

# **The City of Baker School System's (CBSS) Educator's Guide to Professional Development**

## *Based on the Louisiana Components of Effective Professional Development*

A key element to the support of an educator is professional development. Access to effective professional development should be an opportunity for every educator in the CBSS. The goal should be to empower our educators to be effective teachers and leaders for educational excellence in the classroom and/or school setting. Our challenge is to provide all educators with professional development experiences that are needs-driven, curriculum-focused, job-embedded, and relevant.

### **Teaching as a Lifelong Career**

Becoming an effective educator is a journey, not a destination. With professional development, there is no single path to career fulfillment, nor is there a finish line. If an educator can effectively assess his or her own interests, goals, options, and needs, he or she can take control of his or her own career and personal satisfaction. Some educators select to concentrate on promoting learning in the classroom setting, some become teacher-leaders, and some move from teaching to administrative leadership at the building or district level. With the newest state initiatives, Common Core State Standards (curriculum reform) and COMPASS (evaluation/performance management reform), professional development offered by the CBSS will have to change as well. The revised Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET) based upon the work of Charlotte Danielson are the guiding force for professional development needed to impact student learning/student achievement and to make planning and instructional decisions. Ultimately, the success of student learning/achievement will be seen through Value Added Growth and/or through long-term Student Learning Targets established for the majority of children under an educator's instruction. The traditional "sit and intake" approach at local, state, regional, national, and international conferences/in-services must give way to interactive professional learning communities that can be personalized to one's individual classroom or work setting. Educators should meet regularly to identify problems, to research and apply solutions, and to track results in student performance using data. It does not hurt to maintain an ongoing professional portfolio inclusive of the following: 1) Philosophy of Education, 2) Background Information [education, degrees, certifications, work history, resume], 3) Evidence of successful teaching [best lesson plans, student work, student achievements, areas of specialization, recommendation letters], 4) Professional Information [professional development experiences, accomplishments, publications, awards, memberships in professional organizations, leadership roles in professional organizations], and 5) Involvement in school improvement [committee memberships, leadership roles, and classroom innovations].

### **Why Professional Development Matters According to Research**

Teacher quality is one of the most important indicators of student performance/learning/achievement. Tennessee value added guru, Dr. William Sanders, and Ms. June Rivers, along with the Hoover Institution, began collecting standardized test scores for six million Tennessee students that indicated a connection between certain teachers and increased pupil performance. This connection, called the *Teacher Effect*, showed the effects of good teachers years after the students left a particular classroom. Students taught by ineffective teachers for three years scored lower on standardized tests than did their counterparts taught by "Highly Effective" teachers. Researcher, Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) concurred that teacher quality affects student achievement more than class size reduction, increased spending per student, teacher pay increases, and other factors. In fact, in 1999, Sanders wrote in *Blueprint Magazine*, "The *teacher's effect* on academic growth dwarfs and nearly renders trivial all those other factors that people have historically worried about." Additional studies, such as of twelve Ohio teachers serving 291 third through fifth graders by Dr. Douglas Reeves (Making Standards Work Program), showed a clear correlation between top notch professional development and increased student test scores. Darling-Hammond continues that North Carolina and Connecticut boasted on large achievement gains after investing in teacher salary increases, mentoring, and ongoing professional development in the mid 1980s. Professional development matters because it is central to effective education; therefore, rethinking professional development is part of the process.

### **Louisiana's Six Components of Effective Professional Development**

Not every professional development experience will incorporate all six components; however, the total professional development program should address all six. Helpful questions to ask about the effectiveness and the “is it working” of professional development are in *italics*.

**Component 1: Needs-Driven Response** Produces ownership, not compliance; adapts to change, is not static. Needs-driven professional development addresses specific needs of educators, the school, and students. Professional development is shaped by analysis of student and teacher data, school improvement plans, self-reflection, professional growth plans, and student learning targets. Priorities are set based on current professional adult learning needs and gaps in student achievement. *It is effective when I have ongoing assistance in interpreting data so that it can be of use, various strategies are presented for looking at and using data, and after identifying needs, I have an active role in planning the professional development program. I will know it is working when I have been able to participate in the design at the grade level or content specific meetings as improvement plans are developed.*

**Component 2: Curriculum Focus** Generates deep understanding of content, not superficial knowledge; results in effective classroom practice, not rote delivery. The content of the professional development is rooted in Common Core State Standards. Research-based instructional strategies and varied assessment practices inform instruction, align with state assessment, and promote academic growth and student achievement. *It is effective when my participation results in my extension of content knowledge and when it addresses my needs as an educator. I know it is working when my understanding has been strengthened.*

**Component 3: Learning Communities** Occurs regularly, not occasionally; supports team and individual learning. Professional development is part of the day-to-day school culture and provides site-based and extended learning opportunities for teachers, educational leaders, and administrative teams. School leaders and teachers collaboratively identify individual and school wide learning strategies that impact instruction and student achievement. The school as a learning community provides ongoing follow-up, support, and technical assistance. *It is effective when I have regular opportunities to meet with peers to implement new strategies and when our efforts to improve instruction are backed by administrators. I know it is working when I received follow up in my class so that my colleagues and I can refine the strategies we developed.*

