

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

1. What is included in the upcoming comprehensive professional development plan, i.e. will it include a master calendar?
2. Will the new plan include all staff, not just teachers?
3. Will the plan contain special training and support for new teachers?
4. Will the plan incorporate current DCPS models of effective practice?
5. How will central administration and local school responsibilities for professional development be managed in the future?
6. How will professional development be aligned with DCPS academic standards, curriculum and assessment?
7. Will next year's school calendar allow more time for professional development?
8. Has an evaluation system been developed to measure training quality, as well as progress and impact on student achievement?
9. What are the budgetary needs?

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. **Testify at the City Council Budget Hearing:**
  - a. **April 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am** on the DCPS FY 2009 budget.
  - b. **Use the listed questions** as talking points in your testimony.
  - c. **To sign up**, contact Aretha Latta, 724-8196 or email [alatta@dccouncil.us](mailto:alatta@dccouncil.us)
2. **Talk with your school principal and teachers** about their professional development needs, so that you can better advocate for what will help them provide a high quality education for all children.
3. **Join DC VOICE's Ready Schools Project Recommendations Oversight Committee** - which will be monitoring progress on professional development over the next few months.
4. **Volunteer as a Community Auditor for DC Voice's 2008 Ready Schools Project**, to gather information from all of our schools on interagency issues and needs. For more information, call 202-986-8535 or email [events@dcvoice.org](mailto:events@dcvoice.org).

For more information, contact DC VOICE at (202) 986-8535

E-mail: [dcvoice@dcvoice.org](mailto:dcvoice@dcvoice.org)



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## THE CONTEXT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Teachers are more likely to improve student achievement when everyone who affects student learning is involved in improvement efforts, when student standards, curricular frameworks, instructional efforts, and assessments are closely aligned. It is also essential that professional development is given adequate time during the work day and that the expertise of colleagues, mentors, and outside specialists are accessible and engaged as often as necessary. Finally, sustained improvement efforts require commitment to a long-range plan with adequate funding.

## Aspects of Effective Professional Development and Teacher Learning

- **Definition:** A coherent system-wide plan for improving professional skills, competencies, and content knowledge to improve student learning.
- Aligned with state standards and local assessments but not focused on “teaching to the test.”
- Structured to be consistent with teachers’ experiences, goals, and needs (e.g., recognizing changes in local curriculum).
- Enables teachers to see value of PD as part of their career building.
- Reflective of teacher and administrator input at the planning stage, rather than a product from a commercial PD provider that has been purchased in isolation.
- Structured to encourage teachers to continue professional communication within their school and across schools.
- **Considerations for decision making at the district level:** Professional development that is most strongly related to student achievement pays attention to:
  - **Content focus:** the degree to which the goal is to improve teachers’ content knowledge (e.g., improving understanding of math or reading), and not to merely offer a “bag of tricks.”
  - **Active learning:** the opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in a meaningful analysis of teaching and learning in the target subject (e.g., discussion rather than lecture).
    - May have a problem-solving component or activities focused on analysis of student data or work samples.
    - Provides models of communication and collaboration that will transfer to the local school site.
  - **Duration:** the total number of hours spent and the span of time over which the PD is presented (e.g., recurring sessions, rather than a one-stop workshop).
    - Is entered into a master calendar and planned to span the full school year.
    - “Booster” training is often essential after teachers have had some time to implement what is presented at an initial PD session.
    - Formal and informal coaching and mentoring are part of the PD plan.
    - School-based activities such as study groups continue PD.
  - **Participation:** the extent to which teachers, coaches, and administrators from the same school or department attend sessions together.
    - May include demonstrations by local teachers of their best practice.
    - Encourages participants to continue discussions at their local schools and to build professional learning groups

## Types of Professional Development:

- **Traditional PD:** one shot workshop or conference designed to serve a large number of teachers.
- **Reform PD:** often site-based and includes study groups, teacher networks, mentoring or coaching relationships, action research, use of teacher resource center, listservs, etc.

## THE PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Effective professional development respects that change occurs in definable stages and that significant time must be allowed before the outcomes of a professional development program can be determined. A variety of professional development activities will meet individual needs better than a “one-size-fits-all” approach, particularly when these activities are based on teacher self-evaluations of what is needed to improve their students’ performance. Finally, professional development programs should follow initial concentrated work with continued consultation and classes.

- Learning First Alliance’s *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide*