

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS

Background

Foothills School Division (FSD) recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for all staff members to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in order to enhance the quality of education for all students. Support of professional learning is a shared responsibility.

The Assistant Superintendent, Learning Services is responsible for the administration of this administrative procedure. Professional learning is aligned to the *Professional Practice Standards for the Teaching Profession which include the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard and the Alberta Education Leadership Quality Standard*. It is also aligned with board priorities of Learner Engagement, Support and Success.

Definitions

(Source: *Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard, 2019*)

In the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard, the competency of *Engaging in Career-Long Learning* is defined as: *A teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning.*

Engaging in Career-Long learning is demonstrated by indicators such as:

- (a) *Collaborating with other teachers to build personal and collective professional capacities and expertise;*
- (b) *Actively seeking out feedback to enhance teaching practice;*
- (c) *Building capacity to support student success in inclusive, welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments;*
- (d) *Seeking, critically reviewing and applying educational research to improve practice;*
- (e) *Enhancing understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit worldviews, cultural beliefs, languages and values; and*
- (f) *Maintaining an awareness of emerging technologies to enhance knowledge and inform practice.*

In Policy 1 our FSD Priorities are defined as:

Engagement for each learner: Division wide engagement that is timely, meaningful and collaborative with all learners and communities.

Support for each learner: Ensure and maintain Division wide learning environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and inclusive.

Success for each learner: Ensure and maintain Division wide excellence in teaching, learning and leadership.

Procedures

1. Guidelines for Professional Learning in FSD

(Source: Alberta Teachers' Association document - A Framework for Professional Development in Alberta, 2019)

- Professional learning takes many forms and is provided by many different people and organizations.
- Professional learning enhances learning for students.
- Professional learning is a wide range of activities teachers do individually or collectively to enhance student learning.
- Effective professional learning is responsive to educational developments, curriculum changes and school and classroom contexts.
- Designing, planning and implementing effective professional learning is complex, it requires collaboration, informed decision making and understanding of adult learning.

2. Principles for Professional Learning in FSD

(Source: Alberta Teachers' Association document - A Framework for Professional Development in Alberta, 2019)

The following principles describe the characteristics and necessary conditions for effective professional learning that enhances students' learning.

Professional learning:

- Is based on a shared vision and clearly stated objectives.
- Focuses on improving teaching and supporting learning.
- Is based on research into effective teaching and learning.
- Builds on teachers' established knowledge, skills and attributes.
- Enhances implementation of curriculum requirements, instructional strategies and assessment techniques.
- Is interactive, continuous, reflective and part of the day to day work life of teachers.
- Engages teachers in a collegial and collaborative dialogue.
- Is responsive to changing contextual variables and therefore requires ongoing monitoring and refinement.
- Encourages teachers to explore, take risks and think critically about their professional practice.
- Respects the professional judgement of teachers in determining their needs.
- Reflects the unique circumstances in which teaching takes place.
- Considers the needs of the teacher, school and jurisdiction in advancing education plans.

- Operates within and contributes to the development of a collaborative learning culture.
- Is integral to the work of all teachers.
- Is supported by adequate resources, including time, funding and infrastructure.
- Requires support by networks of professional learning committees, specialist councils, teacher conventions, school jurisdictions, regional consortia, universities and other stakeholders.

3. Professional Learning Design in FSD

(Source: Alberta Education Leadership Quality Standard, 2019)

In the Alberta Education Leadership Quality Standard it states *that school leaders nurture and sustain a culture that supports evidence-informed teaching and learning and ensure that every student has access to quality teaching and optimum learning experiences*. This requires the design and leadership of high quality, coherent professional learning plans.

