



# **Toward the Effective Teaching of New College- and Career-Ready Standards: Making Professional Learning Systemic**

To meet the more rigorous expectations embodied in new college- and career-ready standards, students will need teachers who teach in ways that are distinctly different than how most have been teaching. States must move toward supporting sustained, coherent, intentionally designed opportunities for ongoing professional learning focused on increasing teaching effectiveness with respect to college- and career-ready standards.



A Research-to-Practice Brief

# **Toward the Effective Teaching of New College- and Career-Ready Standards: Making Professional Learning Systemic**

May 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

To meet the more rigorous expectations embodied in new college- and career-ready standards, students will need teachers who teach in ways that are distinctly different than how most have been teaching. Students will need, for example, English and science teachers who give students more guided practice in reading nonfiction texts that are more complex than ever. Students will need mathematics teachers who cover fewer topics more deeply and who emphasize conceptual understanding with more intense application as well as procedural skill and fluency. Students will need teachers who continually work to deepen their own knowledge of the content so that they can help their diverse students make multiple connections to the standards. Students will need teachers who can work and learn together to sustain continuous improvement to ensure that *all* students have opportunity to learn at high levels.

To ensure that students have such teachers, in addition to high-quality aligned curricular resources, materials, and tools, high-quality opportunities for teachers to learn to meet the demands of college- and career-ready standards are crucial. Unfortunately, the current fragmented menu of discrete professional development offerings, which have not traditionally focused on the kinds of content and cognitive skills promoted by college- and career-ready standards, simply is not up to the challenge, nor does it support the need for much greater professional collaboration.

We therefore need, if not a whole-scale transformation, at least a massive, systemwide upgrade in the systems and strategies we use to support teachers' professional learning and growth. States are best positioned to help coordinate this upgrade. States must move away from supporting professional development activities that are fragmented, vendor-driven, "sit 'n' get," one-shot workshops and must move toward supporting sustained, coherent, intentionally designed opportunities for ongoing professional learning focused on increasing teaching effectiveness with respect to college- and career-ready standards. Figure 1 depicts this shift.

The purpose of this Research-to-Practice Brief is to describe the elements necessary to align state-level policies and practices with one another and to move away from professional development and to move toward professional learning so that more teachers in more schools have access to the conditions, incentives, and the opportunities for engaging in professional learning that is less fragmented and more coherent, more relevant, and better differentiated. In this brief, we discuss how state-level professional development policy, teacher certification policy, teacher evaluation policy, and teacher compensation policy can come together to build systems to support true professional learning. Throughout the brief, we provide examples of states that are beginning to take important steps toward ensuring that all teachers are ready and able to prepare their students for college and careers in the 21st century.

**Figure 1. Moving From Professional Development to Systemic Professional Learning****An Essential Shift for Teaching Effectiveness**

