

West Feliciana Parish Schools Professional Development Plan

The professional development needs of all schools in West Feliciana Parish are identified primarily through the school improvement plan approach. This process involves the maximum number of stakeholders including teachers, parents, school administrators and central office staff. During the past few years there has been a shift from district-level to school-level professional development. Because there are only five schools in the district, with each being unique in its grade configuration, range of services, and administrative structure, professional development needs of the schools are often quite different.

While the superintendent or instructional supervisors may initiate further study and/or implementation of a particular practice or program, it is the responsibility of the administrative staff at each school to provide the training and/or collaboration needed to ensure implementation. The central office staff provides support to each school as needed including funding for programs, consultants, and materials and supplies.

The School Improvement Team at each school collects and analyzes the assessment data from the district-wide testing program which includes the state-wide assessments known as the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) and the integrated LEAP (iLEAP). Each School Improvement Team begins analyzing assessment data as results are released in mid-May. The team uses the data to develop the yearly Action Plan component of the School Improvement Plan. School Improvement Plans are updated annually, and reflect the goals and objectives necessary to improve student achievement.

Since the implementation of the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum, much of the district's staff development efforts have involved teachers working collaboratively to develop instructional strategies, pacing guides, and unit assessments. The district has also focused on professional development activities which are high-quality, sustained, intensive and classroom focused. This helps ensure a positive and more lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom. This is typically done in the interim between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the fall semester. As the SIP team develops the Action Plan, professional development activities are designed to correlate with content standards and student achievement standards.

As stated in our Mission, the district believes that “**students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process and are provided with a variety of instructional approaches.**” To that end, the district has taken as its instructional centerpiece the **Working on the Work (WOW) model** from the Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR). A core group of teachers has been trained in the Working on the Work concept, and they, along with school-level administrators have assisted other faculty in implementing the process in their classroom. CLSR has followed-up with presentations and training district-wide to all professionals. In 2002, principals and supervisors attended the CLSR national conference in Naples, which resulted in a district wide book study of Working on the Work by Dr. Phil Schlechty.

In addition to the WOW model, the district has also established a framework for its instructional focus called P.I.E. (**Procedures, Induction, Engagement**). This is another avenue to help teachers understand the importance of consistency when managing the classroom environment and providing engaging activities as a means of accomplishing lesson objectives. Copies of Harry Wong’s book, The First Day of School were purchased for each school to use as a guide for teachers and administrators as they developed school-wide policies and procedures. The **Induction** piece is more of an administrative responsibility and is focused on making sure that new teachers are properly supported in establishing their instructional practices through a mentoring process. Beginning teachers are provided a mentor who assists and supports them throughout the school year, and helps prepare them for participation in the Louisiana Teacher Assistance & Assessment Program (LTAAP).

Central office and school level administrators encourage teachers to participate in seminars, workshops, and other trainings which will enable them to enhance their instruction. Each school provides opportunities for faculty to attend state, regional, and national workshops. Principals, assistant principals, and supervisors are also provided opportunities for professional development through various venues. A central office supervisor accompanied a cadre of new administrators to the National Model Schools Conference in July, 2007, and school-level administrators will attend the National ASCD Conference in New Orleans in March, 2008. College-level courses were offered through the local community college to provide paraprofessionals with the content knowledge required to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, and to enhance their professional skills. The district will continue to provide opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge in content areas and in pedagogy.

The evaluation of the districts' Professional Development plan will occur on a regular annual cycle. Classroom observations by supervisors and principals and peer review feedback will be used as well as evaluative data on student achievement derived from mandated assessment tests as well as locally reported subject grades.

The West Feliciana Parish School District will provide professional development for teachers which will enable them to provide students with opportunities to meet challenging academic content standards and student academic achievement standards in the following manner: (1) using the Working on the Work framework, and in consultation with CLSR, teachers will learn how to design work for students which is challenging, relevant, and engaging; (2) state-mandated curricula and the state-developed Grade Level Expectations will be used to train teachers in developing and implementing lessons which meet state academic standards and assessment standards.

Professional Development will focus on the analysis of data including individual students' scores as well as sub group scores, and on providing teachers with the tools to use the data to drive classroom instruction. This will be done at least annually when the results of the CRT and NRT assessments are released. Training will include examining the various skill levels and comparing individual and group scores with the national and state average and developing strategies to address areas of weakness.

West Feliciana Parish School System involves teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, and school administrators to work more effectively with parents by:

- Providing related in-service training activities to help teachers better communicate with parents particularly as it relates to parent/teacher conferences, professional reading materials and online links.
- making sure school/student/parent compacts are in place,
- Conferencing with parents concerning students' success or lack of success.
- Encouraging parents to become actively involved with parent organizations,
- Sending home weekly lesson plan letters to inform parents of the instructions being taken in the classroom,
- Monthly newsletters,
- Making sure students are referred to School Building Level Committee when there are academic, behavioral, social or emotional concerns.

Classroom management skills will be addressed in the Professional Development Plan through implementation of the procedures component of PIE. Using Harry Wong's classroom management model, teachers will receive training and experience in using his methodology. The impact of the professional development activity on student behavior will be measured by the decrease in the number of student discipline referrals.

Technology is becoming a more integral part of every aspect of our increasingly information oriented society. Our students and staff must be provided with the tools of technology that fostered this revolution. They also must be trained to use them effectively in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in the curricula and core academic subjects. Title II funds will be integrated with local, state and other federal funds to address this need. The state approved INTECH training approach will be the core model of implementation. On line training opportunities involving Connected University and/or Blackboard based systems will also be used to complement this approach.

One of the major components of the engagement piece of Working on the Work is addressing the various learning styles of students. As teachers are immersed in the WOW philosophy and become proficient in lesson design, they will become knowledgeable of effective strategies that address specific learning styles and needs of their students. In addition, professional development activities will be provided for teachers in the area of brain research and brain mapping. By utilizing the concepts and strategies that are taught in the Thinking Maps training, teachers will be able to recognize a student's learning style and provide them with the appropriate learning strategy. All students including LEP, gifted and talented, and students with learning disabilities will benefit from the training which teachers will receive in learning styles.

As we all strive to do a better job of professional development, the following quote by Thomas R. Guskey in the June 2003 *Phi Delta Kappan*, should help us realize that though much progress has been made in the field of educational professional development it is still far from being an exact science with definite answers on the effectiveness of any one approach or system.

“Do we know what makes professional development effective? Have researchers and practitioners reached consensus about what factors contribute to a successful professional development experience? Do we even agree on what criteria should be used to judge professional development's effectiveness? A review of newly developed lists of the characteristics of effective professional development indicates that the answer to each of these questions is **“Maybe Not.”**”