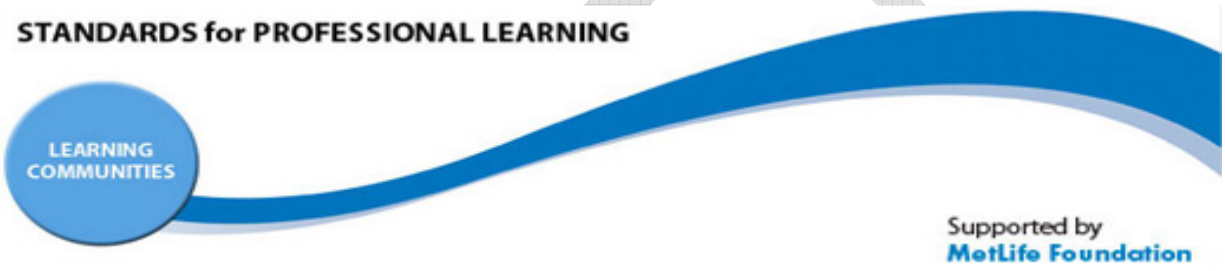
District of Columbia Standards for Professional Development

Vision: High quality professional development is sustained, intensive, and school or classroom focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on instruction and educator performance. Educators take responsibility for their own learning by being engaged in active learning opportunities that model effective instructional practices.

The District of Columbia proposes to fully adopt the standards developed by *Learning Forward,* formerly the National Staff Development Council. A condensed version of the standards follows; they are available in their entirety at http://www.learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning.

Standards for Professional Learning, July 2011
Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council)



Standard 1: Learning Communities
Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Engage in Continuous Improvement

Learning communities apply a cycle of continuous improvement to engage in inquiry, action research, data analysis, planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation. Characteristics of each application of the cycle of continuous improvement are:

- The use of data to determine student and educator learning needs;
- Identification of shared goals for student and educator learning;
- Professional learning to extend educators' knowledge of content, content-specific pedagogy, how students learn, and management of classroom environments;
- Selection and implementation of appropriate evidence-based strategies to achieve student and educator learning goals;
- Application of the learning with local support at the work site;
- Use of evidence to monitor and refine implementation; and
- Evaluation of results.

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Develop Collective Responsibility

- Learning communities share collective responsibility for the learning of all students within the school or school system.
- Within learning communities, peer accountability rather than formal or administrative accountability ignites commitment to professional learning.
- Within learning communities, members exchange feedback about their practice with one another, visit each other's classrooms or work settings, and share resources. They develop norms of collaboration and relational trust and employ processes and structures that unleash expertise and strengthen capacity to analyze, plan, implement, support, and evaluate their practice.
- Often supported through technology, cross-community communication within schools, across schools, and among school systems reinforces shared goals, promotes knowledge construction and sharing, strengthens coherence, taps educators' expertise, and increases access to and use of resources.
- Communities of learners may be various sizes, include members with similar or different roles or responsibilities, and meet frequently face-to-face, virtually, or through a combination. Educators may be members of multiple learning communities.

Create Alignment and Accountability

- Professional learning that occurs within learning communities provides an ongoing system of support for continuous improvement and implementation of school and system wide initiatives. Learning communities align their goals with those of the school and school system, engage in continuous professional learning, and hold all members collectively accountable for results.
- The professional learning that occurs within learning communities both supports and is supported by policy and governance, curriculum and instruction, human resources, and other functions within a school system.

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Standard 2: Leadership

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

Develop Capacity for Learning and Leading

- All leaders demand effective professional learning focused on substantive results for themselves, their colleagues, and their students.
- Leaders artfully combine deep understanding of and cultural responsiveness to the community they serve with high expectations and support for results to achieve school and school system goals.
- Leaders embed professional learning into the organization's vision by communicating that it is a core function for improvement and by establishing and maintaining a public and persistent focus on educator professional learning.
- Leaders of professional learning are found at the classroom, school, and system levels. They develop expertise in others about effective professional learning, set high standards for their performance, and use data to give frequent, constructive feedback.
- Leaders of professional learning work collaboratively with others, such as school and system based resource personnel and external technical assistance providers, so that all educators engage in effective job-embedded or external professional learning to meet individual, team, school, and system goals.
- Leaders can hold formal roles, such as principal, instructional coach, or task force chair, for long periods of time or informal roles, such as voluntary mentor or spokesperson, for shorter periods.

Advocate for Professional Learning

- Leaders clearly articulate the critical link between increased student learning and educator professional learning. They apply understanding of organizational and human changes to design needed conditions, resources, and other supports for learning and change.
- As advocates for professional learning, leaders make their own career-long learning visible to others. They participate in professional learning within and beyond their own work environment.

