INFORMATION CAPSULE

Research Services

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

AT A GLANCE

Effective professional development is defined as professional development that produces changes in teachers' instructional practice, which can be linked to improvements in student achievement. Professional development is a process, not an event, and must be perceived by teachers as a career-long learning continuum. Evidence continues to accumulate showing that student performance is influenced by teachers' high quality professional development and that the effects of increased teacher knowledge are observed across subject matter fields. This information capsule discusses important issues concerning professional development for teachers including: pitfalls to avoid; characteristics of successful training programs; the need to implement professional development programs that are based on the best available research and practices; and the importance of evaluating the training. The Capsule includes a summary of the District's focus in professional development for the current year. For a detailed discussion of this issue and a description of related online resources, the interested reader can contact Research Services for a copy of the full literature review.

Professional development refers to ongoing learning opportunities that are available to teachers through their school or school district (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Effective professional development is defined as professional development that produces changes in teachers' instructional practice, which can be linked to improvements in student achievement (Joyce and Showers, 2002). The primary purpose of professional development is to prepare and support teachers by giving them the knowledge and skills they need to help all students achieve high standards of learning and development (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

The time teachers spend with other knowledgeable educators, engaging in teaching and learning, is just as important to students' learning as the time teachers spend teaching students. Evidence continues to accumulate showing that student performance is influenced by teachers' high quality professional development and that the effects of increased teacher knowledge are observed across subject matter fields (Darling-Hammond, 1999). The American Federation of Teachers (2002) concluded that high quality professional development is essential to the nation's goal of high standards of learning for every child and that one of the most important investments school districts can make is to ensure that teachers continue to learn. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) reported that investments in teacher knowledge and skills result in greater increases in student achievement than other uses of the education dollar.

Professional development programs should support curricular and instructional change that enhances student learning in the personal, social, and academic domains. Professional development must have a significant impact on what is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate of the school so that students' gains in knowledge and skill and their ability to learn increase (Joyce and Showers, 2002b).

WHY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS DON'T SUCCEED

Researchers and practitioners have concluded that when professional development programs are not effective, it is usually due to one or more of the following factors:

- Programs are characterized by a one size fits all approach with an inflexible curriculum that ignores teachers' individual learning needs (Peery, 2002; Redding and Kamm, 1999; Dunn and Dunn, 1998).

- Training is a passive experience. Participation is limited, with teachers having little or no time to meet with their colleagues to discuss how to apply the strategies being taught (Peery, 2002; Black, 1998).

- Professional development programs are fragmented. Teachers receive bits and pieces of training on the latest topics and are then asked to simultaneously implement numerous strategies in their classrooms (Redding and Kamm, 1999; Black, 1998; Dunn and Dunn, 1998).

- Teachers see no connection between their professional development and everyday classroom needs (Murphy, 2000; Black, 1998).

- Teachers have no input into the planning process, with training topics selected in a "top down" manner by district or school level administrators (Black, 1998; Dunn and Dunn, 1998).

- There are no plans for the implementation of follow-up activities or assistance during the school year (Joyce and Showers, 2002; Peery, 2002; Black, 1998; Dunn and Dunn, 1998).

- Schools contract exclusively with external consultants to provide training. When these consultants lack local knowledge, the entire training program lacks credibility (Peery, 2002; Black, 1998).

- The school principal does not provide the necessary leadership. Principals must be involved on a daily basis in making professional development work and must be as engaged in teachers' ongoing learning as teachers are themselves (Alvarado, 1998).

HOW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS CAN SUCCEED

The first goal of professional development is to design training that enables staff to learn and transfer knowledge and skills to their classroom practice (Joyce and Showers, 2002b). No one specific type of professional development has been found to be most effective (American Federation of Teachers, 2002). Research has shown, however, that successful professional development programs have clear, specific goals and objectives; engage teachers intellectually; actively involve participants; consist of multiple sessions over an extended period of time; allow teachers to learn with and from their colleagues; and provide the opportunity for teachers to practice and adopt new strategies (French, 1997; Licklider, 1997).

