

Powerful Designs for Professional Learning

1. Your task is to read the scenarios and make a recommendation about potential learning designs that might be useful in these situation.
2. Using the information from each scenario, complete the chart you'll find after scenario 5.
3. The information you've recorded on the chart and the information from **Tool 5.2: *Selecting the Design that Works with the Context and Content*** to guide your decision about the design(s) you might recommend for each scenario.

Scenario One:

The district of 60,000 students wants to improve their student writing scores. Scores at all grade levels have been stagnant and despite the introduction of the new language arts textbooks last year, scores still have not budged. The principals, a curriculum committee, the staff development director, and the district improvement committee have identified a district-wide goal of increasing writing performance over the next five years by 5% each year. The state assessment uses a rubric similar to the Six-Trait +1[®] rubric. The district professional learning committee has recommended that teachers have opportunities to learn how to facilitate writer's workshop and how to teach the more complex skills of organization and voice. The school board wants to see improvement in writing scores within a year and recognizes that raising the performance of all students will take multiple years.

Most of the district's teachers are seasoned veterans, yet in the last few years there have been increasingly larger numbers of retirements so about 1/5 of the staff now has less than 5 years of experience. The district has not been very successful with district-wide change initiatives in the last five years. There has been some budget reduction, and as a result, a growing unrest between the teachers' association and the school board over salary and benefits packages.

Scenario Two:

Milton High School's 1700+ students have performed near the bottom on all state measures of student achievement for the last two years. It has failed to meet the state's targets for school improvement for two years and now is facing sanctions and the potential of being taken over by a state management team. The district has supported the school with increased funding and a team of consultants and coaches to assist the school's leadership team. Teachers have attended 2-3 days of training on reading across the content areas and writing-to-learn.

Student attendance is around 85%. Teacher attendance is about 87%. Ninety-nine percent of the students live in poverty. Graduation rate is about 73%. Interaction among teachers is relatively limited to faculty meetings that are mostly presentations and announcements. Classroom instruction is largely teacher-directed. The school is one of five in the district that has been facing declining student performance, high teacher turnover, and frequent changes in the principalship. The school has its third new principal in three years.

The leadership team is committed to improving student engagement in school, attendance rates, graduation rates, and overall student achievement. They want to concentrate first on reading because they believe that it is so fundamental to learning in all other subject areas and because it is the area with the worst performance. The leadership team believes that professional learning is at the core of the improvements they want. They just don't know what to do next.

Scenario Three:

Six elementary schools have worked together to develop a new science curriculum for grades 3-6 that aligns with the state standards for science education. Teacher teams from across the six schools worked together for nine months to write, vet, revise, and take the curriculum to the school board for approval. The district provided financial resources to provide the instructional resources available in each school that were needed to teach the curriculum.

Recent assessments of the implementation of the curriculum acknowledged that while teachers believed that they were implementing the curriculum, student performance suggested that either the curriculum was inappropriate, students weren't learning, or something else was at work. Principals, from their classroom walkthrough evidence, wondered if teachers' content knowledge might be part of the challenge. The curriculum was written to be deeply grounded in conceptual development and not just provide activities as some elementary science curriculum do.

The district was ready to help the schools in their implementation of the curriculum and to move the other six schools in the district into the implementation cycle. They did not want to rush, though, until they figured out what kind of professional learning would best support schools in high-quality implementation of the new curriculum.

Scenario Four:

Across the board, the middle school students in the Antioch-area school district consortium have been struggling with preparing students and teachers for the implementation of the new statewide requirement that all 8th graders enroll in Algebra

and pass an end-of-course examination before graduation. In the last 7 years, only about 25% of the students enrolled in Algebra, and those students were considered honor students. While some school-communities, especially those of most affluent students, already had large percentages of their students enrolled, it seemed there was little chance that students in this regional consortium of school districts that served large numbers of poor and minority students would succeed when they were expected to enroll next year.

Within the consortium, teachers had expressed their dissatisfaction with the new rule and wanted to spread the traditional Algebra curriculum over three years. District superintendents agreed and said that the curriculum would not be diluted until they first tried it and looked at student success rates. Superintendents vowed too to provide whatever support teachers needed to ensure that students and teachers were successful. The consortium had an opportunity to apply for a professional learning grant from the district to support teacher development in both content knowledge and content-specific instructional skills. They were ready to write up their plan and wanted to think about how to build both teachers' comfort with algebra concepts and teaching them. They also wanted to focus on teachers' willingness to collaborate across schools and within schools.

Scenario Five:

The board's new plan for improving student achievement in low-performing junior high and elementary schools was to place a full-time instructional coach in those schools. The board used the state's special budget allocation for low-performing schools to support these new roles. It was a bold move for the board. They had a lot at stake in the success of this initiative. As a district without many resources, it was a gamble to put all their resources into such an expensive intervention. The teachers' association expressed some frustration with the decision.

The district selected and provided training to the newly hired coaches. As the school year was beginning though, the director of curriculum and professional learning acknowledged that coaches' training alone would be insufficient to support coaches in their new role. They had evidence from coaches both at the end of training and now after the first three weeks of school were completed that coaches wanted and needed more in-depth knowledge and skills related to the curriculum and instructional strategies, especially differentiation and use of assessment-for-learning, ongoing support and continual refinement of their skills.

Powerful Designs Practice

Using information from each scenario, complete the chart below. Use the information on the chart to guide your decision about the design(s) you might choose for each scenario.

#	Goal/ Intended Result	Student Information	Teacher Information	District/School Information	Design(s) Choice	Rationale
1						
2						

3						
4						
5						