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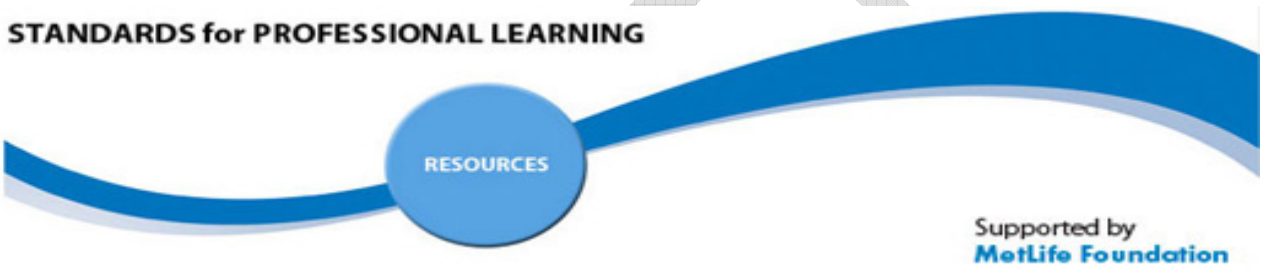
Create Support Systems and Structures

- Skillful leaders establish organizational systems and structures that support effective professional learning and ongoing continuous improvement. They equitably distribute resources to accomplish individual, team, school, and school system goals.
- Leaders actively engage with policy makers and decision makers so that resources, policies, annual calendars, daily schedules, and structures support professional learning to increase student achievement.
- Leaders work within national, regional, and local agencies to adopt standards, monitor implementation, and evaluate professional learning's effectiveness and results.



Standard 3: Resources

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Prioritize Human, Fiscal, Material, Technology, And Time Resources

- Resources for professional learning include staff, materials, technology, and time, all dependent on available funding. Decisions about resources for professional learning require a thorough understanding of student and educator learning needs, clear commitment to ensure equity in resource allocation, and thoughtful consideration of priorities to achieve the intended outcomes for students and educators.
- Staff costs are a significant portion of the resource investment in professional learning. The time leaders commit to professional learning, either their own or for those they supervise, is a cost factor.
- Time allocated for professional learning is another significant investment.
- Professional learning embedded into educators' workdays increases the opportunity for all educators to receive individual, team, or school-based support within the work setting to promote continuous improvement.
- To increase alignment and coherence between job-embedded and external professional learning, both must address the individual, school, and school system goals for educator and student learning.
- In lean economic times, professional learning is especially important to prepare members of the workforce for the changes they will experience, maintain and increase student achievement, develop flexibility to detect and adapt to new economic conditions and opportunities, and sustain employee morale, retention, commitment, and expertise.

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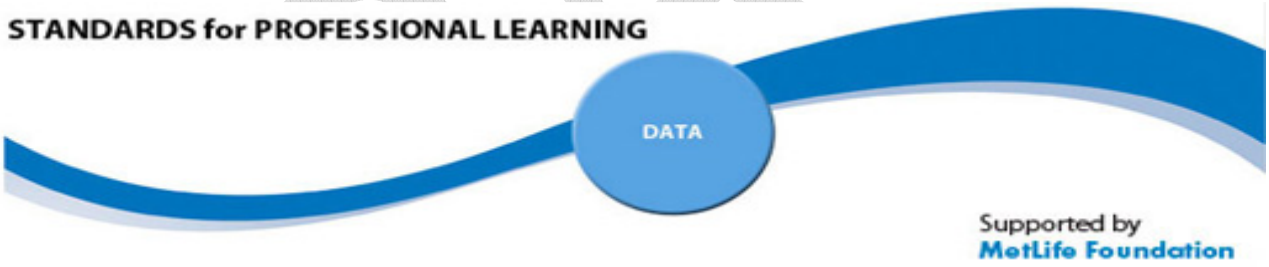
Monitor Resources

- Resources for professional learning come from many sources, including government allocations, public and private agencies, and educators themselves. A consistent and comprehensive process to track and monitor resources is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness or effectiveness of their allocation and use.
- Decisions about funding must specifically address inequities in learning needs and opportunities to learn and be given highest priority so that that all students and the educators who serve them have the resources to achieve at the highest levels.

Coordinate Resources

- The coordination of resources for professional learning is essential to their appropriate and effective use.
- To make certain that resources invested in professional learning achieve their intended results, school system leaders regularly convene representatives of all stakeholders to examine and recommend changes to policies, regulations, and agreements related to professional learning.



