created — to guarantee those hours are available during the school days.”

ACKNOWLEDGING CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge Tipton sees in implementing the policy review process is the time commitment. “It is up to the district to find the time, so it might help to see if it can be coupled with another activity. For example, an accreditation audit or strategic planning process might have room for policy review.”

For Kidwell, the notion of initiative fatigue was the biggest obstacle to overcome. “We had to position the work we were doing as a piece of larger, systemic work in our state. We had to make sure they knew that our focus was to ensure that more students were taught by effective teachers. When we linked everything — Common Core readiness, excellent courses and learning, what teachers need to know, how to do it, etc. — it helped everyone make those connections. They saw that it was not just a layering of initiatives but a truly comprehensive and systemic approach to professional learning.”

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Learning Forward. (2012). *Meet the promise of content standards: Professional learning required.* Oxford, OH: Author. Available at www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.

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Anthony Armstrong (anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org) is publications editor for Learning Forward. ●

MAKING TIME FOR LEARNING

- More than six in 10 teachers say that time to collaborate with other teachers (65%) and professional development opportunities (63%) have either decreased or stayed the same during the past 12 months.



However, more teachers now than a year ago are reporting increases in time for collaboration with other teachers (33% vs. 24%) and in professional development opportunities (35% vs. 26%).

- Seventy-nine percent of principals and 60% of teachers say principals have a great deal of control over teachers’ schedules; far fewer say they have a great deal of control over finances (22% of principals, 25% of teachers) (MetLife, 2012).

Current practices in professional learning

Use the open-ended questions in this tool to gather information on stakeholders’ perspectives on current professional learning practice. Some questions may not be appropriate for certain stakeholder groups since some stakeholders will have more experience with professional learning than others.

The primary purpose of this process is to *understand* current practice, *not* to determine what it *should* be. Focus respondents on what exists and remind them that the overall purpose of this policy review is to strengthen the quality and effects of professional learning. If it is difficult to get answers to all questions, use the goals of the policy review and the nature of the audience as factors to determine which questions take priority.

PURPOSE	To gather information on the current practices of professional learning.
NON-PURPOSE	To identify the strength and weaknesses of the current practice; to identify problems with the current practice; or to suggest strategies to address the problems with current practice. These purposes will occur later in the analysis phase.
TIME	30-45 minutes
QUESTIONS/PROBES	Use the questions in the table on page 44 to elicit information about current practice. Seek clarification if any response is unclear by simply asking the respondent(s) to provide an example or more information. The following additional probes might be useful: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To how many other educators does this apply? • Which specific educators, e.g. teachers, principals, instructional support staff, etc.? • What is the estimated range of implementation through practice? High? Low? Average? • Give a specific example from your own experience. • What is one example of effective professional learning? • What is one example of ineffective professional learning? • What else is important to know about current practice in professional learning that I haven't asked?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
1. Vision, mission, and beliefs for professional learning: Describes the vision, mission, and beliefs for effective professional learning and its relationship to educator effectiveness and student achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the vision, mission, and beliefs for professional learning in the state or district? • What are the current goals for professional learning and its purpose(s)?
2. Definition of professional learning: Defines professional learning and positions it as a comprehensive system of improvement, occurring continuously, and engaging educators in collaborative learning primarily at their worksite with additional opportunities outside their worksite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you define professional learning? • Who participates in professional learning?
3. Standards for professional learning: Delineates research-based standards for professional learning that are used to monitor and measure effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ensures that professional learning meets standards for high quality?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
<p>4. Purposes for professional learning: Specifies three distinct purposes for professional learning including individual growth and development, team and school improvement, and program implementation, all linked to increasing student achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the purposes of professional learning? • How do those purposes influence how professional learning occurs?
<p>5. Governance for professional learning: Delineates lines of authority for professional learning and defines processes for decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What rules, policies, or expectations govern professional learning? • Who has final authority for professional learning? • Who has primary responsibility for the professional learning program?
<p>6. Roles and responsibilities for professional learning: Delineates the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and other contributors to effective professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is typically involved in decisions about professional learning? What kinds of decisions do they make? • How is professional learning planned, implemented, coordinated, and evaluated?
<p>7. Requirement for professional learning: Delineates the expectations and/or requirements for professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much professional learning is available and required for teachers? Principals? Central office staff? Other education staff? Support staff? • How much professional learning do educators typically engage in? • Does the amount vary by roles, e.g. teachers, principals, new teachers, central office ? What reasons exist for this variation?
<p>8. Alignment with other systems: Links professional learning with educator, both teacher and administrator, effectiveness or evaluation systems, major reform initiatives, and other learning-focused and operational systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does professional learning contribute to or interact with other systems such as hiring and retaining educators, curriculum, assessment, and instruction, performance evaluation, student and educator data, educator effectiveness, etc.? • How does professional learning link to major initiatives or goals? • How do those initiatives or goals influence the content, form, and amount of professional learning?
<p>9. Data-informed professional learning: Uses student, educator, and system data to inform decisions about needs, content, designs, and effects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data are typically used to inform decisions about the content, form, and length of professional learning? • What is the most common content of professional learning? • Who determines the content?
<p>10. Leadership for professional learning: Requires leaders and facilitators of professional learning to be well prepared for their leadership roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree are leaders and facilitators of professional learning prepared for their leadership roles?
<p>11. Plans for professional learning: Requires individual, team, school, district, and state professional learning plans that align with individual, team, school, system, and state improvement goals, components of the plans, and process for developing and approving plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there plans for professional learning at the state, school system, school, team, and individual levels? • How are these plans developed? • Are they required? Reviewed? Approved? How?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
<p>12. Licensure/Certification: Specifies the role of professional learning for initial, additional, and advanced licenses or certificates that prepare educators for their new roles and develops the disposition of continuous learning and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What special programs or certifications earn educators awards, additional compensation, or other incentives?
<p>13. Dedicated time for professional learning: Allocates time for professional learning within the workday several times per week and sets aside additional days, approximately 10 per school year, for learning associated with school, system, and state improvement goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is dedicated time set aside for professional learning within the workday? Outside the workday? • Has time for professional learning increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the last five years? • How is the time allocated? • Who determines when it occurs and how it is used?
<p>14. Dedicated funding for professional learning: Requires set aside and/or adequate funding to ensure application of learning to achieve full implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has funding for professional learning increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the last five years? • Is there a designated amount or percentage of funding specifically set aside for professional learning? • Who determines how much funding and how the funds are used?
<p>15. Other resources: Requires other resources such as staff, technology, and materials to increase access to, efficiency of, and effectiveness of professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other resources (staff, technology, and materials) support professional learning? • How are those resources acquired and allocated? • Where do most of these resources reside?
<p>16. Flexible designs: Supports flexible designs for professional learning to differentiate learning for experience, background, learning preference, and other factors that influence learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of professional learning do educators experience?
<p>17. Job-embedded collaboration: Promotes job-embedded collaboration among peers within professional learning and during application and refinement of practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time is devoted to collaborative learning? • How does collaboration occur among peers to support professional learning? • What preparation and support do educators have for effective collaborative learning? • Who supervises job-embedded collaboration? • What supports effectiveness of collaborative learning time?
<p>18. Mentoring and induction: Provides multiyear mentoring with induction to support novice educators, those assuming new positions, or those with new certifications or licenses as they transition to their new work responsibilities, receive personalized support for success and acculturation; and solidify the disposition of continuous improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are novice educators supported to become highly effective? • How are educators in new roles supported? • How long does mentoring support last? • What is included in the induction program for staff members? • How does mentoring and induction align with both systemwide goals and individual educator needs?
<p>19. Incentives and recognition for professional learning: Uses application and impact of professional learning as criteria for incentives or recognition for professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What incentives exist for participation in professional learning? • How are those incentives awarded or earned? • Are the incentives based on application and impact of the learning? • Who determines if the incentives will be awarded?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
20. Evaluation of professional learning: Requires formative and summative evaluation of the equity, effectiveness, and efficiency of professional learning for both accountability and improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is professional learning evaluated? By whom? How often? • Who uses evaluation results? • How are results used?
21. Third-party providers: Establishes criteria for engaging third-party partners in the professional learning system to maintain effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and alignment with specified outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What processes are in place to ensure that third-party providers meet the state's requirements for effective professional learning and provide high quality services and products?
22. Learning management system: Uses a technology solution that links with educator and student databases to manage and increase access to professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is professional learning managed? • Who is responsible for and how is record keeping for professional learning done? • How is technology used to contribute to equitable access, efficiency, and accountability for professional learning?

