



Shaping a Community of Lifelong Learners A Principal's Role

Session Resources

Fostering Equity and Inclusivity Within Your School | Leadership
Series Session 3 February 20th, 2024

Big Rock 1	Action Steps	Owner(s)	Timeline	Resource Allocation
<p>There is minimal differentiation happening when planning lessons.</p> <p>Teachers are often moving to the next lesson in the curriculum without monitoring student understanding.</p>	<p>Whole-staff PD series on monitoring instruction, differentiated instruction, strategies for multilingual learners, using data in the classroom</p>	<p>Principal Ward Literacy Instruction Leader</p>	<p>2 half days in October, November, and December</p>	<p>Half-day staff PD days</p>
	<p>Coaching: Guided intellectual prep sessions (modeling of data analysis to plan)</p>	<p>Literacy Instruction Leader</p>	<p>October-December</p>	<p>Weekly coaching sessions</p>
	<p>Grade-level meetings focused on routine data analysis</p>	<p>Literacy Instruction Leader</p>	<p>October-December</p>	<p>Weekly</p>
	<p>Principal observations</p>	<p>Principal Ward</p>	<p>October</p>	<p>Principal observation time</p>

Big Rock 1	Action Steps	Owner(s)	Timeline	Resource Allocation



Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment

This statement, formerly known as Principles of Professional Development (2006), was revised in June 2019 with the new title Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment.

Overview

Since its inception in the early 20th century, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has provided support for the professional growth of English teachers—a professional space for empowering English teachers to develop their voices. As we navigate the 21st-century challenges of sustaining the soul of literacy education in light of the corporatization of education, we find it necessary to rethink the notion of professional development (Ohmann, 2003). Research on effective methods of professional development reveals that empowering English language arts (ELA) teachers must be a priority. By focusing on the notion of professional learning, our statement enables us to honor the vision that NCTE developed in 1911 as well as to articulate the continued relevance of NCTE to the professional growth of ELA teachers in the 21st century. We assert that professional growth within NCTE is twofold: (1) it must be situated within the context of professional learning (ELA teacher agency) and (2) it must engage in opportunities to develop cultural competency that speaks to the diversity of our US society and global community. A committee of English educators has updated NCTE’s 2006 statement titled “Principles of Professional Development.”

Statement

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) supports the professional development of English language arts (ELA) teachers at all levels—from preK to the university level. In order for professional development to be an empowering experience for ELA educators, it must have four key dimensions:

- collaborative learning
- participatory professional development

- collaborative knowledge production
- commitment to cultural competency

Issue Defined

In too many schools and for too many teachers, the dreaded announcement “It’s time to report for today’s professional development (PD) session” elicits a variety of responses—resignation, resentment, and cynicism. We’ve all been that teacher, moaning to our peers as we strategically gather what we need in order to grade papers or plan lessons during the PD, in preparation for speakers who, while often far removed from classrooms, tell us how to teach or how to implement a newly purchased mandated curriculum or assessment program. Far from being a true learning experience, much of the professional development that teachers are exposed to is a top-down, one-size-fits-all, one-shot model, directed at teachers rather than inclusive of teachers and their diverse classroom experience.

Professional development doesn’t have to be this way. When seen instead as *professional learning*, i.e., a collaborative venture in which teachers are recognized as learners, leaders, and knowledgeable professionals, ELA educators are more likely to actually learn and, importantly, to develop a mindset of the value of lifelong learning that will in turn benefit both their own teaching and their students’ learning. Reconceptualizing professional development as professional learning empowers ELA educators. This approach values the agency of ELA educators through collaborative learning, participatory professional development, and collaborative knowledge production. In addition, we assert that for professional learning to be empowering for teachers and students in the 21st century, it must be committed to cultural competency.

Key Components of Professional Learning

- Teachers are seen as professionals; their knowledge and expertise are valued.
- Teachers are seen as co-constructors of knowledge, not as passive recipients of knowledge, i.e., transmission model.
- Collaboration is recognized as a vital component. When teachers share their own expertise, learning from each other, as well as from administrators and consultants, a different kind of knowledge results.
- Teachers are encouraged to explore published research and given time to do that. However, this published research is not presented to teachers as the sole source of expertise but rather as part of a conversation with teachers that inspires their thinking and helps them develop their own expertise.
- Teachers are encouraged to use their expertise to study the learning in their own classrooms in a systematic manner.
- Teachers set goals for their own learning.

- Teachers become empowered educators, visionary leaders, and inspired knowledge producers through professional learning and cultural competency.

