
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Prepared by

Public Schools of North Carolina
Department of Public Instruction
Office of the Deputy Superintendent
January 2002

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Introduction

In its 2001 Session, the General Assembly revised the responsibilities of the State Board of Education relative to professional development programs. Specifically, Section 31.4.(a) of G.S. 115C-12(26) was rewritten as follows:

The State Board of Education shall identify State and local needs for professional development for professional public school employees based upon the State's educational priorities for improving student achievement. The State Board also shall recommend strategies for addressing these needs. The strategies must be research-based, proven in practice, and designed for data-driven evaluation. The State Board shall report its findings and recommendations to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina prior to January 15, 2002, and shall review, revise, and resubmit those findings and recommendations annually thereafter. The State Board shall evaluate the reports submitted by the Board of Governors under G.S. 116-11(12a) to determine whether the programs for professional development provided by the Center for School Leadership Development address the State and local needs identified by the State Board and whether the programs are using the strategies recommended by the State Board. Prior to January 15th of each year, the State Board shall report the results of its analysis to the Board of Governors and to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

Representatives of the Department of Public Instruction, the Center for School Leadership Development, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission, and the North Carolina Association of Educators were involved in the development of this report. Input was also solicited from legislative staff members.

The development of this report has made clear the need for a state level comprehensive plan for professional development. A survey of superintendents and the experiences of assistance team members and curriculum specialists within the Department generated an extensive list of specific needs. These included classroom assessment strategies, developing Personalized Education Plans (PEPs), cultural diversity, curriculum alignment (especially at transitional years), instructional strategies for teaching ESL students effectively, lesson planning, questioning techniques, differentiated instruction, developing effective teacher-made tests, content/subject matter updates, organizing instructional time in an effective manner, maximizing academic time on task, instructional monitoring, data analysis, data-driven decision-making, promoting positive school climate, and increasing parental involvement. This report does not address all the needs identified, nor is it a comprehensive plan for professional development. This report, by design, focuses on a specific need to address a major issue facing North Carolina's public schools--closing the academic achievement gap among students while increasing the academic achievement of all students.

The Need

All children, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status have a fundamental right to reach proficiency in reading, writing, and math, and educators have a moral imperative to ensure that this happens for every child. North Carolina is committed to working toward improving the academic achievement of all students. Yet, significant gaps in the performance of minority students exist. These gaps are documented in detail in the *Minority Achievement Report 2001, Trends in Subgroup Performance* published by the Division of Accountability in August 2001 (and available on the DPI website).

In the late summer of 2000, an Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps was appointed. The Commission was charged with advising the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent, and the local school systems on ways to raise achievement for all students and close the number of gaps that exist in student achievement outcomes and student participation in the instructional process. Commission members include teachers, school administrators, parents, school board members, community organizations, an attorney specializing in school law and policy, a researcher/consultant on diversity issues, a newspaper editor, and the dean of a public university school of education. The Commission is chaired by a former school superintendent.

Over the past year, the Commission spent a great deal of time reviewing and discussing research and the results from numerous studies related to the issue of closing the gap. Public school practitioners, researchers, and community organizations presented their practices, findings, and opinions to the Commission. Commission members visited classrooms and reviewed data provided by the Department.

At its December 2001 meeting, the State Board of Education received the first report from the Commission. Of the ten recommendations contained in the report, five were focused on Teacher Preparation and Support. Of particular relevance to this report is Recommendation 5: **"That the State Board of Education and the Superintendent immediately make a public commitment to design and fund a required, but flexible, professional development initiative that will ensure that classroom teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be successful in teaching a diverse population of students."** The report states that

Just how much teacher professional development is enough is anyone's answer. Should it be no better than that provided heretofore, perhaps teachers have already had enough! But assuming that new professional development is based on national models and standards and centered on the achievement problems that teachers face each day, one measure of sufficiency will be when teachers are successful in teaching groups of diverse learners . . . A better way to know how much professional development is sufficient is when we can no longer predict the academic performance of groups of students based on ethnicity. . . (p. 11)

Ensuring that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be successful in teaching a diverse population of students serves not only minority students,

but serves every student by raising the level of educational proficiency for entire classes and schools.

