

New American Schools

Strategies for Improving Professional Development: A Guide for School Districts

M. Bruce Haslam and Colleen P. Seremet

Professional development is the cornerstone of school reform, but many educators do not yet have access to the kinds of professional learning opportunities that allow them to develop the knowledge and skills required to help all students learn. In this guide, the authors explain how school districts can review current professional development programs and policies and realign them into a coherent system. They also explain how professional development can be aligned with other key systems to support comprehensive school reforms. This guide is based on experiences in school districts seeking to improve professional development for all educators.

DRIVEN BY RESULTS



New American Schools

New American Schools is a dynamic coalition of teachers, administrators, parents, community and business leaders, policy makers, and experts from around the country committed to significantly improving achievement for all students

Unlike many reforms that are add-on programs or isolated projects, New American Schools designs aim to improve the whole school, from curricula and instruction to funding and community involvement.

Recognizing that one size doesn't fit all schools and communities, New American Schools offers a choice of different designs for helping all students achieve at high levels. (For information on each design, turn to the back of this booklet.)

New American Schools is driven by results.

In a short period of time, New American Schools has generated impressive results. In many schools using a New American Schools design:

- ◆ students are producing higher-quality work, achieving at higher levels, and showing improvement on standardized tests and other measures of performance;
- ◆ discipline problems are down and student attendance and engagement are up;
- ◆ both teacher enthusiasm and community involvement are on the rise; and
- ◆ student achievement is improving quicker than conventional wisdom suggests is possible.

New American Schools helps partner districts restructure.

To overcome traditional barriers to school excellence, New American Schools provides focused assistance to its district partners in five key areas:

- ◆ rethinking school finance, including investment funding and resource reallocation strategies;
- ◆ revamping professional development infrastructures to support whole-school transformation;
- ◆ setting high academic standards and linked assessments;
- ◆ giving schools authority to make decisions about curriculum, staff, and spending as well as holding them accountable for results; and
- ◆ engaging parents and the public in improvement efforts.

New American Schools believes in shared accountability.

The foundation of New American Schools is a strong partnership built on shared responsibility for results. Clearly defined roles link partners to one another and to results. All stakeholders in a New American Schools community—teachers, administrators, district leaders, parents, and New American Schools Design Teams—are expected to take responsibility and to be held accountable for helping to improve student achievement.

New American Schools partners also commit to regular and rigorous assessment of their performance, resulting in the sound business practice of continuous improvement.

Strategies for Improving Professional Development: A Guide for School Districts

M. Bruce Haslam

Dr. M. Bruce Haslam is a Managing Director at Policy Studies Associates in Washington, D.C. During the past 10 years, Dr. Haslam has directed a number of studies of federal, state, and local professional development, technical assistance, and school reform. He has advised New American Schools on professional development issues, and has worked with teams in several school districts to strengthen their professional development systems. Dr. Haslam served as a member of the Education Commission of the States Advisory Group on Teacher Quality.

Colleen P. Seremet

Dr. Colleen Seremet is Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for Dorchester County Public Schools, a small, rural school district located on Maryland's Eastern Shore. During the past three years, Dr. Seremet has led a comprehensive restructuring of the district's professional development programs and policies. She has also worked with other district staff and school leaders to align professional development with other core systems in the district, including school improvement, resource allocations, and personnel. Dr. Seremet is a member of the advisory group of the Finance Project's Collaborative Research and Development Initiative on Financing Professional Development in Education

M. Bruce Haslam and Colleen P. Seremet

Why should a school district invest in a system of high-quality professional development? The answer is clear. Teacher quality and the quality of school leadership have a significant impact on student achievement, and effective professional development can contribute to improved instruction and more effective school organization and management. As Linda Darling-Hammond (1999) Executive Director of the National Commission on Teaching for America's Future suggests, teacher quality consists of "teachers' verbal ability, subject matter knowledge, knowledge of teaching and learning, and the ability to use a wide range of teaching strategies adapted to student needs." Based on a review of research on factors that contribute to student achievement, Darling-Hammond and Ball (1998) conclude that teacher quality accounts for about 40 percent of the variation in student achievement. Reflecting on these and similar findings in earlier research, Darling-Hammond and Rustique-Forrester (1997) assert that "each dollar spent on improving teachers' qualifications nets greater gains in student learning than any other use of an education dollar." Similarly, a report from the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) points to the importance of professional development for principals and other school leaders in implementing comprehensive reforms and increasing student achievement (NSDC, 2000).

Although research does not yet provide extensive evidence of the links between professional development and improved student learning, there is a growing consensus that "professional development lies at the center of education reform and instructional improvement" (Elmore & Burney, 1997). Seymour Sarason (1990) succinctly described the link between professional development and improved student learning: "It is virtually impossible to create and sustain over time conditions for productive learning for students when they do not exist for teachers."

Bruce Joyce, a leading researcher on teacher professional development, echoed this perspective in a recent interview in which he noted that, when professional development enhances teachers' repertoires of instructional skills and content knowledge, "There is no question that

"In fact, several schools wished that their districts would take a more active role in promoting and supporting reform."

staff development can raise student achievement" (Lynn, 1999). We would add that professional development for principals also is important because effective school leadership, especially instructional leadership, is critical to

establishing and maintaining quality educational programs. And, as we have seen again and again, principals play key roles in creating environments in which teachers can learn.

District leaders recognize that higher standards and more rigorous assessments, particularly when they are embedded in comprehensive school reforms, are fundamentally transforming the roles of teachers and principals. Teaching *all* students challenging content, integrating assessment into the instructional program, redesigning grouping practices, schedules and other school organization structures and creating shared governance in school are just some of the dramatic changes facing school staffs. In the context of these transformations in schools, professional development is most appropriately understood as being "synonymous with enacting change... Change does not involve one implementation, but rather the management of several at once" (Guskey & Huberman, 1995). It follows that professional development is not an event or a series of events, although it may include both. Professional development is a process of adult learning and growth.

New American Schools and its affiliated comprehensive school reform Design Teams have learned over the past decade that the assistance they provide is most effective when

it is aligned with other professional development programs and policies. They have also seen that this assistance has greater impact when it is aligned with other district systems such as school improvement planning, personnel management, and resource allocation. Without some measure of alignment between professional development and these other functions, even the most powerful professional learning opportunities are unlikely to have broad impact in classrooms and schools. As Michael Fullan (1991) has observed, "Nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant change in practice when teachers returned to their classrooms." For individual teachers and principals, weak, ineffective, or inappropriate professional development can be a disincentive to further participation in professional learning activities—and more important, it can undermine serious reforms.

Despite the growing consensus about the importance of professional development in school reform, many districts do not yet devote much attention to professional development. Typically, they do not view professional development as a system, nor do they see it as necessarily linked to other core systems. For example, a recent study of schools that had been recognized for excellence in professional development by the U.S. Department of Education concluded that:

"These schools operated fairly independently from their districts. Districts provided [content] standards and curriculum guides; they offered credit, funds, or actual opportunities to attend professional development workshops; but they were not very actively involved. In fact, several schools wished that their districts would take a more active role in promoting and supporting reform." (WestEd, 2000.)

Using This Guide

This guide is intended to assist local policy-makers, central office administrators, and school leaders who are committed to improving the quality of professional development and to ensuring that it is an integral part of comprehensive reform efforts. After a brief review of what research has to say about effective professional development, the guide calls on superintendents to create professional development working groups to tackle the tasks of improving district professional development programs and policies. Next, the guide outlines an action agenda, including specific steps that these working groups can take to complete these tasks. The first item on the agenda is setting standards for high-quality professional development. The second item on the agenda is using the standards to improve professional development by establishing quality assurance mechanisms and ongoing evaluation procedures. The third item on the agenda is to establish or, in some cases, re-establish, the links between professional development and other key district systems.

We recommend that professional development working groups begin by reviewing the guide to familiarize themselves with the overall agenda and specific tasks that are laid out. Following this review, the working groups should decide how they want to proceed. We suggest following the improvement agenda as we have outlined it in the guide. That is, start by setting standards. Next, use the standards to review the quality of current professional development and ensure the quality of future professional development. Finally, review the alignment between professional development and other systems and, as necessary, propose ways to strengthen those linkages. The reason for proceeding in this order is that the standard-setting process can stimulate conversations about professional development and

provide a framework for reaching consensus about the definition of high-quality professional development and the best ways to support it.

Alternatively, a working group could decide to begin by examining the alignment between professional development and other systems. Our colleague, Karen Hawley Miles, recommends that districts can productively review professional development programs and policies by reviewing district investments in professional development. In her perspective, this analysis helps districts determine whether they are using resources wisely and provides data that can inform decisions about how to reallocate existing resources and help district staff see where there are gaps that need to be filled with new resources. No matter where working groups decide to begin, we think that it is important for them to complete the entire three-part agenda.

Working groups will see that the guide recommends three kinds of activities. First, we suggest that working groups *collect and review a variety of information*. These efforts serve several purposes. For example, they lead to shared understanding of key issues and concerns. In addition, they can provide a foundation on which to create new products and avoid reinventing programs and policies. Second, we encourage the working groups to *communicate about their work throughout the district*. Because professional development is a shared responsibility, it is important to engage as many people as possible in conversations about professional development and their roles in the process. Absent this communication, the tasks that we describe in the guide

“Because professional development is a shared responsibility, it is important to engage as many people as possible in conversations about professional development and their roles in the process.”

will have little or no impact in the district. Third, we call on working groups to *develop products related to professional development*, including documents that list the standards, quality assurance guides, and policy statements. These products guide practice and articulate policy. The audiences include district leaders, central office staff, school leaders and faculty, and professional development providers. Other audiences include school board members, parents, and community members. We think that all of these activities are important components of any effort to improve professional development. We encourage working groups to consider each of them and to plan on carrying them out in ways that are best suited to local needs and circumstances.