Standard 4: Data

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Analyze, Student, Educator, and System Data

- Data about students, educators, and systems are useful in defining individual, team, school, and system goals for professional learning.
- Sample data to consider for identifying goals for educator learning include preparation information, performance on various assessments, educator perceptions, classroom or work performance, student results, and individual professional learning goals.

- School and system administrators also engage in data collection and analysis to determine changes in policy, procedures, fiscal resources, human resources, time, or technology, for example, needed to support school- and team-based learning.

Assess Progress

- At the classroom level, teachers use student data to assess the effectiveness of the application of their new learning.
- At the school level, leadership teams use data to monitor implementation of professional learning and its effects on educator practice and student learning.
- Frequent collection and use of data about inputs, outputs, and outcomes of professional learning reinforce the cycle of continuous improvement by allowing for ongoing adjustments in the learning process to increase results for students, educators, and systems.
- Ongoing data collection, analysis, and use, especially when done in teams, provide stakeholders with information that sustains momentum and informs continuous improvement.

Evaluate Professional Learning

- Those responsible for professional learning implement and maintain standards for professional learning and use the standards to monitor, assess, and evaluate it.
- Internal and external evaluators conduct evaluations of professional learning. All professional learning should be evaluated on an ongoing basis for its effectiveness and results.
- Questions that guide the evaluation of professional learning address its worth, merit, and effects. Evaluators design a process to answer the evaluation questions, gather quantitative and qualitative data from various sources, analyze and interpret the data, form conclusions, and recommend future actions.

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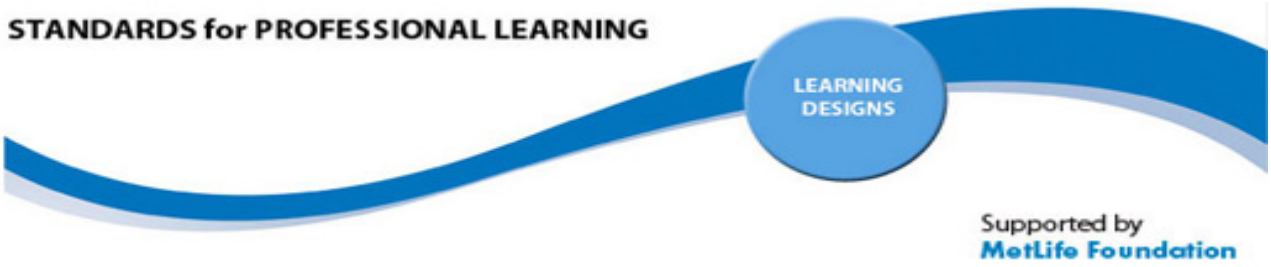

Standard 5: Learning Designs

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Apply Learning Theories, Research, and Models

- While multiple models of human learning exist, many have common features, such as active engagement, modeling, reflection, metacognition, application, feedback, ongoing support, and formative and summative assessment that support change in knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practice.
- Professional learning occurs in face-to-face, online, and hybrid settings. Some professional learning focuses on individual learning, while other forms focus on team-based or whole-school learning.
- Designs for job-embedded learning include analyzing student data, case studies, peer observation or visitations, simulations, co-teaching with peers or specialists, action research, peer and expert coaching, observing and analyzing demonstrations of practice, problem-based learning, inquiry into practice, student observation, study groups, data analysis, constructing and scoring assessments, examining student or educator work, lesson study, video clubs, professional reading, or book studies.
- Learning designs that occur during the workday and engage peers in learning facilitate ongoing communication about learning, develop a collaborative culture with peer accountability, foster professionalism, and support transfer of the learning to practice.
- Technology particularly facilitates access to sharing, construction, and analysis of information to enhance practice. It also exponentially increases possibilities for personalizing, differentiating, and deepening learning.

Select Learning Designs

- Effective designs for professional learning assist educators in moving beyond comprehension of the surface features of a new idea or practice to developing a more complete understanding of its purposes, critical attributes, meaning, and connection to other approaches.
- To increase student learning, educator learning provides many opportunities for educators to practice new learning with ongoing assessment, feedback, and coaching so the learning becomes fully integrated into routine behaviors.

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- Decisions about learning designs consider all phases of the learning process, from knowledge and skill acquisition to application, reflection, refinement, assessment, and evaluation

Promote Active Engagement

- Active engagement occurs when learners interact during the learning process with the content and with one another.
- Active engagement respects adults as professionals and gives them significant voice and choice in shaping their own learning. Through active engagement, educators construct personal meaning of their learning, are more committed to its success, and identify authentic applications for their learning.
- Active learning processes promote deep understanding of new learning and increase motivation to implement it. Active learning processes include discussion and dialogue, writing, demonstrations, inquiry, reflection, metacognition, co-construction of knowledge, practice with feedback, coaching, modeling, and problem solving.