Moving From ...	Moving Toward ...
Believing that professional development is some people's responsibility	Believing that professional learning focused on student learning outcomes is everyone's job
Thinking individual goals for professional development are separate from building and district goals	Aligning individual goals with building and district goals to provide greater coherence
Using professional development as a means of addressing deficiencies evident in the results of evaluation	Embedding professional learning throughout the evaluation system
Seeing evaluation (How well are you doing?) and professional learning (How can you improve?) as separate systems	Systematically aligning teacher evaluation and learning to address summative accountability and formative support
Reflecting selected research, evidence, and standards; seldom addressing standards for professional learning	Reflecting best available research, evidence, and standards, including teaching, student learning, leadership, and professional learning standards
Providing professional development that takes place outside of school, away from students, and is loosely connected to classroom practice	Embedding professional learning in daily work so that staff can learn collaboratively and can support one another as they address real problems and instructional practices of their classrooms
Engaging staff in professional development unrelated to both real data and the continuous improvement process	Engaging staff in a cycle of continuous improvement, guided by the use of multiple sources of data and active inquiry
Relying primarily on outside experts or vendors	Making appropriate use of experts and using their expertise to build internal capacity; deliberately designing for the gradual withdrawal of vendors so that the expertise builds in the local application
Using popular, one size fits all, or limited tried and true formats for professional development	Selecting and using a variety of formats appropriate to the goals of the professional learning experience
Providing one-shot or short-term professional development with little or no transfer to the classroom	Sustaining continuous professional learning through follow-up, feedback, and reflection to deepen knowledge, skills, and dispositions and support implementation in the classroom
Employing few and sporadic quality assurance mechanisms, often relying upon superficial perception surveys as the primary means of evaluating professional development	Strategically monitoring and evaluating professional learning for continuous improvement using multiple methods
Limiting professional development based on scarce resources and discrete funding sources	Dedicating and reallocating resources to support professional learning; recognizing professional learning as an essential investment
Enacting practices to comply with policy that pays little or no attention to standards of practice or efforts to ensure coherence across the system of educator effectiveness	Enacting standards-based practices that support the implementation of policy for an effective professional learning system that includes professional learning as described in the bullets above and is aligned with licensure, evaluation, and other aspects of human capital management systems



## THE RESEARCH THAT SUPPORTS THE MOVE FROM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Recent rigorous research has demonstrated that professional development with the following particular attributes is more likely to have an impact on teacher knowledge and effectiveness, as measured by student learning gains, than professional development without these attributes:

- **Job-embedded and differentiated** (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Parise & Spillane, 2010; Putnam & Borko, 2000)
- **Collaborative, with a focus on student learning** (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Miller, Goddard, Goddard, & Larsen, 2010; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009)
- **Content-centered** (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Phillips, Desimone, & Smith, 2011; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010)
- **Engaging, requiring teachers' active participation and reflection** (Desimone et al., 2002)
- **Ongoing, with multiple opportunities for feedback** (Desimone et al., 2002; Pianta, 2011; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapely, 2007)
- **Aligned with district and school improvement efforts and goals** (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Garet et al., 2001; Grant, Peterson, & Shojgreen-Downer, 1996)
- **Supported by enabling cultural and structural conditions, such as norms of trust and regular time to meet** (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012)

That research found these attributes likely to be effective is not surprising, as these findings are consistent with what we know about how teachers learn (see Coggshall, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, and Jacques [2012] for a discussion of that research base). These research-based attributes of effective professional development outline a vision of teacher learning opportunities that are better described as professional learning (see Defining Our Terms for a description of how we're using the terms *professional development* and *professional learning*).



### DEFINING OUR TERMS

*Professional development* refers to the varied programs and activities teachers participate in to obtain knowledge, skills, and qualifications. Professional development can serve diverse purposes: individual professional growth and career advancement, instructional and school improvement, support of program and technology implementation. Professional development can consist of coursework, conference attendance, workshops, institutes, mentoring, coaching, or action research. Professional development is usually vendor driven, with external experts providing the training, and teachers often experience it as a set of discrete activities with little follow-up. Professional development tends to be undifferentiated no matter the teachers' needs, prior knowledge, or experience and often does not support teachers in solving immediate problems of practice.

*Professional learning* refers to planned and organized processes that actively engage educators in cycles of continuous improvement guided by the use of data and active inquiry around authentic problems and instructional practices. The primary purpose of professional learning is instructional improvement; thus, the content of the learning is around the **content** knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers need to help students perform at high levels. Professional learning is typically **collaborative** and is **embedded** in teachers' daily work throughout the school year. Professional learning is **aligned** with teachers' professional goals as well as with school and district improvement goals and priorities. Professional learning is sustained through follow-up, feedback, and reflection to support transfer to teachers' schools and classrooms.

Approaches to professional learning that contain many of these attributes include coaching, professional learning communities, lesson study, instructional rounds, collaborative planning, and the collaborative analysis of tasks, student work, videos, and other records of practice (for descriptions of these approaches, see Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010).