In the end, these processes will lead to increased understanding of what high-quality professional development looks like and why it is so important to improving instruction, school leadership, and student learning. The products resulting from these processes will serve as guides for future professional development activities and the policies necessary to support them.

Form a Working Group

- ◆ Collect and review a variety of information
- ◆ Communicate their work throughout the district
- ◆ Develop products related to professional development

This guide draws on the experiences of two school districts—the Memphis City Schools in Memphis, Tennessee, and the Dorchester County Public Schools in Cambridge, Maryland. In many ways, these districts represent a study in contrasts. The Memphis City Schools serves 118,000 students in 164 schools, and employs a professional staff of 8,000 teachers and administrators. The Dorchester County Public Schools enrolls 5,000 students in 12 schools, and employs a staff of 350 teachers and administrators. Memphis has a relatively large central office staff. In 1996, the district

opened the Teaching and Learning Academy, a state-of-the-art facility to coordinate and house many of the district's professional development activities. Dorchester County employs nine people in its central office, and each of them must wear a number of hats.

Despite the differences, these two districts have several things in common. Both have benefited from strong leadership by the superintendent. Both districts were committed to comprehensive school reform. Finally, both have unwavering commitments to professional development as a regular part of the work of all educators. This commitment is reflected, in part, by each district's decision to create a working group to examine professional development programs and policies and make recommendations for ways in which they can be strengthened. The working group in Memphis met every four to six weeks for about 18 months. The working group in Dorchester County meets monthly, and has become a permanent advisory body in the district. In both districts, individuals stepped forward to lead the efforts to improve professional development, and the working groups made considerable progress. This guide describes a number of their accomplishments, as well as some of the challenges they faced as they sought to improve professional development.

These two districts agreed to work with staff from Policy Studies Associates (PSA), a Washington, D.C.-based firm that specializes in research and evaluation on school reform and professional development. PSA staff assisted district staff by facilitating meetings of the working groups, collecting and organizing background data, and preparing reports and other materials for the working groups to review. One of the lessons that we learned from these working relationships is that external support, even a relatively modest amount, can speed up the work; most district staff are simply too busy to spend large amounts of

time collecting and organizing data and preparing reports. External consultants also can hold up a mirror to help district staff look at the work they do, and these consultants can provide information about what people are doing in other places. We have not concluded that external help is always necessary, but we do suggest that districts give careful consideration to the ways that external consultants can help them advance their work more expeditiously.

Research on Professional Development

This section of the guide reviews some of the research on professional development. The review begins with a discussion of four characteristics of high-quality professional development. Next, we look at several organizational factors that can contribute to the effectiveness of professional development, including teacher leadership, time, and school culture.

Four Characteristics of High-Quality Professional Development

Since the early 1990s, there has been growing consensus about the characteristics of high-quality professional development. (See, for example, Bull, 1994; Corcoran, 1995a; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Fullan, 1995; Guskey, 1995; Guskey, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Kennedy, 1998; Killion, 1999; Little, 1993; Wilson & Berne, 1999.) Researchers agree that high-quality professional development challenges participants' intellect, adds to their skills and knowledge, leads to improvements in their practice, and enhances their contribution to their schools (Corcoran, 1995b). And, most important, it leads to increased student learning. More specifically, high-quality professional development:

- ◆ Focuses on content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy;

- ◆ Engages teachers and principals as active learners and problem solvers;
- ◆ Provides learning opportunities that are embedded in the daily work of teachers and principals; and
- ◆ Is based on research and examples of best practice

Focus on content knowledge and content-specific instructional practices. As noted above, teacher quality affects student learning, and mastery of subject matter and knowledge of teaching strategies are

key components of teacher quality. It follows from this simple equation that high-quality professional development balances attention to content knowledge and the instructional strategies appropriate to helping students master the content.

Maintaining a content focus in professional development is important for other two reasons. First, substantial numbers of teachers are teaching in fields in which

they have inadequate training. According to statistics cited in *Quality Counts 2000: Who Should Teach?*, a report by *Education Week* (2000) on teacher quality, about 37 percent of all teachers do not hold a degree in the field in which they teach.¹ Second, the adoption of content and performance standards in 49 states raises the bar for teachers by redefining academic content, particularly in the core subjects of mathematics, English, social studies, and science. To be sure, some state standards have raised the bar higher than others, by setting more rigorous standards.² But, in every case, the state standards and the ways in which teachers and principals are held accountable for student performance place

“Researchers agree that high-quality professional development challenges participants’ intellect, adds to their skills and knowledge, leads to improvements in their practice, and enhances their contribution to their schools.”

¹ The statistics in *Quality Counts 2000: Who Should Teach* were obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey.

² For a recent review and rating of the state standards, see *The State of State Standards* (Finn, Petrilli, & Vanourek, 1998), a report from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

greater demands on teachers to know the subjects they teach and to help their students master them.

Not surprisingly, research suggests that content-focused professional development makes a difference in student learning (Cohen & Hill,

“Not surprisingly, research suggests that content-focused professional development makes a difference in student learning.”

1997; Kennedy, 1998; Killion, 1999; Mullens, Laguarda, Leighton, O’Brien, Wimberly, & Murphy, 1996; Wiley & Yoon, 1995). These findings do not estimate the magnitude of the impact nor how much the impact is sustained over time.

Nevertheless, they do show that when professional development focuses on the content teachers are expected to teach, it is more likely to result in changes in instruction and student learning. This is not to suggest that workshops and other kinds of training and dissemination that merely inform teachers about new content standards and expectations for teaching to these standards are sufficient, by themselves, to ensure mastery or implementation in classroom instruction. They may, however, be effective dissemination strategies or effective ways of increasing awareness. Similarly, workshops and training that focus on instructional strategies without addressing content leave the task of making these connections to teachers. In these circumstances, there are no guarantees that the connections will be made. Often when we ask teachers about the purpose of a workshop or training event, they report that the purpose was to give them ideas to consider. Providers often tell us that the purpose of these activities was to train teachers to use new content and instructional practices.

Unfortunately, most teachers do not yet have access to the kind of professional development that affords them opportunities for in-

depth study in the content areas or for developing instructional practices that help students master the content. According to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics, half of the nation’s teachers report that they participate in eight hours or less of professional development focused on the content they teach each year (NCES, 1997). Obviously there is considerable room for improvement. At the same time, it is important to point out that it is unreasonable to expect that even very large amounts of district-supported professional development can close the gaps that result from inadequate teacher preparation and the assignment of unqualified teachers in elementary and secondary schools.

Teachers and principals are engaged as active learners and problem solvers.

High-quality professional development reflects what is known about how adults learn. Malcolm Knowles (1984), who is recognized as the father of adult learning theory, argues that adults learn best when their learning is facilitated and self-directed, rather than rigidly prescribed. Adults learn most when they are actively engaged in a learning activity and rely on past and present experiences to solve the problems at hand.

One implication of adult learning theory is that professional development should engage teachers and principals as active learners. Current education reforms require teachers to change how they teach. For this to happen, professional development must extend well beyond the transmission of knowledge (Little, 1993) and focus on analytic and reflective learning (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). Dennis Sparks and Stephanie Hirsh (1997) of NSDC suggest that teachers, like their students, construct their understandings of the world through interactions and inquiry. It follows that professional development activities should offer teachers and principals meaningful intel-

lectual, social, and emotional engagement among their colleagues through the use of ideas and materials, and, in doing so, capitalize on their past and present experiences (Corcoran, 1995b).

For professional development to be relevant and engaging, it must focus explicitly on participants' concerns and it should reflect their input. Drawing once again on adult learning theory, adults need to be involved in the ongoing planning and evaluation of their learning (Knowles, 1984). The learning needs of school staffs evolve over time as they face new challenges and as new colleagues join their ranks. Thus, teachers and principals have the unique insight and perspectives needed to pursue the optimal mix of "professional development processes and technologies that work best in a particular setting" (Guskey, 1998). And because schools have limited time and support for professional development, "taking participants' opinions into account provides an important basis for prioritizing options" (Mullens et al., 1996).

Adult learning theory also has implications for the governance of professional development. Knowles (1984) has found that adults learn best when they share power and authority with their instructors. A recent study that looked at staff development and student achievement in Georgia schools found that higher achieving schools collectively involved teachers in staff development decisions (Harkreader & Weathersby, 1998). For Sparks and Hirsh (1997), this and similar findings point to the need for professional development providers to adopt the role of facilitator and to share decision-making responsibility with participants. For many providers in many districts, this role may be uncomfortable. And, in most cases, the change will require a fundamental shift in perspective as well as the development of new skills.

Professional learning is embedded in the daily work of teachers and principals.

Most learning in organizations occurs informally—that's the message of a recent study of high-performance organizations conducted by the Center for Workforce Development at the Education Development Center (EDC) (1998). The report adds that informal learning is beneficial to these organizations because it focuses on solving workplace and work-related problems and improving performance. An earlier study by Mark Smylie (1989) reached similar conclusions about schools as workplaces. He found that teachers ranked their own classroom experiences, consultations with other teachers, and independent studies highest among 14 sources of learning, including district-sponsored inservice programs and formal classes.

