Enhancing teaching practice for professional development in Alberta

A framework for the learning of students

The Alberta Teachers’ Association
Purpose

The framework has been developed by the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) to advance a common understanding about professional development (PD) and what makes it effective. Professional development takes many forms and is provided by many different people and organizations. One thing we all know is professional development for teachers enhances learning for students. The ATA organizes and supports activities that promote and enhance teacher knowledge, skills and practice.
Professional Development

Within the context of Alberta’s public school system, the ATA defines professional development as the wide range of activities teachers do individually or collectively to improve their professional practice and to enhance student learning.

It includes:

Inservice education ... a series of activities, experiences and processes that prepare a teacher to successfully implement curriculum.

Staff development ... a focus on teacher-identified needs and concerns within a school. Staff development has the potential to transform not only teaching practice but the school community itself.
Leadership in PD
The ATA provides leadership through programs that seek to develop individual teacher competence, promote teaching as a profession and pursue the cause of public education. The primary goal of the Association’s Professional Development program is to establish and maintain high standards of professional practice.

Student Learning
Research demonstrates that ongoing PD contributes to enhanced student learning and school improvement. Effective PD is responsive to educational developments, curriculum changes and school and classroom contexts.

Shared Responsibility
PD programs and resources for teachers are provided by the ATA, school districts, regional consortia, the department of learning, postsecondary institutions, and other organizations and agencies. Together, these groups share the responsibility to provide PD opportunities and ongoing support that help teachers meet the diverse learning needs of their students.

Principles
In Alberta professional development of teachers is a shared responsibility among individual teachers, school staffs, the ATA, school districts, regional consortia, the department of learning and post secondary institutions. Designing, planning and implementing effective PD programs is a complex process. It requires collaboration, informed decision making and an understanding of adult learning. The following principles describe the characteristics of and necessary conditions for effective PD programs that enhance student learning.
A framework

- is based on a shared vision and clearly stated objectives
- focuses on improving teaching and supporting learning
- is based on research into effective teaching and learning
- enhances the implementation of curriculum requirements, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques
- builds on teachers’ established knowledge, skills, and attributes
- is content-based

CONTENT

STUDENT LEARNING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT...
is interactive, continuous, reflective and part of the day-to-day work life of teachers.

- engages teachers in a collegial and collaborative dialogue.
- is responsive to changing contextual variables and therefore requires ongoing monitoring and refinement.
- encourages teachers to explore, take risks and think critically about their professional practice.
PRINCIPLES

• respects the professional judgment of teachers in determining their needs
• reflects the unique circumstances in which teaching takes place
• considers the needs of the teacher, school and jurisdiction
• operates within and contributes to the development of collaborative learning culture
• is integral to the work of all teachers

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• is supported by adequate resources, including time, funding and infrastructure
• requires support by networks of professional development committees, specialist councils, teachers’ conventions, school jurisdictions, regional consortia, universities and other stakeholders

CONTEXT

STUDENT LEARNING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PRINCIPLES

C O N T E X T
For more information

For information about professional development programs and services contact:

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