

BEYOND THE WORKSHOP

As more educators and school systems transform their expectations for what professional learning can and should be — and demand meaningful outcomes as a result — traditional models of professional development become less frequent. While a workshop has its place, given appropriate goals and follow-up, professional learning encompasses so much more when it is conceived in ways that serve the learning needs of educators and students.



The “If not a workshop, then what?” list on p. 55 is a popular bookmark and tool for Learning Forward members and learning leaders to use in conversations in school-based teams, with central office staff, and with community members invested in school improvement. At right, we offer nine suggestions for use.

IF NOT A WORKSHOP, THEN WHAT?

9 SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE BOOKMARK LIST

COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Often, community members have a narrow understanding of what constitutes professional development. Raise awareness with this audience using the “If not a workshop, then what?” list with community members by:

1. Sharing the list in email communications with a short overview of how your school or district is building capacity of teachers and administrators.
2. Distributing the list at a school family night with a short presentation by a leadership team. Offer examples of how teachers have used specific strategies on the list and what the outcomes have been.
3. Using the list as a discussion starter in a parent-teacher organization meeting as part of expanding parents’ understanding of effective professional learning

BUILD LEARNING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AMONG EDUCATORS



Both novice and experienced learning leaders likely draw upon many learning strategies to plan professional learning for themselves and others. The “If not a workshop, then what?” list can be valuable for considering what additional strategies might offer a novel approach for addressing a learning need. Starting points could include:

1. Asking each member of a central office learning leadership team to briefly study five of the items on the list and offer a short explanation to the team on where the strategy fits in a larger learning agenda.
2. Using the list in principal learning opportunities to help school leaders build their knowledge of what learning strategies could support teacher growth in their buildings.
3. Engaging coaches in an effort to bank examples from the list of professional learning in action that demonstrate how different strategies have been valuable in changing educator practices.

ADVOCATE FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Board members and policymakers will also benefit from understanding the diversity of learning strategies that help educators improve. Use the “If not a workshop, then what?” list with these audiences to:

1. Build awareness of potential rich educator learning with explanations from teachers about how they’ve used different strategies and what the results have been.
2. Discuss how investments in different types of professional learning have had meaningful outcomes versus a one-size-fits all approach that can’t meet a range of needs.
3. Demonstrate that education professionals use strategies that have parallel uses in other fields.

1. Engage in a **cycle of inquiry** with a team.
2. Conduct **action research**.
3. Participate in a **Twitter** chat.
4. Pursue additional **certifications** or degrees.
5. Examine **student data**.
6. Lead a **book study**.
7. Do a classroom or school **walk-through**.
8. **Plan lessons** with colleagues.
9. **Shadow** a student, a teacher, or another professional.
10. Learn with the support of a **coach**.
11. Give **presentations** at conferences.
12. Participate in **lesson study**.
13. Write **assessments** with colleagues.
14. Be a **mentor** or be mentored.
15. Join an online or face-to-face **network**.
16. Consult an **expert**.
17. Create new teaching **resources**.
18. **Write** an article about your work.
19. Participate in a **Critical Friends Group**.
20. **Read** journals, magazines, blogs, books.
21. **Video** your own teaching.
22. Invite colleagues to **observe** you.
23. Keep a reflective **blog** or **journal**.
24. Maintain a professional **portfolio**.
25. Attend or lead **webinars**.
26. **Advocate** for your profession.
27. Observe a **model lesson**.
28. Attend an in-depth **institute** in a content area.
29. Participate in school improvement **planning**.
30. Study **content standards** for your state.
31. **Coach** a colleague.
32. Enroll in a **university** course.
33. Develop team facilitation **skills**.
34. Join a cadre of in-school or in-district **trainers**.
35. Share teaching **successes** with board and community members.