Despite the positive benefits of informal learning activities and the value teachers and principals place on it, it is not an important part of professional development in most schools and districts. Part of the problem is that state and local professional development programs and practices make sharp distinctions between professional development and job responsibilities. Fullan (1995) observed that, as a result of this common bifurcation, "professional development has been miscast. By being treated as a discrete entity outside the regular job, its effectiveness has been severely limited." Instead, opportunities for experimentation, reflection, and discussion should be built into the school day and they should be treated as legitimate professional development (Corcoran, 1995b; Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1993; Murphy & Lick, 1998; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

"For professional development to be relevant and engaging, it must focus explicitly on participants' concerns and it should reflect their input."

When researchers define job-embedded professional development, they often point first to the work and learning educators do together (Bull, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1993). For example, they point to the potential benefits of activities such as peer observation, discussion groups, collaborative lesson planning, joint work on curriculum or school improvement committees, mentoring, and networking related to subject matter and pedagogy. As teachers and principals engage in these activities, they become members of professional school communities in which members learn from one another and clarify values, desired outcomes, and commitment (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; McLaughlin, 1994; Murphy & Lick, 1998). According to

“Because almost all informal learning is learner-initiated and learner-directed, it is likely to have the greatest positive impact on the organization when there is consensus about the organization’s goals reflected in congruence between the learner’s definitions of problems to be solved and goals to be met and those of the organization.”

Milbrey McLaughlin (1994), “Teachers’ professional development of the most meaningful sort takes place not in a workshop or in discrete, bounded convocations, but in the context of professional communities—discourse communities, learning communities.”

Researchers agree that traditional workshops are, by themselves, relatively ineffective because they lack sufficient opportunity for practice, follow-up, and reflection to have much of an impact on teacher and principal learning (Bull, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Guskey, 1995). “The one-shot workshop is a

much-maligned event in education. This event has been criticized by virtually every teacher who has ever participated in it and by virtually everyone else even vaguely interested in

improving teaching” (Kennedy, 1998).

Nevertheless, these activities continue to be a staple in the learning opportunities available to teachers and principals. The problem is not that these workshops and other traditional staples of professional development fare are inherently bad or ineffective. Instead, the problem is that they are typically organized as discrete events and are based on the assumption that participants will use the information and knowledge presented without question or further support and assistance.

The solution is that “professional development must be re-conceptualized as continuous learning” (Fullan, 1995). In this view of professional development, the workshop or other one-time event becomes part of a coherent series of events that sustains, reinforces, and deepens learning. Consistent with what is known about how adults learn, this perspective assumes that learning is an ongoing process of reflection, experimentation, and discussion that requires more than a single event. Rather than being at odds with traditional training events, sustained professional development provides a context in which it can have a lasting impact. It assumes that mastering complex ideas and skills requires continuous learning and long-term support (Corcoran, 1995b; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Guskey, 1995; Harkreader & Weathersby, 1998).

In the language of the EDC study on workplace learning, effective professional development includes informal learning and recognizes the benefits of taking advantage of these activities by directing them toward achieving larger organizational goals. Because almost all informal learning is learner-initiated and learner-directed, it is likely to have the greatest positive impact on the organization when there is consensus about the organization’s goals reflected in congruence between the learner’s definitions of problems to be solved and goals to be met and those of the organization.

The notion of job-embedded professional development broadens the scope of what counts as professional development. It legitimizes the professional learning that occurs as teachers and principals design new curricula, experiment with new instructional strategies, review student work, and carry out other kinds of improvement efforts. It also means, for example, that districts should consider counting the time spent in these activities when awarding professional development credits for certificate renewal, tenure or salary increases. Finally, it means that district professional development staff and school principals need to begin thinking about their roles as facilitators of professional learning.

Professional development content should be based on research and proven practice. Professional development is most effective when it provides access to the best research and experience of successful practitioners. For example, the National Staff Development Council calls for professional development that is grounded, at least in part, in (1) research on child and adolescent growth, development, and learning and (2) research-based instructional strategies. Further, not only should the content inform participants about what works; it should provide information about the conditions that facilitate or hinder success (Corcoran, 1998).

Many teachers and principals either do not have access to research about effective practice or think that they will not be able to understand it even if they were to gain access to it. Therefore, the challenge is to increase their access to the research and to work with them to understand its messages for practice. In some cases, this could mean that providers distill research findings into clear guidance for instruction and school management. In other cases, this will mean improving professional development libraries and other similar resources, including increased access to online databases.

Organizational Factors That Contribute to the Effectiveness of Professional Development

Most teachers, principals, and other school staff do not have opportunities to engage in the kinds of sustained professional learning opportunities described here. Research on professional development and change, as well as years of experience in school improvement initiatives, points to several factors that can facilitate engagement in high-quality professional learning activities. When these factors are not present, engagement is difficult and effectiveness may be limited.

Teacher leadership. The foregoing discussion of the elements of high-quality professional development emphasizes the importance of learning opportunities that engage participants as active learners, that focus on participant needs, and that are embedded in participants' workplaces and routine professional responsibilities. A number of districts have attempted to build these elements into professional development by creating formal school-based leadership positions for teachers who serve as coaches and mentors of other teachers (they also may be called lead teachers, resource teachers, or instructional facilitators or guides). In some cases, these are full-time positions for teachers who spend all of their time working with other teachers.³

One particularly important role for these teacher leaders is helping new teachers. In one project, supported in part under the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assistance Program, lead teachers, who are on two-year rotating assignments, spend up to two hours a week with each new teacher for whom they are responsible. This support extends over a two-year period and includes help with everything from finding supplies and equipment to preparing lessons, assessing student learning, and, getting ready for performance reviews.

³ For a report on one example of school-level teacher leadership in professional development, see *Hard Work at a Fast Pace: A Study of San Antonio's Instructional Guides*, (Haslam, Wodatch, & Laguarda, 1998).

Several features of mentoring and coaching programs contribute to their success. One is the investment in training and ongoing support for the mentors and coaches. To be effective in these leadership roles, mentors and coaches must be good teachers, but this is not enough. In addition to extensive knowledge about cur-

“In addition to extensive knowledge about curriculum, instruction, and assessments, coaching and mentoring require the skills to work with adult learners.”

riculum, instruction, and assessments, coaching and mentoring require the skills to work with adult learners. Much of the investment in training goes for the development of these skills.⁴

A second feature of these programs is a strong positive working relationship between these teacher leaders and school principals (Haslam, Wodatch, &

Laguarda, 1998). Indeed, absent this good relationship, teacher leaders will have limited success at best. For example, findings from a study of San Antonio’s instructional guides show that principals can encourage teachers to take advantage of the guides and can help focus the work of the guides on instructional issues by eliminating competing demands for their time.

A third important feature of these positions is that the teacher leaders should have little or no involvement with formal teacher performance appraisals. This arrangement permits a degree of trust to develop that might not be possible if these teacher leaders were responsible for evaluating teacher performance.

Time. The lack of time for professional development has been well documented in *Prisoners of Time*, by the National Commission on Time and Learning (1994), and elsewhere (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Professional development often is relegated to after-school sessions or some other out-of-

school time. If nothing else, this means that professional development takes place when participants are tired. More important, this arrangement separates professional development from the workday and often from the workplace. Finally, this arrangement also is likely to mean that there is little or no time allocated for follow-up, practice, reflection, or feedback.

One solution to the lack of time for professional development has been for districts and states to formally designate several days out of the year as professional development days. On the plus side, this signals state and local commitment to professional development, at least in principle. On the minus side, these professional development days often become occasions for large, one-time events that feature outside experts but no follow-up, or present content that is unrelated to participant needs and priorities. For many teachers and in many schools, these days become opportunities to catch up on paperwork and other chores. For policymakers, the challenge is to ensure that these days are utilized effectively. Strategies for ensuring effective use of this time include:

- ◆ Providing additional resources to support high-quality activities;
- ◆ Requiring planners to ensure that these activities are linked to school and district priorities;
- ◆ Providing schools and districts latitude in scheduling these days; and
- ◆ Requiring that the activities meet standards for high-quality professional development.

As we noted above, a second solution to the lack of time is to build opportunities for professional learning, particularly collaborative activities, into schools’ daily or weekly schedules. Sparks and Hirsh (1999) recommend that states and districts increase to 25 percent the time available during the school day for

⁴ Here, we should note that a major problem with many professional development programs purporting to rely on a trainer-of-trainer model is that they fail to attend to the training skills of the trainers and the time needed to carry out the training. Instead, they rely on the erroneous assumption that potential trainers need only be given the content they are expected to transmit and they will return to their schools or districts and provide the appropriate training. Although these strategies have the appearance of achieving economies of scale, they tend to be ineffective. In most cases, there is little or no monitoring to see whether the intended training actually took place or whether it was of reasonable quality.

teacher learning of this sort. One way schools can free up time is by reorganizing the school day so that teachers can work together and observe each other's classrooms. In order for teachers to observe each other, some schools use their administrators or mentor teachers to cover classes, minimizing the loss of instructional time for one classroom, eliminating the need to hire scarce substitute teachers, and sending a strong message of support for collegial learning. Alternatively, the school schedule can be altered to include time when students are not present. For example, adding a half hour of instructional time four days a week would free up two hours on the fifth day or four hours every two weeks.