**Component 4: Active Engagement** Promotes active, not passive participation; stimulates critical/creative thinking, not rote responses or inattention; sparks investigation, self-discovery, and innovative solutions. Professional development actively engages educators, addresses the needs of adult learners models effective research-based instructional strategies, and makes use of a variety of teaching tools, both face-to-face and on line. *I know it is effective when the activity includes strategies that work in the class, when I have opportunities to practice new skills, and when the program encourages critical and independent thought. I know it is working when I am engaged and stimulated by the activity and can use the strategies with different learners.*

**Component 5: Relevance** Provides practical applications, not mere rhetoric; addresses the needs of students and educators for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; reflects current research, not passing trends. Relevant professional development is directly applicable to instructional practice; addresses real conditions in the classroom, school, district, and community; and makes appropriate use of information technology and resources. *I know it is effective when I can learn today and use tomorrow and when I have options for adapting practices to meet the needs of all students. I know it is working when I can use in the real world of my class, my style, and my students' lives.*

**Component 6: Evaluation** Focuses on effective implementation of professional development, not efficiency of delivery. Professional development is subject to diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation. The evaluation uses appropriate data to determine the effectiveness of the professional development in increasing knowledge of participants, improving instructional practices, increasing student achievement, and identifying additional needs. *I know it is effective when I receive useful feedback on what was learned and when I am able to tell whether the program has affected my students' performance. I know it is working when my school evaluates the impact to document changes in practice and student achievement.*

**Standards for Professional Learning of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC)**

<http://www.learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning>

Standards for Professional Learning is the third iteration of standards outlining the characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Learning Forward, with the contribution of 40 professional associations and education organizations, developed the Standards for Professional Learning. The standards make explicit that the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. The standards are not a prescription for how education leaders and public officials should address all the challenges related to improving the performance of educators and their students. Instead, the standards focus on one critical issue -- professional learning.

These standards call for a new form of educator learning. The decision to call these Standards for Professional Learning rather than Standards for Professional Development signals the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous development and places emphasis on their learning. The professional learning that occurs when these standards are fully implemented enrolls educators as active partners in determining the content of their learning, how their learning occurs, and how they evaluate its effectiveness. The standards give educators the information they need to take leadership roles as advocates for and facilitators of effective professional learning and the conditions required for its success. Widespread attention to the standards increases equity of access to a high-quality education for every student, not just for those lucky enough to attend schools in more advantaged communities.

For most educators working in schools, professional learning is the singular most accessible means they have to develop the new knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to better meet students' learning needs. The use of Standards for Professional Learning by school systems and educators indicates commitment to effective professional learning. Further, use of the standards to plan, facilitate, and evaluate professional learning promises to heighten the quality of educator learning, performance of all educators, and student learning. Increased educator effectiveness makes possible a shift from current reality to the preferred outcomes of enhanced student learning results -- a goal to which all educators subscribe.

### Standards for Professional Learning

#### Learning Communities

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

#### Resources

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

#### Learning Designs

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

#### Outcomes

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

#### Leadership

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

#### Data

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

#### Implementation

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.

### Professional Development Requirement for Educators in Louisiana

Professional Development continues throughout each educator's career. Continuing Learning Units (CLUs) are awarded for participation in different learning activities that improve skills and student performance. Ongoing professional development based on earning CLUs helps educators to stay sharp, to keep abreast of new techniques, and advance their careers to higher levels of knowledge, skills, dispositions, responsibility, leadership, and accountability. Professional development should involve individual, school-wide, district wide, and state-wide goals and plans, and should also involve peer collaboration/interaction, and self-assessment/evaluation/reflection. *Some helpful questions may include: Do I have the CLUs needed to renew my license? Have I developed lessons plans to implement the CCSS? How do I introduce new content programs to address identified student learning needs? How do I expand my knowledge and instructional practices to use hands-on strategies for teaching? How do I seek knowledge and application of rigorous national and international standards and approaches? Have I embedded technology throughout my classroom instruction or work setting? Have I implemented effective instructional practices that meet the needs of students with various differences and learning styles?*

A CLU is a professional development activity that builds capacity for effective, research-based, content-focused teaching and learning that positively impacts student achievement. It is the district's Human Resources Supervisor responsibility to ultimately approve all CLUs that are first approved at the school level for building level educators. Required evidences shall include the following non-exhaustive list: 1) certificates of participation, 2) agendas & associated handouts & PowerPoint representations, 3) meeting minutes, 4) work products, 5) final grades (C or Higher), 6) meeting logs, 7) action plans, 8) student work samples, 9) portfolio samples, 10) summary analysis of feedback/evaluation forms, 11) reflective journals, and 12) any other appropriate evidences.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CLU PROCESS**