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has published standards for staff development that provide direction for designing a professional development program to ensure teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and the ability to transfer the strategies learned to their classrooms (National Staff Development Council, 2001). A complete description of the NSDC's standards for professional development can be found online at http://www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm.

The *School Community Professional Development Act*, Florida Statute 1012.98, requires districts to develop and submit professional development systems for approval by the Florida Department of Education (State of Florida, 2004). The statute specifies the content and delivery of professional development for teachers in Florida's public schools and creates a strong linkage between

professional development and improvements in students' performance. District professional development activities are guided by the Florida Professional Development Evaluation System. This evaluation model assesses the local planning, delivery, follow-up, and evaluation of professional development activities according to standards modeled after the National Staff Development Council's professional development standards, as well as Florida Statutory requirements. The Florida Professional Development Evaluation System Protocol's standards allow educators to identify and recognize best practices as well as to identify local professional development systems that are in need of improvement. The interested reader can access the Florida Department of Education's Web site (www.firn.edu/doe/profdev/inserv.htm) for a complete listing of the state's 66 professional standards, as well as professional development resources that include a listing of relevant documents and web sites, information on promising and model professional development programs, and an evaluation preparation guide.

Researchers and practitioners have identified the following characteristics and activities as components of effective professional development programs:

<u>Identify Professional Development Needs</u>
The selection of professional development content should be dictated by the perceived need for change. These needs vary greatly among schools. Options for professional development content include (Joyce and Showers, 2002b):
- Renewal within a curriculum area (finding one area of the curriculum to target for improvement).
- Teaching and learning strategies (selecting a strategy, such as cooperative learning or mnemonics, to implement schoolwide).
- Technology (training staff on the use of computers, videotape, broadcast television, or the Internet).
- Attending to special populations (implementing population-oriented initiatives that focus on students with special needs or students of varying cultural backgrounds, for example).

Staff development councils, established at both the school and district levels, can be established to coordinate professional development efforts, align content with identified needs, discuss professional development issues, and make recommendations on the types of professional development activities that should be implemented (Joyce and Showers, 2002b).

Carefully designed needs assessments provide valuable information and are considered essential in the planning of successful professional development programs. Planners of these programs must first identify potential weaknesses in the instructional programs (at the district, school, and classroom levels) and then develop training strategies that will help to strengthen the programs (Guskey, 1999).

<u>Involve Teachers in Professional Development Planning</u>
Professional development should be designed by teachers in cooperation with experts in the field (Guskey, 1996). Studies have found that learning is more likely to occur when teachers have influence over the substance and process of professional development (King and Newmann, 2000).

<u>Align Professional Development with Student Content Standards and Curriculum</u>
Effective professional development begins with a clear sense of what students need to learn and be able to do and includes a thorough analysis of where students are in relation to where we want them to be (Sparks, 2002; Killion, 1999). Programs must be matched to school and district instructional practices and based on standards for student learning, teaching, and professional development (Sparks, 1997).

<u>Broaden Teachers' Content Knowledge and Pedagogic Foundation</u>
Professional development should help teachers gain a thorough understanding of the content they teach and effective instructional strategies for teaching the content (Guskey, 2003; Odden et al., 2002). The most effective programs provide teachers with the least specific information about what to do in the classroom and the most specific information about the content they will be teaching and how students learn that content (Kennedy, 2000).

Pay Attention to Individual Needs

Professional development programs should incorporate a variety of learning strategies to maximize the number of participants who will understand and use the new techniques. Professional development should include training in both theory and practice, provide opportunities for collaborative problem solving, and include a variety of activities, such as readings, role playing of techniques, watching videotapes, live modeling, guest lectures, and visits to other classrooms and schools with similar programs (Roy, 2005; Goldberg, 2002; Rice, 2001; Black, 1998; Richardson, 1998; Licklider, 1997).

Select Effective Facilitators

Studies have found that, although external experts play an important role in professional development, effective programs also use in-house experts to match the training to individual school or district needs (King and Newmann, 2000; Richardson, 1998). Redding and Kamm (1999) found that when teachers participated in the selection of the facilitator, it gave the facilitator instant credibility and resulted in higher levels of teacher commitment. Redding and Kamm also found that teaching experience in the discipline and at or near the grade level of the participants helped to establish the facilitator's credibility.

Embed Professional Development in the School Day

Research shows that a significant amount of professional learning takes place as teachers engage in their daily activities and face the challenges of their work (Odden et al., 2002; Sparks, 2002). When professional development is important enough for school districts to integrate it into the normal work day, it is perceived as more valued and connected to teachers' work than when activities are arranged outside of the school day (American Federation of Teachers, 2002).

Provide Sufficient Time for Professional Development

In a study conducted by Garet et al. (2001), teachers reported that sustained and intensive professional development was more likely to have an impact on their classroom practice than shorter forms of professional development. Teachers indicated that programs of longer duration provided them with more opportunities for in-depth discussions, trying new ideas, and obtaining feedback.

Promote Collegiality and Collaborative Exchange

Professional development programs do not succeed when teachers are passive recipients of information, instead of active participants (French, 1997). Educators at all levels value opportunities to work together, reflect on their practices, exchange ideas, and share strategies and expertise (Joyce and Showers, 2002b; Supovitz, 2002).

Reflect Best Available Research and Practices

Successful professional development programs use the best available research and practices to shape their content. Programs should be implemented on the basis of sound research, not just because an idea is popular (Guskey, 1999; Joyce and Belitzky, 1997).

Commit to Ongoing, Long-Term Professional Development

Professional development must accomplish the same thing for teachers that educators try to achieve for students: a lifetime of ongoing learning (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Professional development is a process, not an event, and must be perceived by teachers as a career-long learning continuum (American Federation of Teachers, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Implement School-Focused Professional Development Programs

Professional development is most successful when it focuses on goals for student learning that are based on the unique strengths and challenges of individual schools or districts (Sparks, 1997). Each school or district must determine what type of training it will benefit most from and then design the professional development program according to its specific needs (Black, 1998; Richardson, 1998).

Principal Provides Support for Professional Development

Research has found that the effectiveness of professional development programs is enhanced when principals (Education Week, 2005; Joyce and Showers, 2002; Lashway, 1999; Killion, 1998; French, 1997; Licklider, 1997):

- Assess their staff's professional development needs.

- Focus professional development on the school's goals.
- Work cooperatively with district staff to develop school and district policies that ensure all teachers have opportunities for continuous learning.
- Clearly and consistently communicate the school's professional development policies to teachers.
- Place a high priority on professional development and continuous improvement.
- Encourage teachers to extend their content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy.
- Actively participate in teachers' learning experiences.
- Promote collegiality, informal communication, and experimentation among teachers.

Provide Sufficient Time, Support, and Resources for Follow-Up Activities

Follow-up activities complement training by promoting transfer to the classroom. Teachers need many opportunities and much support to take risks and try out new strategies (American Federation of Teachers, 2002; Joyce and Showers, 2002; Joyce and Showers, 2002b; Odden et al., 2002; Black, 1998). Researchers have found that, without the opportunity to engage in follow-up activities, less than 10 percent of teachers will fully integrate the new skills into their classroom practice (Sparks, 2002; Showers et al., 1996).

Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Professional Development Program

In the past, few professional development leaders knew how to measure the impact of professional development on student learning. Professional development results were more often reported as activities completed or the level of teacher satisfaction with the program, as opposed to improved student performance. As a result, educators knew training was conducted, but didn't know if teachers' classroom practices changed or if students learned more as a result of their teachers' training. Results-driven professional development, on the other hand, measures success in terms of increases in teacher knowledge and skills, changes in classroom practice, and improvements in student learning (Killion, 2002; Sparks, 2002; Speck and Snipe, 2001; Kennedy, 2000; Killion, 1999; DuFour, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

The blueprint for the professional development program should include a description of how the attainment of the program's goals will be assessed. Evaluations should focus on the extent to which teachers' classroom practices changed and determine if students learned more as a result of their teachers' training. Information should be gathered throughout the professional development process to continually refine the program (Killion, 2002; Speck and Knipe, 2001; Kennedy, 2000; Guskey, 1999; DuFour, 1997).