Organizational culture. School cultures that encourage collegiality, reflection, risk-taking, and collaborative problem solving facilitate engagement in professional development (Little, 1996; Rosenholtz, 1989). In these schools, there is a “collective focus on students and shared responsibility for student learning” (Little, 1996). One important indicator of this norm is that school staffs devote considerable time and energy to reviewing student work as a starting point for school improvement. Finding time for professional learning also appears to be much less of an issue in these schools. Because professional learning is valued, there is agreement that school staffs should find time for learning. Here again, creative school staffs readily regroup students among themselves to provide time for colleagues to work and learn together. Others use professional development monies to pay stipends for dinner seminars or weekend retreats to add hours to the day or week. Little (1996) notes that teachers in these schools have ready access to “information, ideas, materials, and technology” that support professional learning.

Leadership is key to establishing school cultures that encourage and support professional

learning. School leaders, including principals, assistant principals, department chairpersons, team leaders, and teacher leaders, can set aside time for professional study and learning in regular school schedules. They can encourage teachers to raise questions and find answers to them. They can create environments conducive to experimentation and reflection by encouraging teachers to try out new practices, see how they work, and determine how they can be fine-tuned. In addition to providing time, school leaders can ensure that teachers have the facilities, supplies, and equipment to try new ideas. In short, school leaders can create learning environments for adults as well as students.

Unfortunately, many school leaders do not do these things. Instead, they have very limited roles in teacher professional development. Principals and other school administrators sign forms approving participation in professional development activities, but are typically not well-informed about the activities or what they might expect in terms of changes in classroom instruction, assessments, or curriculum. The lack of awareness can create two problems. First, principals are not in a good position to take advantage of new and developing teacher knowledge and skills to advance broader school improvement goals and objectives. Second, they are not able to support additional practice and experimentation because they do not know what teachers are learning and trying to accomplish in their professional development activities. In some instances, principals participate in workshops and training with teachers. The rationale for their participation is that they will have an opportunity to see what teachers are learning. This is not enough. Principals need to understand their

“Leadership is key to establishing school cultures that encourage and support professional learning.”

role in facilitating practice and implementation of new approaches.

These observations as well as numerous conversations with principals about professional development lead us to the conclusion

Whatever the final agenda for the working group is, there are some real benefits to convening such a group.

that one of the most important steps that a district can take to improve professional development for teachers is to provide principals with professional development on professional development. The purpose of these activities is to help principals learn

the skills and take on the perspectives necessary for creating and maintaining effective adult learning environments.⁵

Steps in Setting and Using Professional Development Standards

One of the most important messages from our review of the research on professional development is that districts should recognize that professional development takes many forms. It includes traditional activities such as workshops, courses, and other training activities. It also includes formal and informal, job-embedded learning opportunities for teachers, principals, and other members of the school staff. In setting a broad definition of what counts as professional development, districts also should recognize the importance of both the individual and collective dimensions of professional learning activities. By setting standards for professional development, districts can translate this broad definition into specific elements, which can, in turn, inform practice, programs, and policies related to professional development.

There are no hard and fast rules for setting professional development standards. The six

steps described here require participation by many people and they can be time-consuming. Nevertheless, based on our experience, we believe that these investments are worthwhile in terms of the improved quality of professional development as well as increased attention to professional development as a central part of school improvement.

1. Start the Conversation

Districts can begin this process by establishing a professional development working group that is charged with the responsibility of framing a set of standards and developing strategies for implementing them. The working group should be broadly representative of the full spectrum of professional development programs and stakeholders. Membership should include:

- ◆ District administrators responsible for professional development and human resource management, assessment and accountability, and school improvement;
- ◆ Leaders of key programs and initiatives (e.g., Title I, Eisenhower Professional Development, Goals 2000, CSRD projects, Urban Systemic Initiatives, special education, vocational education);
- ◆ Teachers and principals;
- ◆ Key professional development providers; and
- ◆ Community representatives.

Ideally, the superintendent should convene the working group and provide its charge. As we discuss below in more detail, the charge to the working group may extend beyond setting standards and overseeing their implementation. The group may also be responsible for mapping existing professional development programs and policies, and examining the alignment between professional development and other key functions in the district.

Whatever the final agenda for the working group is, there are real benefits to convening

⁵ For a very useful guide on what principals and other school leaders can and should do to create learning environments for adults, see *Professional Learning Communities at Work* (Eaker & DuFour, 1999).

such a group. A district administrator in one of our partner districts explained it this way:

“Including representatives from the various programs paid off in helping us come to consensus among the program managers about our definition of professional development and what we meant by ‘high quality.’ It gave us a common language and helped us align professional development activities in Title I, the Eisenhower program, special education, and other programs with our district priorities in reading, writing, and math.”

2. Review the Functions of Professional Development Standards, Program, and Policy Tools

As district policy tools, professional development standards can serve five critical functions:

- ◆ Define the kinds of learning opportunities necessary to develop the knowledge, skills, and perspectives called for in professional performance standards;
- ◆ Communicate a vision of how professional development should support and be aligned with local and state priorities;
- ◆ Inform the planning, design, and evaluation of professional development;
- ◆ Establish responsibility and accountability for professional development;
- ◆ Inform investments in professional development, including decisions about the kinds of professional development that will *not* be supported.

The professional development working group will need to understand and agree on the functions that the standards will play in their district. In most districts, full implementation of the standards will require substantial changes in professional development and how it is organized. In particular, implementing the

Six Steps for Setting Professional Development Standards

- 1. Start the conversation.** Establish a professional development working group that is broadly representative of key stakeholder groups. Ideally, the superintendent should convene the working group and provide its charge.
- 2. Review the functions of professional development standards as program and policy tools.** Come to agreement within the working group on the functions that the standards will play in the district. Consider that building district capacity to put the standards into effect may require professional development for district staff.
- 3. Review professional development standards developed by others.** Reviewing standards developed by other districts can speed the development of your district’s standards. In particular, consider how other districts have addressed these five themes: the content, format, outcomes, organization, and evaluation of professional development.
- 4. Draft the standards.** Based on the work above, and the four characteristics of high-quality professional development discussed early in this guide, prepare draft standards.
- 5. Go public and get feedback on the draft standards.** Invite feedback from stakeholders to refine the standards and build support; focus groups are an excellent tool for this purpose.
- 6. Communicate the standards to the entire education community.** Make sure that all teachers, principals, and central office staff are aware of the standards and their responsibilities for implementing them. Also, be sure to communicate the standards to parents and community leaders and help them understand the importance of professional development for improving their children’s education.

standards will require changes in the roles of district staff who are responsible for professional development, including principals, and professional development providers. Consider the following observation by a district leader on the amount of unfinished work in one of the partner districts, even after there was some agreement about the function of the standards:

“We continue to struggle to balance individual teacher professional develop-

ment needs, the needs of groups of teachers, such as special educators or media specialists, and the overall priorities in our school improvement plans. Our school improvement team, our principal, and the district office [staff] constantly wrestle with how to make the best choices about what professional development to spend time and money on. The standards should help, but we have a way to go.”

3. Review Professional Development Standards Developed by Others

Professional development working groups can jump-start the drafting of professional development standards by reviewing standards that have been developed by others. In some states, the state department of education has adopted professional development standards or principles of professional development, to guide local activities, so it is a good idea to

“Professional development working groups can jump-start the drafting of professional development standards by reviewing standards that have been developed by others.”

start by reviewing these standards (including standards from other states).⁶ At the national level, the NSDC (www.nsd.org) has issued professional development standards that have been disseminated widely.⁷ Similarly, the American Federation of Teachers (www.aft.org) and the National Education Association (www.nea.org)

have articulated their own sets of professional development standards. The web sites for these and other organizations can provide more information about existing professional development standards.

Despite variations in specificity and focus, the sets of standards we reviewed typically address the following five themes:

- ◆ **Content of professional development.** These standards emphasize (a) the importance of professional development based on research and best practice, (b) specific knowledge and skills to be acquired, (c) the links between curriculum and instruction, and (d) alignment with state and district reform agendas.
- ◆ **Format of professional development.** These standards often call for professional development organized around the basic tenets of adult learning theory, and some specify particular types of activities, such as in-school observation of a new teaching technique.
- ◆ **Outcomes of professional development.** These standards focus on increasing teachers’ knowledge and skills, and they explicitly link improvements in teacher knowledge and skills to improved student learning outcomes. These standards may also include specific indicators of teacher and student learning.
- ◆ **Organization of professional development.** These standards focus on the governance of professional development, with particular emphasis on the role of participants in planning and design. These standards also focus on the location of professional development, often calling for professional development in the workplace or very close to it. Finally, these standards consistently emphasize the need for professional development that extends over time and includes adequate opportunities for follow-up, practice, and feedback.
- ◆ **Evaluation of professional development.** These standards describe appropriate evaluation strategies, the frequency of evaluations, and the use of evaluation results to strengthen future professional development.

⁶ State standards for professional development may apply only to state-sponsored professional development programs or to professional development included in state reform initiatives. Therefore, it is important that districts establish their own standards to apply to all professional development activities in the districts, including those sponsored by the state.

⁷ The NSDC standards are currently being revised.

4. Draft the Standards

The challenge in drafting standards is not so much to agree on exactly the right words, although agreement on the words is important. Instead, the challenge is to reach consensus on the functions that the standards will play and then to reach agreement on a set of principles that define high-quality professional development. We learned that one of the most useful strategies for these discussions was to invite members of the working group to think about some simple questions related to each of the principles or evolving standards they were considering: Can you live with this standard or principle when it is applied to the professional development activities for which you are responsible or in which you will participate? More specifically: Will you be comfortable with these standards guiding the ways you spend your professional development dollars? Will you be comfortable telling a group of teachers that they will not receive credit for a professional development activity because it does not meet the standards? Will you be comfortable telling a school improvement team that its annual professional development plan is not approved and will not be funded because a number of the proposed activities do not appear to meet the professional development standards? Discussions around these and similar questions resulted in a much more intense review of the role and function of professional development standards. They also led the working groups to consider a number of related issues, including the quality of current professional development in the partner districts.