DIMENSION 1: Collaborative Learning

Two key models of this kind of professional learning show us what is possible:

The National Writing Project

Proclaimed by Lieberman and Wood as “arguably the most successful educational network in the history of American education,” the National Writing Project practices a model of professional learning that relies on developing teacher leadership alongside a teachers-teaching-teachers approach. Teachers, who participate in summer, year-round, or hybrid institutes, learn together about the teaching of writing and then share that knowledge with others in their educational community—from other teacher to administrators to parents. Specifically, NWP sites enact a

national program model that includes identifying and developing teacher and educator leaders, providing support for educators in their local services area, and providing a professional home for educators’ continued learning.

Developing Leaders

Local Writing Project sites develop leadership by

- engaging educators in writing and responding to a variety of genres;
- inquiring into their own practice and going public with questions and conclusions;
- immersing educators in reading and research into the teaching of writing;
- providing educators with the opportunity to take on leadership and advocacy roles.

Network Models

Network models suggest an approach to professional learning that begins with a core group of teachers and administrators but that grows to other communities of practice. These networks shift away from the authority of outside experts or products, instead relying on the expertise of the teachers themselves as they study particular problems of practice and then—through word of mouth and specific outreach measures—invite other educators to join the network, scaling up the work over space and time. In stark contrast to traditional professional development, networks are co-constructed with teachers and administrators and, according to Brooks-Yip, Fleischer, and Norman, are organized around three key ideas:

- **Teacher networks:** Creating a constellation of learning communities, deeply interconnected, to share and explore the complexities of teaching in ways that reach all students. The network starts with a core group, which grows to connect with other teacher groups in school buildings

and districts. The life cycle of a network is a multiyear approach, scaling up from a core group to a social network of relationships, or interconnected communities of practice.

- **Teacher empowerment:** Empowering teachers to research, investigate, and define the instructional approach to which they will commit five years of effort in enacting. The teachers define this work in the research and development phase, and then try it out in the teacher action research phase. After looking at the learning and their research, teachers can make informed decisions about how to move forward.
- **Teacher leadership:** Developing a superordinate group of educators to direct and shape the course of the instructional work.

DIMENSION 2: Participatory Professional Development

At the heart of this work is the idea that when multiple voices with diverse experiences and from diverse contexts enter the conversation, a new kind of knowledge is created. Based in existing research into participatory learning for students and summarized in the report “Designing with Teachers: Participatory Approaches to Professional Development in Education,” this approach suggests expanding the learning space to include diverse others as well as tools of technology to expand conversation. When this model is adapted to professional learning, the values that drive this work are these:

- ***Participation, not indoctrination.*** There is a critical need in the field of education to transition from professional development *for* teachers to professional development *with* teachers. Participatory learning relies on a model of “distributed expertise,” which assumes that knowledge, including in an educational context, is distributed across a diffuse network of people and tools. We believe that professional development for teachers should similarly be conceived and implemented in a nonhierarchical, inclusive, and participatory manner, thus modeling the type of dynamic pedagogy that characterizes participatory learning.
- ***Exploration, not prescription.*** In order to inspire this sense of ownership and codesign in the participants, PD initiatives must allow ample room for personal and professional exploration. Attention must also be paid to what teachers want from a professional development experience, rather than just what is required of them. By allowing teachers to explore who they are and what their professional goals are, the PD program can provide educators with an opportunity to connect to the content and to display their own individuality in the process.
- ***Contextualization, not abstraction.*** PD programs should be tailored to the specific questions and particular career goals of the participants. We acknowledge the tension between the desire to create scalable and flexible initiatives, and the need to cater most effectively to specific disciplines and levels of instruction; this challenge is all the more acute when it comes to sharing strategies for integrating media and digital technologies into the classroom. However, we believe that there is a way to reconcile this tension. By addressing the Common Core Standards teachers need to fulfill, while at the same time accounting for the various disciplines and grade levels, program designers

can craft versatile PD initiatives that represent—and feel like—a genuine investment in professional growth.

- *Iteration, not repetition.* In order to sustain ongoing learning, the design of successful PD programs must provide opportunities for constant improvement, troubleshooting, and evaluation. In this sense, assessment emerges as a problematic yet nevertheless vital topic in the realm of professional development implementation. We hope that assessment practices in professional development will increasingly mirror the participatory shift in program design and reflection.

DIMENSION 3: Collaborative Knowledge Production

Situated in the underlying beliefs of John Dewey in the 1930s and revisited in the work of teacher research in the 1990s and 2000s (Maclean and Mohr, Cochran-Smith and Lytle), an inquiry approach focuses on teachers' true wonderings about their own teaching and their students' learning. Teachers then inquire into those questions, focusing on their own students and classrooms, gathering data about their question within their context. As they glean information, they reflect upon their own teaching and make changes to constantly improve the learning environment.

