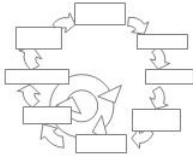


Part 1

Introduction to Training About the Maine Professional Development Model





II. One School's Story

This is the story of a school that has been implementing the Iowa Professional Development Model on which our Maine model is based. Callouts in the right margin identify the Model components that are illustrated by the story. Use this narrative for an initial awareness of what professional development can accomplish and how it is supported.

A. “One School’s Story”: Implementing the Maine Professional Development Model

- Next Few Pages:
- A. One School’s Story: Implementing the Maine PD Model
 - B. Three PD Assumptions

As you read, visualize a district and a specific school in the district, perhaps your own school.

This school has been implementing the PD Model. For over a year teachers have been studying and learning together, and they are seeing results.

Student Learning at the Center of School Improvement/Staff Development

What does the term “results” mean in the PD Model? It means teachers’ practices have improved. It means student learning has increased and student achievement gains have been made.

Collecting and Analyzing Student Data

A year ago the district set out to collect, analyze and organize student data. Data were studied at the district, building and classroom levels. With a clearer picture of student learning, the district set goals and began charting a course to close identified achievement gaps.

They generated questions ...

What do data tell us about our student learning needs?

(Constant Conversation Question #1)

- How does our student performance in reading and math compare with state and national achievement norms?
- Are our mean percentile math and reading achievement scores consistent at the elementary, middle school and high school levels?
- How does the achievement of our various subgroups (e.g., Special Education, English Language Learners, Low Socioeconomic Status, ethnic minorities, etc.) compare with our district averages in reading and math? Are we serving all students?
- How do our reading and math scores correlate with attendance?
- How do our reading and math scores correlate with discipline referrals?
- How many of our students are proficient in reading? Math?
- What is the correlation of reading scores with students who have dropped out of school this year?
- What is the correlation of reading scores with students who have been referred to the office for discipline problems this year?
- How much independent reading do our students do? At school? At home?
- And others....

One School's Story (continues)

In addition to student achievement data, other sources of information were collected and analyzed-- for students (attendance, grades), teachers (instructional strengths and weaknesses, recent professional development topics) and schools (norms about collaboration, beliefs about student learning potential).

In this district, principals and other leaders continuously model how to use data. The analysis and use of data are public. Leaders involve the whole spectrum of staff in data analysis as well as discussion and decision-making based on student data.

Leadership

A leadership team was formed with representation from various grade levels and role groups. This team rolled up its sleeves and dug into the data. Data analysis work began with the team and then eventually included all faculty.

Participative Decision-making

Using student data as well as other sources of information, the staff went on to address the question, "What will we do to meet student learning needs? (Constant Conversation Question #2)

They set goals and helped establish a sense of urgency around making a difference and the need to change teaching practices. Confronting the data to set a clear course got everybody engaged in dialogue about what students needed to learn. Staff all knew what the focus was and administration made it clear that they intend to be actively involved in learning also, to work with the teachers, and to support the focus on instruction over time.

Focus on Instruction

District leadership sent a straightforward message that their goal was student learning and the path to student learning was instruction.

Message = Improved instruction is everybody's job!!!

Goal Setting

This district wanted to choose professional development content with a solid track record for accomplishing the kind of student achievement goals they had set. Past experiences with one-shot speakers and topics unrelated to student achievement goals had left many in the district believing that professional development was irrelevant to the real mission of the district. They looked for external help with selecting content that had a research base. Again, the focus was placed squarely on instruction.

Selecting Content

The leadership team worked through a process facilitated by a consultant to review a selected set of studies and to sort out what content would best match the student learning needs they had identified.

Once the team selected a strategy, the faculty had confidence that what they were going to study together and implement had the capacity to make a difference for their students.

One School's Story (continues)

Once the content was chosen, the district and building leadership teams began defining a plan that would get teachers to a level of mastery and implementation necessary to increase student achievement. (As the planning work unfolded, the team wrote their local professional development plan.)

Designing the Process

School administrators knew they wanted all teachers engaged in professional development, so together with the leadership team they facilitated a process for participative decision-making. They needed a governance plan with input from all grade levels so teachers could help design opportunities to learn and collaborate. The design included time to learn the theory and see demonstrations, to practice, and to rehearse. The design set up a way to get teachers to observe each other occasionally for the purpose of seeing how others were implementing the strategies.

The principals helped deal with calendar and time issues. They worked with central office and board personnel to get early release time. They restructured faculty meetings to include more opportunities to learn together about data and to focus on learning and designing classroom applications of the new strategies learned.

The design built in common training days, plus in-building time for professional development.

The leadership set a tone that recognized the need to address process and procedures but kept focus on content. About 80% of the district resources and time for professional development was expended on content but other issues were dealt with as they came up.