#### **EDUCATOR**

- Ensure the professional development of high quality is in alignment with district, state, and national standards.
- Ensure that the professional development meets the CLU criteria that is needed by the teacher in the appropriate category
- Maintain verifiable documentation of the professional development activities

#### **DISTRICT**

- Ensure the professional development is of high quality and in alignment with school, district, state, and national standards
- Ensure the professional development meets the criteria for CLUs under the appropriate category for each individual teacher
- Sign teacher's certification renewal application based upon already documented mechanisms
- Maintain documentation as required by the Louisiana Department of Education to meet reporting requirements

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDER**

- Ensure that the professional development is in alignment with the requirements under the district or state.
- Provide verification to the participants of the actual instructional time, content description, provider qualifications
- Provide agendas, handouts and other materials for the teachers' documentation

#### **FORMULA IN CALCULATING**

#### **FACE TO FACE or UNUSUAL SET UPS**

- Educators may earn one CLU for each hour of active engagement (lunch and breaks excluded) in high quality professional development such as traditional in-services, conferences, seminars, and workshops. The 1 hour per 1 hour of active engaged will be determined by the building level principal (subject to ex officio approval by the Supervisor of Human Resources). The **1 hour per 1 hour of active engagement** (breaks and lunch do not count) will generally be the rule of thumb for nontraditional programs such as task forces, committees, faculty study groups, school improvement programs, National Board certification, induction programs, mentoring programs, accreditation teams, and online instructor. A three semester hour university class is the equivalent of 45 CLUs.

#### **ONLINE OR UNIVERSITY COURSES**

- For online courses/workshops the rule of thumb shall be: 12 weeks/3 semester hour university course=45 CLUs, 08 weeks = 30 CLUs, 04 weeks=15 CLUs, and 02 weeks = 8 CLUs

The guiding questions below will help educators evaluate and select appropriate learning experiences.

1. **Is the professional development** designed to increase the content knowledge and/or improve the instructional practices in a particular content area?
2. **Is the professional development** aligned with the Common Core State Standards?
3. **Is the professional development** an integral part of the broad school-wide and district-wide improvement plans?
4. **Is the professional development** developed with extensive input from teachers, principals, parents, and other educational administrators?
5. **Is the professional development** classroom-focused and linked to the teacher's current job responsibilities?
6. **Is the professional development** job-embedded?
7. **Does the professional development** provide follow-up activities that support effective implementation in the classroom?
8. **Does the professional development** include instruction in the use of data and assessments to assist a teacher in meeting the needs of his/her students?
9. **Is the professional development** based on an analysis of current student needs?
10. **Does the professional development** utilize strategies that meet the learning styles of adult learners?
11. **Does the professional development** include strategies for addressing the needs and differences of all students?
12. **Does the professional development** incorporate proven methods for closing the achievement gap between and among student subgroups?
13. **Does the professional development** incorporate technology to improve teaching and learning in the curricula?
14. **Does the professional development** incorporate meaningful evaluation to determine its impact on knowledge, classroom practice, and student achievement?
15. **Does the professional development** include instruction/guidance in effective methods for teachers, principals, and school personnel to work with and/or engage parents/caregivers in the education process?

All professional development to be considered as legitimate professional development for Continuing Learning Units (CLUs) must meet the criteria set forth by the National Staff Development Council and Louisiana Department of Education as high quality, job embedded professional development. Professional development may be offered at the school, district, state, regional, national, and international levels; however, all professional development must meet the approval of the building-level principal/immediate supervisor and the Supervisor of Human Resources in order for any CLU to be awarded. It is the responsibility of each **9 month-12 month educator** to log his or her own professional development and to submit to the principal/immediate supervisor **by the last day of the fall semester prior to release of the Christmas Holidays**, and in the spring semester, for **9 month educators by the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Friday in May**, for **10 month educators by the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) Thursday in June**, and for **11 month educators by the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Thursday in June**, and for **12 month educators by the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) Thursday in June**. At minimum, each educator must attach **at least two** of the following sources of documentation to demonstrate legitimacy of the professional development opportunity: 1) certificate of full completion (signed and dated by at least one person in authority who provided the professional development opportunity), 2) agenda, and 3) sign-in sheet(s) with name highlighted. Other forms of documentation are strongly encouraged to legitimize the documentation process. They include, but are not limited to: 1) associated handouts & PowerPoint representations, 2) meeting minutes/logs, 3) pictorial/portfolio evidence of work products, published scholarly writings, or student samples, 4) final grades (C or Higher), 5) summary analysis of feedback/evaluation forms, and 6) reflective and peer critique journal entries.

Date (m/d/y) of Activity	Name of Activity Sponsor/Provider	City & State of Activity	Title or Description of Activity	List of Documentation Received as Proof	# of CLUs earned

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date (m/d/y) of Log Submission \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name Above Signature)

Principal/Immediate Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date (m/d/y) Log Approved \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name Above Signature)

HR Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date (m/d/y) Log Approved \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name Above Signature)

Comments must be provided of why any professional development submission was not approved :  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_