Guidelines that support leading a learning community:

- Collaboratively creating and implementing a Foothills School Division shared vision for professional learning.
- Communicating a philosophy of education that is student-centred and based on sound principles of effective teaching and leadership.
- Aligning practices, procedures, policies, decisions, and resources with school and school authority visions, goals and priorities.
- Cultivating a culture of high expectations for all students and staff.
- Identifying and planning for areas of need, growth and improvement.
- Building the capacity of teachers to respond to the learning needs of all students and advancing understanding of effective pedagogy and curriculum.
- Identifying, mentoring and empowering teachers in educational leadership roles.
- Promoting team building and shared leadership by creating a shared leadership team that is engaged in planning for and leading professional learning. A shared leadership model that is co-created, consultative and collaborative in decision-making, informed by open dialogue and multiple perspectives of the team. Shared leadership teams should include but not limited to: Principals, Administration, Learning Coaches, ATA PD Reps and Lead Teachers.
- Creating meaningful collaborative professional learning opportunities.
 - Utilizing the structures of professional learning communities and teams, communities of practices, coaching, mentoring, peer observations, cohorts and learning sessions.
 - Utilizing the systems of action research, iterative cycles and other reflective processes that engage learners with data and other evidence informed practices.
- Using services, supports and resources of the system, as well as, collaborating among schools and utilizing education partners in professional learning.

- Seeking, critically reviewing and applying educational research to inform effective practice and professional learning.
- Accessing, sharing and using a range of data/evidence to determine progress towards achieving goals.
- Promoting innovation, enabling positive change, and fostering commitment to continuous improvement.
- Communicating professional learning plans with stakeholders on an ongoing basis.
- Promoting engagement and apprising parents of education plans, evidence and research informed decision-making and professional learning plans on an ongoing basis.

See Appendix for FSD Commitments to Engaging in Career-long Learning and Allocation of Staff Learning Funds.

References: Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines
Alberta Education Professional Practice Standards for the Teaching Profession, 2019
A Framework for Professional Development in Alberta by the Alberta Teachers' Association, 2019

FSD COMMITMENTS TO ENGAGING IN CAREER-LONG LEARNING

Foothills School Division (FSD) recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for all staff members to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in order to enhance the quality of education for all students. Support of professional learning is a shared responsibility.

We recognize...

- a. Teachers have professional obligations under the Education Act and regulations made pursuant to the Education Act, as well as the Teaching Quality Standard, which may extend beyond what is assigned by school jurisdictions. Teachers have discretion, to be exercised reasonably, as to when they carry out their professional responsibilities that extend beyond their assigned time.
- b. With a cap of 1200 hours of assignable time teachers have adequate and dedicated time to engage in Individual Professional Growth Plan development beyond assigned time during school-based professional development days.

We commit to...

- a. A minimum of eleven (11) professional learning days each school year.
- b. A start and end time that is consistent with a regular school day.
- c. Collaboratively accommodating the needs of specialized staff.
- d. Clear and consistent expectations with part-time staff for professional learning days.
- e. Flexibility. We realize that attending a conference or other meetings may be a means of achieving school plan goals or an individual's professional growth plan. We commit to finding a reasonable balance.
- f. Professional Learning Plans that:
 - Enhance implementation of curriculum requirements, instructional strategies and assessment techniques.
 - Consider the needs of the teacher, school and jurisdiction in advancing education plans.
 - Engage teachers in a collegial and collaborative dialogue.

Professional Development Contributions

Professional and Sabbatical Fund (as per article 9.2 of the collective agreement)

9.2.1 A fund will be available for both Professional Development and Sabbatical Leaves for teachers. The fund shall be composed of:

- 9.2.1.1 A Professional Development fund of \$350 per teacher based on the full-time equivalent teacher count as at September 30 of the previous year; and
- 9.2.1.2 A Sabbatical Leave fund of 95% of the fourth year minimum salary as at September 30.
- 9.2.1.3 In the event that no candidate is selected for Sabbatical Leave, the funds for same shall be added to the Professional Development fund of that year.
- 9.2.1.4 All monies not used in a specific year shall be forwarded to the Professional Development Fund of the following year.