Simultaneity

Together the faculty put the Local professional development plan into place.

Teachers participated in learning opportunities, collaborated to learn the new content, and studied their implementation. Principals and the leadership team maintained a schedule for partners to plan, work out problems, and watch lessons (to get further ideas for their own classrooms – not to critique each other). The leadership team collected data to find out – How often are teachers implementing? Are teachers implementing accurately? Do we need more demonstration? Theory? Practice? As a staff they kept fine tuning until they saw mastery on the part of the faculty AND evidence of increased performance by the students.

Ongoing Cycle

Leaders kept their eye on the prize – are all teachers engaging? They helped with barriers such as time. Leaders sent an unrelenting message that every person (including administrators) is responsible to learn, to be forthcoming with data, and to confront the data about kids.

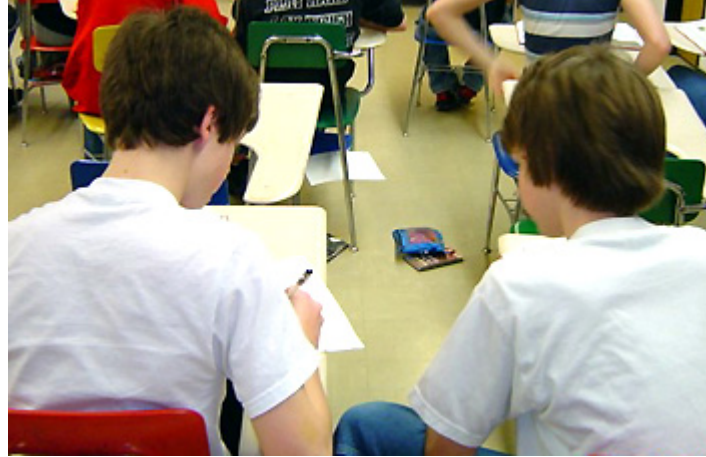
Leadership

Principals engaged in learning opportunities, visited classrooms, and collected data to share with individual teachers. The Principals routinely asked about the strategies, and kept a constant eye on the data.

The district’s teacher evaluation procedures ensured that the evidence needed to document many of the teaching standards and criteria aligned with what was being routinely collected for PD. This saved time and paper work and also helped to strengthen the PD process.

Program Evaluation

This district carefully evaluated their district plan by asking: “How do/will we know that student learning has changed (student data)?” And “How will we evaluate our programs and services to ensure improved student learning (implementation data)?” (Constant Conversation Questions #3 and #4)



Knowledge about what the kids were experiencing and whether teachers were using new strategies frequently and accurately was used to shape ongoing professional development as well as to evaluate the program.

As the district was deciding on future steps they asked, “Did we do what we set out to do?” Data indicated that teachers had used the new skills in the classroom and that students had made gains. As they study their current student achievement data, they must decide if their goals have been fully met and determine how to proceed in the coming year. They now had three choices for their next local professional development plan:

- 1) To continue training on the strategies in the previous plan;
- 2) To identify additional strategies to further move toward their student learning goal;
- 3) To establish a new goal and determine the strategies needed to accomplish that goal.

In any case, they will use data generated by their program evaluation to plan next steps in their professional development agenda.

One School’s Story – A Prelude to the Model’s Assumptions and Principles

“One School’s Story” helps us envision ourselves experiencing processes illustrated by the Maine Professional Development Model. The following three pages directly state three basic assumptions and four Quality Standards upon which the Maine Professional Development Model was developed. Additionally, the Model’s cycle components are defined a bit more for you. Eventually, Part 2 of this Training Manual will flesh out the components in even greater detail, and Part 4 will provide tools and resources to assist your district and school in implementing the components.

B. Three Maine Professional Development Model Assumptions

The next few pages list assumptions that helped form the Maine Professional Development Model. Studying these assumptions helps the reader understand the logic for each component of the model. This logic is based on professional development research and the knowledge and experience of the stakeholder group that developed the Iowa Professional Development Model.

Assumption 1 — School Improvement and Staff Development Decisions are Driven by Student Learning Needs

The purpose of the local professional development plan is to increase student learning. The Maine Professional Development Model describes a collective process in which collaborative action toward shared goals targets student learning needs. *If the object of professional development is increased student learning, the Maine Professional Development Model is a high-probability course of action.*

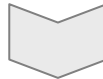
Assumption 2 — Four “Quality Standards” Guide the Use of the Maine Professional Development Model

The box at right defines four “Quality Standards” from “Achieving Results” that are revisited as needed throughout the development and implementation of a professional development program. Throughout the manual, when an operating principle is noted, this shield icon will appear as a prompt:

Assumption 3 — The Professional Development Process is Cyclical

Professional development begins with planning components, includes continuous and collaborative teacher training and evaluation components, and moves to summative evaluation of the PD program efforts. This PD process continues as necessary as defined on the next page.

