

Job-Embedded Professional Development

1. What is job-embedded professional development?

It is professional development within schools focused on quality instruction and student achievement.

- Occurs during the workday and in the workplace.
- Closely connected to the actual work of teachers in classrooms with their current students.
- Designed to improve teachers' instruction.
- Intended to improve student learning.
- Centered on the academic student needs of the school.
- Directly linked to the goals set for students by the team and school.

2. Why the shift to job-embedded professional development from staff development?

A child learns well not by having a great teacher along the way but by having thirteen years of great teachers.

- Schools need to be strategic: ALL teachers in the school improve the learning for ALL students.
- Schools need to be systemic: School improvement plans align with professional development plans and practices.
- Schools need to be super-focused: All teacher actions are tied to meeting student achievement goals.
- Schools need to link teachers' work to the district curriculum: Collaboration occurs among teachers and the curriculum they teach through the use of horizontal groups (teachers meet with other teachers who share the same grade level of students) and vertical groups (teachers meet in Pre-K–12 groups teaching the same content area).

3. What are ineffective professional development practices?

Professional development activities are ineffective when they are not focused on the immediate work of teaching the students to whom the teachers are assigned.

- Individual-teacher-focused professional learning does not have a schoolwide or districtwide impact. Staff members taking turns attending a workshop of their choice is often based on teachers' needs and wants rather than needs of students.
- A hodge-podge approach to professional learning does not have a wide-range performance impact. Workshop days or meetings focused on presenting the next-new-thing are not aligned with the achievement needs of the students in the school and are disconnected from school student achievement goals.
- Reliance on external experts for professional learning does not have a lasting impact. The temporary impact of solutions driven by external consultants ends when the expertise walks out the door once the experience is complete.

- The sit 'n get experience of professional learning does not have an action impact. Staff members often walk away from a workshop with ideas that are never implemented in their classrooms.

4. What does job-embedded professional development look like?

Collaborative work is the heart of job-embedded professional development, evaluating and solving problems of practice in order to improve teacher quality.

- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Teacher collaboration meetings to analyze classroom practice, learn new instructional strategies and tactics, field-test them in the classroom and report the results to each other.
- Teacher observations: Frequent observations by a peer linked with deep conversations about the art and craft of teaching that takes one's practice to a higher level of performance.
- Coaching: A peer that provides ongoing consistent follow-up with teachers by way of demonstrations, observations, and conversations as teachers implement new strategies and knowledge.
- Mentoring: A peer support relationship with a new teacher in real-time classroom support to increase teacher effectiveness with instruction and classroom best practices.
- Examining student work: A process that enables teachers to develop common understanding of quality student work, identify student misconceptions and evaluate their teaching methods.
- Data teams and assessment development: Teachers who meet together and analyze results for standardized tests or teacher-created assessments and use the evidence to determine teaching strategies that will improve student achievement.

5. What conditions are needed for high-quality, job-embedded professional development?

Teachers serve as each others' main resource for learning in job-embedded professional development, making successful collaboration key to professional growth.

- Offering support from all district and school levels: superintendent, principals and teachers.
- Requiring all staff to actively participate and construct professional knowledge.
- Driving professional learning with schoolwide student academic achievement goals.
- Providing time during the workday for professional learning.
- Establishing structures for teacher learning and improvement (e.g., PLCs, coaching, mentoring, peer observations).
- Ensuring ongoing analysis of school needs regarding both student and teacher learning.

6. What can school leaders do to support job-embedded professional development?

Principals create a school culture, support structures, systems and dedicated time for making job-embedded professional development an intrinsic part of each teacher's workday.

- Keep the school focused on the main objective: student achievement.
- Develop a school climate among staff that promotes continued learning focused on improving students' academic achievement.
- Identify, train and support effective instructional facilitators in providing job-embedded professional development.

- Provide common teacher learning time, at least 60 minutes of uninterrupted time per week, which is distinct from planning time.
- Use student performance data to inform decisions of job-embedded professional development.
- Align teacher evaluation with the teacher learning occurring in job-embedded professional development so teachers can regularly strengthen their practice.
- Measure the progress of teacher and student learning to ensuring success for all.

7. What are the results of job-embedded professional development?

The most important outcome of teacher collaboration is that all students succeed—not just those within a few classrooms.

- Stronger focus of school improvement efforts towards a common goal.
- Higher quality solutions to instructional problems.
- Increased confidence and collaboration among staff.
- Increased ability to support one another's strengths and to improve areas of weakness.
- More systematic assistance to beginning teachers, struggling teachers, teachers in transitions and teachers striving to become even more effective teachers.
- Significant gains for student achievement when these results are produced in combination.

Job-Embedded Professional Development Model

“Job-embedded [professional] development requires that most of an educator’s professional learning occurs during the workday in the workplace, is designed to support team learning, and is offered and available to educators. Job-embedded means the learning occurs during the workday and has a direct link to the goals set for students by the team and the school.” (Hirsch and Killion, **The Learning Educator**, 2007). Teacher learning during the educator’s workday allows access to necessary resources including materials, curriculum experts and knowledgeable assistance.

Teacher learning in a job-embedded professional development model has the following characteristics:

1. Alignment with the district and school education improvement plans, staff development plans and site SMART goals for student achievement.
2. Use of the internal capacity of the district that does not rely primarily on outside experts to impart knowledge and skills.
3. Delivery in a learning team format with collaborative teams having regular dedicated time (meeting weekly or every other week) within the teacher workday.
4. Learning teams working collaboratively to improve instruction in order to achieve common goals aligned to increasing student achievement.
5. Teacher learning experiences focused on using scientifically research-based strategies that translate directly to classroom instruction.
6. A formal team structure that includes having a purpose (goal), outcomes for meetings (action plans, agendas and minutes) and a focus on classroom instruction to improve student achievement (selecting instructional strategies, planning lessons and reflecting on practice).
7. Effective use of professional development activities within learning teams, which include analyzing student data, learning new instructional strategies, developing lessons, designing common assessments and analyzing student work to assess student learning.
8. Peer observations and coaching provided for all teachers to refine their teaching while they embed new teaching strategies to become more effective in working with the students currently in their classrooms.