

# Developing an Effective Professional Development Plan

An effective professional development plan (PDP) is comprehensive; supports a teacher's continual learning; and is focused on improving a teacher's ability to improve student achievement. An effective PDP is also aligned with school and district goals and the New Jersey Professional Development Standards. To develop a comprehensive PDP, teachers and their supervisors should explore a variety of professional learning opportunities that will impact a teacher's classroom practices and are aligned with school/district improvement goals. The PDP needs to be structured to deepen a teacher's knowledge and enhance practice. The teacher in conjunction with his/her supervisor will want to consider team-based professional learning opportunities as well as individual learning. The teacher and the supervisor should discuss the rationale for the plan to assure that it is in alignment with the New Jersey Professional Development Standards and agree upon the projected number of hours which will be devoted to such study.

A high quality PDP contains opportunities for a teacher that are district-provided professional learning opportunities, school-based team experiences as well as individual opportunities provided outside the district through universities or other professional development providers. Outside options could include, but are not limited to, formal courses, on-line offerings, conferences, workshops, seminars and institutes sponsored by professional associations, colleges and universities, district boards of education, training organizations or other entities.

When creating a PDP, teachers and their supervisors should discuss the kinds of professional learning that would deepen the practitioner's knowledge of content, pedagogy, and social-emotional learning. Teachers and their supervisors should consider options that provide sustained, intensive, and collaborative team-based opportunities so a teacher can benefit from learning with colleagues. Such professional learning may include, but is not limited to, professional learning communities that engage in planned, documented, learning opportunities, focused on student learning outcomes (data) as part of school-based, district, and/or cross-district professional learning.

A teacher and his/her supervisor will also want to consider individual professional learning that supports student learning. This learning may include, but is not limited to, individual action research, sabbaticals, fellowships, internships, textbook review, portfolio development, and contributions to professional literature. To achieve an effective, comprehensive PDP, teachers and their supervisors should consider professional learning that supports and/or enhances student learning such as grant writing, mentoring a pre-service or novice teacher, professional service on boards or committees, teaching a course or making presentations and developing curriculum.

In summary, the key to developing a high quality professional development plan is to focus on a continuous cycle of learning to improve the teacher's ability to meet the needs of the students and the school/district goals. A teacher and a supervisor should collaborate to develop an effective PDP, including a variety of options to develop a relevant, meaningful plan. All professional learning activities designed by the teacher and supervisor that become part of the PDP and are documented count hour for hour. Professional development hours may also be attained/accrued during the work day. The PDP is a living document that can be revisited and revised as needed.