

Philosophy

The District believes that high-quality professional development is essential to initiating and sustaining school reform and that school systems have an obligation to ensure that employees are thoroughly prepared to successfully discharge their responsibilities. Continuous improvement on the part of individuals and the organization is required to refine skills, inquire into practice, construct knowledge, and create self-renewing learning organizations. Staff development implies that educators are professionals and are to be supported as professionals. A professional is one who takes responsibility for his or her own learning, attends meetings designed to move the District and local campus forward, but also seeks and is allowed to seek alternative ways of learning, whether individually, collaboratively, or in large groups. Results-driven, standards-based education requires results-driven, standards-based staff development for all employees who are responsible for student learning and the implementation of high academic standards. Because professional development is an essential component of systemic educational reform, each professional development activity must be evaluated in terms of its effect on individual student performance and the improved learning of all students.

Professional Development Focus

Adequate time, human, and financial resources shall be allotted to support a staff development plan in accordance with the TEA standards. This comprehensive program shall promote learning, reflect best practices, and shall be guided by the site-based decision-making process in accordance with the campus improvement plans and the District improvement plan. Needs of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, students, parents, and community members shall be identified and all stakeholders shall have input.

Effective staff development focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of teachers, administrators, and other school employees so all students can learn and perform at high levels. Training shall include development of skills in technology, conflict resolution, discipline management, and collaboration, as well as, focusing on standards of student performance in TEKS and meeting the needs of students in special programs. Staff development shall be predominantly campus based with an emphasis on achieving performance objectives.

Professional development engages teachers, principals, and other school staff, both individually and collectively, as active learners and recognizes that educators learn in a variety of ways. Therefore, the program shall provide access to various models of staff development and may include activities to enhance existing skills, to practice new methods, to study and conduct research, and to develop meaningful programs in order to improve job performance, organizational development, and student achievement.

As a part of the Student Achievement Improvement Plan (SAIP), schools must have in place a process that includes theory, demonstration, practice/feedback, and coaching so that all participants shall have knowledge mastery, skill acquisition, and practical application. The SAIP shall also include a blueprint for the use of the staff development days available to them through the Board-approved school calendar.

Standards

Staff development in the District shall follow best practices and the established national standards for staff development elementary through high school. These standards are organized into three categories: (See Appendix 6 B–C in Prof. Growth Plan)

1. **Context**—These are the conditions that surround the required changes in professional practices. It addresses the organization system, or culture in which the new learnings shall be implemented. Concepts such as the belief in continuous improvement, leadership and advocacy, and time for learning strongly influence the context. Contextual considerations must also include the characteristics of our students and the physical contexts in which teachers and staff work.
2. **Process**—These issues relate to the “how” of staff development. It describes how knowledge and skills will be acquired. Some of the strategies that shall be used to implement the professional development growth plan are implementation of the five models of staff development, awareness of the change process, data-driven decision making, and the impact of systems thinking as well as evaluation.
3. **Content**—This refers to the new knowledge and skills that all stakeholders shall need to possess or acquire as our schools implement effective staff development activities that address their SAIPs and District goals and initiatives.

Staff Development for New Professional Employees

All first-time professional employees of the District shall be required to attend two days of staff development for orientation purposes. These workshops shall be in addition to regular staff development requirements and shall be prior to contracted time.

Employees who start their employment after the beginning of the school year must also attend a two-day workshop. This staff development shall take place on days that are not designated as workdays. Expertise in elementary and secondary content area knowledge shall be of utmost importance and shall be encouraged just as experience shall be embraced. It shall be the duty of the experienced educators to mentor and share valuable input with those entering the field.

**Bilingual / ESOL
Education**

All staff, including administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions, shall receive a minimum of 12 hours of professional development in bilingual education issues before providing services to bilingual/ESOL students. These 12 hours of professional development in bilingual/ESL education strategies and methodology shall be required annually (June-May) of teachers teaching identified bilingual/ESL students. These hours shall address issues ranging from child growth and development, literacy instruction, dual-language instruction to classroom management and organization of instruction of limited English proficiency (LEP) students.

Gifted and Talented

Teachers who provide instruction and services are required to have completed 30 hours of professional development that include nature and needs, identification and assessment, and curriculum and instruction for gifted/talented students. Teachers are required to have completed the 30 hours of professional development prior to their assignment to the District's gifted/talented services.

Teachers without required training who are assigned to provide instruction and services that are part of the District's defined gifted/talented program are required to complete the 30-hour training within the first semester.

Administrators and counselors who have authority for gifted and talented service decisions are required to complete a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs and service options for gifted/talented students.

Kindergarten–grade 5 teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the District's defined gifted/talented services must receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted/talented education. The six-hour training must be completed within the first semester.

Grade 6–12 teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the District's defined gifted/talented services must complete six hours annually of professional development in differentiating curriculum for the gifted learner in the Advanced Placement (AP)/Pre-AP class. The six-hour training must be completed within the first semester.

**Pre-Advanced
Placement and
Advanced Placement**

All teachers who are assigned a Pre-AP/AP course, must successfully complete the required College Board AP/Pre-AP Institute in their respective subject by attending a five-day seminar prior to being assigned the course. Teachers must be approved by the campus principal prior to this training.

It is recommended that teachers who currently hold a 30-hour AP/Pre-AP Institute certification and who are instructing an AP/Pre-AP course attend a two-day College Board workshop renewal every four to five years.

Special Services

All special education and regular professional staff in specific instructional arrangements shall obtain 12 hours of continuing professional education in special education strategies and methodology. Sample areas include co-teaching, modifications, crisis prevention, behavior-improvement management plan, content mastery, and the like. These hours shall be required annually (June through May) of special education staff in specific instructional arrangements.

**Professional Growth
and Development
Plan**

A professional growth and development plan details guidelines that support this policy and are found under separate cover. A specific number of continuing professional education (CPE) clock hours is detailed for certified and classified employees. The hours required can be obtained from various approved sources (i.e., bilingual, G/T, Pre-AP, AP, special education, and the like). Cross-referencing of CPE hours obtained through special programs may meet requirements across programs. This shall be indicated on the provider certificate. Compliance requirements in areas of training for special programs (G/T, special education, bilingual education, and the like) shall raise minimum District-required CPE clock hours for staff serving these populations. Therefore, legislative updates impacting staff development shall be addressed in these procedures. These procedures shall also be updated annually with feedback from the District stakeholders.