

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS

## A GUIDANCE PACKAGE FOR DEVELOPING THE ANNUAL PDP

### • OVERVIEW •

#### SECTION

#### 1

This guidance package is designed to assist teachers and their supervisors in crafting an individual professional development plan (PDP) that provides for sustained professional learning that supports teacher practice and student achievement. The document will help teachers and supervisors develop a professional development plan in light of our current knowledge of effective professional development. Research has shown that professional development experiences that are disconnected from a teacher's practice have little or no impact on teacher practice or student outcomes. Conversely, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that schools that build professional communities of learners based on collective responsibility, shared practice and collaboration make tremendous gains in student achievement (Newman and Whelage, *Successful School Restructuring*, 1995; Sparks, *On Common Ground*, 2005; Louis and Marks, *American Journal of Education*, 1998; and Reeves, *On Common Ground*, 2005).

This guidance package includes several components:

- The New Jersey Professional Development Standards;
- The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Definition of Professional Development; and
- The section entitled Developing an Effective Professional Development Plan (formerly "What Counts").

These components will assist teachers and their supervisors in setting goals for professional learning and selecting high quality professional development experiences for their individual PDP (formerly PIP). Additionally, it will assist in awarding hours for meeting the requirement. The PDP is a living document that allows teachers to revise their PDP based on learning needs. In the next section is a brief descriptor of each of these documents and how each can help in planning effective professional development activities.

### The New Jersey Professional Development Standards

New Jersey adopted the NSDC Professional Development Standards because they reflect the principles of best practice in professional learning and are grounded in the research on effective professional development. The standards address the three key components of effective professional learning: the process, or the "how to" for designing and taking part professional learning; the content, the actual knowledge and skills to be learned; and the context, or structural supports, that will ensure the learning is able to take place. These three strands help educators recognize that professional development is only effective when a thoughtful design process and an appropriate organizational context support meaningful content. Teachers and their supervisors will want to discuss goals and opportunities for professional development that focus on the learning needs of the students they teach. The professional development standards help frame the discussions and determine appropriate activities.



## SECTION

### 2

## The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Definition of Professional Development:

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The new NSDC Definition of Professional Development reflects current thinking on the most effective professional learning for teachers. This definition, adopted with minor modifications by the Professional Teaching Standards Board and NJEA, supports New Jersey's new emphasis on school-based planning and sees learning teams as the engine of professional learning. The definition describes how professional development should be implemented in schools through teams of educators who work together in a continuous cycle of improvement to support student achievement. Teachers and supervisors will want to consider professional development opportunities in light of this new definition which places great importance on site-based, team-based learning.

## SECTION

### 3

## Developing an Effective Professional Development Plan: Replacing "What Counts"

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 as part of school-based, district, 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 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.

## SECTION

### 3

## Special Situations

In this section, special situations are addressed with regard to fulfilling the 100 hour requirement.

All teachers will be on the same cycle beginning September 1, 2010 and ending August 31, 2015. Please see the attached description for accruing hours in the new cycle.

### Part-time Teachers

A part-time teacher is defined as one who is employed on a regular basis for the school year, but for less than the full school day or week. A part-time teacher is required to accrue 50 hours of professional development within each five-year cycle. If the part-time teacher moves to a full-time position, the teacher will continue the cycle by accruing hours as required of all full time teachers. For example a teacher who teaches the first two years as a part-time teacher and three years as a full-time teacher would be required to accrue 80 hours.

### Teachers on Leave

If the teacher is on leave in one year of the cycle for 5 months or less the teacher will need to accrue 10 hours for that year. If a teacher is on leave for 5 months or more the teacher will not need to accrue hours for that year in the five year cycle. A teacher on leave for one year or less has the option to accrue professional development hours if the teacher has a PDP (formerly PIP) for the school year.

### Novice Teachers and Teachers New to the District

Novice teachers and teachers who are new to the district must complete a PDP (formerly PIP) with the supervisor within the first 60 days of beginning work within the district. This PDP will guide the professional learning of the individual teacher for the year.

### Teachers Providing Trainings or Courses to Educators

Teachers who provide trainings or teach courses to other educators on topics aligned to their PDP may accrue additional hours for their preparation. A teacher will accrue two hours of preparation for every hour of delivery. For example a teacher who provides a five-hour training will accrue five hours for delivery and ten hours for preparation. A teacher may only accrue hours for the same course or training once in the five-year cycle.



### **Job-embedded Professional Learning**

Teachers who engage in documented team-based learning or trainings during the school day accrue hours to meet the requirement.

### **Validation of Professional Development Hours**

All teachers must continue to maintain their certificates or other appropriate documentation toward meeting the 100-hour requirement. Provider certificates will no longer need provider numbers. Documentation from conferences, trainings, and institutes must be in the form of a certificate, a sample of which can be found on the department website at [http://www.nj.gov/education/njpep/pd/provider/pd1\\_doc.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/njpep/pd/provider/pd1_doc.pdf). Documentation for team-based learning could be in the form of team logs, team journals or team minutes.