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Essential Questions About High-Quality Professional Development

SCENARIO

Three teachers discussed their day as they walked to the parking lot after school. Their conversation turned to other topics.

Josie: *I just heard a report from the Education Trust in Washington, DC. I don't want to believe what Kati Haycock said. Did you know that out of every 100 Hispanic kindergarten children, only 61 will graduate from high school, and only 10 will get bachelor's degrees? She gave statistics for the other groups, but this one reached right into my heart.*

Kim: *I heard that. High schools really have a problem, don't they? I mean, obviously they aren't preparing kids for college.*

Jeff: *Do you really think it's their problem?*

Based on your experiences and learning, how would you and your colleagues respond?

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ESSENTIAL QUESTION

To provide the best teaching and learning opportunities for the achievement of all students, what are the essential questions we must ask about professional development practices?

Pause for a moment to reflect on this essential question.

Prior reform efforts have not been buttressed by the ongoing professional development needed to prepare teachers to teach in the complex ways that learner-centered practice demands.

—Darling-Hammond (1997, p. xv)

INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive professional development for educators has generally been a neglected or shallow component of school reform efforts for the past twenty years. To increase student achievement and help all students meet the standards, educators must be well prepared. They must also engage in continuous learning to meet the demands of a changing and diverse student population in a rapidly evolving world. At the core of what schools and districts should be about is recognition of the need for continuous professional growth. No longer can school reform efforts tolerate shallow professional development that never really gets to the heart of providing in-depth experiences for new learning. If reform efforts are to take place, we cannot afford to let quality professional development get lost in the shuffle of shifting reform priorities and the countless time demands that affect the daily lives of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders. Just as a clear focus on student standards provides clarity of required achievement, so is a clear focus on professional development key to building the capacity of educators to help students achieve the standards and sustain their efforts over time. Research has shown that improving educators' (teachers' and leaders') knowledge and skills is a prerequisite to raising student performance.

The goal of this book is to deepen educators' collective understanding about how to create professional development opportunities and practices in a design that enables teachers to educate all students well. To sustain focused efforts, a well-designed professional development program will nourish the growth of educators and foster a learner-centered environment. If we are to dramatically improve schools and schooling, we must insist on professional development designs and practices that make a

difference in teacher learning and student success. The professional learning, therefore, will permeate the system, resulting in higher academic results for students. When district offices, parents, communities, county and state departments of education, educators' associations, and state and federal legislators recognize and support these designs and practices, and when all of these groups align their goals with student achievement, the key elements will be in place for responding to the question in the title *Why Can't We Get It Right?*

In framing the book, we challenge readers with essential questions regarding professional development to focus the discussion for each chapter and to cause readers to reflect on their current professional development practices.

Professional development opportunities and practices must provide both the challenge and the support for educators to grow, change, and reflect on their practices. Creating such opportunities requires commitment, understanding, planning, resources, time, and evaluation. This book provides the reader with knowledge, insights, tools, and designs to assist in creating new professional development opportunities that serve the learner-centered school and improve student achievement.

Educational leaders and teachers must design programs to support professional growth along a continuum of each educator's experience to be learner centered and learning centered. The failure by most schools and districts to recognize the importance and need for continuous, aligned, needs-based professional development condemns school reform efforts to ultimate failure. Virtually every effort to improve education since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) has centered on overcoming deficits in student knowledge or dealing with reshaping the structure and organization of schooling. School reform efforts—ranging from increased course content and rigor to establishing charter schools, from testing schools for accountability to lowering class size, and from changing schedules to creating schools within schools—all have largely left the classroom untouched (Sparks & Hirsh, 1999). Thus, teachers, despite reformers' efforts, generally continue to teach as they have in the past. No wonder we have seen little or no increase in student results. Research and proven practice demonstrate that expanding teacher knowledge and improving teaching skills are essential to raising student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997). In the redefinition of teacher and student needs, we have created a new meaning of professional development.

WHAT IS HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

High-quality professional development is a sustained collaborative learning process that systematically nourishes the growth of educators

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(individuals and teams) through adult learner-centered, job-embedded processes. It focuses on educators' attaining the skills, abilities, and deep understandings needed to improve student achievement.

It is the authors' premise that in schools the focus of professional development must be to improve student learning. As fostered in a learner-centered environment, professional development is embedded in the daily work of educators; offers choices and levels of learning; builds on collaborative, shared knowledge; employs effective teaching and assessment strategies; expands teacher knowledge of learning and development; and informs teachers' daily work. It is sustained and intensive, with opportunities for practice, collaborative application through problem solving and action research, mastery, coaching, and leadership. Professional development includes an evaluation of progress as it builds teacher and leadership capacity and as it affects student learning.

