



## Teaching Quality/Professional Development

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### Iowa's Statewide Professional Development Model

By Dinah Frey  
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#### State-Mandated High Quality Professional Development

The National Staff Development Council ([NSDC](#)) believes that all educators have a responsibility to learn in order to improve student performance. The NSDC standards, which were built upon High Quality Professional Development (HQPDP) research and practices, are intended to **expand teacher capacity**.

In a separate review of research, [Linda Darling-Hammond](#), Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University, and Nikole Richardson, doctoral student at Stanford University, found that "collaborative, job-embedded professional learning activities can improve teacher practice and student achievement." Their review establishes that such quality professional development:

- Deepens teachers' knowledge of content and how to teach it to students
- Helps teachers understand how students learn specific content
- Provides opportunities for active, hands-on learning
- Enables teachers to acquire new knowledge, apply it to practice and reflect on the results with colleagues
- Is part of a school reform effort that links curriculum, assessment and standards to professional learning
- Is collaborative and collegial
- Is intensive and sustained over time.<sup>1</sup>

#### NSDC Standards for Staff Development

##### Context Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

##### Process Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress and help sustain continuous improvement
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to collaborate.

##### Content Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

Source: [National Staff Development Council \(2001\)](#).

## Iowa – A Comprehensive Model

To improve student learning through expanding teacher capacity, a number of states have aligned their professional development standards to the NSDC standards.

This ECS *StateNote* highlights Iowa's state-led High Quality Professional Development (HQPD) initiative. The Iowa approach is distinctive because it is statewide and comprehensive; it addresses development of school leaders as well as teachers; it fosters engagement of all teachers, not just those who choose to participate; and it centers around student learning.

### **Quality professional development policy tend to evolve over time**

Major adjustments to Iowa's professional development began with the formulation of the *Teacher Performance, Compensation and Career Development* in 2001 (Iowa Code § 284). The initiative acknowledged that outstanding teachers are a key component in student success. It consists of four main elements:

1. Mentoring and induction programs for beginning teachers
2. Career paths with compensation levels
3. Professional development that supports best teaching practices
4. Evaluation of teachers against the Iowa teaching standards.

The *Teacher Performance, Compensation and Career Development* policy set the professional development expectations, standards and procedures of the department of education, school districts, area education agencies and attendance centers (schools) as well as funding allocations. The Quality Professional Development Stakeholders Group was created in 2001 to develop the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM) which guides implementation of the new requirements. As of July 1, 2002, **each** school district, area education agency and attendance center was expected to fully comply with Iowa Code § 284.

### **Student needs drive development**

Under IPDM, decisionmaking is guided by student needs. Professional development is planned, implemented and evaluated based on student learning. The IPDM is founded on four operating principles considered necessary for delivering successful professional development throughout the state.

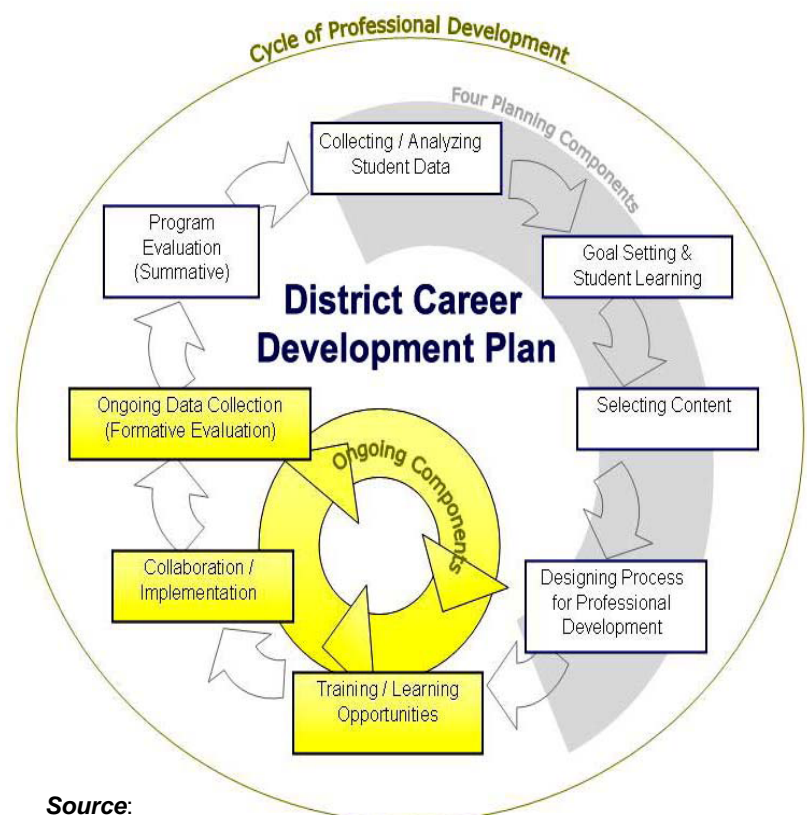
- Focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment
- Participative decisionmaking
- Leadership