For teachers to begin teaching in ways envisioned by the developers of college- and career-ready standards (see *Changes in Instruction Demanded by New College- and Career-Ready Standards* for examples), teachers need to be supported by high-quality professional learning now and throughout their careers. Unfortunately, as senior researchers at American Institutes for Research (AIR) observed in a 2001 working paper, current manifestations of professional development too often lack strategic coherence, and educators therefore experience professional

development as fragmented and discrete experiences that generally fail to be effective (Garet et al., 2001). Due, in part, to a lack of coordination among and within state, regional, and local education agencies (LEAs), teachers tend to receive mixed signals about the knowledge and skills that are important to learn. These mixed signals come from the different systems that bear on the teaching profession, including state certification requirements, district evaluation systems, and the steps and lanes of teachers' compensation systems, not to mention shifting district and state priorities. Garet et al. (2001) go on to argue that developing a coherent system would be "a dramatic change in the way business is done" (p. 8).

This Research-to-Practice Brief aims to describe how states can help propel this dramatic, needed change.

**CHANGES IN INSTRUCTION DEMANDED BY NEW COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS**

Most states have adopted the Common Core State Standards for student learning as their college- and career-ready standards. These standards require significant changes to what, how, and how much students learn, demanding a level of cognitive engagement that most students currently do not experience. These changes require teachers to teach in distinctly different ways than they were taught and, in many cases, in different ways than they have been taught to teach. The following are just some of the shifts in instruction that Common Core standards require. While some teachers already may be making these shifts in their classrooms, most will need substantial practice and support and interaction with expert teachers to implement these instructional changes.

- Teachers will need to engage students in critical thinking as (not after) students work to master knowledge and skills.
- The focus of instruction will need to shift from procedures and rules (such as teaching algorithms to solve for  $x$ ) to reasoning (such as helping students be able to explain why one algorithm works and another does not).
- Teachers will need to think across grade levels, building on students' foundations of conceptual understanding of core content by making links to earlier learning and preparing students for the next level of understanding.
- Teachers will need to help students reason quantitatively and abstractly as well as critique the reasoning of others.
- Instruction must place a greater emphasis on disciplinary literacy (i.e., the specific skills, dispositions, and strategies that facilitate student learning in the discipline).
- Instructional practices will need to prioritize students' uses of evidence from the text to justify, support, and communicate about their own and others' reasoning.
- Teachers will need to design and implement interventions, including accelerated teaching techniques to ensure that all students, especially students with special needs (e.g., students with learning disabilities, students at risk of dropping out, English language learners, and other students who struggle), transition successfully from high school to college, careers, or training programs

## THE STATE'S ROLE IN MOVING FROM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Although most decisions about professional development are made at the local level, states can help schools and districts make the shift toward professional learning and effective implementation of college- and career-ready standards by addressing the following actions:

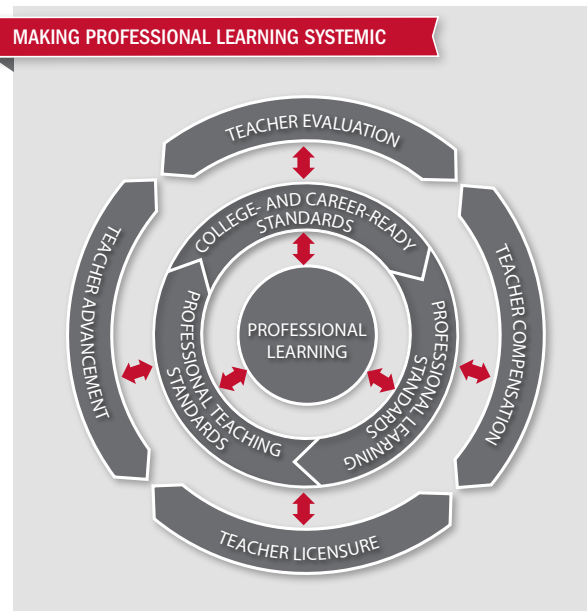
- Implementing professional learning standards:** Adopting rigorous standards for professional learning and creating tools that describe the core expectations for programs and providers and ensuring that they are used in practice
- Disseminating effective professional learning models:** Developing and disseminating research-based models of high-quality professional learning practices and providing associated guidance, tools, and technical assistance for implementing those models
- Creating opportunities for collective learning and collaboration across districts:** Supporting the creation of leadership networks or other communities of practice among regional, district, and school leaders to help build systemwide know-how and capacity to move from professional development to professional learning for the effective implementation of college- and career-ready standards
- Monitoring and supporting district plans:** Requiring that LEAs submit professional learning plans for state review, including providing guidance around those plans