The lack of professional development, as well as its misuse by educators, explains the chronic failure of school reform. New professional development models exist that will help propel school reform efforts when used systematically over time. The knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and practices of teaching are only minimally challenged by current practice. In addition, districts do not provide consistent support and leadership for improving teaching practice. If this is the dilemma, what essential questions should educators ask that would cause them to rethink their current professional development practices?

Essential Questions for High-Quality Professional Development

Essential questions challenge educators' thoughts about professional development practices and help us transform schools into vibrant learning centers for both students and educators (Table 1.1). The questions help shift the focus from what is to what could be. They engage educators in a reflective process that generates new ideas and designs. They help teachers and administrators in schools continue their growth and challenge their current practices in professional development. Through the examination of professional development practices, educators will better understand what it takes to bring about change and reforms in education that can be sustained to support all students and their success. We challenge the reader to think deeply and reflect on the essential questions for high-quality professional development (Table 1.1), which provide a focus for each chapter in this book.

Examining the big picture (Figure 1.1, see p. 6) provides the reader with a visual of the interactions of the focus areas and the corresponding essential questions. The dynamics of professional development designs and tools interconnect to help drive the outcome of student achievement using the improvement process. As you view the dynamics, you can see that the processes and conditions for high-quality professional development are

Table 1.1 Essential Questions for High-Quality Professional Development

- To provide the best teaching and learning opportunities for the achievement of all students, what are the essential questions we must ask about professional development practices?
- How will schools and districts design professional development opportunities and policies that create, shape, and sustain the culture of a learning community focused on student achievement? (Chapter 2)
- What conditions and processes using cycles of improvement (inquiry) will be used to address high-quality professional development focused on student achievement while addressing teacher, team, and school concerns? (Chapter 3)
- What professional development designs and tools will be used to focus a learning community on student achievement? (Chapter 4)
- How will schools and districts evaluate their professional development programs based on student achievement and continuous improvement? (Chapter 5)
- What expertise, knowledge, and tools do we need to rethink professional learning in the schools? (Chapter 6)

interwoven and not linear. Each of the parts is working simultaneously in the learning community to create a force for sustainable change to increase student achievement. Visualize the dynamics in motion within your own school. Are there missing pieces? Why?

We hope that by reading each chapter, your own experience, knowledge, and subsequent reflections will add to your understanding of how to provide high-quality professional development, leading to increased student achievement.

THE CHANGE PROCESS FOR SUSTAINING EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Educators need to explore the change process for sustaining educational improvement, recognizing the simplicity of the concept and the complexity of implementation. The visual representation of the change process (Figure 1.2, see p. 7) provides a conceptual framework of the interactive components supported by research and proven practice. Because of the interactive qualities of the parts, no one element is more important than the others, and, conversely, no one element can be omitted if the design is to be successful. It is of critical importance that the focus is on improving

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Figure 1.1 Big Picture: Focus of and Essential Questions for Professional Development

FOCUS

Focus on student achievement

Create the culture that forms a learning community

Use the cycle of inquiry to guide professional learning for individuals, teams, and school

Engage and align the learning community to focus the work

Evaluate continuously



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How do we connect student achievement and high-quality professional development?
Is it data driven?

How can we shape a learning community with opportunities and policies?

What conditions and processes do we need to guide professional learning?

