

10 STEPS to Creating Your Own Professional Development



What picture do you see in your mind's eye when you hear the term "professional development?"

Typically, educators envision periodic sessions in which an "expert" presents a body of knowledge and engages the participants in activities to improve their performance and student achievement. But, *you* can be the expert. You can design and deliver your own professional development to ensure your own continuous learning and improvement. Here's how.

1 Reflect. First, consider your current practices. Do this by reflecting on one week's worth of instruction. Select the subject and for five consecutive days, reflect daily on these questions: What portion of the lesson was most challenging? How did the students respond to the lesson? What would you have done differently? What are you least confident about?

2 Analyze. Analyze your needs by reviewing your responses. In your review, identify similar patterns that you notice. Use colored highlighters to distinguish statements that appear to be related to each other, and use a different color for each category of statements.

3 Select. Once you have categorized the patterns, choose the area you most want to develop. To choose, consider the items in the professional development plan that you submitted to your administrator or select a category that is your district's focus. Whatever method you choose, remain focused on that area.

4 Research. Research your selected area. You can search the [publications archives](#) on PDK International's website or the archives of another educational organization, obtain BEST Practices through iTunes University, and seek traditional or audio educational books on your selected topic.

5 Plan. Plan your course of action. Create a timeline and set goals for when you will read, listen to, and view the selected materials. Include the dates you will begin using your new strategies in your classroom. Consider your work and family responsibilities to establish a realistic timeline.

6 Implement. Put your plan into action. Keep track of your learning by checking off your accomplished self-learning tasks. Remember that if you deal with daily traffic, that time is an opportunity to learn by listening to audio materials, such as books or podcasts.

7 Record. While implementing your newly learned skill or strategies in your daily teaching, use video or audio media to record yourself so that you can assess your effectiveness. Video is best if possible.

8 Assess. Determine the effectiveness of your new strategies by viewing the video. This activity requires being honest with yourself. Answer these questions: Did the students respond as anticipated? Did learning occur? Did you deliver the strategy as your research suggested?

9 Decide. Decide to do one of three things after analyzing your video: Continue with the strategy as implemented, modify the strategy for improved results, or change the strategy. Again, your honest analysis of your recording should inform your decision.

10 Repeat. If you decide to modify or change the strategy, repeat steps six through nine. If you decide that the strategy worked well, document it as part of your professional learning for the year. Now you can engage in continuous improvement by beginning the process again with a newly selected area.

This issue was written by Sheron Brown, a professional development consultant at EdSolutions by Design in Washington, D.C.



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