
Leaders of Learning and Professional Development

The primary responsibility of curriculum leads is to develop the collective capacity of the organization to assure that all students are successful. One of the functions of these individuals' work to assure the capacity of the system and the success of the students is their collaborative leadership in modeling, expecting, and monitoring continuous learning of *all*.

As leaders of learning and professional development, we must equip ourselves and others, both at the district and the building levels, with the knowledge and skills to achieve increased learning on a daily basis. A priority is the alignment of our work with practices that make a difference for students and their teachers.

John Dewey once said, "We learn by doing, *if* we reflect on what we have done." Reflection is the key to all learning – to its understanding, to its application, and to its impact. As leaders of learning and professional development, one of our first and most important jobs to achieve a *system of learning* is to develop reflective students and educators. We do this through common high expectations, through our modeling, through our questioning, and through our monitoring and evaluation.

Our expectation must be that all students and all educators – each and every one of them – are constantly striving for increased success. The mantra in our districts ought to be, "Good, better, best! Never rest till good be better, and better best." Without clearly articulated high expectations with evidence of progress on a continuous basis, good will not become better, and better will not achieve best.

Modeling is important in teaching and building the capacity of others for increased learning and professional development. This begins with our work with building principals – providing the standards and the practice for their own professional development. Data consultations and supervisory walkthroughs - learning walks – provide us an opportunity to model, teach, and coach the building leaders in both pedagogy and best practices.

Our role is to assure the process is in place for consistency in use *and impact* of the professional development. The establishment of professional learning communities, or communities of practice, provides us a vehicle to achieve the job-embedded professional development that results in highly qualified teachers for the increased learning of our students. Clear expectations and norms for their operation help in developing the capacity of the building/district for continuous learning for all stakeholders. Back mapping the expectations for adult learners, much like we back-map learning for our students, provides the clarity and intended evidence for the high expectations at the novice, practitioner, and expert stages.

Monitoring for implementation and evaluating impact of the learning and professional development provide an opportunity to develop reflective learners and educators. Ongoing feedback and questioning are important tools we must model and develop in our students and our educators. Possible questions we might consider to develop reflection in others include these:

- What are you able to do now that you couldn't do before you tackled this learning? How do you know?
- If there were one area of this new learning/behavior you would like/need to improve even further, what would it be? What steps could you take to assure that improvement?
- As principal of this building, how has this new behavior or skill helped you accomplish your building's goals for increased student success? How do you know?
- What do our data (e.g., student learning, evaluation summary, formative assessment summary, summative assessment summary, survey) tell us about the impact of present practice and the needed focus if we are to increase our success in learning/teaching?

In summary, we know we can be successful in learning and professional development if we as a building/district assure our response to learning is . . .

- Informed by data.
- Reflecting current research-based practices.
- Differentiated to meet individual and group needs.
- Aligned with the Iowa Professional Development Model.
- Monitored and coached for implementation.
- Evaluated for impact – on educators, on students and their learning.
- Celebrated for increased learning.

Bottom Line: Continuous learning – continuous progress – every day, everyone!