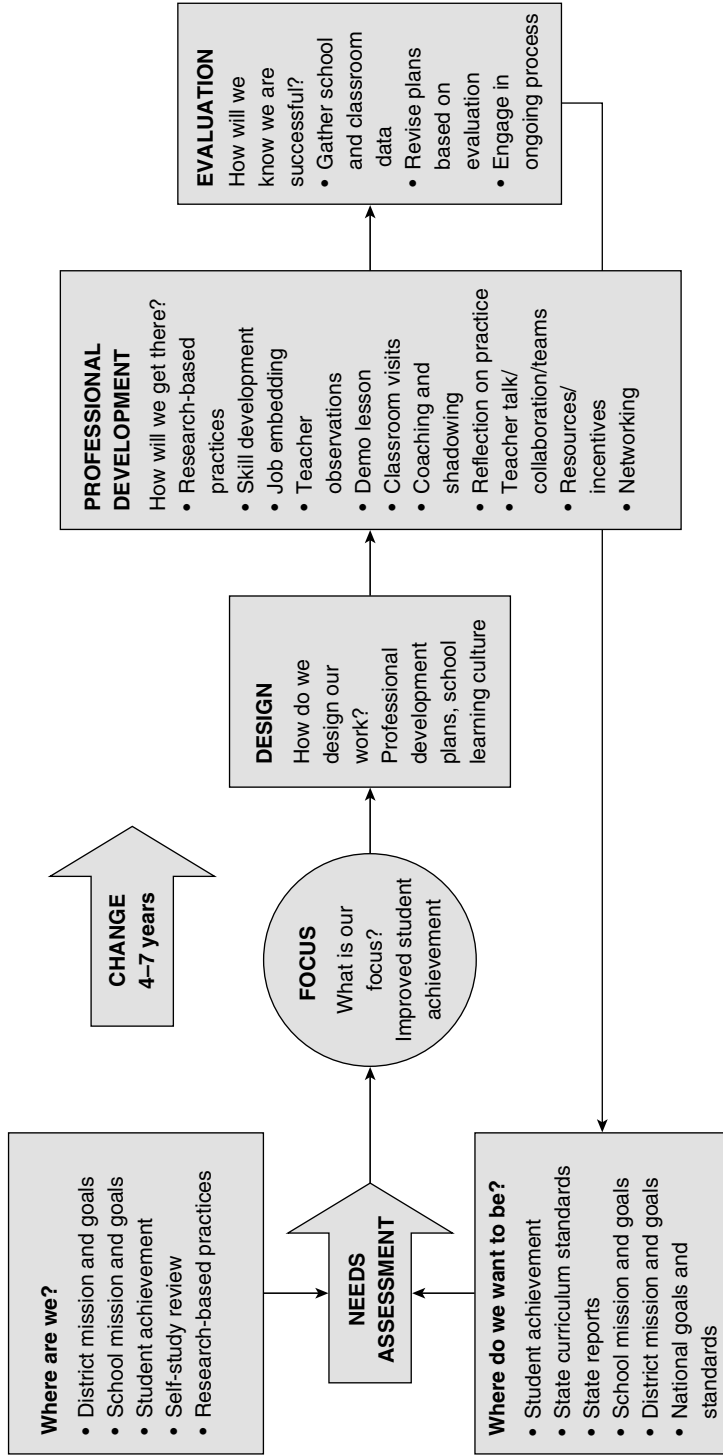
How do we design our work?

How will we know when we are successful?

student learning and achievement. This is a change from past practice. Prior to the emphasis on standards, educators considered professional development to be whatever someone in the system thought interesting or useful. Without the focus on improving student learning, educators often could not connect what happened in one year with the next. In fact, using “the pendulum swings” as an excuse for waiting for the next change—not doing any serious thinking about the current thrust because it would be gone next year—is a direct consequence of unfocused professional development practices. Anticipating four to seven years for the change process to become culturally significant allows educators to continuously analyze needs using a data-driven process centered on student achievement. Designing the work within a learning community provides a foundation for improvement using ongoing monitoring systems and job-embedded professional development practices.

Addressing the essentials illustrated in Figure 1.2 (focuses on improved student achievement with needs assessment, creates a school culture, provides professional development, and evaluates goals) in a systematic way through relevant content and interactive processes provides coherence and sustainability to ongoing professional development plans

Figure 1.2 Essentials for High-Quality Professional Development Sustained Educational Change Model



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and actions. If one views a school district's design of professional development over a period of years, one can often see that these key essentials have been neglected, especially the components of keeping a clear focus on improving student achievement and of evaluating procedures to meet the goals. These essentials of the high-quality professional development for sustaining educational change model emphasize the need for a long-term (four- to seven-year period), ongoing commitment to practices. We can no longer afford to jump from one professional development activity to the next, year after year, but must be strategic about seeing professional development embedded in our school planning and culture, data analysis and decision making, and resource support of teachers, principals, and staff professionals learning to improve practice.