- Reallocating funds:** Allocating state and federal dollars toward professional learning and away from fragmented professional development
- Aligning human capital systems:** Ensuring that state certification systems, evaluation models, and compensation structures reward engagement in effective, aligned professional learning rather than a hodgepodge of discrete professional development activities

While the amount of leverage that each of these policy mechanisms would have over local professional development practice would vary by state, all or some combination of these mechanisms, reoriented toward professional learning and working together, have the potential to help states implement more systemic and more sustained, coherent, and thus more effective professional learning opportunities. In the following sections, each of these domains of state action is described in greater detail and supported with examples.

Figure 2 depicts the key components in such an integrated system that better coordinates professional learning for teachers.

**Figure 2. Professional Learning in an Integrated System**



## Implementing Professional Learning Standards

Professional learning standards help establish expectations for high-quality teacher learning activities so that the “consumers” of professional learning—state, district, and school leaders and teachers—have a better understanding of what they should look for when adopting, purchasing, or creating professional learning tools, materials, or programs for their teachers and colleagues. Standards are only effective if they are widely disseminated (so that intended users know about them), have widespread credibility (i.e., seen by most as valid, relevant, and useful), and users are given guidance in how to use them to make effective decisions. To assist in implementation, states can develop tools such as rubrics or innovation configurations that districts can use to determine the extent to which the professional learning their teachers are engaging in meets the standards.

While many states have set statewide standards for professional development in policy, there is wide variation in the extent to which state education agencies have the authority and capacity to ensure that schools and districts are providing professional

development that meets those standards. The nonprofit organization Learning Forward (formerly NSCD) has developed model professional learning standards that are based in the research on effective professional learning that states can adopt. As of May 2012, at least six states had officially recognized Learning Forward’s revised Standards for Professional Learning, and two (Kansas and Michigan) had formally adopted the standards into state policy.

## Disseminating Effective Professional Learning Models

States can develop, pilot, and disseminate research-based professional learning models to assist districts and schools to implement better, more coherent professional learning so that districts and schools don’t have to reinvent learning designs themselves. States can, for example, develop sample school schedules that depict how to build in sufficient time for the collaboration necessary for effective professional learning and assist districts in adapting their schedules to meet their particular contexts and constraints. The deployment of these models also can be supported by regional educational service centers.

**State Initiatives to Watch: New Jersey's Professional Learning Communities Model**

Through its professional learning initiative, New Jersey has been working to implement high-functioning professional learning communities (PLCs) in 33 pilot schools, some of which are among its highest need schools. The state, in partnership with leading professional development experts, provided six days of training for school leadership teams in each year of the three-year pilot on how to support PLCs, including how to communicate expectations, build relationships, establish a safe environment for learning and risk taking, develop team goals and processes for learning, and use data to identify collective learning needs. The state, in partnership with multiple professional organizations, also has developed a set of materials to support this work. Materials include guidance documents describing a common language for PLCs that seek to create a shared vision of the work as well as a PLC toolkit for New Jersey educators.