Standard 6: Implementation

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

Apply Change Research

- Those responsible for professional learning, whether leaders, facilitators, or participants, commit to long-term change by setting clear goals and maintaining high expectations for implementation with fidelity.
- Leaders provide and align resources, including time, staff, materials, and technology, to initiate and sustain implementation. Individuals, peers, coaches, and leaders use tools and metrics to gather evidence to monitor and assess implementation.
- Understanding how individuals and organizations respond to change and how various personal, cognitive, and work environment factors affect those experiencing change gives those leading, facilitating, or participating in professional learning the ability to differentiate support, tap educators' strengths and talents, and increase educator effectiveness and student learning.

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Sustain Implementation

- Professional learning produces changes in educator practice and student learning when it sustains implementation support over time.
- Formal professional learning, such as online, on-site, or hybrid workshops, conferences, or courses, is useful to develop or expand knowledge and skills, share emerging ideas, and network learners with one another.
- To bridge the knowing-doing gap and integrate new ideas into practice, educators need three to five years of ongoing implementation support that includes opportunities to deepen their understanding and address problems associated with practice.
- Ongoing support for implementation of professional learning takes many forms and occurs at the implementation site. Examples include:
    - ongoing workshops designed to deepen understanding and refine educator practice;
    - collaborative learning teams when educators plan, implement, analyze, reflect, and evaluate the integration of their professional learning into their practice;
    - learning communities that meet to learn or refine instructional strategies, plan lessons that integrate the new strategies, share experiences about implementing those lessons, analyze student work together to reflect on the results of use of the strategies, and assess their progress toward their defined goals;
    - school- and system-based coaches provide extended learning opportunities, resources for implementation, demonstrations of the practices, and specific, personalized guidance.
- Professional learning is a process of continuous improvement focused on achieving clearly defined student and educator learning goals rather than an event defined by a predetermined number of hours.

Provide Constructive Feedback

- Constructive feedback accelerates implementation by providing formative assessment through the learning and implementation process.
- Feedback from peers, coaches, supervisors, external experts, students, self, and others offers information for educators to use as they refine practices. Reflection is another form of feedback in which a learner engages in providing constructive feedback on his or her own or others' practices.
- Effective feedback is based on clearly defined expected behaviors, acknowledges progress toward expectations, and provides guidance for achieving full implementation.
- To add validity and reliability to the feedback process, educators develop and use common, clear expectations that define practice so that the feedback is focused, objective, relevant, valid, and purposeful.
- Frequent feedback supports continuous improvement, whereas occasional feedback is often considered evaluative.

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Standard 7: Outcomes

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Meet Performance Standards

- Educator performance standards typically delineate the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of highly effective educators.
- Typical areas included in teacher standards are knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to content knowledge; pedagogy; pedagogical content knowledge; assessment; understanding how students learn; understanding how students' cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development influences their learning; engaging students with diverse cultures, language, gender, socioeconomic conditions, and exceptionalities; engaging families and communities in student learning; creating learning environments; professional growth and development; and professional collaboration.
- Standards for school and system leaders describe what effective leaders know and do so that every student and educator performs at high levels.
- Typical areas covered in leader standards include establishing a vision and strategic plan for effective learning; leading learning of students and staff; developing workplace culture to support learning; engaging in their own professional learning; managing facilities, workforce, operations, and resources; establishing effective relationships and communication systems; managing change; sharing leadership with others; engaging staff and families in decision making; understanding and responding to the diverse needs of students and communities; understanding and responding to cultural, political, social, legal, and financial contexts; and securing individual, team, school, and whole system accountability for student success.

Address Learning Outcomes

- Student learning outcomes define equitable expectations for all students to achieve at high levels and hold educators responsible for implementing appropriate strategies to support student learning.
- Using student learning outcomes as its outcomes, professional learning can model and engage educators in practices they are expected to implement within their classrooms and workplaces.

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Build Coherence

- Coherence requires that professional learning builds on what educators have already learned; focuses on learning outcomes and pedagogy aligned with national or local curriculum and assessments for educator and student learning; aligns with educator performance standards; and supports educators in developing sustained, ongoing professional communication with other educators who are engaged in similar changes in their practice.
- Coherence also ensures that professional learning is a part of a seamless process that begins in the preparation program and continues throughout an educator's career and aligns tightly with the expectations for effectiveness defined in performance standards and student learning outcomes.

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