For a full discussion on the evaluation of professional development programs and how to determine their impact on student achievement, the reader is referred to Killion's (2002) resource guide, *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development.*

ON A LOCAL NOTE

The essence of professional development is to ensure that all students learn how to learn by mastering the skills of reading, writing, and numeracy. In M-DCPS, there is a change in the direction and focus of professional development that reflects many of the research concepts and principles highlighted in this information capsule. Under the leadership of Ms. Ava Byrne, Deputy Superintendent, Office of Professional Development at M-DCPS, the district is narrowing the scope of professional development and, at the same time, expanding its offerings and efforts to support building school communities of literate learners. The emphases in professional development offerings in 2005-06 is on customized inservice for new teachers, leadership development for principals, and succession management across all levels.

With close to 3,000 new teachers hired on an annual basis, M-DCPS has restructured and expanded the induction program for new teachers to include mentoring (both face-to-face and virtual) and ongoing professional learning in targeted areas such as literacy, classroom management, planning aligned with student instructional needs and district curricular goals, and continuous improvement. To expand the current professional development system, the district is increasing the use of technology, including the intranet and instructional television, to provide staff with "just-in-time" professional learning. M-DCPS is restructuring its leadership development program to reflect:

- a systemic succession management plan;
- current best practices from both the education and corporate fields,
- alignment with performance standards from business and education sectors,
- the uniqueness of an urban setting;
- a focus on building strong instructional leaders;
- varied delivery system, including on the job rotation, scholarship programs to prestigious institutions such as Harvard University and Stanford University, and mentoring through a cadre of professional partners.

SUMMARY

Effective professional development programs produce changes in teachers' instructional practice, which can be linked to improvements in student achievement. Professional development programs should reflect the best available research and practices and be evaluated on the basis of their impact on teacher effectiveness and student performance. Successful professional development programs have clear, specific goals and objectives; actively involve participants; and consist of multiple training sessions over an extended period of time. Other features of successful professional development include aligning the program with student content standards and curriculum; broadening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogic foundation; promoting collegiality and collaborative exchange; and providing teachers with ample opportunities to engage in follow-up activities that will better enable them to transfer the newly acquired strategies to their classroom practice.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For a detailed discussion of this issue and a description of related online resources, please refer to the complete report, *Literature Review on Professional Development for Teachers*, available from Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Research Services by calling (305) 995-7503. The report can also be found online at http://drs.dadeschools.net.

REFERENCES

Alvarado, A. (1998). Professional Development *Is* the Job. *American Educator*. Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/winter98/ProfessionalDevelopment.html.

American Federation of Teachers. (2002). *AFT's Guidelines for Creating Professional Development Programs That Make a Difference*. Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/pubsreports/downloads/teachers/PRINCIPLES.pdf.

Black, S. (1998). Money and the Art of Staff Development. *Journal of Staff Development, 19* (2), 14-17.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). Target Time Toward Teachers. *Journal of Staff Development, 20* (2). Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/darling202.cfm.

DuFour, R.P. (1997). The School as a Learning Organization: Recommendations for School Improvement. *NASSP Bulletin, 81* (588), 81-87.

Dunn, R., and Dunn, K. (Eds.) (1998). *Practical Approaches to Individualizing Staff Development for Adults*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Education Week. (2005). *Professional Development*. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/context/topics/issuespage.cfm?id=16.

French, V.W. (1997). Teachers Must Be Learners, Too: Professional Development and National Teaching Standards. *NASSP Bulletin, 81* (585), 38-44.

Garet, M.S., Porter, A.C., Desimone, L., Birman, B.F., and Yoon, K.S. (2001). What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results From a National Sample of Teachers. *American Educational Research Journal, 38* (4), 915-945.