High-functioning PLCs that are beginning to be able to document a positive impact on student learning have been taking hold in many of the pilot schools, including at Adelphia School, an elementary school in Howell Township (Keelan, Long, Flitton, & Steinberg, forthcoming). Based on the school's professional development plan and using the materials the state created as well as their own data sheets, teachers at Adelphia School study student data, and PLC facilitators work to help teachers make personal connections to the data. Together, teachers follow the progress of students of concern throughout the school year. Through intense weekly meetings, this evidence-based work has motivated teachers to take collective responsibility for student outcomes, and the results are beginning to show. Nevertheless, bringing these success stories to scale is not easy. Carol Albritton, teacher quality coordinator at the New Jersey Department of Education said, "The lab schools have grappled with significant challenges during the pilot project, including fiscal and operational obstacles, 'initiative fatigue,' time for teachers to meet, and leadership turnover. Nevertheless, an external evaluator of the pilot found nearly all of the participants are satisfied with the progress that their PLCs had attained and expect that their PLC efforts are likely to continue."

For more information, see <http://www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/pd/teacher/plc.shtml>.

**Creating Opportunities for Collective Learning and Collaboration Across Districts**

States, in partnership with regional comprehensive centers and/or their within-state regional educational service centers or other technical assistance providers, can convene groups of educators to begin sharing best practices for professional learning across

districts. These convenings can occur in person or virtually, although the state should consider a clear curriculum and goals for each convening and model and, to the extent possible, the kinds of standards-based professional learning designs (such as communities of practice and effective small group facilitation) that are likely to be effective. Trust and a culture of inquiry at these convenings need to be intentionally fostered.

**State Initiative to Watch: Leveraging Leadership Networks to Collaborate Across Districts in Kentucky**

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has been working to support implementation of Kentucky's college- and career-ready standards, the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS), through aligned professional learning. In 2010, KDE established a system of leadership networks, which are regional district-level collaborative efforts between school leaders, including teachers, teacher leaders, building-level administrators (principals and assistant principals), district-level leaders, and superintendents. The goal of the leadership networks is to "ensure that every participant has a clear understanding of how to implement/support the implementation of the KCAS within the context of highly effective teaching, learning, and assessment practices so that all Kentucky students have the knowledge, skills, and abilities they will need to be successful and prepared for college and/or career" (Kidwell, 2012).

To meet this goal, KDE created a plan for professional learning to build local capacity within regions and districts throughout the state so that all educators had locally driven opportunities to gain knowledge and skills about the new standards within the context of highly effective teaching practices. In 2011, the members of the leadership networks developed guidance around highly effective teaching and learning strategies and resources with respect to KCAS, identified characteristics of effective formative and summative assessments, developed model curricula and units and pacing guides, created accessible online resources for all educators in Kentucky, planned and developed aligned learning experiences focused on the standards, and gave support to teachers as they implemented these strategies and resources in their classrooms.

In late 2011, Kentucky applied to serve as the demonstration state for Learning Forward's *Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core*, an initiative funded with support from the Sandler Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The initiative, including the demonstration state and six Critical Friend States (Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Utah, and Washington) focuses on building a comprehensive system of transformed professional learning from the statehouse to the classroom to support implementation of KCAS, new assessments, and future new initiatives. The Learning Forward grant has allowed Kentucky to look beyond the leadership network goals to establish state and local policy and practices within a system of support that includes state policies, integration of initiatives and resources, ongoing evaluation of professional learning, third-party provider engagement, technology solutions, and seamless implementation of research- and standards-based professional learning, a vehicle for change underlying Kentucky's reforms.

For more information, see <http://www.learningforward.org/advancingimplementingthecommoncore.cfm>.



## Monitoring and Supporting District Plans

Many states currently require LEAs to submit annual professional development plans, either as part of a master strategic improvement plan, as part of their Equity Plans, or as a separate plan focusing on professional growth for school staff. Typically, plan requirements include a description of how districts are using data to determine professional development needs, the intended outcomes, the extent to which activities are consistent with those outcomes including follow-up activities, and a description of how the professional development will be evaluated.

