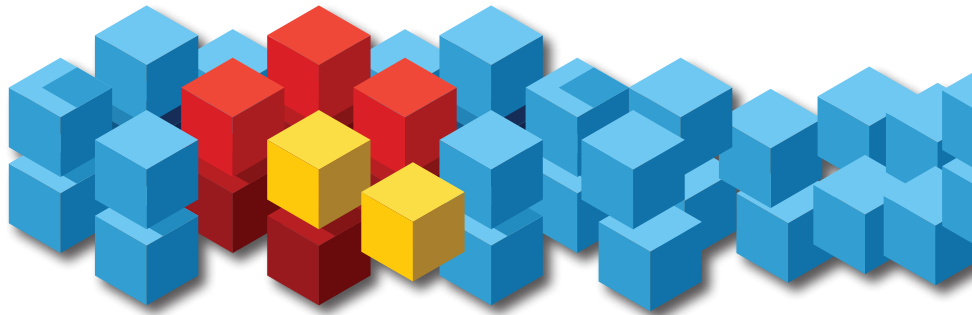


TYPES OF COACHING

Coaching is one of the most fundamental types of professional learning. But what do we mean by the broad term “coaching”? Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison describe different types of coaching, each with a distinct focus or purpose. These include:

- **Challenge coaching:** Coaches support individuals or teams of teachers in addressing persistent problems in their instruction.
- **Cognitive Coaching:** Coaches engage in conversations with teachers about planning, reflecting, and problem solving with the intent of building autonomy and interdependence.
- **Collegial coaching:** Coaches work as peers with individuals or teacher teams to strengthen their collegiality, collaborative skills, and instructional practice.
- **Content-focused coaching:** Coaches focus their interactions with teachers on content-specific instruction, planning and assessment curriculum, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.
- **Instructional coaching:** Coaches interact with teachers on all aspects of instruction, including planning, assessing learning, and differentiating to meet learners’ needs.
- **Mentoring:** Coaches focus on supporting novice teachers to build their instructional expertise and support their acclimation to their school.
- **Peer coaching:** Teachers provide coaching support to one another, typically focused on a new area of learning, in a collegial, nonevaluative relationship to advance their individual expertise with the learning.

Source: Killion, J. & Harrison C. (2006). *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.



THE EMPHASIS IS ON EFFECTIVE

Professional learning, often called professional development, can occur in a formal setting, such as a conference, workshop, or seminar, or in an informal context, such as discussions among colleagues, independent reading and research, observing a colleague’s work, or learning from a peer. (See “Beyond the workshop” on p. 54.)

Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills educators need in order to address students’ major learning challenges.

Before we take a deep dive on this issue’s theme, “Fundamentals,” it’s important to understand what effective professional learning is and what it looks like.

1 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Effective professional learning enables educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to address students’ learning challenges. To be effective, professional learning requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators’ learning needs.

Educators who participate in professional development then must put their new knowledge and skills to work. Professional learning is not effective unless it causes teachers to improve their instruction or causes administrators to become better school leaders.

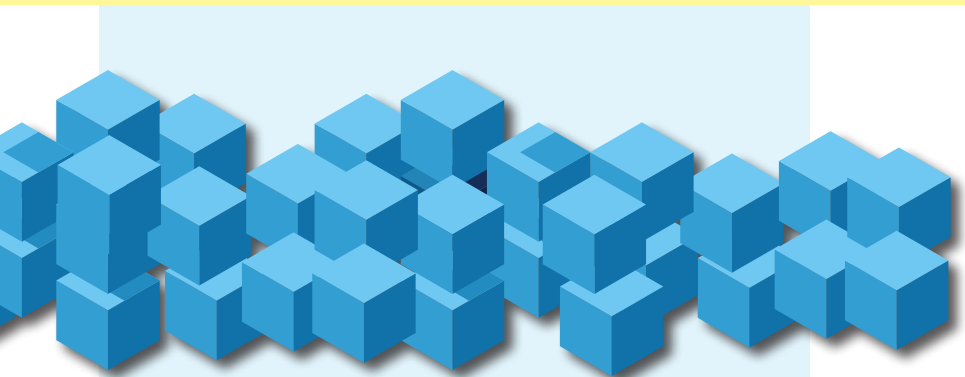
Source: Adapted from Mizell, H. (2010). *Why professional development matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

2 HOW DO EDUCATORS MAKE SURE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IS EFFECTIVE?

The effectiveness depends on how carefully educators conceive, plan, and implement it. There is no substitute for rigorous thinking and execution. Unfortunately, many educators responsible for organizing professional development have had no formal education in how to do so. The learning experiences they create for others are similar to their own experiences, many of which were neither positive nor effective.

3 WHAT DOES EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

In effective professional learning, a leadership team analyzes student achievement data to identify learning problems common to students in a particular grade or class, determines



HOW TO SET A LEARNING AGENDA

To determine a focus for learning and action, ask these four crucial questions in order:

- What does an analysis of student achievement data reveal about students’ major learning problems?
- Which student learning problems are most educators not addressing effectively?
- What knowledge and skills do educators need to learn to more effectively address the identified student learning problems?
- What is the content and duration of professional development required for educators to learn the knowledge and skills they will use to more effectively address the student learning problems?

which problems educators have the most difficulty addressing, and investigates what they need to know and do to be more successful in helping students overcome learning challenges.

Next, all educators are organized into learning teams. Many educators serve on more than one learning team. Each team has a skilled facilitator to guide the team in establishing and pursuing learning goals. Teams meet during the workday at their school two or three times a week. Districtwide teams are sometimes organized by grade or subject to focus on systemic matters.

In team learning, less experienced educators interact with and learn from more experienced educators on the team. As all educators on the team become more skillful, they reduce or eliminate variations in performance and begin to take collective responsibility for the success of all students, rather than just their own.

4 WHAT IS A LEARNING TEAM?

On a learning team, teachers and school leaders work together to use data to understand what students are not learning and to find instructional gaps, then determine what they need to learn to help close those gaps.

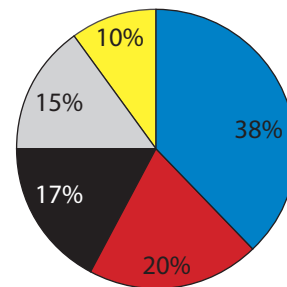
Learning team members next set out to learn what they need to know and do to improve. They may work with a knowledgeable person from the school system’s central office, with a successful teacher within the school or from another school, with an expert from a local college/university or education service center, or with a consultant.

Team members also might engage in self-directed learning such as conducting research, observing effective instruction perhaps at another school, or attending a conference or workshop. The team allows time, likely over the course of many weeks, to make sure educators’ learning is intensive. They engage in an ongoing cycle of improvement.

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LEARNING LEADERS COME FROM EVERYWHERE

As an example of how learning leaders can be found in every area of education, here is a breakdown of Learning Forward members’ roles.



- District, central office
- External, technical assistance provider, organization
- Teacher, teacher leader, coach
- Principal, assistant principal
- None specified