

[Key Considerations for District of Columbia Educators Contemplating Professional Learning](#)

[Why might I consider professional learning?](#)

Professional learning has the potential to increase the effectiveness of the educator workforce and, ultimately, advance student outcomes. However, for professional learning to provide the support and growth we seek as educators, it must be high quality. This guidance provides key considerations that educators may use when selecting professional learning opportunities to help ensure that those opportunities are high quality.

[How is professional learning related to educator credential renewal in DC?](#)

The Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Division of Teaching and Learning (TAL) does not pre-approve professional learning activities or providers for K-12 and adult educators for the purposes of [educator credential renewal](#). However, many of OSSE's approved, in-state [Educator Preparation Providers](#) offer coursework and professional learning opportunities that educators may pursue to earn professional learning units (PLUs) for the purposes of renewing an OSSE educator credential. Additionally, candidates may use [OSSE-provided professional learning](#) to earn credit toward renewing an educator credential.

OSSE requires that the content of professional learning activities accepted for the purposes of renewing a DC K-12 or adult educator credential aligns with one or more of the following focus areas.

- Increases content knowledge and competence in the specific subject area of the credential;
- Increases effective instruction and methodologies;
- Increases school leadership strategies and skills;
- Increases knowledge of curriculum and standards;
- Improves school, community, and family engagement;
- Increases knowledge of educational best practices and trends;
- Increases knowledge of resources and services for schools;
- Increases strategies and skills for meeting the needs of diverse learners; and/or
- Increases strategies and skills for effectively using educational technology

An educator seeking to renew a DC educator credential under the professional learning activities and coursework pathway should contact the institution or entity that is delivering the activity to obtain a detailed syllabus or activity description prior to enrollment, to ensure that the professional learning activity aligns with the required focus areas needed for credential renewal.

[What questions will help determine whether a professional learning activity is high quality?](#)

- Is it **content focused**?
 - High-quality professional learning focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content which supports teacher learning within teachers' classroom contexts. This element includes an intentional focus on discipline-specific curriculum development and pedagogies in areas such as mathematics, science, or literacy.
- Does it incorporate **active learning**?
 - Active learning engages teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, providing them an opportunity to engage in the same style of learning they are designing for their students. Such professional learning uses authentic artifacts, interactive activities, and other strategies to provide deeply embedded, highly contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional learning models and environments that are lecture based and have no direct connection to teachers' classrooms and students.
- Does it support **collaboration**?

- High-quality professional learning creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district.
- Does it use **models of effective practice**?
 - Curricular models and modeling of instruction provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like. Teachers may view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, and video or written cases of teaching.
- Does it provide **coaching and expert support**?
 - Coaching and expert support involve the sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on teachers' individual needs.
- Does it offer **feedback and reflection**?
 - High-quality professional learning frequently provides built-in time for teachers to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Feedback and reflection both help teachers to thoughtfully move toward the expert visions of practice.
- Is it of **sustained duration**?
 - Effective professional learning provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner 2017).