



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Chapter Summary

Objective

To assist educational leaders (federal, state, and local) in designing, implementing, assessing and communicating high quality professional development models that utilize electronic tools and resources

Key Questions

- How does online professional development support the building and maintenance of professional learning communities for teachers and other educational leaders?
- How can educational technology leaders make the case for funding and support for professional development that will facilitate the development of highly qualified teachers as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001?
- How can educational technology leaders create a more coordinated approach to professional development (i.e. between federal and state government, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, districts, schools, and classroom teachers) that results in improved processes of teaching and learning?
- What are the steps that can be taken to alleviate the “disconnect” between the design of the plan for quality professional development at the state and/or district level and the actual implementation at the building level?

NLI Work Group Process

Professional development is an extremely broad topic. The task of the Professional Development Work Group was to develop tools to assist state directors in addressing this complex issue. In preparation for the National Leadership Institute (NLI), the Professional Development Leadership Team, through a series of phone conferences, developed a set of proposed guiding questions, deliverables, and resources to provide a context for the work. The final phone conference included all Work Group members, who were invited to discuss the proposed questions, deliverables, and resources and to do some initial brainstorming around the task of the group. Work Group members were provided with a pre-conference checklist to be completed before attending the NLI. Items on this list included: (1) the generation of ideas on key issues contained in the guiding questions; (2) the identification of promising practices for professional development, including case studies, web links, evidence of effectiveness, and creative funding sources; and (3) the review of resources on the NLI professional development website including “plane packet” readings.

When the group met at the NLI, each member greeted the others by providing a personal definition of professional development as well as a personal vision for the task ahead; from these introductions came a shared vision and statement of the objective of the Work Group. An exercise called “Deconstructing the Guiding Questions” followed. Each of the questions was discussed in terms of: (1) issues and needs of the states; (2) potential indicators of success relative to addressing the questions and meeting the needs of the states; (3) gaps and barriers that prevent the states from addressing these questions or meeting these needs; and (4) potential NLI action that would advance the states’ work in the areas identified.

These preliminary discussions led to a deeper examination of the guiding questions, with each group member selecting a subgroup around the question and potential deliverable of most interest to them. Subgroup members discussed possibilities for deliverables that would best answer their respective guiding question, frameworks for the deliverables, task differentiation for creation of the deliverables, and expert help and resources needed to create the deliverable. After each of the four subgroups agreed upon a deliverable and identified its framework, they began to develop the content of the Toolkit. As work progressed over the three days, group members often worked in smaller subgroups, left their tables and joined other groups to which they could better contribute, and requested and received help from other NLI Work Groups for better coordination of Toolkit products. The Professional Development Work Group came together as a whole several times in order to share progress, report out on deliverables, and reconsider and refocus on the overall group task. As a result, each of the four “tools” is actually a set of related tools, all designed to illuminate the various facets of the guiding question chosen by the subgroup members.

SETDA Tools Developed to Assist States

- The **Building and Sustaining Professional Learning Communities Document** includes:
 - ♦ **Tools for Online Professional Development Models** - A model and definition of “learning community”; two High Plains Regional Technology in Education Consortium (HPR*TEC) TrackStars with important website links; and an online rubric from RubiStar which lists benchmarks along a Professional Learning Communities continuum;
 - ♦ **Components of Effective eLearning Communities** - A table listing essential components for building and sustaining collaborative communities in eLearning environments; and
 - ♦ **Resource Guide for Building eLearning Communities** - A matrix of tools (e.g. courseware, communications, teleconferencing, instant messaging, discussion boards) and resources for each tool, for building and sustaining collaborative learning communities.
- **Making the Case for Funding and Support of Professional Development Fact Sheet:** This list contains key facts about effective professional development targeted to key audiences such as state-level policy makers, district and building-level policy and decision makers, and the corporate community. This fact sheet also includes strategies on how best to address each of these constituencies.

- **Creating a Coordinated Approach to Professional Development:** This document lays out components that will serve as resources for creating a more coordinated approach to professional development including a set of common elements, a matrix of funding sources; and a case study design template, with examples.
- **Guide to Alleviating the Disconnect Between Professional Development Planning and Implementation:** This set of six graphics, along with the Professional Development Process and Communication Guides, represent steps in the professional development planning process and the entities within education, as well as the standards, resources, targeted audiences, and communication strategies applicable to those entities. The model is designed to be used by leaders of staff development to ensure that stakeholders are effectively communicating their needs and visions to one another.

Next Steps

The Professional Development Work Group recommends that SETDA take these next steps:

- Maintain and update the HPR*TEC tools (TrackStars and Rubrics);
- Encourage states and others to add to the matrix of funding sources begun by the Work Group;
- Encourage states and others to create additional case studies using the template developed by the Work Group. The template might be posted online in a format that allows others to contribute. This might provide the content for a searchable database of case studies which could be added to SETDA Connects; and
- Recommend that the model for the Professional Development Process and Communication Guide be adapted by state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) to reflect the unique needs of each, thereby improving the professional development process within and between organizations.