

Preface

Let's open a conversation space. Within these pages is a guidebook for how to design a school for meaningful professional learning using a supportive structure, called the Five-Part Plan (FPP). The FPP model provides teachers time and experiences to grow and advance into effective/highly effective facilitators of student learning through active engagement in self-selected learning designs. Unique features of the FPP include the following:

- Creating a shared vision among school staff for effective classroom learning environments
- Alignment to the teacher evaluation system
- Teachers self-selection of learning designs
- Opportunities for teachers to act as knowledge producers
- Attention to three dimensions of professional learning: technical, psychological/emotional, and social
- Knowledge Showcase
- Creation of a Professional Knowledge Base

For one year, the research-informed FPP was enacted at four schools—one high school and three elementary schools. It was created synergistically by principals, teacher leaders, and myself, the university partner, in response to a compelling need for teachers to have time to improve teaching practice as measured by teacher evaluation, and to create ownership in their learning. This book is meant to serve as a manual for educators who want to design schools for authentic, purposeful, and enjoyable professional learning. Strategies for implementation, along with stories of enactment and results, are included throughout the chapters.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Designing Schools for Meaningful Professional Learning explores how school-based educators can work collaboratively to create a highly

effective, low-stress culture of collaboration and knowledge building for supporting student learning. Research, articles, and literature abound with theories and practices about effective professional learning, but it is often difficult for educators to find the planning time to translate theory into practice at their school. This book offers a detailed plan that responds to the need for teachers to find time to learn collaboratively through a variety of self-selected learning designs connected to their classroom and to advance teachers' facilitation of student learning as measured by the teacher evaluation system. Each chapter guides school-based educators with authentic highlights, successes, and challenges using comments and vignettes, and provides protocols, facilitation suggestions, and troubleshooting tips for implementation.

Chapter 1—Moving to Meaningful Professional Learning in Schools provides information from research and experts in the field about professional learning and what it currently looks like in schools. Decisions made about professional learning are examined, as well as who influences and makes those decisions. Reasons are explored for why schools should be intentionally designed for professional learning. The FPP for designing a school for meaningful professional learning is introduced in this chapter, accompanied by how the FPP aligns professional learning to teacher evaluation. Two unique ideas about professional learning are introduced in this chapter and explored in later chapters: (1) how teachers can become knowledge producers to inform and advance their practice, and (2) how teachers can create a Professional Knowledge Base for archiving successful practices in student learning.

Chapter 2—The Five-Part Plan: How to Design a School for Meaningful Professional Learning describes each part of the research-informed plan that four schools implemented for one year. Protocols and suggestions for facilitation are described in detail.

Part 1—Reaching Consensus results in the Five Agreements, a consensus among school staff about what five practices should be in every classroom every day to support student learning. Teacher evaluation elements align the Five Agreements with descriptors of effective/highly effective teaching methods to ensure the five practices are in concert with what will be measured.

Part 2—Selecting the Learning Design results in teachers selecting one of nine learning designs to learn how to become effective/highly effective with the Five Agreements.

Part 3—Implementing the Learning Design Cycle describes how teachers collaborate in two cycles of learning designs to connect learning outside of their classrooms to practice and enactment inside them.

Part 4—Sharing Professional Knowledge with Whole School Staff describes a Knowledge Showcase and how teachers share learning with evidence produced from participation in the two cycles of learning designs.

Part 5—Creating a Professional Knowledge Base illustrates how a school can archive knowledge so that successful strategies and practices are remembered.

Chapter 3—Cycles of Learning Designs Connected to the Classroom details nine learning designs supported by research and Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning. Each design consists of a protocol for enactment and is illustrated with a vignette from practice. In each protocol is a description of the design that includes studying and planning a classroom lesson with the new practice, enacting the lesson in the classroom collaboratively, and assessing student outcomes. Unique to the learning designs is nonjudgmental, descriptive feedback about student results and teaching outcomes apart from the teacher. The nine learning designs included in this chapter are the following: (1) Collaborative Teaching and Assessing, (2) Peer Teaching, (3) Vertical Team Study, (4) Intentional Practicing with Student Response, (5) Using Technology—Linked-In Lessons, (6) Studying Video and Application, (7) Lesson Study, (8) Shared Learning with Teachers, Principals, and Coaches, and (9) Creative and Innovative Teaching.

Chapter 4—The Power of Teachers Selecting Learning Designs explores the need to promote teacher self-efficacy through selection of learning designs, how and why teachers select specific designs, the benefits for teachers selecting learning designs, and ways in which the choice of learning designs connects to growth through teacher evaluation.

Chapter 5—Assessing and Evaluating Changes considers the difference between assessment and evaluation, and why assessment was an important term to use to determine the impact of the FPP. This chapter includes the results from implementing the FPP, specifically what was assessed and what improved as a result of teachers engaging in the FPP. A process to assess the FPP or any professional plan at a school is described, and a checklist is provided at the end of the chapter for a practitioner to use.

Chapter 6—The Principal: The Key to Making Learning Happen examines the crucial role of the principal in implementing the FPP, and the need for the principal to understand the value of professional learning to support and connect job-embedded learning to teacher evaluation. This chapter includes communication tools a principal can use to promote a climate of trust, and some “behind the scenes” actions a principal takes before introducing the FPP to staff.

Chapter 7—Three Dimensions of Learning Designs: Technical, Psychological/Emotional, and Social introduces three dimensions useful for developing and assessing learning designs: (1) Technical—how do you do it? (2) Psychological/Emotional—is it enjoyable for you? (3) Social—how do we learn together? Each dimension is explored through a research lens, and reasons are cited for why all three dimensions must be considered for professional learning to be an optimal experience.

Chapter 8—Building a School’s Professional Knowledge Base proposes the development of a professional knowledge base and some reasons why each school should create one. Learning at three schools, from teachers’ engagement in two cycles of learning designs, was scrutinized as to whether practices contributed to both teacher and student learning. Suggestions were made for knowledge that should be archived so as to allow ongoing access for other educators.

Chapter 9—Meaningful Learning to Remember synthesizes learning from implementation of the FPP during one school year. Addressed are the benefits and challenges, some final thoughts, and an invitation for all school-based educators to take creative action to design their schools for meaningful professional learning. Wise educators must respond to the need for teachers to have time and efficacy to engage in professional learning that leads to advances in student learning. When educators establish a climate of collaboration and a culture of continuous learning at a school, dramatic changes can happen.