The final version of the professional development standards for Dorchester County is included in this guide as Exhibit 1. This standards document illustrates four guidelines to consider in drafting professional development standards. These guidelines are listed in the box at the right.

5. Go Public and Get Feedback on the Draft Professional Development Standards

One of the most effective ways of refining the standards and building consensus around them is to invite feedback from large numbers of stakeholders. The districts we assisted received feedback through focus groups convened specifically for this purpose. For example, in Memphis, the superintendent sent letters to approximately 200 teachers, principals, program administrators, and central office staff inviting them to review the draft standards and participate in focus groups to express their comments, questions, and concerns. The invitations also included questions that would guide the focus groups, and they encouraged participants to share the draft standards and the questions with their colleagues. We used a similar strategy in Dorchester County, where the superintendent also invited parents, community representatives, and local business leaders to participate in the focus groups. Reports from the focus groups in each district were shared with the working group and used to guide final revisions of the standards.

In addition to raising issues that required attention as the professional development standards were refined, the focus groups also revealed considerable support for the standards. For example, focus group participants generally welcomed the standards for providing a clear definition and expectations for professional development. One principal said:

Guidelines for Drafting Professional Development Standards

- ◆ The list of standards should be short, containing no more than four or five standards.
- ◆ Each standard should be accompanied by indicators that provide additional detail about responsibility, accountability, and governance of professional development.
- ◆ The standards should be explicitly linked to state and local priorities and to existing standards for students and educators.
- ◆ The standards document should include the district's vision of professional development and indicate what functions the standards will play in programs and policies.

Exhibit 1 Dorchester County Public Schools Professional Development Standards

The goal of all professional development is to improve student learning. To achieve this goal, the Dorchester County Public Schools support and encourage active participation in professional learning activities that meet the following four standards:

1. Professional development is explicitly linked to high and challenging standards in content and performance for all students in Dorchester County.

Quality indicators:

- 1a. Professional development content is based on careful analysis of student learning outcomes as reflected in their work and performance on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program and other assessments.
- 1b. Procedures are in place to routinely review the alignment of professional development content with Maryland Content Standards, Maryland Learning Outcomes and Indicators, Core Learning Goals and Indicators, and other sets of state-required standards.

2. Professional development focuses on effective teaching and instructional leadership.

Quality indicators:

- 2a. Professional development is designed to help participants carry out the Dorchester County Schools' improvement priorities and the improvement priorities set by each school's Instructional Improvement Initiatives.
- 2b. Professional development features sound, research-based theories and practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for *all* students.
- 2c. Professional development is aligned with the standards for teaching reflected in Dorchester

County Schools' teacher performance appraisal system.

- 2d. Professional development features sound, research-based theories and practices in school organization and management.
 - 2e. Ongoing evaluation gauges the impact of professional development on classroom practices and school organization.
 - 2f. Evaluation results are used to plan and design future professional development activities, programs, and policies.
 - 2g. Professional development fosters an understanding of our diverse community culture and its educational needs.
- 3. Professional development engages participants as active learners.**

Quality indicators:

- 3a. Professional development actively engages participants in reviewing data, especially student achievement data, to inform decisions about (a) changes in instruction, curriculum, and assessments; (b) changes in school organization; and (c) additional professional development needs.
- 3b. Professional development includes opportunities for participants to study and reflect on research, information on successful practice, and their own experiences to (1) define and solve problems; (2) develop new curricula, instructional strategies, assessments, and approaches to organizing and managing their schools; and (3) build strong cultural ties between schools and community.
- 3c. School and district schedules allocate sufficient time for job-embedded professional development, which includes (1) team

planning; (2) data analysis; and (3) individual and collaborative review, development, experimentation, and implementation of new instructional practices, curricula, assessments, and federal, state, or local mandates.

4. Professional development focuses content and format on participants' learning needs.

Quality indicators:

- 4a. Teachers, principals, and/or other members of the school community have active roles in determining the content and format of professional development activities and programs.
- 4b. The district makes a substantial investment in developing teachers' and principals' capacity to assume leadership for planning and conducting professional development.
- 4c. District initiatives, policies, and guidance related to school improvement and school improvement planning focus on professional development as a key component of these activities.

These standards serve five important functions for district and school leaders, teachers, and professional development providers. The standards should:

- ◆ Guide planning professional development programs and activities;
- ◆ Guide evaluation of the quality and impact of professional development;
- ◆ Inform investments in professional development at both the school and district level;
- ◆ Inform decisions about participation in professional development by teachers, principals, and other members of the education community; and
- ◆ Inform district policies related to professional development.

“As I look at these standards, I think that they are just what I want—more emphasis on teacher learning, the use of data in making decisions about professional development, having active learners, research-based professional development, and sharing knowledge that teachers can practice in their classroom... This document supports what we have been doing. We can run with these standards. They give us authority to do what we need to do.”

Another principal observed that “the standards are like rubrics in the classroom in that they guide you and help you focus.”

Many focus group participants wanted more detail about patterns of responsibility and wanted assurances that school staffs could make decisions about professional development. As one teacher, who is a union representative, told us: “I understand that these standards have to be broad to be useful, but teachers want to know specifically ‘how will these affect me?’” Another teacher commented that the final version of the standards should clarify decision-making responsibility:

“Can the [standards] document actually state that decisions about professional development will be made at the school level—that faculty will decide on school goals, priorities, strategies, and resources [for professional development]? Right now the document is not clear enough about school-level decision making.”

The focus group discussions also revealed narrow perspectives on professional development and pointed to a real need to help people understand that professional development includes much more than just workshops and courses. Not surprisingly, the focus groups shed light on the differences between how teachers, principals, and central office staff viewed professional development and how they viewed their roles in it. None of the participants objected in principle to the fact that pro-

fessional development should reflect lessons from research and best practice, but a number of them said they were not particularly confident in their ability to find research-based information or to judge its usefulness as professional development content. As a content specialist who participated in one of the focus groups explained:

“How do we know [if] it’s research-based or a best practice? How do we find that information? How do we know that the study or article that we’re reading is any good? We need help in finding this information and help in evaluating it so that we can make good choices about the content of our workshops.”

Finally, we learned that many of the focus group participants had not only a limited understanding but also a negative opinion of any kind of standards. They viewed standards as somehow adding to their work, rather than clarifying expectations and facilitating choices.

In addition to helping the working groups refine the professional development standards, the focus groups helped change district perspectives on the importance of professional development. In the words of one district administrator:

“The focus groups made us think about professional development and changed the conversations about it. Changing the conversations is an important step in changing the culture. We’re on our way!”

6. Communicate the Final Version of the Professional Development Standards

Depending on the capacity of the working group and the interest of its members in taking the steps outlined here, the standards-setting process probably will require three to six months. It is also important to recognize that setting the standards is only the beginning of the process of creating a system of high-quality professional development. As many districts

have learned when setting student content and performance standards, merely announcing the standards does not result in the standards having any serious meaning for teachers, principals, or central office staff. Our experience in the two partner districts clearly points to the importance of investing considerable time and

“...most people who experimented with the standards agreed that they provided useful guideposts for thinking about the design of the various activities and for deciding how to strengthen the activities.”

energy to disseminating and building consensus around the standards. In

Dorchester County, the consensus-building process culminated in the school board adopting the standards as district policy.

When the standards become policy, they can be readily used as the basis for an accountability system.

The publication of the professional development standards marks the end of

the first phase of the work of improving professional development, and the beginning of the second phase, which involves implementing the standards to inform policy and practice.

Using the Standards to Improve Professional Development

Most districts pay little attention to planning professional development and even less to evaluating it. Districts can remedy this problem by using the standards to establish quality assurance procedures to guide planning, particularly working with professional development providers. Districts can also use the standards to inform evaluation of professional development. Together, these two ways of using standards go a long way toward establishing a system of accountability for high-quality professional development.

Quality Assurance

One of the ways that we “tested” the professional development standards in the two districts was to ask district staff responsible for

professional development to use the standards to review a sample of existing professional development activities. The basic question was: How closely do these activities meet the standards? In both districts, most people who experimented with the standards agreed that they provided useful guideposts for thinking about the design of the various activities and for deciding how to strengthen the activities.

A next step was to enhance the review process by developing quality assurance guides. In Dorchester County, the quality assurance guide has been incorporated into the district’s School Improvement Resource Guide. Readers who would like a copy of the Dorchester County School Improvement Resource Guide can visit www.DCPS.K12.md.us. The links between professional development and school improvement are discussed in more detail in a later section of this guide.

The primary purpose of a quality assurance guide is to help school and district staff plan high-quality professional development. In Dorchester County, staff are encouraged to use the guides in planning activities for which they are responsible and in working with external providers. Using the quality assurance guide is already paying off. As a member of one of the New American Schools Design Teams explained:

“I wanted our trainers to see what the district expected in terms of high-quality professional development. The district’s professional development standards and quality assurance guide are the mirror image of our goals as a training team. In order for us to do a good job, we want to collaboratively plan, implement, and evaluate our professional development. Our experience tells us that it is the observations in classrooms by the trainers, followed by individual conferences, [that leads to strong] implementation of the model in each classroom. It was exciting to see it—this job-embedded approach to professional development in writing as a district policy.”

These comments illustrate three important points. First, the professional development standards and the quality assurance guides are important tools for planning professional development. Second, they are useful in helping districts hold providers accountable for high-quality professional development. Third, using these tools in design and planning requires spending much more time on these tasks than is usually the case.

