

Executive Summary

Florida Department of Education

Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol

Cross-District Analysis, First Cycle Technical Report

by

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Summer 2006



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Executive Summary

The 2000 Florida Legislature enacted new legislation to improve the quality of the professional development system for public education. The law and subsequent revisions required the Department of Education to design and disseminate methods by which the state and district school boards may evaluate and improve the professional development system. In accordance with the law, the Department has generated and implemented the Florida Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol and completed the first cycle of reviews for all 67 Florida districts. The purposes of the Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol are to:

1. Ensure the highest quality district, school, and faculty Professional Development Systems in Florida to support instructional programs throughout the state and increase student achievement.
2. Provide the Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education, and Legislature with information each year on the quality of the district Professional Development Systems.
3. Provide Florida school districts with the methods and protocols needed to conduct ongoing assessments of the quality of professional development in their schools.

The Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol is based on a set of 66 standards that describe the characteristics and components of a quality professional development system that meets the requirements of Florida's laws. These standards have been generated from the statements in Florida's laws as well as the *National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development*. The standards reflect three levels of the Professional Development System and four strands incorporated into each level (Figure 1). The system is described in detail in the full report that is available online. A 4-point rating scale is used for judging each standard that ranges from unacceptable to excellent with a midpoint of 2.5.

Summary of Conclusions

1. **Most school districts are currently implementing most standards related to planning and delivery of professional development at the “good” or “excellent” level.** The average of ratings across all districts and standards was 2.97 on a 4-point scale with 4 equal to “Excellent” and 1 equal to “Unacceptable.” A total of 63 of the 67 districts received average ratings of over 2.5 across all standards reviewed.
2. **Districts that receive good or excellent ratings on the district professional development standards also tend to have demonstrated greater increases in student achievement.** A correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between high ratings on the



standards and the last district standard, 3.4.7 on Student Gains. The analysis demonstrated a moderate positive relationship (.31) between the state's ratings of districts on student achievement increases and ratings on the quality of professional development in the district, significant at the .01 level. **These results support the effectiveness of high quality professional development programs in contributing to increased student achievement in school districts.**

3. **Upward trends were noted on the ratings of districts over time, with small but consistent increases in the average ratings in almost all of the professional development strands and levels.** Statistically, 91% of the successive years of site visits displayed increases in the strands and levels of the standards.
4. **Districts are more adept at planning and delivering professional development than providing follow-up to training or evaluating the effectiveness of professional development.** Consistently, the ratings in the strands for Planning and Delivery were higher than those for follow-up and evaluation, regardless of district size or region.
5. **Greater differences were noted among districts in the area of evaluation of professional development than in the other strands.** Larger standard deviations in the ratings on evaluation standards indicate that across the state there are greater differences in districts' efforts to evaluate professional development than for planning and delivery.
6. **Virtually all of the content of professional development being planning and delivered in districts and schools addresses the required areas in s. 1012.98.** Ratings for the standards related to Content were very high at all three levels. Virtually all districts or schools are supporting with federal, general revenue, or local dollars professional development that is directly related to the teaching assignments. Reviewers noted almost no professional development that didn't meet this criterion.
7. **Teachers consistently described and demonstrated that the professional development in which they have been involved recently was relevant to their needs and teaching assignment.** Most school districts received ratings of 3 or 4 on all three levels examining the relevance of the professional development teachers receive to their needs as classroom teachers. Virtually no professional development was listed in Individual Professional Development Plans, in School Improvement Plans, or in district plans that did not directly relate to the skills and knowledge that teachers need to deliver quality instruction in a well-managed classroom.
8. **Although structures are in place in some schools to implement Learning Communities, few teachers or schools have consistently implemented them.** Ratings for Learning Communities were among the lowest in the system. Some schools have the structures in place to conduct learning communities such as joint planning time for grade level or subject area meetings, but most of the discussions currently center on the logistics of operating the schools and classrooms rather than increasing the knowledge and skill levels of the teachers.
9. **Few teachers have conducted Action Research, and most teachers are not aware of the term or how to do it.** This faculty level standard received the lowest rating among the 66 standards and is an area for growth for the entire state.
10. **Districts are incorporating standards into their organization/structure.** Districts are using the 66 standards and the rationales for the standards in their planning. Some districts have used the standards to generate checklists for training developers.
11. **The Protocol system provided a common language.** Conceptually, many discussions and planning sessions center now on the four strands of planning, delivery, follow-up, and evaluation. Common language is more apparent now for concepts and practices such as learning strategies, learning communities, and action research.

- 12. **The set of standards is raising expectations.** The Department’s wide dissemination and public availability of the standards has encouraged all districts to meet the standards and improve their professional development systems.
- 13. **Reviewers learn from other districts.** District professional development staff who participate in reviews of other districts increase their awareness of better methods for planning and implementing professional development, as well as becoming more focused on the need to improve professional development systems in their own districts.
- 14. **Some districts conduct self-studies.** Some districts have used the Department’s self-study methods to review their professional development systems and encourage principals and trainers to adhere to the standards.
- 15. **Continued efforts need to be concentrated on the quality of follow-up and evaluations of professional development in many districts.** These standards received lower ratings at all three levels than planning and delivery standards.

Overall, districts have benefited from the review system through increased awareness and understanding of quality professional development programs, learning about practices throughout the state, and self-reviews of the quality of their own professional development systems. Statistical evidence demonstrates a correlation between high performance on the ratings of the quality of professional development in a district and increases in student achievement, as represented by the district’s grade.

Figure 1

