

Building Capacity

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Leadership: Building Capacity

Survey Statement from Standards Assessment Inventory

My school's leaders consider all staff members to be capable of being professional learning leaders.

Overview

Professional learning is critical for schools that want to positively impact teacher practice and student achievement. Leaders that “hold learning among their top priorities” understand that having high expectations for themselves, staff, and students can increase success at all levels (Standards for Professional Learning, 2011, p. 28). These leaders “invest in their own professional learning” and set clear goals for the campus' professional learning in order to make improvements to teacher practice and student learning (Hirsh & Hord, 2012, p. 47). Effective leaders often facilitate professional learning but also recognize that they are not the only ones able to lead professional learning. They consider staff members from all levels capable and strive to build this capacity in each member.

Capacity-building leaders identify the strengths of their staff and empower them to lead. These leaders consistently create opportunities to involve staff in all professional learning activities. Leaders further build staff capacity by developing guidelines and processes for professional learning and identifying data with which to monitor progress. They understand the power of feedback, so they “give frequent and helpful feedback to improve performance while celebrating progress” (Recommendations: The Leadership Standard, 2012, p. 2). Leaders who advance staff's capacity for learning have built a culture that believes in collective responsibility for all students, collaboration, and the importance of holding one another accountable for learning. The campus has structures in place for job-embedded professional learning, implementation of a continuous cycle of improvement and regular reflection of professional learning (Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011, p. 25).

Because effective leaders understand the importance of developing others' leadership, they create opportunities for all staff to serve in leadership roles — as mentors, learning team facilitators, and members of the school leadership team. They coach school-based facilitators and coaches, providing materials, guidance, and feedback, and helping them solve problems (Hirsh, Psencik & Brown, 2014, p. 73).

Developing staff capacity can offer many benefits for teacher practices and student achievement. To support your learning of staff capacity, the activity and tool below can be used to identify leadership roles and responsibilities regarding professional development.

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities Activity

The Leadership Roles and Responsibilities activity and tool can be used to identify opportunities for exercising leadership regarding professional development, including identifying different groups responsible for making decisions and generating ideas about the kinds of decisions they make related to professional learning.

Optional supporting materials include:

1. A video vignette available at <http://learningforward.org/standards/leadership#Vh1nYBNViko>
2. "Support and structures make the difference for educators and students" by Kyla L. Wahlstrom and Jennifer York-Barr. *JSD*. August 2011, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 22 – 25, 32.

Directions		Time
1.	Read the Leadership standard to the group or post it where all can see: <i>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.</i>	1 minute
2.	Have groups discuss the degree to which the standard reflects members' views of the relationship between leadership and professional learning.	5 minutes
3.	Ask participants to think about why the standard was named <i>Leadership</i> rather than <i>Leaders</i> . Invite them to share their thoughts.	5 minutes
4.	Leadership occurs at the individual and collective levels. Brainstorm different levels (e.g., teacher, teacher leader, principal) at which decisions are made that advance or inhibit effective professional learning. Give examples of the levels and the decisions that can be made at each level.	5 minutes
5.	Consider the responsibilities of different leadership role groups for professional learning. Use the Leadership Roles chart on the next page to organize the conversation, noting responsibilities for each role, opportunities that responsibility offers, and how your thinking for this role impacts professional learning. As a group, complete as much of the chart as time allows.	10 minutes
6.	If multiple groups are participating, invite each group to share at least one highlight from each section of the chart.	10 minutes
7.	Discuss the most significant implications and potential next actions for strengthening professional learning in your setting. Groups may also consider nominating colleagues who would be successful serving in one or more of these roles.	5 minutes
8.	Record these statements and share with others as appropriate.	4 minutes

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities Tool

Leadership Roles	Responsibilities Related to Professional Learning	Decisions Related to Professional Learning	Impact on Professional Learning
Department Grade-level Team Chair			
Teacher Leader			
Instructional Coach / Facilitator			
School-Based Staff Developer			
School Improvement Team Leader			
Professional Learning Committee Member			
School Administrator			
District Administrator			
Policymaker			

Source: Hirsh, S., & Hord, S. (2012). *A Playbook for professional learning: Putting the standards into action*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Next Steps

If you would like additional research and resources for building staff capacity, consult any of these excellent resources.

- Deepen your understanding of teacher leadership and learn more about districts that have promoted teacher leadership.
 - JSD, 2011, Vol. 32, No. 3
 - http://learningforward.org/publications/jsd/jsd-blog/jsd/2011/06/30/jsd-june-2011-teacher-leadership#.Vh5Y_xNViko
- Review the Leadership standard and the need for leadership at all levels to ensure effective professional learning.
 - The Learning System, 2012, Vol. 7, No. 2
 - http://learningforward.org/docs/learning-system/systemwinter-12_mizell.pdf?sfvrsn=2
- Explore the Leadership standard in practice by reviewing this JSD publication dedicated to Leadership.
 - JSD, 2012, Vol. 33, No. 6
 - http://learningforward.org/publications/jsd/jsd-blog/jsd/2012/12/05/jsd-december-2012-leadership#.VI95_9-rRTY
- A resource brief designed to support next actions for educators to improve professional learning through the Leadership standard. This brief includes an overview of the standard, next steps for continuous improvement in three categories, and tools and readings that support improvement in each of those categories.
 - Recommendations: The Leadership Standard
 - <http://learningforward.org/docs//sai/leadershiprecommendations.pdf>
- Explore how leaders can further develop leadership capacity by understanding the different levels of leadership capacity, the impact of delegating, and how to support change on your campus.
 - JSD, 2005, Vol. 26, No. 2
 - <http://learningforward.org/publications/jsd/jsd-blog/jsd/2005/04/01/jsd-spring-2005-leadership#.Vh5fbRNViko>

References

- Hirsh, S., Brown, F. & Psencik, K. (2014). *Becoming a learning system*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
- Hirsh, S. & Hord, S. (2012). *A Playbook for professional learning: Putting the standards into action*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
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- Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.
- Wahlstorm, K. & York-Barr, J. (2011). Support and structures make the difference for educators and students. *JSD*, 32(4) 22 – 26, 32.