- Simultaneity (simultaneously attend to multiple concerns)

The IPDM guides school boards, administrators and teachers through the eight-component *Cycle of Professional Development*.

Under the IPDM, every school district is required to use assessments of student and staff needs, including data and input from students, administrators and teachers in creating district professional development plans. Their plans must be integrated into the district's comprehensive school improvement plan.

In line with the IPDM, there are mandatory professional development activities for administrators and teachers. New activities may be added that are specific to district or academic center plans.



Source: [Iowa Professional Development Model Technical Guide](#) (2009)

### **Statewide standards guide professional development**

The Iowa Professional Development Standards were established in 2001 with the *Teacher Performance, Compensation and Career Development* Legislation and serve as a foundation for programs that strengthen teacher capacity and increase student achievement. Every school district professional development plan must meet all of these standards.

### Iowa Professional Development Standards

1. Align with the Iowa teaching standards and criteria;
2. Deliver research-based instructional strategies aligned with the student achievement goals established by the district;
3. Deliver professional development training and learning opportunities that are targeted at improvement of instruction and designed with the following components:
  - Student achievement data and analysis;
  - Theory about learning and instruction;
  - Classroom demonstration and practice;
  - Classroom observation and self-reflection;
  - Teacher collaboration and study of teacher implementation; and
  - Integration of instructional technology, if applicable;
4. Include an evaluation component of professional development that measures improvement in instructional practice and its impact on student learning; and
5. Support the professional development needs of district certified staff responsible for instruction.

Source: [Iowa Professional Development Model Technical Guide](#) (2009)

### **Specifying activities to strengthen teacher capacity**

The following activities outlined in the Iowa Teacher Performance, Compensation and Career Development policy (Iowa Code §284 and 284A) require participation of **all** teachers unless otherwise specified.

#### **Beginning Teacher Mentoring and Induction (BTMI)**

The state provides funding to each school district and area education agency for providing mentoring for up to two years for all first- and second-year teachers. Each district and area education agency is required to develop individual mentoring and induction plans that describe how each of the following will be addressed:

- Two-year sequence of induction program content and activities
- Mentor training
- Placement of mentors and beginning teachers
- Process for dissolving mentor and beginning teachers partnerships
- District support for release time of beginning teachers and mentors
- Structure for mentor selection and assignment
- District facilitator
- Program evaluation

Beginning teacher programs address Iowa's eight teaching standards, as well as personal and professional needs. A comprehensive evaluation of the beginning teacher is required for a beginning teacher to move to "career" teacher status, and follows completion of the BTMI.

### Teacher Development Academies

Academies are established by area education agencies and the department of education; each is required to provide a series of professional development opportunities, follow-up training and coaching. The academies provide a regional setting in which districts participate and collaborate. **All** teachers must participate in designated district or attendance center professional development activities as outlined in the district and attendance center professional development plans.

#### **Individual teacher professional development plan**

In addition to state and district plans, all career teachers are required to develop individual plans focused on personal limitations and needs. Career teachers meet annually with their supervisors to discuss and review progress and evaluations, if applicable. A 2007 senate bill (SF277) expanded state policy to allow use of the allocated professional development funds for "...costs associated with implementing the individual professional development plans."