The Center for School Leadership Development

The State Board of Education appreciates the unique mission of each of the programs within the Center for School Leadership Development (CSLD) and the impact the programs have had on individual teachers and school administrators. The Board also recognizes the potential powerful impact the programs could have on the achievement of students in the public schools through a coordinated, cross-program effort focused at the school level. For this reason, and based on the need described above, the Center for School Leadership Development is asked to marshal its resources to assist the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction in their efforts to decrease the gaps in achievement among groups of students based on race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status while raising the achievement levels of all students in two distinct, but complementary ways. Specifically, the Center for School Leadership Development is asked:

1. to develop and implement a comprehensive school-level program designed to close the achievement gap while raising the achievement of all students, and
2. to work with DPI and other appropriate partners to design and develop a series of instructional modules for teachers, administrators, and instructional support staff focused on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to closing the achievement gap while raising the achievement of all students.

School-Level Program

The Center is asked to develop and implement a comprehensive school-level program designed to close the achievement gap while raising the achievement of all students. The Department of Public Instruction will identify 15-20 schools to participate in the program. The identification will be based on a number of factors including the analysis of the achievement gap data which has been completed by the DPI Closing the Gap Section, the demographics of the school, and a commitment on the part of the school to eliminate the achievement gap. Cognizant that what happens at one level of the K-12 system (e.g., the elementary school) influences what happens at other levels of the system (e.g., the middle school and high school levels), to the extent possible, a "feeder-school" model will be utilized (i.e., 3-5 high schools and the middle schools and elementary schools which "feed" into the high schools will be identified). This model can facilitate the vertical alignment of curriculum and ease the transitions between levels, helping to create a K-12 system that is seamless.

It is the expectation of the Board that the **school-level program**:

- a. be a coordinated and collaborative effort across the Center for School Leadership Development Programs, and not simply current CSLD Programs delivered at the school level;
- b. be based on a comprehensive needs assessment which involves administrators, teachers, instructional support staff, and others involved in support of instruction in the identification of needs;
- c. include not only teachers, but administrators, instructional support staff, and others involved in support of instruction;
- d. be sufficiently flexible to allow for the identification and addressing of local issues contributing to the continuation of the achievement gap;
- e. be replicable on a statewide basis;
- f. occur over an extended period of time and include provisions for participants to try out new skills and techniques and analyze the impact of new strategies and approaches on student learning;
- g. provide participants with on-the-job coaching and feedback;
- h. be predicated on the characteristics of effective professional development (identified later in this report); and
- i. utilize research-based techniques such as "Student Work Sample Methodology" (described later in this report).

Instructional Modules

To begin creating a "library" of high quality professional development activities that can be used to address the needs of individual teachers, administrators, and instructional support staff, the Center is asked to work with DPI and other appropriate partners to design and develop a series of instructional modules focused on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to closing the achievement gap while raising the achievement of all students. These modules should be designed for use by teachers, administrators, and instructional support staff, on an individual or small group basis, based on identified need. The modules will be made available to all school systems in the state, and not limited to those schools participating in the school-level program. The modules should be accessible on-line or through other distance learning technologies.

It is the expectation of the Board that the **instructional modules**:

- a. be designed for independent use by teachers, administrators, and instructional support staff (i.e., they should allow for self-directed, self-paced learning);

- b. be focused on the knowledge and skills inherent in the Core Standards for Teachers articulated by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and adopted by the State Board of Education; and
- c. include an assessment component that requires the individual to demonstrate application of the skills in the classroom and/or school setting.

Based on the experiences of the assistance teams and the July 2000 report by the Evaluation Section of the Division of Accountability Services entitled, *Closing the Achievement Gap: Views from Nine Schools*, the first series of modules should address the following: the impact of diversity on learning; differentiated instruction; grouping strategies; assessing student progress; data analysis as a basis for planning instruction; developing higher order thinking skills; teaching basic reading and writing skills; integrating reading and writing across the curriculum; and content/subject matter updates.

