



How to Use This Guide

Enormous amounts of money are spent on staff development each year. These funds come from local school district budgets, private and public foundations, federal and state budgets, and educators' personal funds. To date, many school policy decision-makers remain unconvinced that staff development provides a significant return on the investment, either in terms of changes in teacher practice or in student achievement. *What Works in the Middle: Results-Based Staff Development* hopes to change this in two ways:

1. Those who have responsibility for selecting staff development initiatives will benefit from examples of staff development programs that have evidence of increasing student achievement. The programs included in this volume have been carefully reviewed to ensure they meet established criteria. These model programs can be adopted, adapted, or used as models for the development of local initiatives. Each of these programs provides (1) evidence of how it has improved student achievement, (2) a well-designed staff development component, and (3) evidence showing that the program can be duplicated elsewhere. Of course, programs that replicate these examples will most likely be successful if implemented with a high degree of fidelity to the original design.
2. For staff development leaders and program developers, the selected programs will serve as models of ways to demonstrate the impact of staff development. Many providers want evidence of how their programs benefit teachers and students. The assessment processes employed by evaluators of these programs serve as model evaluation designs, which other program developers can replicate or adapt.

Before referring to the programs featured in this guide, school teams have a number of preliminary tasks to complete. The steps and questions in this chapter will guide some of the decisions school teams will need to make before selecting a staff development approach. These steps, in essence, are the steps to school improvement. Schools that have developed a thoughtful plan for improvement will have completed these steps as a part of their routine school improvement work. School teams should become "knowledgeable choosers." "Educational leaders who understand the

strengths, weaknesses, and goals of their school and school district will be able to evaluate how various programs will match these to produce the best results in terms of student learning” (pg. 20, Educational Research Service, 1998).

Step 1. Review student achievement data.

To produce results, staff development must be directly tied to student achievement needs. Before selecting or designing staff development, a careful and thorough analysis of student achievement data must occur. This analysis will help identify specific student achievement strengths and areas of need and will guide decisions about staff development programs.

Key questions to answer during this step include:

- What are available assessments?
- What is being measured with this assessment?
- Which students were involved in the assessment?
- What areas of student performance are at or above expectations?
- What areas of student performance are below expectations?
- Do patterns exist in the data?
- How did various sub-populations of students perform?
(consider factors such as gender, race, socio-economic status)
- What are other data telling us about student performance in this area?
- How are the data similar or different in various grade levels, content areas, and individual classes?
- What surprises us?
- What confirms what we already know?

The data analysis process should result in knowing or identifying:

- Specific areas of deficit;
- Specific knowledge and skills students need in order to overcome the deficit; and

- Specific students or groups of students for whom the deficit is most prevalent or pronounced.

For example, assume a school's scores on a norm-referenced test are below the expected or desired level in reading. These scores are insufficient by themselves to use for planning a staff development intervention. Now assume that the school staff analyzes sub-test scores and sub-population scores. The staff finds a deficit in vocabulary for Hispanic students. This information *can* be used to guide the selection and/or design of a staff development intervention to address the need to improve vocabulary among Hispanic students.

The latter information is actionable — that is, it is specific enough to identify what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to improve student performance in reading vocabulary. To simply identify reading as the area of focus provides insufficient information to guide the design and/or selection of a staff development program.

Step 2. Identify the unique characteristics of the school, community, staff, and/or district.

School decision-makers need to know how best to meet the needs of their students. When school leaders and teachers understand the unique characteristics of the students, they can use this information to make appropriate instructional and program decisions.

Understanding the conditions under which the staff development program will be implemented also helps inform the selection and/or design of a staff development initiative. For example, a staff development program for experienced teachers may be different than one for novice teachers. Likewise, a staff development program designed to enable staff to meet the needs of urban, disadvantaged students may be different than one for rural schools. Additionally, a program provided in a district or school setting with limited resources or time for staff development will need to be different than one in a district or school that has set aside time and resources for staff development.

Therefore, schools should complete a school profile that gives them information about their own environment and conditions to help them make informed decisions.

Key questions to answer in this area are:

- What are the characteristics of our students?
Some characteristics to consider are:
 - Ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Socio-economic status

- Mobility
 - Family support
 - Motivation
 - Attitude about school
 - Experience in school
 - Academic performance
 - Retention rate
 - Parents' education level
 - Sibling data
- What are the characteristics of the staff?
 - Some characteristics to consider are:
 - Years of experience
 - Years at a grade level
 - Years in the school
 - Past experience with staff development
 - Motivation
 - Performance/ability
 - Attitude
 - Sense of efficacy
 - Response to change
 - Collegiality
 - Extent to which degrees match teaching assignments
 - Level of education
- What are some characteristics of our formal and informal leadership for both teachers and administrators?
 - Some characteristics to consider are:
 - Leadership style
 - Roles of formal and informal leaders
 - Level of participation in leadership activities
 - Opportunities to be involved in leadership roles/activities
 - Trust in leadership
 - Support by leadership
 - Support for leadership
 - Level of communication

- What are some characteristics of our community?
Some characteristics to consider are:
 - Support for education
 - Support for the school
 - Involvement in school activities
 - Support for students
 - Support for staff development

- What resources are available to support this improvement effort?