#### **Strong leaders cultivate strong instruction**

Teachers are not the only focus of professional development in Iowa. Since July 1, 2007, **every** school district, area education agency and attendance center (school) has been required to participate in Iowa's "Beginning Administrator Mentoring Program."

All administrators are required to participate in three professional development activities of the Administrator Quality Program based on [Iowa Standards for School Leaders](#):

##### **1. [Iowa Evaluator Approval Training](#)**

Any administrators who evaluate teachers or administrators must complete the evaluator training program as a condition of ongoing or initial certification; the department of education provides this training.

##### **2. Individual Administrator Professional Development Plan**

Administrators craft personal plans that are supposed to be:

- Based on the needs of the administrator
- Aligned, as appropriate, to the Iowa Standards for School Administrators
- Aligned with student achievement goals of the school (attendance center) and the school district as established in the comprehensive school improvement plan
- Developed in cooperation with the administrator's evaluator
- Supportive of both individual and group professional development.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Beginning Administrator Mentoring Program

Mentoring by an approved administrator is required for all beginning administrators. Each district is required to either participate in the School Administrators of Iowa Beginning Administrators Program or establish a state board-approved mentoring program that addresses:

- Mentor selection (four years successful administrative experience with a current license and evaluator approval)
- Supports for beginning administrators (institutes, website, e-mails, professional resources, books, etc.)
- Program organizational and collaborative structures
- Budget (state provides \$1500 for one year for each beginning administrator)
- Sustainability of the program
- Program evaluation.

#### **Oversight includes teacher voice**

Teacher Quality Committees in each district provide oversight for professional development. Each committee consists of an equal representation of administrators and teachers. Some of committee responsibilities are to:

- Monitor implementation and evaluation
- Determine how funds are distributed and used
- Monitor professional development in each attendance center

#### **Signs of Impact**

Statewide attention to and support for quality teaching and leading in the state of Iowa appears to be getting results.

*Dinah Frey, Intern, ECS Clearinghouse, prepared this note.*

#### **Statutes Referenced:**

Iowa Code § 284.1- 284A.8

#### **Impact on teacher retention**

Retention of new teachers in Iowa has increased by 5% since the *Teacher Performance, Compensation, and Career Development* legislation was implemented, even though the performance-pay policy element was amended and basically deleted as a component.

- In 2000-01, 87% of the teachers who were first-year teachers returned to teach the next year.
- In 2004-05, 92% of the teachers who were first-year teachers returned to teach in Iowa classrooms.

The percentage of teachers in the classroom two years after their first year increased by 5.1%:

- In 2002-03, 78.7% of 2000-2001 first-year teachers were still in the classroom.
- In 2005-06, 83.8% of 2003-2004 first-year teachers were still teaching in an Iowa school.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Mixed evidence of student learning gains**

Fourth- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade reading and math and 11<sup>th</sup>-grade math scores have shown improvement on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills since 2001 (Condition of Education Report 2009). While this growth cannot be linked directly to any one aspect of reform, including the *Teacher Performance, Compensation and Career Development policy*, it serves as a positive indicator.<sup>4</sup> However, National Assessment of Educational Progress results reported between 2001 and 2010 do not show significant growth in Iowa student achievement.<sup>5</sup>

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## ***Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas***

<sup>1</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond and Nikole Richardson, "Teacher Learning: What Matters," *Educational Leadership* 66, no. 5, (Feb. 2009): 46-53, [http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/wm2010/texts/Darling\\_Hammond\\_Richardson.pdf](http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/wm2010/texts/Darling_Hammond_Richardson.pdf), (accessed October 7, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Iowa Department of Education. *Iowa Professional Development Model Technical Guide* (Des Moines: Iowa Department of Education, 2009).

[http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=8238&Itemid=1507](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=8238&Itemid=1507), (accessed October 25, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> *Iowa Code Chapter 284: A Review of the Educator Quality Legislation* (Iowa: Department of Education, 2006), [www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=3236](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=3236), (accessed October 21, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> *The Annual Condition of Education Report 2009* (Iowa: Department of Education, 2009), [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=646&Itemid=1563](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=646&Itemid=1563), (accessed October 21, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Institute of Educational Sciences National Center for Educational Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer (Washington, DC: United States Department of Education), <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx>, (accessed November 18, 2010).