

Tools for self-directed professional development

All professional development should be self-directed as individual teachers should have the autonomy to select how they want to use their PD resources. Just as students have different learning styles and needs, so too do teachers and thus the organization of professional development activities should reflect this. Research tells us that the most effective professional development occurs when teachers are in control of their own learning.

Teachers will be the drivers, not the driven—using objective evidence to help them improve, but never undervaluing their own experiential knowledge because of it. Professional learning communities will not be places for devising quick-fix solutions to disturbing data exposed by test score results, but places where wise and critical teachers engage with each other over their accumulated (though not unquestioned) knowledge using a wide range of data (not just test scores) to devise more powerful strategies that help all children learn.

Andy Hargreaves. Five flaws of staff development and the future beyond. *Journal of Staff Development* 24, (July 2007) pp. 37–38.

Choices for professional development should be made carefully, involving teacher's reflection on their practice, often including collaboration with colleagues. What follows here is a series of documents designed to help guide you through the choices associated with making your own self directed PD plan.

Developing a self-directed PD plan for teachers

This reflection form for developing a self-directed PD plan for teachers is a useful place to begin when establishing some broad PD goals for the year. What do you know about your own learning? Do you have a “wondering” about an aspect of your practice?

Reflection

1. Current strengths

My current strengths as a TEACHER are...

2. How I learn

I learn best when...

3. When I think about my practice, I wonder about areas of professional learning focus (developed by BCTF Research):
 - a. Teaching approaches
 - Preparation
 - Assessment
 - Differentiated instruction
 - Subject focus
 - Evolution of teaching to personalized learning
 - Classroom management / accountability
 - b. My role as a teacher
 - How I am teaching
 - My interactions with peers
 - Collaboration with peers
 - Interactions with students and parents
 - c. Context
 - Changes within the school
 - Changes at the district level
 - Ministry policies / documents
 - d. Students
 - Changes in learning approaches
 - In/out of school learning
 - Digital / technology use and access.

I have a lot of skills, but what do I want to know more about?

Now that you have spent some time thinking about your teaching practice in general, what specific elements of teaching do you want to focus on this year?

Inventory of elements of teaching

Check off the elements you are interested in learning more about, or add some of your own.

1. Leadership and planning
 - Mentoring
 - Lesson planning skills
 - Ability to pre-assess student needs
 - Ability to clarify learning outcomes
 - Long range planning skills
 - Understanding of different learning styles
 - Use a variety of teaching methods
 - Planning for individual differences
 - Unit planning skill
 - Developing new curriculum (units/programs)

- Use of technology to enhance teaching and learning

2. Teaching skills

- Clear directions to students
- Good pacing of instruction
- Interesting, clear, teaching methods
- Explanation of objectives to students
- Solid topic introductions
- Use of a variety of teaching techniques
- Use of questions which extend thinking
- Maximization of student participation in lessons
- Effective use of small groups
- Individualized instruction
- Effective work with special needs students
- Learning centres which challenge students
- Use of problem solving techniques
- Effective student evaluation strategies
- Effective (teacher) self-reflection
- Effective approaches to student discipline
- Effective skills in resolving classroom crises

3. Differentiated instruction

4. Teaching and curriculum

My teaching area

Student-teacher interaction

- Teacher responses which extend thinking
- Teacher responses which promote creativity
- Effective counselling skills
 - using reflective skills
 - using empathy
 - perception checking

- Building student's self-esteem
- Discipline procedures which promote student self-direction
- Dealing with students with problems.

Teacher-parent communications

- Effective teacher-parent conferences
- Effective crises resolution techniques
- Parent involvement in school programs.

Self-directed PD planning

Plan your professional development for the year by taking the information you have gathered through reflection and collaboration and, using one of the examples below, complete a personalized, self directed plan. This will help you focus the use of the professional development resources available to you on an area that you have chosen.

Many ways to grow professionally

1. Participate in a Teacher Inquiry project.
2. Attend a conference/workshop locally, regionally/provincially/nationally/internationally.
3. Attend a workshop/conference or summer institute/course.
4. Be a sponsor teacher for a student teacher.
5. Become a BCTF PD associate, and carry on the teachers-teaching-teachers tradition.
6. Become a BCTF Social Justice associate, and carry on the teachers-teaching-teachers tradition.
7. Become active in your local association.
8. Becoming a facilitator, and give a workshop locally, regionally, or provincially.
9. Begin/continue university studies, either on-line or as a member of a cohort.
10. Develop innovative programs for use in your classroom.
11. Develop an annual personal PD plan, and maintain a PD portfolio.
12. Apply for a PQT/Teacher Inquiry grant. Find information on-line at: bctf.ca/TeacherInquiry
13. Form/join a teacher research group.
14. Participate in group planning.
15. Hop on the internet through BCTF online or another PD site.
16. Job-shadow in a related work situation.
17. Join a professional organization/network:
 - Provincial specialist association (32 within the BCTF)
 - Local specialist association/Local Chapter of a PSA (See "Forming PSA Chapters")
 - International network (ASCD, MSCD).
18. Mentor a beginning teacher.
19. Observe another teacher, and talk together about the lesson/program.
20. Participate in curriculum development.
21. Pilot curriculum/program.
22. Read professional literature.

23. Reflect, discuss, and research for the purpose of planning individual or group ongoing professional development.
24. Develop the discipline of reflective journal keeping.
25. Serve as your school's PD representative.
26. Share with colleagues what you found at a conference/workshop.
27. Subscribe to/read professional journals.
28. Watch professional videos.
29. Work on a provincial committee (MoE or BCTF).
30. Work on the Local Ed-Change Committee.
31. Work on your local's PD committee.
32. Work with a colleague to discuss, observe, and critique a lesson/program (peer coaching).
33. Write professional articles for your local's newsletter, your PSA's publications, or *Teacher* newsmagazine.