The effectiveness of the school-level program and instructional modules will be evaluated on the basis of student work sample methodology and on student performance on standardized assessments (e.g., End of Grade and End of Course tests) and other indicators of school success (e.g., dropout rates, enrollment in AP/Honors classes) across time.

Suggested professional development strategies, assessment measures, and a possible timetable follow.

Suggested Professional Development Strategies

In recent years, there has been a considerable amount of research done nationally to determine which professional development strategies and practices are most effective in providing teachers new knowledge and skills that translate into increased student achievement. The National Staff Development Council has recently revised its standards for professional development based on this research. In North Carolina, the Professional Teaching Standards Commission has developed a set of standards for professional development, compatible with and referenced to these standards.

A summary of this research indicates that characteristics of effective professional development can be grouped into categories of effective planning, appropriate content, effective delivery, and meaningful evaluation. It is expected that programs of the Center for School Leadership Development will follow these standards in offering professional development experiences to school based personnel as they work to eliminate the achievement gap among diverse groups of students and to increase the achievement of all students.

Specifically, research has established the following parameters for effective professional development:

Planning: Quality professional development incorporates significant participant (administrator, teacher) involvement in planning and evaluation of the activities.

Quality professional development occurs more easily in an environment where it is invited and welcomed rather than in an environment where teachers are forced to participate.

Content: The content of quality professional development is research-based, significant, and appropriate to the context of the school and the environment of the teacher.

The content of professional development is based on and responsive to student needs, educator needs, school and district improvement efforts, and state guidelines.

Quality professional development increases teachers' knowledge of subject matter, of ways in which students learn the content being taught by that teacher, and of appropriate and meaningful ways to assess students' understanding of the material being taught.

One size does not fit all. The professional development needs of beginning teachers are different than the professional development needs of veteran teachers. The professional development needs of master teachers are different than the professional development needs of less-skilled teachers. The professional development needs of science teachers may be very different than the needs of English teachers.

Delivery: Delivery of quality professional development incorporates characteristics of adult learning theory. A variety of approaches are used to convey new knowledge and skill; active learning is encouraged; and the knowledge and skills of participants are acknowledged and capitalized on.

Professional development is delivered over an extended period of time, with provisions for teachers to try out new skills and techniques and time to reflect on and analyze the impact of new strategies and approaches.

Quality professional development includes a strong coaching/observation/follow-up component providing feedback. It supports and encourages collaboration, reflection and analysis.

Appropriate and sufficient time is provided for the planning and implementation of new strategies and techniques.

Evaluation: The impact of professional development is evaluated and modified based on data concerning student growth and achievement.

To increase student achievement, professional development must be on-going with

intensive follow-up and support. Instructors must model appropriate behavior, guide activities, and provide various examples, rather than emphasizing telling and directing. Educators need to collaborate with peers to make sense of the teaching and learning process in their own contexts. This professional development could include action research, conversations with peers about beliefs and assumptions that guide instruction, and reflective practices such as journal keeping.

Student Work Sample Methodology

Developed by the State of Oregon and the Oregon State University System, "Student Work Sample Methodology" provides a model that can be used to link professional development to student learning. While the Oregon model is designed for use with preservice and beginning teachers, it can easily be adapted for use with experienced teachers. The model requires teachers to develop a unit of study, articulate specific learning outcomes, and identify teaching strategies to be employed. Work products, completed by students during the unit of study, are used to assess student learning. Samples of the student work products are analyzed by the teacher and his/her colleagues for evidence of levels of student understanding and impact of the unit on student learning. The work samples provide the basis for discussion by colleagues of the teaching-learning process.