As districts and their working groups move forward with the professional development standards and the quality assurance guides, we strongly suggest using the guides to profile at least a sample of ongoing professional development activities. This review can yield observations about strengths and weaknesses in current activities and lead to specific recommendations for improvement in both the activities and professional development policies. To understand how this process could help improve professional development, consider the following examples from our experiences in the two partner districts:

- ◆ The profiles could reveal a pattern of well-designed training activities that attract the participants whom the activities were intended to serve. At the same time, these profiles could also reveal a pattern of limited follow-up and opportunities for practice in classrooms. The working group could then consider options for addressing this problem. The group could, for example, recommend that there be fewer training events and that the staff time and other resources be allocated for follow-up support. Alternatively, the group could recommend working with principals and other school leaders to prepare them to help teachers experiment with new practices.
- ◆ The profiles of several large professional development activities could indicate that the activities are organized to advance the interests of the federal programs that support them. The content of the activities

(e.g., the implementation of schoolwide Title I programs, comprehensive school safety programs) is consistent with broad program mandates, but there is no effort to link the content with district priorities for comprehensive school reform and improved student learning. The working group could recommend that program managers and professional development providers align these activities with district priorities and encourage them to make the alignment explicit with concrete examples.

Evaluating Professional Development

As districts pay more attention to professional development, there are questions about whether the districts and schools are getting any return for their investments in these activities and programs. Unfortunately, the answer to these questions is frequently, “We don’t know.” Indeed, there has been remarkably little rigorous evaluation of professional development. If there is any evaluation at all, it typically involves a few questions that ask participants whether they liked the event. These questions are administered as people leave the session, and there is almost no follow-up to see whether they use or even remember what they learned. To be sure, much of what passes for professional development either does not seek to change teacher or principal practices as an outcome, or is not designed to include the kinds of learning opportunities that might be reasonably expected to result in such changes.

There are three levels of evaluation of professional development. They are:

Level 1: Assess the quality of the activity against the professional development standards. This level of evaluation begins with the quality assurance process. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the content, for-

“... the professional development standards and the quality assurance guides are important tools for planning professional development.”

mat, and organization of the professional development activity meets the standards. Data collection for this level includes review of plans and materials prepared for the activity, observations, and surveys of participants. Survey items should ask participants to rate the clarity and appropriateness of the goals and objectives and the usefulness of the materials and learning opportunities. These surveys should also ask participants to comment on the extent to which they are likely to change their practice as a result of the activity.

“Linking professional development to improved student outcomes is difficult. Nevertheless, if evaluation results indicate that participants, especially teachers, have mastered and used knowledge and skills they acquire in professional development, it is worth trying to learn whether there are changes in student learning.”

Level 2: Assess the extent to which participants develop and use new skills and knowledge. This level of evaluation examines the extent to which participants change their practice or learn new content. If the activity was intended to foster the development of new skills, the evaluation should follow participants back to their work places to ascertain whether they did, in fact, put the new skills into practice. If the purpose of the activity was to communicate information or new ideas, the evaluation should assess the extent to which participants mastered the content. Evaluation at this

level looks at both whether participants develop new skills and whether they use them. This distinction is important because it can shed light on factors that facilitate or impede improvements. For example, evaluators could visit teachers’ classrooms to see if they have, in fact, mastered new skills, but are not using them because they have inadequate resources. Alternatively, these visits could reveal that teachers have a tentative grasp of new ideas or skills, but have few opportunities or incentives to experiment with or practice them. Both

types of findings would be useful for understanding what can or should be done to ensure that teachers can use the skills they acquire.

Level 3: Assess the extent to which professional development contributes to improved student outcomes. Linking professional development to improved student outcomes is difficult. Nevertheless, if evaluation results indicate that participants, especially teachers, have mastered and used knowledge and skills they acquire in professional development, it is worth trying to learn whether there are changes in student learning. This level of evaluation entails looking at the intensity of the use of the new skills and whether there is reason to think that student outcomes are improving. In addition to looking at classroom instruction and curricula, data collection will include reviewing at least a sample of student work to see if there are changes that may be attributable to the new instructional practices.

District staff who review these three evaluation strategies may conclude that most of them are well beyond current capacity and that it is simply unreasonable to expect that most districts will be able to mount the kind of effort described here without sacrificing other activities. Our response is to agree on both counts.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that much of what we recommend as appropriate evaluation procedures can and should be undertaken as part of other work related to professional development. For example, the quality assurance process can be built into to all professional development planning and review. In one district, setting the requirement for this up front quality review resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of workshops and training activities because planners and providers did not want to make the effort to ensure that planned activities met the quality standards. Reducing the number of activities may not be a goal of the quality assurance process, but it is certainly not necessarily a bad result.

Evaluations at Level 2 can be included as part of ongoing follow-up and support associated with all high-quality professional development. Evaluators and professional development providers or facilitators can work together on data collection and analysis. For example, teachers and other participants in professional development activities can be asked to keep journals in which they report on efforts to try out what they learned and on how these experiments worked. Alternatively, principals and other teachers can observe instructional activities to determine whether and how new practices are being implemented. Reviewing the teacher journals and the results of the classroom observations can go a long way in tracking changes in practice. These activities can also pinpoint areas where additional help or effort may be necessary.

Currently, there are few good models to inform technically sound evaluations at Level 3. Nevertheless, engaging teachers and others in systematic discussions of how and why student learning is improving and the extent to which the improvements appear related to new instructional strategies and curricula is critical to continuous improvement.

Linking Professional Development to Other District Systems

Thus far, we have focused on strategies for improving the quality of professional development activities. This section describes how districts and the professional development working groups can increase the impact of professional development by ensuring that district policies and practices in such areas as school improvement, personnel practices, and resource allocation encourage participation in high-quality professional development. In short, we call on districts to *think about a system of professional development and how the professional development system is linked to other systems* within the district.

Three Levels of Evaluation of Professional Development

Level 1: Assess the quality of the activity against the professional development standards. Using the plans and materials prepared for the activity, observations, and surveys of participants, assess the extent to which the content, format, and organization of the professional development activity meet the standards.

Level 2: Assess the extent to which participants develop and use new skills and knowledge. For activities intended to lead to changes in behavior, use classroom visits to assess whether participants developed new skills and whether they use them. For activities intended to communicate information, assess the extent to which participants mastered the content.

Level 3: Assess the extent to which professional development contributes to improved student outcomes. Making this assessment is difficult, but it is worth the effort if the Level 2 evaluation shows that teachers are using new classroom skills. Assess the link between professional development and student outcomes by measuring the intensity of the use of the new teaching approaches, and review samples of student work or student achievement gains in areas targeted by the new teaching approaches.

A fundamental assumption underlying our notion of a district professional development system is that individual professional learning needs and organizational goals should define the professional development market. It follows from this assumption that school staffs are in the best position to determine what kinds of professional learning opportunities are necessary for improving student learning in their schools. It is the district's responsibility to make certain that these learning opportunities are available and that teachers, principals, and other educators are able to take full advantage of them. The district has the dual roles of facilitator and provider of professional development, and shares these roles with school staffs and their leaders.

Mapping the Professional Development Policy Arena

One way to start the process of linking professional development to other district systems

is to map existing relationships among the systems, including school improvement (e.g., planning and reporting requirements, review/approval procedures), personnel policies (e.g., certification, credits, tuition reimbursement), and resource allocation (e.g., grant programs, local budget development processes). To begin the mapping process, all members of the professional development working group should have copies of key documents describing district policies and programs that are or should be related to professional development. These include the following:

- ◆ Professional development catalogues;
- ◆ School improvement planning guidance;
- ◆ Guidance for individual and school-level professional development planning;
- ◆ Descriptions of teacher and principal performance appraisal systems;
- ◆ Policy manuals (or sections) related to rewards and incentives;
- ◆ Collective bargaining agreements; and
- ◆ Budget development and expenditure procedures.

Working groups will no doubt identify other documents and materials that they should review. Compiling these collections of documents may be the first time that they have been put together in a single volume. Most, if not all, members of the working group will be familiar with some of the documents, but few will be familiar with all of them. Therefore, it may be important to spend some time reviewing the highlights of the individual documents, particularly their implications for professional development.

School improvement planning. Many districts require schools to prepare and implement school improvement plans. In most cases, school improvement planning and implementation are organized in annual

cycles, although in some districts the cycles may take longer. Policies and expectations for school improvement planning and implementation may include professional development, or schools may be required to prepare and implement professional development plans on a separate, but parallel track. In addition, some states and a number of districts require individual professional development plans. Ideally, professional development should be explicitly linked to school improvement, and, absent compelling reasons to the contrary, there should be a single planning requirement that includes school improvement and school-level and individual professional development. In reviewing guidance and expectations for school improvement planning and implementation, working groups should address the questions in the box on the next page.

Linking school improvement and professional development requires changing attitudes as well as policy. Consequently, it can take time. Consider the following comments from teachers in a professional development working group reporting on implementation two years after the initial standards setting process began:

“Attitudes are shifting. We can see it (the professional development topic) in the school improvement plan; it’s based on the needs of the school and it ties into everyone’s curriculum. Everyone is aware of the goal. We understand the reason for the topic and buy in.”

In the same meeting, another teacher reported:

“The session met the needs of our third grade teachers but I’m not sure about fourth and fifth grade teachers. Could we have adjusted the activities to include examples to allow all teachers at each grade level to have something specific to their upcoming unit?”