Elements of High-Quality Professional Development

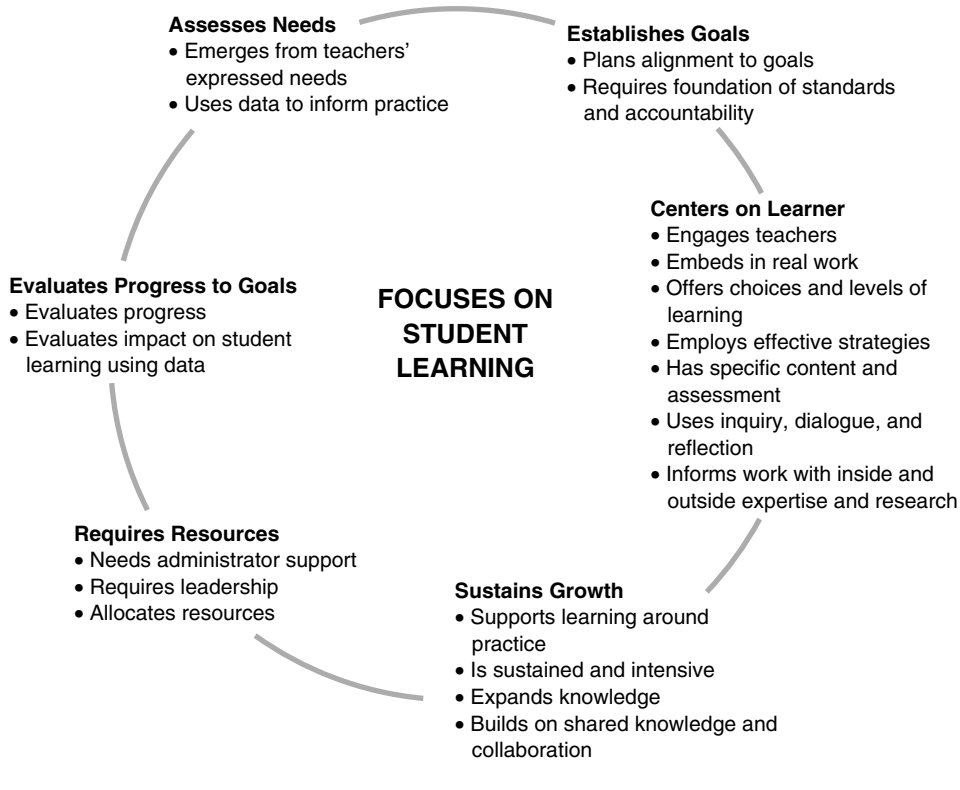
If educators have a clear image of what high-quality professional development entails, such an image will help them evaluate and design their own professional development opportunities. The elements in Figure 1.3 are designed as critical elements to help the reader understand the key components necessary for developing professional development plans that will bring about change in current educational practice. Although Figure 1.3 depicts a cyclic process of inquiry, the reader should keep in mind that all parts are essential for the total design to be effective. These elements provide a framework for understanding the essential parts of designing quality professional development. Each element is briefly discussed as to its importance and its relationship to high-quality professional development based on research and proven practice.

Focuses on Improving Student Learning

High-quality professional development must focus on conditions for improving student learning and achievement. Student success is the ultimate aim and outcome of well-planned professional development (Guskey, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 1995). The needs of all students, especially in our diverse society, must inform all aspects of a professional development design. We cannot afford to lose sight of this goal in the process of designing a professional development program. Professional development focused on improved student learning will prevent a disconnect from occurring between the purpose of the professional development and the process. Once this overarching goal has been established, the content, processes, materials, and evaluations of professional development efforts can be measured according to whether they support this goal. Components that fail to improve student learning can be dropped, modified, or redesigned (Steiner, as cited in Hassel, 1999).

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Figure 1.3 Elements of High-Quality Professional Development (Includes Both Content and Process)



Districts and schools must focus all professional development plans on improving student learning and achievement. Teachers, schools, and districts must hold a clear, sustained, systemic focus on specific areas for improving student learning (i.e., literacy) over several (three to five or more) years for lasting change to occur and improvement to be shown (Schmoker, 1996). If learning and professional growth are supported and reinforced, then there cannot be a year-by-year change of focus. Little (1993b) asserts that highly effective schools are those that are able to weather the conflicting policy mandates and practices to which they are subjected and maintain a clear path with well-established goals.

Recently, there have been signs that districts and schools are truly beginning to understand that there is a need for focus and coherence in their professional development plans if student learning is to improve. Research and experience confirm that the difference for students between a well-prepared teacher and a poorly prepared teacher can be a full level of achievement in a single year (Haycock, 1999). Quality professional development can produce immediate gains in teacher quality, which affects student achievement (Cohen & Hill, 1998). Where does your school

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or district stand in understanding the true importance of sustaining a focus on improving student learning, both in planning and action taken, through professional development opportunities?

Assesses Needs and Establishes Goals

Emerges From Teachers' Expressed Needs. Professional development can emerge from teachers' expressed, and sometimes urgent, need to know. When leaders respond to teachers' expressed professional development needs, which emerge from teachers' daily work with students, the design for professional growth becomes meaningful and immediate (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Leaders, especially principals, must have the ability to listen to teachers and understand their emerging needs as changes take place and as professional development is adapted to the learning environment. It is difficult for teachers to focus on district-imposed professional development when their immediate concerns are not being addressed. Meeting teacher-felt needs is the foundation for building future professional development plans. A direct connection must be established between the teachers' felt needs and the students' achievement levels and needs; this connection can be made by examining student work and allowing teachers to define their areas of needed professional growth (Schmoker, 1996). To do this, school leaders must work collaboratively with teachers to provide multiple experiences to help teachers—as well as themselves—identify needs in both content knowledge and instructional skills to better meet individual student needs (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998).

