

# Professional Development in North Carolina

Volume 1, Number 1  
September 2004



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA | State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

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## What is Professional Development?

At one time professional development was synonymous with “sit and get” sessions in which relatively passive participants were “made aware” of the latest ideas regarding teaching and learning by so-called experts.<sup>1</sup> Current research has shown the error of this thinking. First and foremost, professional development is no longer viewed as something only necessary for teachers – everyone who impacts student learning must continually improve and refine their knowledge and skills to maximize student achievement. Secondly, professional development is much more than “one size fits all” after-school workshops and training sessions. True professional learning is results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded. Finally, professional development is something done “with” rather than “to” the learner.

## What’s the Big Deal About Professional Development Standards?

First and foremost, standards are not a modern incarnation of the dunking stool or stocks. They are not about ridicule or shame nor are they about comparing schools to schools and districts to districts. They are, when met, a badge of honor. Standards are a tool for fine-tuning performance and reporting results.<sup>2</sup> They permit determination of the “value added” of professional development. Rightly understood, standards permit us to ask the tough questions about professional development practices. Is the planning of professional development a collaborative effort involving teachers and administrators? Does the organization support professional learning through a commitment of resources, human and fiscal? Are professional

learning opportunities planned in response to a thorough review of disaggregated student data? Is professional development based on research and best practice? Does change occur at both the individual and the organizational level following professional development? The list of questions is endless, and which questions are appropriate depends on the school and school district.

## North Carolina Professional Development Standards

The North Carolina professional development standards begin with the premise that a primary goal of professional development is to help educators develop the knowledge, skills, behavior, and insights needed to become effective classroom teachers and school leaders. Based on research by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), the State standards provide the vision and framework for making professional development more responsive to the learning needs of both educators and students. The standards clearly describe behaviors and attitudes that will lead to maximized teaching and learning.

## The Vision

Classroom practice and school leadership in North Carolina will be improved through tailored, intensive professional development that includes follow-up, support, practice, feedback, and evaluation. It is a collaborative effort that provides every student access to a competent, caring, highly-qualified teacher. All fiscal and human resources within the educational community support classroom instruction and interactions that prepare students to thrive and contribute to a complex, dynamic, global, and multicultural society. Activities result in implementation of classroom practices that lead to improved student achievement.

# THE STANDARDS

The standards are organized according to the context/process/content schema:

## Context Standards:

address the organization, system, and culture in which the new learning will be implemented

- *Learning Communities:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
- *Leadership:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.
- *Resources:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

## Content Standards:

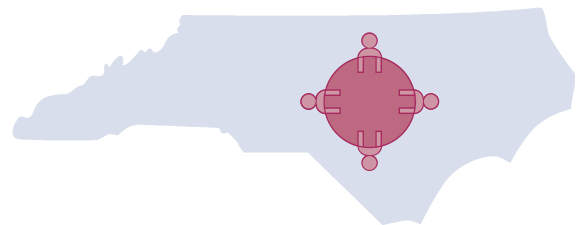
refer to the “what” of professional development.

- *Equity:* Professional 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.
- *Quality Teaching:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students 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.
- *Family Involvement:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

## Process Standards:

refer to the “how” of professional development describing the learning processes used in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and addressing the use of data, evaluation and research.

- *Data-Driven:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- *Evaluation:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
- *Research-Based:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making.
- *Design:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.
- *Learning:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.
- *Collaboration:* Professional development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.



<sup>1</sup> National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development Study Guide. (1995). Ohio: NSDC

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, J. & Doyle, D. (1999). No finish line. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20(1), 14-18.