Questions to Guide Linking Professional Development and School Improvement Planning

- ◆ Do the guidance and expectations clearly link school improvement and professional development?
- ◆ Do the guidance and expectations require an assessment of professional learning needs related to specific school improvement strategies and student learning goals?
- ◆ Does the district provide school leaders and school improvement teams with sufficient technical assistance and other help, including easy access to student data and information on research-based best practices, to ensure that they have the capacity to plan and implement a coherent set of professional development activities?
- ◆ If district policy treats professional development planning and school improvement planning separately, are the guidance and criteria by which the various plans will be reviewed consistent?
- ◆ Is there adequate opportunity and flexibility for school leaders and staffs to adjust school schedules and assignments to include regular job-embedded professional learning activities?
- ◆ Do district staff use school improvement and professional development plans to identify district needs for professional development?

Questions to Guide Aligning Professional Development and Personnel Policies

- ◆ Do the systems of rewards and incentives explicitly support and encourage participation in the full-range of professional development activities defined by the standards? For example, can teachers and principals receive professional development credit and salary supplements for participating in job-embedded professional learning activities such as implementing a comprehensive school reform model or participating on a curriculum development task force?
- ◆ Are teachers and principals rewarded for outcomes and mastery, as opposed to seat time, in professional development activities?
- ◆ Does the performance appraisal system recognize and reward participation in high-quality professional development as part of the routine work of competent teachers and principals?
- ◆ Does the performance appraisal system recognize and reward creating effective learning environments for teachers and other school staff as part of the routine work of competent principals?
- ◆ Are there reliable mechanisms for ensuring that teachers and principals who receive a poor performance rating have access to the kinds of professional development that can help them improve their performance?
- ◆ Are there adequate professional development days in the school calendar?
- ◆ Are there clear guidelines for how the professional days are to be used?

Personnel policies and practices. This part of district operations has mushroomed in scope and complexity recent years, in part because of the introduction of myriad new federal and state regulations and the emergence of comprehensive accountability systems. It is beyond the scope of the professional development working group (and this guide) to look at the entire spectrum of personnel policies and practices related to professional development. Nevertheless, three areas of policy and practice do have direct implications for professional development. These include the system of rewards and incentives, performance appraisals for teachers and principals, and days set aside for professional development. We suggest that the working groups address the following questions as they examine these areas of personnel policies and practices:

When the various elements of district personnel policy are aligned in support of high-quality professional development, the answer to all of these questions will be “Yes.” Along the path to alignment, working groups are likely to find a number of examples of misalignment among the policies and practices in these areas. For example, a district may be committed to comprehensive school reform, but systems of rewards and incentives do not include participation in school-based reform initiatives as activities for which teachers and principals receive professional development credit or salary increments. In other cases, rewards and incentives for professional development are based on traditional, narrow definitions of professional development with the result that teachers who participate in study groups or engage in independent study do not receive credit for these efforts. One result is that teachers who participate in these activities must also participate in other “approved” activities if they are to receive professional development credits or salary supplements. Therefore, it is no surprise that teachers often report that they do not have enough time to

participate in all of these activities. Upon close examination, professional development working groups will probably find similar misalignment in other areas of personnel policy and practice.

One of the more visible areas of district policy that bears careful review is the use of professional development days. Many districts and some states have set aside a number of days in the regular school year for professional development. These allocations are an acknowledgment of the importance of professional development and represent substantial investments of district and state resources. At the same time, these days may not have much payoff because they are not used wisely. Often there is little or no planning and the activities that do take place are of low-quality. In some districts, programs, schools, and the central office schedule competing activities. To be most effective—and to produce the greatest return on the investment—the professional development scheduled for these days should focus on school needs and contribute directly to school improvement efforts. Consistent with the characteristics of high-quality professional development, these activities are likely to be most effective when they are planned by teachers and principals, take place in the schools, and are accompanied by appropriate follow-up.

Resource allocation. According to some estimates, districts spend between 2 and 7 percent of their total budgets on professional development. Some districts spend less, although few spend more. Professional development expenditures are typically included in the district’s main operating budget as well as in the budgets of individual programs and initiatives. In most districts, the program expenditures account for most of the spending on professional development. Beyond these basic patterns, very little is known about district spending on professional development. And, as we and others have learned, it is very difficult

to generate reliable estimates of the amount of money spent and the ways that it is spent. There are at least three reasons for this difficulty. First, district accounting systems may include categories for professional development, but they typically do not include all of the spending categories that we include under professional development. Second, because much of the spending is the responsibility of individual programs, it is necessary to review the program budgets for detailed information and the programs may have different accounting requirements or use different expense categories. Third, district leaders may be reluctant to produce aggregate estimates because even though the amount may represent relatively a small portion of the district budget, the expenditures can easily run into the millions or tens of millions of dollars and district leaders fear that school boards will see professional development as an easy target for budget cutting. Program managers and central office staff, who frequently want to protect their spending autonomy, may also be reluctant to be held accountable for demonstrating the payoffs for such large investments — particularly when the payoffs appear limited. Note that the absence of good evaluation data—including even rudimentary anecdotal data—make it difficult to build much of a case for the benefits of professional development either in terms of changes in classroom instruction or improved student learning.⁸

Despite these problems, reviewing professional development expenditures can shed light on local professional development activities and help find ways of improving them. Our colleague, Karen Hawley Miles, has developed a model for analyzing professional development spending and for thinking about how to reallocate professional development resources to support district priorities for comprehensive school reform and improved student learning.

Finding dollars for professional development can be difficult but finding time for professional development is also a challenge. After two years of redefining professional develop-

Questions for Aligning Professional Development and Resource Allocation

- ◆ Does the school improvement planning process require teams to examine their current allocations of people, time and money to ensure that resources are aligned to school goals?
- ◆ Does the district review all possible funding sources to support professional development (Title I, Goals 2000, Eisenhower, etc.) and allocate those monies to schools if their plans meet the district's professional development standards?
- ◆ Is the district's budget development process built upon the school improvement plans (and professional development plans if these plans are separate documents)?
- ◆ Does the professional development plan include a budget? Does it need to be approved? By whom?

ment, school teams in one of the partner districts continue to struggle with finding time, especially the time for collegial networking and coaching around practicing new skills. As a member of one of the teams explained:

“We have revised our schedule to include one hour per week of team planning time. We discuss the content or strategy we’ve been working on in our professional development; we work together on designing plans for the next unit. We even look at student work samples to see if we can see any effects in student achievement. Some teachers may feel this use of time is infringing on the personal time but I think we’ve turned the corner. Most of our teams are asking for more time to continue the work begun in these team meetings. We’ve used our professional development funds to provide substitute teachers so teachers have this expanded meeting time.”

⁸ See www.newamericanschools.org for a District Issue Brief by Karen Hawley Miles for elaboration on how both districts and schools can rethink and realign spending to support comprehensive school reform and improve student achievement.

Or consider the staffing challenges noted by one high school principal.

“I know I need one more math teacher and I have one too many physical education teachers. Do I assign someone out of their area of certification? How can I change my master schedule to address student course needs when I don’t have the ‘right’ teachers?”

Bringing the Systems into Alignment

In the two partner districts, discussions around the questions we listed above, as well as others that came up, revealed fragmented or inconsistent district policy and practice in the areas of professional development, school improvement planning, personnel systems, and resource allocation. We expect that there are similar situations in other districts. This is not surprising, for a number of reasons. First, policies and practices related to school improvement, personnel, and resource allocation have typically been developed independent of policies in the other areas and they have not necessarily been developed to support clearly defined district priorities. Second, until fairly recently, most districts have devoted little attention to professional development as a critical component of school reform. Instead, professional development tended to be the responsibility of programs and initiatives that operate independently of one another. Moreover, because many of the certification and re-certification requirements were defined in terms of seat time with little or no attention to where the seats were located or why, no one paid much attention to them. Third, the combination of program-driven professional development activities, many of which serve a dissemination or communication function, and the emphasis on accruing credit through coursework or participation in workshops, has resulted in a narrow operational definition of

professional development as well as relatively low expectations for the contributions that it might make to improving instruction or student learning.

The immediate goal of the discussions around the questions we listed above should be to identify gaps and inconsistencies in policy and practice. The longer-term and more important goal should be to propose ways of closing the gaps and inconsistencies. There are no clear formulas for how to accomplish this. We do, however, offer three recommendations:

1. ***Policies related to professional development should convey clear and consistent messages about what constitutes high-quality professional development.*** As important as it is to set standards for professional development, having the standards is only a starting point. These standards should be reflected or even included in guidance related to school improvement planning and implementation, individual and school professional development planning, performance appraisals, rewards and incentives, and resource allocation and accounting.
2. ***Policies related to professional development should explicitly encourage participation in high-quality professional development in support of school and district reform priorities and improved student learning.*** Conversely, these policies should explicitly discourage participation in professional development activities that do not meet the district’s standards and that do not directly address school and district priorities.
3. ***Policies related to professional development should establish clear lines of authority and accountability for ensuring the quality of professional development.*** Again, the professional development standards are a good starting point. The



challenge is to define the lines of authority and accountability across all of the relevant policy areas. For example, who will review the professional development components of school improvement plans and be responsible for providing feedback? Who will be responsible for working with providers to make sure that professional development meets the standards? What mechanisms will be used to ensure that university courses that count toward certification or salary supplements meet the standards and support school and district priorities?