Uses Data to Inform Practice and Make Decisions. Because accountability for student learning is the focus, designers of professional development should use disaggregated data on student achievement and needs as well as information about teachers' skills and abilities to inform the design. If data analysis does not occur, then professional development plans may be based on misinformation, and training may be initiated that is neither necessary nor useful. Processes must be in place to inform teachers about student achievement data, causing them to analyze the data and look for areas of strength and needed improvement. These assessment processes will show the gaps in student learning and in teacher competence. Then, decisions about which professional development needs to take place are based on a thorough analysis that includes student work and achievement levels and the alignment with standards. Too often, professional plans are drafted without reviewing data, and prescriptive activities are simply mandated for teachers. The latest fads and programs cannot be sought to fix the problems. Meaningful analysis that requires teachers and leaders to see patterns and trends provides for understanding and informed decision making about professional development needs and plans.

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Aligns Plans Systematically With School and District Change Efforts and Goals. If real change and progress is to be accomplished, professional development plans must be aligned systematically with school- and districtwide goals and change efforts. Aligning school and district professional development opportunities sends a clear message about the direction of the district and supports a better use of district resources (Joyce & Showers, 1995). Alignment provides the coherence necessary for long-term commitment to school and district goals and results. How often have school- and districtwide plans lacked focus, jumping from one professional development activity to the next with no aligned, systemic, long-term plan? Aligned school- and districtwide systems and structures need to be in place for effective, career-long professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Thus, linking professional development to the educational goals of the school and district is essential for achieving significant change (Steiner, as cited in Hassel, 1999).

Bases Professional Development on a Foundation of Standards and Accountability. Professional development plans must be based on a foundation of standards and accountability. Standards provide the starting point for developing plans, a focus, and outcomes for professional development. If educators are committed to students' meeting the standards, then they must have a clear understanding of the content and an ability to teach to the standards. Professional development plans and opportunities must be tied to standards and appropriate assessments; otherwise, the curriculum has no anchor. Teachers must also see a clear link between professional development, student learning, standards, and accountability (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Accountability for the outcomes of professional development is vital in relation to increased student achievement and school improvement. A professional development plan or activity that demonstrates its purpose through specific outcomes tied to school or district goals shows its worth in a critical way. Educators can no longer afford simply to have a professional development activity without related accountability. If the professional development is valuable, then it should be demonstrated through the achievement of clear outcomes. Specific expectations are important for professional development (Guskey, 2000). Participants must know what has been accomplished and what needs to be done. Schools or districts investing in professional development should require results; otherwise, why invest?

Centers on the Learner

Engages Teachers in Planning, Implementing, Reviewing, and Revising. Often professional development is designed by outside experts or district office staff and then imposed on teachers as a quick fix to raise failing student

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achievement. Unless teachers are engaged in planning, implementing, reviewing, evaluating, and revising professional development plans with their school and district on a regular basis, they will probably not commit to the outcomes (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Because teachers are the recipients of professional development, they should have significant ownership and a deeper understanding of the plans (Lieberman, 1995). The development of ownership and commitment to improved practice are important to ensure positive participation by faculty in professional development. Because teachers are affected by change, they must have input into the changes, or there is no meaning in their involvement. Engaged teachers can plan, give feedback, review, and revise professional development based on their working knowledge, understanding of student learning needs, and commitment to the plan. Too often, school leaders undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of professional development by failing to include participants in planning and delivery (Corcoran, 1995).

Offers Choices and Levels of Learning. A variety of choices and levels of learning in professional development provides participants with options based on their own learning needs. Educators' recognition that one-size-fits-all professional development will not meet the needs of all participants is an important concept in designing professional development for the wide range of abilities found within a school or district (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Understanding the current developmental level of the participants allows a planner to challenge individuals to improve based on their current abilities within a focused area. Honoring the developmental levels and experiences of teachers through appropriate means is critical to the professional development design. Once teachers and administrators establish the specific needs for learning, then a variety of choices and strategies for learning can be offered to individuals to improve their professional competence. These multiple entry points, based on individual teacher needs and skill levels, will focus professional development in specific areas.

Teachers are tired of professional development that is imposed on them from the top. Such professional development plans are presented as being good for all, rather than being balanced by recognition of individual strengths and areas of personal improvement. Effective professional development has multiple opportunities, is diverse, and provides for an ongoing process as it actively engages the educator in learning. Districts and schools must recognize this complexity and the differentiated need to implement successful professional development that meets teachers' needs and improves student performance. Teachers feel a greater sense of commitment to change and more interest in participating in professional development when attention is paid to their assessed needs (Duke et al., as cited in Collins, 1998). This important analysis and understanding of individual as well as schoolwide needs make it possible to plan professional

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development efforts that recognize the teachers' felt needs, content knowledge level, and skill gaps (Guskey, 1999).