To move toward more coherent professional learning, state guidance and review criteria should include requiring LEAs to demonstrate the extent to which professional learning activities support college- and career-readiness standards implementation, meet professional learning standards or research-based best practices, are aligned with teacher evaluation and other human capital policies, and build on one another to support the continuous improvement of practice. Using this information, states could then plan their technical assistance efforts, determining general and specific needs, targeting support to districts with similar needs, and facilitating collaboration among those who might learn from one another.

## Reallocating Funds

Most of the funding that states have available for moving toward coherent professional learning comes from the federal Title II, Part A program, authorized as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). For the recent past, total funding for the program has hovered around \$2.5 billion. This formula funding is spread among state education agencies, state higher education agencies, as well as directly

to LEAs. Title I of ESEA also furnishes some funding for professional development—it requires that districts spend at least 5 percent of their Title I funds for professional development activities, and schools that have been identified for improvement must spend at least 10 percent of their Title I allocations on professional development or other strategies that directly support teachers.

There are any number of allowable uses for the Title IIA funds, as long as they are used to support teacher quality or support class size reduction. Title IIA funds cannot be used to directly implement the college- and career-ready standards, but they can go toward supporting professional learning to enhance teachers' abilities to provide effective instruction in the standards. States have varying amounts of direct authority in prescribing how LEAs use the funds; however, states can influence fund use through using funds to leverage the mechanisms described here.

## Aligning Human Capital Systems

Currently, the professional development required for licensure renewal or advancement is likely to not be aligned with the professional development that teachers participate in to gain salary increases, which are not likely aligned with the professional development they are required to engage in as a result of their evaluation. And it is too often the case that none of the professional development entailed by these systems is aligned with the kinds of professional learning that moves the needle on teaching effectiveness and student learning.

For example, in many states, obtaining a masters' degree at considerable expense to the teacher (in terms of both time and money) can count toward licensure renewal as well as increase a teacher's base salary (Roza & Miller, 2009). However, there is often no requirement that the degree program constitutes a coherent



learning design intended to increase teaching effectiveness (and thus help teachers improve their evaluation results), is consistent with school or district goals, or often, until recently, is even in the subject area to which the teacher is assigned. For another example, many states require teachers achieve a certain number of professional development points (PDPs) before renewing their license. These points can be obtained by engaging in a number of activities, such as taking coursework, attending conferences or summer institutes, scoring state or regional assessments, conducting an action

research project, or publishing a scholarly paper. Few states require that these activities demonstrate a measurable impact on practice or that they be woven into the fabric of what teachers do in schools day to day. As such, these activities are unlikely to lead to greater teaching effectiveness.

There are a number of efforts underway to better align certification or licensure, compensation, and evaluation with professional learning but few, if any, concerted efforts to align all four systems.

### **State Initiatives to Watch: Toward Professional Learning in Certification—The Kansas Professional Development Point System**

The Kansas State Department of Education requires that teachers with a professional teaching license renew their license every five years. To renew their license, teachers must complete PDPs, the number of which depends on whether the teacher holds an advanced degree (ranging between 160–180 PDPs). Teachers earn one point for each hour involved in knowledge-based professional development (such as from a seminar or graduate-level course) but may earn double points for providing evidence that this new knowledge has had an impact on his or her practice and triple points for evidence that this new knowledge and practice has had an impact on student performance or educational programs in the school or district. Teachers document impact on practice and student learning through lesson plans, test results, or other relevant documentation. The types of learning activities that teachers engage in are moreover linked to their individual development plans and are therefore ideally aligned with their goals for instructional improvement (Kansas City Kansas Public Schools, 2009; Kansas State Department of Education, 2011).

For more information, see <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Dd7byUUOZCQ%3d&tabid=2132&mid=5592>.