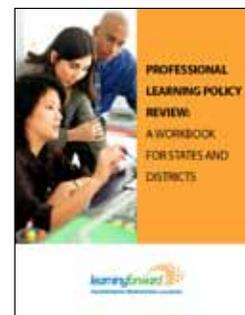
Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Professional learning policy review: A workbook for states and districts*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

SIX PHASES OF A POLICY REVIEW	
Phase 1: Initiation	Addresses initiation of the policy review and includes recommendations for setting up the process, identifying members of the review committee, and outlining their responsibilities. It also includes guidelines for the scope and length of the review process and confirming criteria for analysis.
Phase 2: Discovery	Discusses discovery. During this phase, policies related to professional learning are located for future analysis.
Phase 3: Analysis	Covers analysis. During this phase, members of the task force review and analyze the policies discovered using established criteria. Task force members use available data and evidence to make judgments about policies.
Phase 4: Recommendations	Focuses on recommendations for changes that the task force believes will leverage policies to increase the effectiveness and results of professional learning. It also includes sources of professional learning policies.
Phase 5: Reporting	Provides guidance on reporting and disseminating information on the policy review process, findings, and recommendations.
Phase 6: Follow-up	Provides guidance for follow-up one year after the review report and for annual reviews in the interim between comprehensive policy reviews.

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Professional learning policy review: A workbook for states and districts*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

TRANSFORMING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional Learning Policy Review: A Workbook for States and Districts was created as part of Learning Forward's Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core initiative, a multidimensional initiative focused on developing a comprehensive system of professional learning that spans the distance from the statehouse to the classroom. The project is supported by Sandler Foundation, MetLife Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Learn more at www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.



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Hayes Mizell

BUSINESS OFFICE

504 S. Locust St.

Oxford OH 45056

513-523-6029

800-727-7288

Fax: 513-523-0638

office@learningforward.org

www.learningforward.org

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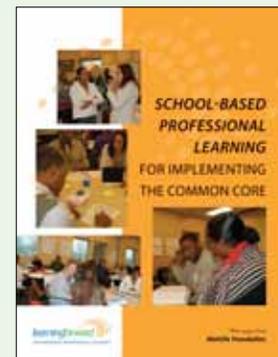
Myra Whitney

Editor: Anthony Armstrong

Designer: Sue Chevalier

School-Based Professional Learning for Implementing the Common Core

Explore four units created to help principals and teacher leaders develop their capacity to facilitate school-based collaborative professional learning. Complete with background information, tools, slides, and handouts, the four modules cover key topics in leading professional learning tied to implementing content standards: Managing change, facilitating learning teams, learning designs, and Standards for Professional Learning.



Download the units at:
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