Embeds in Real Work of the Teachers. Embedding professional development in the real work of teachers provides for clear connections to their work with students and to the improvement of student achievement. This relevancy and context of professional development allow teachers to inquire, reflect, analyze, and act on their current practice, especially as they examine student work and learning and their ability to provide increased learning for their students. Professional development is not an isolated event that takes place outside the school but rather an integrated part of the daily work of teachers. The experiences of learning together emerge from real work together (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Such professional development ignites commitment and continual growth based on the unique circumstances of the teacher and the school. It becomes an integral part of a teacher's professional life as the school develops the ecology of a learning community.

However, Guskey (1999) cautions that these professional development needs must be more deeply analyzed to make sure that schoolwide (not just individual) needs are accurately identified. This critical analysis requires planning and a team effort by teachers and staff to close common student learning and teacher skill gaps (Guskey, 1999). When professional development is seen as a daily integrated part of a teacher's work life, there is a recognition within the school culture that learning needs, adjustments, the search for new ideas and skills, and reflection on current teaching practices are embedded in the daily life of the teacher and school.

Employs Effective Teaching and Learning Strategies. Understanding the learning styles of participants and providing multiple strategies for learning allow individual learning needs to be met through the professional development process. Educators recognize that not all individuals learn in the same way at the same time. Using a variety of effective learning strategies (e.g., media, the Internet, dramatic presentations, dialogue, or other collaborative processes) enhances the participants' abilities to process, understand, and learn new information and skills. This diversification gives participants several pathways to knowing and understanding, which moves well beyond the knowledge level of learning. A variety of techniques can reinforce learning in a number of ways, allowing individuals to process and internalize new information in different contexts with various learning modalities. For continuous professional growth to occur, professional development plans must include these multiple strategies to recognize learners' developmental, as well as career-level, needs and experiences (Wood & Thompson, 1993).

Has Content Specific to Teaching and Assessment of Subject Matter. Professional development cannot ignore the integration of specific subject

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matter content along with teaching and assessment development for teachers. Professional growth opportunities that specifically address how the new information and strategies affect teaching and assessment in particular subject matter areas get to the heart of how the new learning will be implemented. Vague references to applications of new teaching and assessment techniques to content with no examples of what works in the classroom will not advance professional growth. Teachers need rich examples, modeling, practice, and coaching embedded in subject areas. New literacy strategies, such as the use of organizers to focus learning, should be modeled in professional development seminars, practiced in the context of the classroom, and shared with colleagues for feedback and refinement. The more the strategies use actual subject matter content, the greater the learning for participants. Including assessment strategies (e.g., running records and personal word lists in reading professional development seminars) provides teachers with specific, integrated strategies to evaluate student progress. Application to the content area gives clear messages about the relationships between content and assessment and how to apply strategies in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, Aness, & Falk, 1995).

Uses Inquiry, Dialogue, and Reflection to Inform Practice. Cycles of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection provide the means for thoughtful discussion of important learning issues in a school or district. Engaging in a cycle of inquiry requires educators to examine their current practices and outcomes, engage in dialogues about these practices, conduct inquiry into what research and best practices say, and reflect on what was learned from the study before taking corrective action. Informing practice using these inquiry processes will make a difference for student learning. It is this cycle of inquiry that challenges educational practices and encourages teachers to develop professionally (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sagor, 1992; Schmoker, 1996).

Informs Work With Inside and Outside Expertise and Research. Balancing the use of inside and outside expertise and research to inform professional practice in schools and districts is critical (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). The needed and valuable expertise of practitioners within the school, combined with the new knowledge and strategies of outside expertise and research, provides a healthy balance in a system. Informing professional practices by using valued, inside teacher expertise helps provide experiences that sustain the ongoing aspects of professional development in a school. An outside expert can provide new knowledge and even coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1995, 1996, 2002). Teachers then need to practice, reflect on, and refine the strategies over time in their classrooms. Research and outside expertise bring new knowledge and practices to the school setting. This outside expertise and information must be understood and adapted by practitioners to the context of their students and schools. Little change

will occur unless current practices are examined and challenged by teachers as new knowledge and strategies are internalized. Using inside expertise (i.e., peer coaches, expert coaches for novices, trainer of trainer models) to help implement, refine, or review practice helps teachers to recognize their own levels of expertise and to feel the power of sharing with colleagues on an ongoing basis. Professional practice is balanced and reinforced by the professional development process of combining inside and outside expertise and research (Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