**A State Association Initiative to Watch: Toward Professional Learning in Evaluation—The Teacher Evaluation and Development System for Districts in New York State**

The Teacher Evaluation and Development (TED) system, initiated by the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) union, is a teacher evaluation model approved by the New York State Education Department for district use. TED works to integrate job-embedded professional learning across a four-phase teacher evaluation annual cycle, with all phases reinforcing one another:

- Phase 1: Teacher Self-Reflection
- Phase 2: Preobservation Conference, Evidence Collection, and Postobservation Conference
- Phase 3: Summative Evaluation
- Phase 4: Goal Setting and the Professional Learning Plan

Collaboratively, teachers and evaluators consistently use the New York Teaching Standards and the NYSUT Teacher Practice Rubric as framing concepts for evaluation and learning throughout the phases.

The TED developers are currently working with district design teams to revamp professional development to more closely align with the evaluation outcomes. They are focusing on creating schools as learning organizations that engage teachers in ongoing job-embedded professional learning in which teachers routinely meet with their colleagues to reflect on their practice and student learning, gain new knowledge and skills, apply what they are learning, and assess impact. For more information about TED, see Coggshall et al. (2012) or <http://www.nysut.org/ted>.

**Local Initiatives to Watch: Toward Professional Learning in Compensation—the Denver Public Schools and TAP**

Teachers in Denver Public Schools are eligible for a compensation incentive once a year for developing and implementing an action research project they call a professional development unit (PDU) as one component of the ProComp model (Denver Public Schools, n.d.). During each of the projects, the teacher is required to establish an area of focus, collaborate with colleagues, demonstrate learning through the collection of artifacts that are accumulated during the course of the project (a minimum of three months), and reflect on his or her teaching practice based on the information learned during the PDU process. Upon completion of the PDU, the teacher submits the project during a peer review session, and records of completed PDUs are then submitted for compensation. The goal of this work is to have teachers increase their learning on a topic of interest while also developing capacity to increase student learning. To assist in the implementation of college- and career-ready standards, states and districts might consider this model, perhaps tweaking the parameters to ensure teachers work to deepen their understanding and implementation of the standards.

Another way to use compensation to support the move toward professional learning is to provide additional compensation to highly effective teachers who facilitate the learning of their colleagues. The TAP model, for example, encourages teachers to take on several career paths, including career teacher, mentor teacher, or master teacher (TAP, 2012a.). TAP uses a rigorous process for selecting master and mentor teachers, who work to support a range of professional learning activities such as coaching, coteaching, and formative evaluation (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012).

## ■ CONCLUSION

Making the shift from professional development to professional learning across systems to help ensure that all students meet the new college- and career-ready standards requires states to take significant action. The opportunities for change described in this brief, from adopting and deploying professional learning standards to aligning human capital systems, will not be easy to undertake. The changes may require new state legislation or the renegotiation of district employee bargaining contracts. The changes will almost certainly require improved collaboration among different parts of the state education agency such that those in charge of educator certification, professional development, educator evaluation, college- and career-ready standards implementation, and data management work together to build a more coherent system of professional learning. No matter what course states choose to take, the time to begin engaging stakeholders in conversations about the critical shift from professional development to professional learning is now. The tool in Appendix A is provided to help deepen that critical conversation.

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## APPENDIX



## APPENDIX A



### **Tool 1: Prompts for Finding Ways to Make Professional Learning More Systemic in Your State**

Stakeholders involved in this discussion can include the following:

- Legislator taskforce
- State, district, and school leaders
- State education agency staff
- School board members
- Advisory board members
- Interdepartmental working group
- Professional associations and organizations

The following questions are designed to guide stakeholders through the process of building a more coherent and aligned professional learning system. The questions are intended to initiate conversation and then drill down into specifics about each of the topic areas. Facilitators can choose how to best pose the questions to their stakeholder groups, understanding that it may be necessary to adjust the questions to fit the state context.