Some considerations are:

- Budget
- Time
- Support personnel
in the building
- Support personnel
outside the building
- Union contract
- Incentives

Step 3. Establish clear, measurable outcomes for the staff development program.

Schools must understand what they hope to accomplish in terms of both student and teacher learning as a result of their staff development efforts. Without a clear goal and specific target, it is easy to miss the mark. Key questions are: (1) What results do you seek for students? (2) What results do you expect for staff? (3) How do school practices, procedures, and policies affect these goals?

Expected results should first be stated in terms of student achievement and then in terms of changes in teacher practices and characteristics. In other words, expected outcomes are stated in terms that allow the school to know if it has or has not achieved the intended results. Too often, results are stated in terms of process rather than achievement.

For example, a goal that states that “One hundred percent of the staff will participate in training in brain-based learning” does not say what will happen for students as a result of this training. A preferable goal is one that states that “In three years, 90 percent of students will read on grade level as a result of teachers learning and imple-

menting new instructional strategies.” The latter goal is focused on the end result of the staff development, rather than what occurs in the process.

Step 4. Study the staff development programs described in the guide.

Before determining how to accomplish the goal, school teams need to examine proven staff development programs, those that have evidence of their impact on student learning. Too often this important step is overlooked. In their urgency to improve student performance, school staffs adopt programs with which they are unfamiliar, or they design one of their own. School staffs often fail to conduct a critical review of what is available and what has proven successful. The programs in this guide are a starting point for this review.

In examining programs, consider the following questions:

- Which programs address the skills and knowledge we have identified as our needs?
- What programs are being used in schools with similar demographics?
- If our school’s characteristics do not match those of schools in which the program was successfully implemented, what are the key differences? How likely are those differences to interfere with the program’s success?
- What changes could be implemented to increase the likelihood of our success?
- What aspects of the program (if any) might need to be modified to accommodate the unique features of our school?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
- What school, district, and community support was required to make the program successful?

Step 5. Before selecting a program, answer these questions:

- How will we assess the initiation, implementation, and institutionalization of the program?
- How will we support the program?

- How will we support the individuals involved?
- What are we equipped to do in-house to support and implement the program, and what outside resources will we need?
- What resources are we dedicating to the program?
- What is our timeline for full implementation?
- What benchmarks along the way will help us know if we are being successful?
- Are we willing to commit time, energy, and financial resources to this effort for the long term?
- How will we align this new initiative with existing ones? What may need to be eliminated to make resources available for this program?
- How closely do the goals of this program align with our school's improvement goals and the district's strategic goals?

The worksheet on pages 192 and 193 is a tool for reviewing staff development programs. Once completed, the worksheet becomes a handy reference guide to each program being considered. As schools are studying various staff development options, the worksheet offers a framework for collecting information about each option and for comparing programs prior to making decisions about which option to select and implement. The areas of the worksheet correspond to the criteria used to select programs for inclusion in *What Works in the Middle: Results-Based Staff Development*.

With a completed worksheet for each program under consideration, staff development committee leaders will find it easier to compare programs and select the best program to address the needs of their school or district. After this initial study is completed, school and district staff members will be better equipped to make informed decisions about appropriate staff development interventions to address their student achievement needs.

References

Educational Research Service. (1998). *Comprehensive Models for School Improvement: Finding the Right Match and Making It Work*. Arlington, VA: Author.



Staff Development Program Review

Program Title _____
 Content Area(s) _____
 Grade(s) _____

Contact Name _____
 Address _____

 Phone _____
 Fax _____
 E-mail _____
 Website _____

Program Goals				
Evidence of Success	Yes	No	Measure	Notes
Student Achievement				
Student Behaviors				
Student Attitudes				
Teacher Content Knowledge				
Teacher Behaviors/Practices				
Teacher Attitudes				

Program Content		Notes
Content		
Pedagogy		

Staff Development Processes					
Models of Staff Development	Yes	No	Frequency	Length	Notes
Individually Guided Staff Development					
Observation and Assessment					
Training					
Development or Improvement Process					
Inquiry or Action Research					

Follow-up	Yes	No	Notes
Classroom-based			
Non classroom-based			

Program Context			
Geographic	Yes	No	Notes
Rural			
Urban			
Suburban			
Other			
Student/School Demographics	Notes		
Ethnic/Racial			
Socio-Economic Status			
Size of School/District			
Teaching Staff			
Support Needed	Notes		
Community			
District			
Building			
Other Features	Notes		

Intended Participants	Yes	No	Notes
Individual teachers			
Team			
Grade Level			
School			
District			

Cost	Yes	No	Notes
Honorarium			
Travel Costs (airfare, lodging, meals, etc.)			
Materials			
Other			

	Site Reference	Site Reference	Notes
School Name Address Phone Fax			