More recently, Michael Palmisano has adapted this work, focusing on ways to take inquiry to scale as a means of professional learning. Collaborative inquiry, he suggests, "offers an alternative to one-size-fits-all and top-down approaches to educator professional learning through its approach and its results. Collaborative inquiry changes the professional learning experience by reframing how professional knowledge is constructed and applied" (23). He further suggests key elements for this kind of work:

- Investigate shared problems or questions of practice
- Learn from and with colleagues
- Seek expertise and perspectives of others beyond the inquiry group
- Use evidence and data
- Act, reflect, and refine practice
- Share and connect learning (24)

DIMENSION 4: Commitment to Cultural Competency

Rethinking professional development as professional learning enables us to view ELA educators as empowered classroom teachers, visionary leaders, and inspired knowledge producers (see Dimensions 1, 2, and 3 above). This sense of agency must ultimately be informed by an ongoing commitment to cultural competency. According to Elise Trumbull and Maria Pacheco, cultural competence refers to "the ability to recognize differences based on culture, language, race, ethnicity, and other aspects of individual identity and to respond to those differences positively and

constructively" (*Leading with Diversity*, 2005). While cultural competency "points out that all students should be able to develop fluency in at least one other culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2017), it also speaks to new ways of thinking about the texts we teach, according to Alfred Tatum (on textual lineage) and Tricia Ebarvia, Lorena Germán, Kim Parker, and Julia Torres (on disrupting traditional textual lineage).

NCTE's commitment to developing ELA educators who teach, lead, and write with cultural competency (an inclusive pedagogical imagination) affirms the need for diversity awareness within our society ("Race in America 2019" Pew Research report), embraces the changing demographics within the United States (specifically racial and ethnic diversity), and welcomes the emergence of new language that speaks to new intersectional forms of identity and belonging (Allan Johnson, 2017).

Cultural competency enables ELA educators to affirm the following core values:

- Sustain an inclusive pedagogical imagination that recognizes and engages difference positively within curriculum development (diverse literary voices are represented) and within the classroom (diverse student voices are heard).
- Develop an awareness of the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality, and class within the everyday lived experiences of ELA educators and our diverse student bod
- Develop an awareness of diversity (its significance and importance) as teacher-leaders in collaboration with administration on professional development programming.
- Develop an awareness of diversity as producers of knowledge on the practice of teaching and student learning.

RESEARCH SUPPORTING THIS STATEMENT

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Trumbull, Elise, and Maria Pacheco. *Leading with Diversity: Cultural Competencies for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*. Brown University and Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2005.

Connection to Past NCTE Statements

(2011) [*A Policy on Disability in CCCC*](#) [3]

(2014) [*Diverse Gender Expression and Gender Non-Conformity Curriculum in English Grades 7–12*](#) [4]

(2015) [*Resolution on the Need for Diverse Children's and Young Adult Books*](#) [5]

(2018) [*Resolution on Amplifying the Voice of Literacy Teachers*](#) [6]

(2018) [*Resolution on Professional Learning in the Teaching of Writing for Inservice Teachers*](#) [7]

(2018) [*Resolution on Support for Undocumented Students in the English Classroom*](#) [8]

(2018) [*Statement on Anti-Racism to Support Teaching and Learning*](#) [9]

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[1] https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/nwpsites/what_sites_do.csp:

https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/nwpsites/what_sites_do.csp

[2] <https://dmlhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/designing-with-teachers.pdf>:

<https://dmlhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/designing-with-teachers.pdf>

[3] A Policy on Disability in CCCC: <https://www2.ncte.org/statement/disabilitypolicy/>

[4] *Diverse Gender Expression and Gender Non-Conformity Curriculum in English Grades 7–12*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/gender-curriculum-7-12/>

[5] *Resolution on the Need for Diverse Children’s and Young Adult Books*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/diverse-books/>

[6] *Resolution on Amplifying the Voice of Literacy Teachers*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/resolution-amplifying-voice-literacy-teachers/>

[7] *Resolution on Professional Learning in the Teaching of Writing for Inservice Teachers*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/resolution-professional-learning-teaching-writing-inservice-teachers/>

[8] *Resolution on Support for Undocumented Students in the English Classroom*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/resolution-support-undocumented-students-english-classroom/>

[9] *Statement on Anti-Racism to Support Teaching and Learning*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/antiracisminteaching/>

[10] *Statement on Gender and Language*:

<https://www2.ncte.org/statement/genderfairuseoflang/>

School Priority	
What mode will best serve this learning? <i>(PLC, book club, collegial visits, grade level meeting, coaching, staff meeting, etc.)</i>	
Learning Outcomes <i>(Stakeholders will be able to...)</i>	
Which stakeholders can collaborate in the planning and facilitation of this learning opportunity?	
In what ways can the learning align with the dimensions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative learning • Participatory professional learning • Collaborative knowledge production • Commitment to cultural competence 	