The alignment task is ambitious and time consuming, but the effort can pay off in terms of improved instructional programs and increased learning by all students

Concluding Observations About Building Local Professional Development Systems

As we have suggested throughout this guide, building a system of high-quality professional development is hard work. This comes as no surprise, but the reasons why it is difficult are worth noting. First, the vision of professional development that we started with was unfamiliar to many members of working groups. It pushed them to think about professional development as an ongoing learning process — one that should be a regular part of the work of all educators. It is much easier to rely on the familiar images of workshops and courses. It is also easier to think of professional development as something that takes place after school or on certain days set aside for special events rather than as activities that take place during the regular school day. What we saw is that as the new vision of professional development came into sharper focus, people were able to engage in more thoughtful discussions

of how to frame the standards and how the standards could be used to improve professional development.

A second reason why the work is difficult is that before it is finished it delves into many areas of district policies and practice. In retrospect, the bridges between professional development and school improvement, personnel policies, and resource allocation seem obvious. As we learned, however, they are not obvious, at least at the outset. One reason is that in most districts these systems have evolved independently of one another, each with its own history, precedents, and turf. Linking these systems to professional development entails revisiting some of the basic assumptions and practices in each of these areas to determine if they continue to make sense as the alignment proceeds. It also requires stepping over boundaries and treading in protected turf.

Leaders and staff in our partner districts agree that a good bit of the work that they have started is unfinished. At the same time, they are quick to point out the benefits of the work that has been completed. The quality of professional development is improving and teachers and principals have a greater stake in the process. They look forward to increasingly rapid changes in classroom instruction and to improved student learning.

“The quality of professional development is improving and teachers and principals have a greater stake in the process. They look forward to increasingly rapid changes in classroom instruction and to improved student learning.”

References

- American Federation of Teachers. (1995). *American Federation of Teachers professional development guidelines*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Bull, B. (1994). *Professional development and teacher time: Principles, guidelines, and policy option for Indiana*. Bloomington, IN: Education Policy Center, Indiana University.
- Cohen, D.K., & Hill, H. (1997, March). *Teaching and learning mathematics in California*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Corcoran, T.B. (1998). *Effective Professional Development Systems (Draft)*. Philadelphia, PA: Author.
- Corcoran, T.B. (1995a). *Helping teachers teach well: Transforming professional development* (CPRE policy brief). New Brunswick, NJ: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Corcoran, T.B. (1995b). *Transforming professional development for teachers: A guide for state policymakers*. Washington, DC: National Governors' Association.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1999, Spring). Target time toward teachers. *Journal of Staff Development*, (20)2, 31-36.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1998, January-February). Teachers and teaching: testing policy hypotheses from a national commission report. *Educational researcher*, (27)1, 5-15.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Ball, D.L. (1998). *Teaching for high standards: What policymakers need to know and be able to do*. Philadelphia, PA: National Commission of Teaching and America's Future and Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M.W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (76)8, 597-604.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Rustique-Forrester, E. (1997). *Investing in quality teaching: state-level strategies*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- Dilworth, M.E., & Imig, D.G. (1995, Winter). Professional teacher development. *The ERIC Review*, (3)3, 5-11.
- Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (1999). *Professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Education Development Center. (1998). *The teaching firm: Where productive work and learning converge*. Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.
- Education Week. (2000). *Quality counts 2000: Who should teach*. Bethesda, MD: Author.
- Elmore, R.F., & Burney, D. (1997). *Improving instruction through professional development in New York City's Community District #2* (CPRE Policy Bulletin). Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Finn, Petrilli, & Vanourek. (1998). *The state of state standards*. Washington, DC: The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.
- Fullan, M.G. (1995). The limits and the potential of professional development. In T. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices* (253-267). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M.G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Guskey, T.R. (1998, Fall). The age of accountability. *Journal of Staff Development*, (19)4, 36-44.
- Guskey, T.R. (1995). Professional development in education: In search of the optimal mix. In T. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices* (114-131). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harkreader, S., & Weathersby, J. (1998, July). *Staff development and student achievement: Making the connection in Georgia schools*. Atlanta, GA: Center for Applied Research, Georgia State University.
- Haslam, M.B., Wodatch, J.K., & Laguarda, K.G. (1998). *Hard work at a fast pace: A study of San Antonio's instructional guides*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.
- Hawley, W.D., & Valli, L. (2000). The essentials of effective professional development: A new consensus. In L. Darling-Hammond and G. Sykes (Eds.), *The heart of the matter: Teaching in the learning profession* (pp. 127-150). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Huberman, M., & Guskey, T. (1995). The diversities of professional development. In T. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices* (269-272). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kennedy, M. (1998, December). *Form and substance in inservice teacher education*. Madison, WI: National Institute for Science Education.
- Killion, J. (1999). *What works in the middle: Results-based staff development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.
- Knowles, M. (1984). *Andragogy in action*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Levine, M (Ed.). (1998). *Designing standards that work for professional development schools*. Washington, DC: The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.
- Lieberman, A. (1995, April). Practices that support teacher development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (76)8, 591-596.
- Little, J.W. (1996, May). *Organizing schools for teacher learning*. Paper presented to the American Education Research Association Invitational Conference on Teacher Development and School Reform.
- Little, J.W. (1993, Summer). Teachers' professional development in a climate of education reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, (15)2, 129-151.
- Louis, K.S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S. (1996, Winter). Teachers' Professional Community in Restructuring Schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, (33)4, 757-798.
- Lynn, L. (1999, Spring). Out of focus. *Journal of Staff Development*, (20)2, 52-53.
- McLaughlin, M. (1994). Strategic sites for teachers' professional development. In P. Grimmett and J. Neufeld (Eds.), *Teacher development and the struggle for authenticity: Professional growth and restructuring in the context of change* (31-51). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Mullens, J.E., Laguarda, K.G., Leighton, M.S., O'Brien, E.M., Wimberly, G.L., & Murphy, D.J. (1996). *Student learning, teaching quality, and professional development: Theoretical linkages and current measurement*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.
- Murphy, C.U., & Lick, D.W. (1998). *Whole-faculty study groups: A powerful way to change schools and enhance learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1997, July). *America's teachers: Profile of a profession, 1993-94* (NCES 97-460). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- National Education Commission on Time and Learning. (1994). *Prisoners of time*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Staff Development Council. (2000). *Learning to lead, leading to learn: Improving school quality through principal professional development*. Oxford, OH: Author.
- Rosenholtz, S.J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools*. New York: Longman.
- Rosenholtz, S.J. (1985). Effective schools: Interpreting the evidence. *American Journal of Education*, (93)3, 352-388.
- Sarason, S. (1990). *The predictable failure of educational reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Smylie, M.A. (1989, May). Teachers' views of the effectiveness of sources of learning to teach. *Elementary School Journal*, (89)5, 543-558.
- Sparks, D., & Hirsh, S. (1999). *A national plan for improving professional development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.
- Sparks, D., & Hirsh, S. (1997). *A new vision for staff development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- WestEd. (2000). *Teachers who learn, kids who achieve*. San Francisco: Author.
- Wiley, D.E., & Yoon, B. (1995, Fall). Teacher reports on opportunity to learn: Analyses of the 1993 California learning assessment system. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, (17)3, 355-370.
- Wilson, S.M., & Berne, J. (1999). Teacher learning and the acquisition of professional knowledge: An examination of research on contemporary professional development. In A. Iran-Nejad and P.D. Pearson (Eds.) *Review of research in education* (173-209). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the development of this guide. Cheryl Kane, formerly the Director of Strategy at New American Schools and currently the Executive Director of the National Commission on High School Senior Year, encouraged us to embark on this project and has provided valuable insights at every step of the way. Dale Kalkofen, currently the Vice President at New American Schools, was instrumental in creating a professional development working group in the Memphis Public Schools and in leading the group through a number of tasks necessary to improve the district's professional development programs and policies. She has also brought a keen sense of how to work with and in school districts to her comments on early drafts of the guide. Dr. Gerry House, the former Superintendent in Memphis and Dr. Spicer Bell, the Superintendent in Dorchester County, paved the way for our work by convening working groups charged with the responsibility of improving professional development programs and policies. They also provided very useful feedback at every step of the way.

Finally, we extend a special thanks to the many teachers, principals, and school district staff who served on the professional development working groups. These individuals worked hard on the tasks that we proposed, and they helped us refine our thinking about how to improve professional development. They took ownership of the process and deserve the credit for the progress that has been made.

We are grateful for all of the help we received.

M. Bruce Haslam
Colleen P. Seremet
May, 2001

New American Schools

Papers in this series include . . .

- ◆ Design-Based Assistance as a Cornerstone of a School Improvement Strategy
- ◆ How to Create and Manage a Decentralized Education System
- ◆ How to Rethink School Budgets to Support School Transformation
- ◆ How to Rebuild a Local Professional Development Infrastructure
- ◆ How to Make the Link Between Standards, Assessments, and Real Student Achievement
- ◆ How to Create Incentives for Design-Based Schools
- ◆ How to Engage Educators, Parents, and the Community in Design-Based School Change

Accompanying this series are New American Schools Action Tools

To help you implement the ideas and suggestions recommended in this series, New American Schools is creating hands-on Action Tools that complement and expand the use of the research papers as well as District Issues Briefs. As they become available, each tool will be posted on the New American Schools web site, www.newamericanschools.org.

For more information about this series...

For more information about these papers and the Action Tools that will correspond with this series, or to obtain copies of these booklets, write to New American Schools, 1560 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 901, Arlington, VA 22209, call (703) 908-9500, or download them from our website at www.newamericanschools.org.

For more information about District Services at New American Schools...

Visit the web site at www.newamericanschools.org or call (703) 908-9500.

DRIVEN BY RESULTS