### **State Policies**

1. Do all teachers in the state receive high-quality professional learning throughout their careers?
    - a. How do we know?
    - b. Where are the gaps?
  2. Has the state or have districts within the state adopted high standards for professional learning?
    - a. If yes, how are these standards used in practice?
    - b. To what extent do the standards support college- and career-ready standards implementation?
    - c. To what extent do the professional learning opportunities that teachers receive meet the standards?
    - d. How do we know?
  3. What state policies impact professional learning in your state?
    - a. To what extent are the policies consistent and not conflicting?
  4. Who in your state assures the quality of the professional learning activities in which teachers engage?
    - a. How is quality monitored?
-

5. Does your state require schools and districts to establish professional learning plans aligned with school or district improvement plans?
  - a. Do school and district leaders view these plans as compliance-oriented activities or as opportunities to reflect on the quality of professional learning their teachers receive?
  - b. Do the plans drive innovation and strategic alignment?
  - c. What can the state do to support the implementation of those plans?
6. How are professional learning activities aligned with the goals and objectives of college- and career-ready standards?
  - a. How are teachers being prepared for the new standards?
  - b. What supports do teachers need to be prepared?
7. How are funds being used to support professional learning?
  - a. How could these funds better support professional learning in the places where professional learning is needed most?

## Systems Alignment

1. Are teachers in your state required to document evidence of their participation in professional learning activities for licensure renewal, teacher evaluation, teacher compensation, or other purposes?
    - a. Are the documentation requirements and report procedures the same or similar for each purpose?
      - i. If not, why not?
      - ii. What should be done?
      - iii. Who should lead the work that needs to be done?
  2. Do your current state certification policies promote professional learning?
    - a. Are there amendments that can be made to more directly promote professional learning?
    - b. How do the goals of certification promote professional learning among teachers?
  3. How are your state certification policies aligned with evaluations?
    - a. Are there activities that already exist in evaluation that can be modified to support certification?
  4. To what extent are ongoing professional learning activities embedded in state or district evaluation systems?
  5. Do evaluation systems include professional learning and teacher development as a measure or consideration in teacher evaluation?
  6. How can the state affect compensation structures to incentivize teachers to take on additional roles and responsibilities to facilitate professional learning?
  7. Does your state already have compensation initiatives that systematically promote professional learning activities among teachers?
    - a. How do changes in compensation initiated through initiatives such as the Teacher Incentive Fund, Race to the Top, and Elementary and Secondary Education Act waivers support professional learning?
-

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## ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE CENTER FOR TEACHER QUALITY

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) was created to serve as the national resource to which the regional comprehensive centers, states, and other education stakeholders turn for strengthening the quality of teaching—especially in high-poverty, low-performing, and hard-to-staff schools—and for finding guidance in addressing specific needs, thereby ensuring that highly qualified teachers are serving students with special needs.

The TQ Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is a collaborative effort of ETS; Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research; and Vanderbilt University. Integral to the TQ Center's charge is the provision of timely and relevant resources to build the capacity of regional comprehensive centers and states to effectively implement state policy and practice by ensuring that all teachers meet the federal teacher requirements of the current provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The TQ Center is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Centers program, which includes 16 regional comprehensive centers that provide technical assistance to states within a specified boundary and five content centers that provide expert assistance to benefit states and districts nationwide on key issues related to current provisions of ESEA.



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Research and conceptual support for this brief was provided by Ellen Cushing, Catherine Jacques, and Jessica Milton (American Institutes for Research), Claudette Rasmussen (Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center), and Amy Colton (Learning Forward Michigan). Without their help, this brief could not have been written. Claudette Rasmussen and Amy Colton moreover developed the content for (Figure 1) describing the essential shift from professional development to professional learning. Angela Minnici and Steven Leinwand (American Institutes for Research) and Ellen Sullivan (New York State United Teachers), also contributed greatly. Thanks also goes to Carol Albritton (New Jersey Department of Education).

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This work was originally produced in whole or in part by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement number S283B050051. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.

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