Sustains Growth

Supports Learning Around Practice With Modeling, Coaching, and Problem Solving. New learning must be supported by modeling, coaching, and problem-solving components for the new learning to be practiced, reflected on, and integrated into regular use by the learner. Professional development that does not model or include the critical element of ongoing modeling and coaching lacks the continuous support needed for individuals to change practice (Joyce & Showers, 1995, 1996, 2002). If teachers are condemned to onetime or fragmented workshops with little or no modeling, follow-up, coaching, analysis of problems, and adjustment in practice, there will be little change. Just as with sports or music, modeling, practice, coaching, and analysis of performance help hone the skills of the individual. Why should learning new teaching concepts and strategies be different? These crucial elements of modeling, practicing, coaching, and problem solving will end the isolation of teachers and broaden the school into a community of learners in support of teaching and learning (Barth, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Little, 1993a; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). This concept of supporting the “learning organization” (Senge, 1990) within the normal working of a school day gives teachers and administrators the time for the inquiry, reflection, and mentoring necessary for long-term change in practice.

Is Sustained and Intensive With Opportunities for Mastery and Leadership. If individual educators are to continue their personal growth, they must have multiple opportunities for participation with an in-depth approach that is intensive and sustained over a period of time (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Educators need quality time to master new strategies and new learning by practicing them in their classrooms, reflecting on these practices, and refining their learning. Mastery comes only with study, practice, coaching, feedback, and refinement in a sustained effort. As teachers develop mastery, they can provide leadership in helping others understand the concepts and develop their skills. Encouraging leadership by teachers recognizes their expertise, which can be used to help others, and builds the capacity of the school and district (Lambert, 1998).

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Expands on Knowledge of Learning and Development. Continually expanding on teachers' current knowledge about learning and development provides the foundation of lifelong learning for educators. It validates the learning community concept within a school and district. Understanding the developing new research on learning and how it applies to what happens in the classroom helps inform and change practices, leading to increased student achievement. As educators, we can ill afford to retain practices that have not proven to be successful or to avoid the new knowledge being generated around learning and the developmental levels of children (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Gardner, 1999; Lieberman, 1995).

Builds on Shared Knowledge of Teachers and Is Collaborative. Professional development must build on the shared knowledge of participants in a collaborative setting. As educators develop plans for professional improvement, they must understand the breadth of knowledge a faculty possesses and plan how to share that knowledge in a collaborative way. When the professional knowledge of teachers is untapped during professional development activities, facilitators create a hostile climate. If outside experts tell, rather than engage, teachers, the opportunity for a collaborative and collective sharing and expanding of baseline knowledge is lost. When leaders recognize the broad knowledge of teachers and commit to constructing collaborative processes to enable teachers to share that knowledge, they create a culture that nurtures continuous improvement and learning (i.e., action research, cycles of inquiry, trainer of trainer and peer coaching models; Joyce & Showers, 1995, 1996; Sagor, 1992; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Requires Resources

Requires Administrative Support and Leadership and Allocates Resources. Administrative support is a key element in successful professional development planning and implementation. When administrators understand the importance of the professional development plan and how it affects student learning, their support is more easily garnered. Principals can provide support and recognition of the importance of the work through their leadership actions and allocated resources. When administrators support teachers in their professional development work with needed resources, including structured time, they send an important signal that professional development is to be taken seriously (Guskey, 2000; Schmoker, 1996). The leadership of administrators and teachers helps to establish a priority for professional development planning and implementation. Principals and other leaders need to be present and involved in professional development activities to learn, understand, and support the new learnings (Fullan, 1993). Through discourse and engagement in learning, teachers and administrators model a community of learners. Professional development

without leadership and direction lacks the necessary commitment on the part of teachers and administrators to carry it out (Little, 1993a). Educators can easily become confused by the mixed message that is sent when leaders do not provide support and resources for professional development but still voice an expectation that teachers should learn and implement new strategies to raise student achievement.

Evaluates Progress to Goals

Evaluates Progress and Impact on Student Learning Using Data. Evaluating progress toward the goals of professional development and the impact on student learning is the accountability measure that gives credibility to the importance of continuous professional development. Unless evaluation of progress to date occurs, leaders have no evidence that the professional development is working. A systematic plan to collect data, analyze it, and make changes based on the significance of the data should inform professional development planners (Guskey, 2000). The evaluation process must go deeper than whether participants liked or disliked the activity. It must analyze whether teachers improved their practice and whether the changed practice affected student learning. What difference did the training make in the classroom? Looking long term at student data and the effect of specific professional development provides important feedback on the investment of a school or district in professional development. This continuous cycle of inquiry into practice causes educators to question current practices based on data and to seek new methods of improving their abilities to increase student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sagor, 1992). A clear evaluation process requires both focused efforts and accountability for progress toward intended outcomes (Guskey, 2000).