Four “Quality Standards”



Focus on Research Data to Drive Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

A clear focus on instruction is essential. Deliberate alignment of instruction, curriculum, and assessment increases the likelihood that professional development efforts will be effective. If the goal is increased student achievement, use the most powerful tools over which the school has control.

Participative Decision Making

Collective action requires a democratic process. Teachers are engaged in decision making and planning for professional development that is aligned with identified student needs. Communication and governance processes are in place to increase the likelihood that decisions made about staff development are binding. When professional development decisions affect a group (rather than an individual), group members must participate in those decisions.

Focus on Results

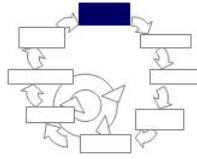
Strong leaders are essential for successful professional development efforts. Leaders facilitate the engagement of all faculty members responsible for instruction, address time and resource issues and balance both the pressure and support required to sustain professional development efforts as a priority. For leadership to be pervasive and intense enough to make things happen at the district, building, and classroom levels, it must be distributed through the organization – involving the school board, central office administration, building-level administration, and teachers. Collective professional development aimed at student learning goals requires focused leadership.

Organizational Alignment

Schools and districts often have to attend to multiple concerns simultaneously. Professional development efforts balance the resources directed toward and the efforts invested in content, context and processes. To accomplish student achievement gains, focusing on new content is the priority but simultaneously issues of context and process may also need to be addressed. Select a priority in which to invest professional development time and resources and then seek ways to integrate other concerns without losing focus on the major initiative. If multiple initiatives receive equal effort, the probability of succeeding with any of them is reduced.

Defining Components of the Maine Professional Development Model

Part II of this manual focuses on the Model components.

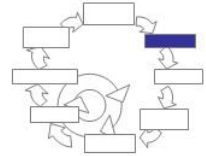


Collecting and Analyzing Student Data

Identifying student need is the first step in designing professional development intended to improve student learning. Collecting and analyzing information about student performance in areas of interest enables a district and/or school to set priorities. If professional development is to impact student learning, it must precisely align with student need.

Goal Setting

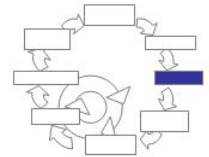
Clear statements of expectations regarding student learning allow schools and districts to focus professional development resources and energy on achievable goals. To meet the goals identified in a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, the intent of professional development is to increase the learning of all students while attending to the learning needs of subgroups of students. If professional development content is to accomplish the desired increases in student learning, the goals for student learning must be explicit and concrete.



Selecting Content

Content selected for collective study by schools and districts must be supported by evidence that it can accomplish the goals set for student learning. A district should be confident that the content they choose to study has been found to improve student achievement. A process for selecting content will include:

- A review of research on curricular and instructional innovations with a history of success in the areas identified for student improvement;
- A review of current knowledge and practices in the district/school;
- Alignment with the Maine's Teaching Standards; and
- Documentation that the practices are supported by scientifically-based research.

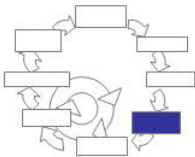


Designing the Process

The professional development process must ensure that teachers have adequate opportunities to learn and implement new curriculums, instructional strategies, and assessments.

Teachers need to have sufficient workshop and workplace supports to develop a deep understanding of the theory of the strategy/model they are learning. Professional development design will build in time for teachers to learn together and to collaborate with each other. If teachers have opportunities to learn new content and implement it in their classrooms, the investment in professional development will pay off in increased student learning.

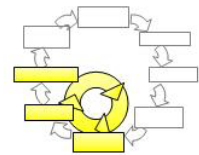
If professional development is based on powerful and proven content and implemented as designed, students will benefit.



Ongoing Cycle

Professional development is a continuous process rather than a one-time event. To be able to transfer new learning into the classroom, teachers need multiple opportunities to see demonstrations, plan together, work out problems, rehearse new lessons, develop materials, engage in peer coaching, and observe each other. The collaborative routines needed for supporting these actions must be planned for, supported and monitored.

What staff developers learn from the study of implementation will inform decisions about future training, the need for support, and adjustments in the learning opportunities. If new content is to be learned and implemented in classrooms so that students benefit, teachers need ongoing training, the collegiality of peers as they plan and develop lessons and materials and study their implementation, and interim measures to judge the success of their efforts.



Program (Summative) Evaluation

The effectiveness of professional development is judged by student learning outcomes. Determination of the efficacy of a professional development program is based on two factors: whether or not the content was implemented as planned and whether or not students acquired the desired knowledge/skills/behaviors. This judgment is based on both formative and summative evaluation data. The quality of the evaluation is contingent upon having clearly stated goals that target an improvement in student performance. A professional development program is successful when it achieves its student learning goals.