The use of Student Work Sample Methodology has the potential to transform the focus of professional development from teacher learning to student learning. Student work products can provide immediate evidence of the impact of professional development on student learning. Discussions of student work products provide the opportunity for feedback and coaching for the teacher and encourage continuous monitoring of student progress. The Student Work Sample Methodology process encourages collaborative planning of instructional units, sharing of effective practices, and teacher observations of other teachers. The process engages teachers in discussions of what constitutes evidence of student understanding and the levels of understanding. It allows school administrators to engage in discussions of what effective instruction "looks like" in the different disciplines and can encourage administrators to consider ways of restructuring time during the week for academic teachers to meet to discuss student learning as reflected in the work samples. The Student Work Sample Methodology process makes the private act of teaching more public.

The Student Work Sample Methodology process encourages the development of reflective practice inherent in National Board Certification, Performance-Based Licensure, and the product of learning required in the revised graduate teacher education programs.

Assessing the Impact of the Professional Development Activities

The objective of the professional development activities should be to decrease the gaps in achievement among diverse groups of students while raising the achievement levels of all students. The effectiveness of the activities in achieving this objective should be primarily assessed by measuring student achievement on End of Grade and End of Course

tests and on the size of the achievement gap across time in participating schools. If the programs are effective, the gaps will close and the performance of all students will increase. The ABCs results for prior years and the historic analysis of the achievement gap data completed by the DPI Closing the Gap Section will provide the baseline data for measuring progress across time. This school level data will be provided to the Center for School Leadership Development on an annual basis by the Department of Public Instruction and should be included in the CSLD Annual Report.

A secondary means of assessing the impact of the professional development activities developed by the Center for School Leadership Development in response to this request is to examine indicators of school success among different racial and ethnic groups in the school. These include numbers of students who:

- a. dropout
- b. are suspended or expelled
- c. participate in academic clubs and academic extracurricular activities
- d. participate in accelerated or advanced courses
- e. enroll in AP/Honors courses
- f. achieve honor roll or other academic recognition
- g. enroll in and successfully completing continuing education (college/technical school)

Baseline data on these measures is available from the Department and on the Department website. Changes in the above indicators across time will measure progress toward the ultimate aim of reaching the point where there is no longer an ethnic, racial, gender, or socioeconomic indicator of school success.

While evaluation of progress on the above primary and secondary indicators will assist in developing and revising a strategic plan to work with individual schools, formative assessment must also occur as the programs are implemented. This should include assessment of participants' valuing of the activities, their understanding of the activities, their use of the knowledge and skills acquired through the activities, and the administrative and community support for their implementation of suggested strategies. Student work products should be analyzed for evidence of participants' understanding and use of suggested strategies. The data gathered in the initial needs assessment should be periodically reviewed and updated.

Suggested Plan and Timetable

Primary responsibility for responding to this report rests with the Center for School Leadership Development. However, many others in the schools, communities, institutions of higher education, and the Department of Public Instruction are working to close the achievement gap while increasing the achievement of all students. These entities must work together if our children are to be served effectively and efficiently. These entities must also work together to provide the financial support for these activities. For these reasons, it is suggested that a steering committee be appointed to guide this initiative. It should be co-chaired by the DPI Deputy Superintendent and the UNC Vice President for

University/School Programs, and include representatives of the Center for School Leadership Development Programs, teachers, school administrators, higher education faculty, the Professional Teaching Standards Commission, the Closing the Gap Commission, DPI, and professional associations.

A suggested timeline for this initiative is:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| January 2002 | ❖ Appointment of Steering Committee |
| | ❖ Identification of the schools to participate in the program |
| February 2002 | ❖ CSLD staff, DPI staff, and Steering Committee members trained in Student Work Sample Methodology |
| | ❖ School profiles/needs assessment completed. |
| | ❖ School teams (including parents and community partners) meet with CSLD program representatives, review best practices, and develop custom professional development activities that meet the needs of their respective schools. |
| March 2002 | ❖ Begin implementation of professional development activities in identified schools. |
| March -- August 2002 | ❖ Continued implementation of activities |
| | ❖ Monitoring of activities by Steering Committee. |
| | ❖ Development and Validation of Instructional Modules. |
| September 2002 | ❖ Report from CSLD to SBE |
| Fall 2002 | ❖ Assessment of Progress by Steering Committee |
| January 2003 | ❖ 2nd Report by SBE |
-