SURVEY OF ELEMENTS OF HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If schools or districts were to look at research-based elements of successful professional development as a set of questions regarding professional development opportunities, how would they respond? The Survey of Elements of High-Quality Professional Development (Table 1.2) is intended as a tool for analyzing current professional development practices within a school or district. In reality, these elements overlap, repeat, and often occur simultaneously. This assessment tool is intended to lead to reflection about professional development opportunities, not to overwhelm the reader. It is a tool by which key leverage points can be identified to improve professional development planning and implementation. By identifying these leverage points (specific elements) for professional development, schools and districts can clarify their goals, strategies, and

(Text continues on p. 20)

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Table 1.2 Survey of Elements of High-Quality Professional Development

Directions: For each question, circle the number that best represents the answer as it relates to the current professional development program in your school or district based on the following scale: 1 = *never*, 2 = *seldom*, 3 = *usually*, 4 = *always*

	1 <i>Never</i>	2 <i>Seldom</i>	3 <i>Usually</i>	4 <i>Always</i>
1. Is there a focus on improving student learning?	1	2	3	4
2. Does it emerge from teachers' expressed and sometimes urgent need to know?	1	2	3	4
3. Does it use data to inform practice and make decisions about teaching and learning?	1	2	3	4
4. Are the plans aligned systematically with school and district change efforts and goals?	1	2	3	4
5. Is it based on a foundation of standards and accountability?	1	2	3	4
6. Are teachers engaged in planning, implementing, reviewing, evaluating, and revising professional development plans?	1	2	3	4
7. Are individuals offered choices and levels of learning?	1	2	3	4
8. Is the professional development embedded in the real work of the teacher?	1	2	3	4
9. Does the professional development employ effective teaching and learning strategies?	1	2	3	4

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10. Does it integrate content specific to teaching and assessment of subject matter?

1 2 3 4

11. Does it involve inquiry, dialogue, and reflection?

1 2 3 4

12. Does it inform work by using inside and outside expertise and research?

1 2 3 4

13. Does it support learning with modeling, coaching, and problem solving around practice?

1 2 3 4

14. Is it sustained and intensive with opportunities for mastery and leadership?

1 2 3 4

15. Does it expand on knowledge of learning and development?

1 2 3 4

16. Does it build on shared knowledge of teachers and provide for collaborative interaction?

1 2 3 4

17. Are there administrative support, internal leadership, and available resources?

1 2 3 4

18. Does it evaluate progress and measure impact on student learning?

1 2 3 4

Total score: _____ divided by 18 = _____

How does this score inform your professional development design and practices?

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resources as they focus on student success. The survey provides a baseline assessment of a school or district's high-quality professional development practices, which can be used to evaluate the progress toward improving professional development practices and plans.

CONCLUSION

Transforming schools and increasing student performance is not an easy process. Educators in schools and districts that have a systematic approach to continuous professional development provide a pathway for improving student learning and achievement. Delineating what it means to develop, implement, evaluate, and revise professional development plans has been the intent of the discussion of the elements of successful professional development and the essential questions. Analyzing where your school and district stand in relation to quality professional development and your capacity to increase student learning is an important step to take. Transformation of schools will not happen overnight but must be nurtured over a period of time, with professional development that supports and facilitates the transformational process as teachers and leaders learn, practice, reflect, and grow together.

At the end of each chapter we have provided a space for reflection on the key points. Take a moment now and review the key points for Chapter 1. This chapter introduces the models used throughout this book.

Stop and reflect on these key points and their meaning for student achievement in your school.

KEY POINTS

- High-quality professional development is the critical leverage point for improving student learning and achievement.
- Essential questions for high-quality professional development drive the focus and work to achieve improved student learning. Each of these questions frames the focus for each chapter: focus on improving student achievement, plans and policies for learning culture, conditions and processes for the cycle of improvement, designs and tools, evaluation methods, and future trends.
- High-quality professional development is a sustained collaborative learning process that systematically nourishes the growth of

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educators (individuals and teams) through adult learner-centered, job-embedded processes. It focuses on educators' attaining the skills, abilities, and deep understandings needed to improve student achievement.

- High-quality professional development has critical elements that must be addressed if professional educators are to grow and schools are to improve: assessing needs, establishing goals, centering on the learner, sustaining growth, requiring resources, and evaluating progress to goals.
- Key tables, figures, and a survey tool will assist in defining and assessing current and future school and district professional development plans and processes.

Note

The recommended readings and Web sites in Resources A and B will help educators design professional development processes and plans.