

DEVELOP A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

A professional learning plan establishes short- and long-term plans for professional learning and implementation of the learning. Such plans guide individuals, schools, districts, and states in coordinating learning experiences designed to achieve outcomes for educators and students.

Professional learning plans focus on the program of educator learning. A program of professional learning is “a set of purposeful, planned actions and the support system necessary to achieve the identified goals. Effective [professional learning] programs are ongoing, coherent, and linked to student achievement” (Killion, 2008, p. 11). Events, on the other hand, are occasional, episodic, disconnected incidents that are scheduled periodically throughout a school year. Typically, they have little or no connection with one another and little chance of producing substantial change (Killion, 2008).

Events are simply not enough to do more than raise awareness, transmit information, and possibly ignite a desire to change. For example, a workshop on using literacy across the curriculum is not a program of professional learning, whether the duration is two hours or 20. A program is not about the number of hours of formal learning, but about the nature of the learning itself. It may be informal or formal, but it must include application, analysis, reflection, coaching, refinement, and evaluation of effectiveness to produce results for educators and students. Furthermore, it needs to address state, school system, school, team, and individual learning goals.

REFERENCE

Killion, J. (2008). *Assessing impact: Evaluating staff development* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Individuals leading or facilitating professional learning planning teams or members of planning teams may use the tool Websites to Sample Professional Learning Plans on pp. 56-59 to locate examples of templates and formats for professional learning plans. These examples represent how professional learning plans are structured, not necessarily exemplary plans.

NEW WORKBOOK OFFERS STEP-BY-STEP PLANNING GUIDANCE

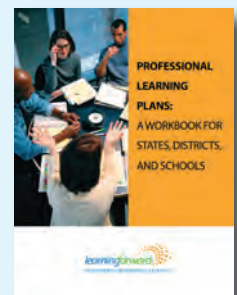
Professional learning plans establish short- and long-term guidance for professional

learning and its implementation. *Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts, and Schools* offers information and tools to walk educators through seven planning

steps, from data analysis to setting goals to identifying learning designs to monitoring impact. Effective plans help individuals, schools, districts, and states to coordinate learning experiences designed

to achieve outcomes for educators and students.

The workbook is available free for download at www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.



STEPS TO DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

Follow these steps to develop a short- or long-term professional learning plan.

	Step	Task
1	Analyze student learning needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather multiple forms of student data.
2	Identify characteristics of community, district, school, department, and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the data to identify trends, patterns, and areas of needed improvement. • Gather data about the learning context. • Identify the features of the context that influence student and educator learning. • Identify potential contributors to the current state of student learning. • Write SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) goals for student learning. • Gather data about educators.
3	Develop improvement goals and specific student outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review research and evidence on successful professional learning programs or practices. • Identify those relevant to the current goals and objectives.
4	Identify educator learning needs and develop goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop educator SMART objectives. • Define knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behavior changes (KASAB). • Develop logic model.
5	Study research for specific professional learning programs, strategies, or interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study professional learning research related to goal area and context features. • Identify research- or evidence-based practices.
6	Plan professional learning implementation and evaluation, including establishing a logic model for specific professional learning programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop theory of change with assumptions. • Develop logic model.
7	Implement, evaluate, and sustain the professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact the plan. • Monitor progress and adjust as needed. • Evaluate progress and results. • Sustain support to achieve deep implementation over time.

CORE ELEMENTS OF A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN	
Most professional learning plans, whether short-term, annual, or multiyear, contain the following elements:	
<p>Needs analysis. Needs emerge from data, not wishes. Through a process of analyzing data about students, educators, and the system, studying trends and patterns, and assessing the potential causes of contributors, needs emerge. These needs are then studied to understand what might be causing or contributing to them.</p>	<p>Responsible person(s). The responsible person(s) is the designated point person, or the persons who know about the actions and the status of each action. In most cases, the responsible person(s) works with a team or multiple individuals to complete an action.</p>
<p>Goal(s). Goals specify the broad outcomes of professional learning. Typically, they are stated as outcomes for students, e.g. student achievement increases because educators learn. Many plans use the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) goal format to convey the goal(s).</p>	<p>Indicators of success. Indicators of success describe how planners will know whether the actions have occurred and the goals and objectives have been achieved. The indicators are descriptions of the completed actions or markers that demonstrate progress toward the goals.</p>
<p>Objectives. Objectives delineate the specific long- and short-term changes that need to occur in order to meet the goal(s). In professional learning, they are frequently stated as the knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behavior (KASAB) changes that occur in educators to achieve the goal(s) stated for students.</p>	<p>Measures of success. Measures of success identify how data or evidence will be collected to demonstrate indicators of success. For example, if improved student writing is an indicator of success, the measures of success are the quarterly writing samples scored by teachers.</p>
<p>Strategic actions/interventions. The strategic actions or interventions delineate what a state, district, school, team, or individual does, provides, or offers to accomplish the changes necessary to achieve the goals.</p>	<p>Evaluation plan. The evaluation plan measures the success of the professional learning. It uses the indicators of success and measures of success to guide data collection to determine if the goals and objectives were achieved, if the strategic actions and interventions were appropriate, and what improvements can be made in future professional learning plans.</p>
<p>Timeline. The timeline explains when actions will be completed and the objectives and goals achieved. It helps monitor progress over the duration of a plan.</p>	<p>Resources needed. Resources include the staff, technology, funding, materials, and time necessary to accomplish the objectives and goals. Resources may also be called the inputs.</p>
The following components are sometimes included in professional learning plans:	
<p>Assumptions. Assumptions are statements of belief, rather than facts, that undergird or drive the plan design. The assumptions frame the plan’s development and explain its design.</p>	
<p>Theory of change. A theory of change maps the sequential actions needed to achieve identified goals. This theory is often graphically displayed to demonstrate the interrelationship of the components. It identifies the core components of professional learning that will produce the intended changes.</p>	
<p>Logic model. A logic model is a diagram showing how a program works. Because it delineates the inputs, short-term outputs, and intermediate and long-term outcomes, the logic model is used as a progress-monitoring, assessment, evaluation, and communication tool.</p>	