Indicator Explanation

DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Talent	Target professional learning opprtunities	2B.6 School leaders ensure consistent evaluation measures and tools are sued to measure the impact of professional learning on teacher and leader practices.

Professional development can be a huge drain on resources (time and money) if it is not well targeted and implemented effectively, and a school's resources should be used for professional development that is directly tied to classroom observations and analysis of student learning data. Leadership teams need to consider data from multiple sources to allow for a comprehensive and balanced analysis that leads to effectively targeted use of professional development resources (Learning Forward, n.d.). Frequent monitoring of student learning data may be necessary; for example, leadership team review of benchmark assessment data during the year can provide teachers with timely information on where students need the most assistance, and adjustments can be made to instruction and/or additional student supports provided (Love & Crowell, 2018). A leadership team can also work with the principal to conduct classroom observations and discern patterns of practice; this procedure aggregates data from several or all teachers without revealing teachers' individual identities. When the principal (or peer observers) conduct classroom observations, they determine if specific indicators of effective practice are demonstrated. The patterns of practice analysis then show the percent of teachers demonstrating each indicator for a grade level, subject area, grade-level cluster, or across the faculty. The leadership team can then use the observation data to determine what professional learning is needed for individual teachers, for certain grade levels, or schoolwide (Redding, 2006). If principals note strengths in one teacher that would assist another teacher struggling with the same skill, the first teacher could be assigned as a mentor; teacher-to-teacher high-quality mentoring can be a powerful tool for school improvement (Coskeran, 2013; Kraft et al., 2018; Reddy et al., 2021).

While a principal's capacity for instructional leadership through evaluation and coaching is correlated with student learning gains (Grissom et al., 2013), principals often lack adequate time to engage in high-quality classroom observations that inform instructional change, and teacher-principal relationships may suffer when observations takes place within high-stakes decision making (Kraft & Christian, 2021; Neumerski et al., 2018). Von Frank (2011) describes how leadership teams can support the principal by collecting data to inform continuous school improvement:

> The leadership team is there to discuss strengths and what we, as a school, need to work on… the leadership team takes responsibility for a cycle of continuous improvement. Leadership team members collect data through student performance indicators, classroom observations of teacher practice, and teaching artifacts…and continuously consider the next steps to school-wide improvement…leadership teams [should] conduct learning walks that are separate in term and conduct from any administrative walk-throughs so that the sense of a formal evaluation is not present and teachers are more at ease with the purpose of the walks. (p. 5)

Professional development (PD) within education has received frequent and well-documented criticism around it being too generic and unrelated to everyday instructional practices, and too often consisting of one-shot events led by an external consultant without any follow-up to address implementation and effectiveness (DeMonte, 2013). Calls for more comprehensive, job-embedded, and sustained PD are found frequently in the literature (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2009), as are calls for more individualized/personalized PD focused on giving the teacher agency within the PD process (Imants & Van der Wal., 2020). Wei, et al. (2009) define high quality or effective professional development as "that which results in improvements in teachers' knowledge and instructional practice, as well as improved student learning outcomes" (p. 3).

Literature reviews yield five characteristics of high-quality professional development (Archibald et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; DeMonte, 2013):

1. *Aligns with School Goals, State and District Standards and Assessment, and Other Professional Learning Activities*. Alignment helps reduce confusion and uncertainty about what and how to teach, and can help build shared vocabulary and common goals that are essential to sustain instructional improvements (Archibald, et al., 2011). Teachers report greater increases in their knowledge and skills when PD activities build on what teachers have previously learned in previous PD, and emphasize content and pedagogy aligned with standards and assessments.

2. *Focuses on Core Content and Modeling of Teaching Strategies for the Content*. A wealth of research evidence has documented that improved teacher knowledge, when followed by explicit changes in instructional practice, leads to improvement in student learning. PD must focus not just on content but on the teaching and learning process in order to positively impact teacher instructional practices (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Research has also shown that modeling teaching strategies effectively can be accomplished through instructional coaching. Coaching is most effective when it is conducted by an experienced teacher educator, includes observation of instruction followed by discussions with a coach, and involves teachers collaborating around what they are learning from a coach (DeMonte, 2013).

3. *Includes Opportunities for Active Learning of New Teaching Strategies*. Not surprisingly, active participation and engagement with professional development activities leads to larger changes in instructional practice. Active learning strategies include practicing learned strategies in the classroom, observing other teachers, conducting demonstration lessons, and reviewing student work with colleagues. These active learning methods typically take longer than passive learning activities such as seminars, lectures and workshops, but are more likely to result in improved instruction and student learning (Blank et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017)

4. *Provides the Chance for Teachers to Collaborate*. Teacher collaboration is a necessary feature to maximizing the benefits of PD. Hill et al (2010) suggest that "teachers develop expertise not as isolated individuals but through job-embedded professional development, and as members of collaborative, interdisciplinary teams with common goals for student learning" (p. 10). Professional learning communities (PLCs) offer a collaborative setting for teacher professional growth. PLCs are lauded as a positive reform in PD where "through collaborative inquiry, teachers explore new ideas, current practice, and evidence of student learning using processes that respect them as experts on what is needed to improve their own practice and student learning" (Vescio et al., 2008, p. 90). Evidence suggests that PLCs can positively benefit instruction and student achievement at struggling schools (Saunders et al., 2012).

5. *Includes sustained, embedded follow-up and continuous feedback*. PD that includes follow-up and feedback will be more likely to result in significant changes to teaching practices. In addition, longer-term professional development programs that provide between 30 and 100 hours of contact are more likely to impact student achievement than those providing fewer hours (Yoon et al., 2007). These longer-term programs likely provide more opportunities for teachers to practice what they have learned and receive continuous feedback on what is, and is not working. PD activities are considered to be job-embedded when they are authentically related to the work of the teachers involved and informed by what teachers are doing and need to do (DeMonte, 2013). Teacher work within PLCs

and instructional coaching serve as examples of job-embedded contexts optimal for professional development. PD activities that are marked by these characteristics create greater opportunity for teacher "buy in," and thus increase the likelihood for instructional improvement and enhanced student learning.

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