Goldberg, M.F. (2002). *15 School Questions and Discussion: From Class Size, Standards, and School Safety to Leadership and More.* Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Scarecrow Education.

Guskey, T.R. (1996). Jointly Planning Staff Training. *The School Administrator, 53* (11). Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/guskey202.cfm.

Guskey, T.R. (1999). Apply Time With Wisdom. *Journal of Staff Development, 20* (2), 10-15.

Guskey, T.R. (2003). Analyzing Lists of the Characteristics of Effective Professional Development to Promote Visionary Leadership. *NASSP Bulletin, 87* (637), 4-20.

Joyce, B. and Belitzky, A. (1997). *Creating a Staff Development System: Report on the Florida Staff Development Evaluation Study*, Florida Department of Education.

Joyce, B., and Showers, B. (2002). Designing Training and Peer Coaching: Our Needs for Learning. *National College for School Leadership.* Retrieved from http://www.ncsl.org.uk/mediastore/image2/randd-engaged-joyce.pdf.

Joyce, B., and Showers, B. (2002b). *Student Achievement Through Staff Development, 3rd Edition.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kennedy, M.M. (2000). *Form and Substance in Mathematics and Science Professional Development.* Madison, WI: National Institute for Science Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Killion, J. (1998). Leaders Have Key Role in Promoting Staff Development. Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/results/res10-98killion.cfm.

Killion, J. (1999). Design Staff Development With Student Needs in Mind. Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/results/res4-99killion.cfm.

Killion, J. (2002). *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

King, M.B., and Newmann, F.M. (2000). Will Teacher Learning Advance School Goals? *Phi Delta Kappan, 81* (8), 576-580.

Lashway, L. (1999). Creating a Learning Organization. *ERIC Digest.* Retrieved from http://www.ericdigests.org/1999-1/creating.html.

Licklider, B.L. (1997). Breaking ranks: Changing the Inservice Institution. *NASSP Bulletin, 81* (585), 9-22.

Murphy, M. (2000). Designing Staff Development with the System in Mind. *National Staff Development Council.* Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/results/res9-00murp.cfm.

National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. (1996). *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future.* New York, NY: Author.

National Staff Development Council. (2001). *NSDC Standards for Staff Development.* Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm.

Odden, A., Archibald, S., Fermanich, M., and Gallagher, H.A. (2002). A Cost Framework for Professional Development. *Journal of Educational Finance, 28* (1), 51-74.

Peery, A. (2002). Beyond Inservice. *Principal Leadership, 3* (3), 22-28.

Redding, J.C., and Kamm, R.M. (1999). Just In-Time Staff Development: One Step to the Learning Organization. *NASSP Bulletin, 83* (604), 28-34.

Rice, J.K. (2001). Fiscal Implications of New Directions in Teacher Professional Development. *School Business Affairs, 67* (4), 19-24.

Richardson, J. (1998). We're All Here to Learn. *Journal of Staff Development, 19* (4). Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/richardson194.ctm.

Roy, P. (2005). A Fresh Look at Follow-up. Retrieved from http://www.nscd.org/library/publications/results/res2-05roy.cfm.

Showers, B., Murphy, C., and Joyce, B. (1996). The River City Program: Staff Development Becomes School Improvement. In *Learning Experiences in School Renewal: An Exploration of Five Successful Programs.* Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Sparks, D. (1997). A New Vision for Staff Development. *Principal, 77* (1), 20-22.

Sparks, D. (2002). Focusing Staff Development on Improving the Learning of All Students. In Cawelti, G. (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement, Third Edition.* Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Speck, M., and Knipe, C. (2001). *Why Can't We Get It Right? Professional Development in Our Schools.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

State of Florida. (2004). *The 2004 Florida Statutes.* Retrieved from http://www.flsenate.gov.

Supovitz, J.A. (2002). Developing Communities of Instructional Practice. *Teachers College Record, 104* (8), 1591-1626.

U.S. Department of Education. (1996). *Achieving the Goals. Goal 4: Teacher Professional Development.* Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/pubs/AchGoal4/index.html.