9.2.2 Sabbatical leaves may be granted for periods of time equivalent to one quarter, one semester or a full year. A committee composed of three School Jurisdiction representatives and three teacher representatives shall select the candidate(s) for the Sabbatical(s).

- 9.2.2.1 The equivalent of one full year's Sabbatical Leave shall be allocated each year if there are sufficient applicants.
- 9.2.2.2 All applications for a Sabbatical Leave shall be submitted to the Superintendent by January 31, with a copy to the Chairman of the Professional Development Committee. The Sabbatical Committee shall review all applications and select the candidate(s) by March 1.

9.2.3 For the guidance of this committee the following regulations shall apply:

- 9.2.3.1 To be eligible for a Sabbatical Leave a teacher must have been employed by the School Jurisdiction for at least five (5) years.
- 9.2.3.2 Experience increments will not be granted to teachers for the period of the Leave.
- 9.2.3.3 A teacher granted Sabbatical Leave shall enter into an individual written agreement with the School Jurisdiction on conditions under which the teacher may return to the school system at the conclusion of the Leave provided this contract does not contravene the Collective Agreement.
- 9.2.3.4 Teachers granted Sabbatical Leave shall return to their duties at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of a semester, whichever occurs first, following expiration of the Leave, and the teacher shall not resign or retire from the services of the School Jurisdiction for at least two (2) years after return to duties. If the teacher terminates employment before the two year return service commitment, then the teacher shall reimburse the Professional Development Fund any Sabbatical pay pro-rated.

The ATA Local 16 Professional Learning Contributions will be used to fund international conferences, mentoring days, individual initiatives, leadership meetings and committee expenses.

The contributions to the Staff Learning Fund are:

- Division Contribution (as per Collective Agreement) \$350.00 per FTE
- ATA Local 16 Contribution \$70.00 per FTE
- Division School Based PD Allocation \$40.00 per FTE
- Division Sabbatical Leave Allocation TBD
- Division Leave of Absence Allocation TBD
- Administrators Professional Learning \$500.00 per school-based administrator

Calculations regarding the above are based upon the number of FTE teachers as of September 30 and the current Collective Agreement.

National/International Conferences:

- Teachers will be supported annually for attendance at a conference offering a national or international perspective with applications to be submitted by September 30th for conferences that occur between October 1st and April 30th; and April 30th for conferences that occur between May 1st and September 30th, annually.
- The Selection Committee will consist of three (3) individuals, including the ATA PD Chair/Co-chair, the ATA PD Treasurer, and one other member selected from the ATA PD Committee.
- Interested teachers will complete an application to attend a major conference and forward it to the ATA Local PD Committee Chair on or before the application deadline.
- Allocations of \$5250 will be awarded per application deadline with each teacher eligible to receive a maximum of \$1750 each. This allocation will be made from the ATA Local 16 PD budget to assist the successful applicant(s) to cover direct expenses. (Individual PD funds may also be used to offset national/international conference costs).
- Upon returning, the teacher(s) will submit an expense claim with receipts to the ATA PD Treasurer for reimbursement.
- Teachers are expected to present at the ATA Local PD Committee meetings and are encouraged to share their newly gained knowledge and insights with colleagues.

Administrator Professional Learning:

- A specific allocation is provided annually to support the professional development of principals and vice-principals through participation in conferences and institutes related to curriculum and/or instructional leadership. The funds may also be used to support professional reading.
- The Board will set the amount of this allocation annually as part of its budget process.

- Each school-based administrator may accumulate funds over a three (3) year period. Should an administrator transfer to another administrative position within Foothills School Division, any accumulated funds from this allocation will follow them to their new school.
- Administrators are to notify the Assistant Superintendent, Learning Services of conferences and institutes that they will be attending and will be asked to share their learning with other members of the Foothills Administrators' Association.

System-Based Administrators:

- The Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, Learning Services approves the attendance, at Division expense, of officials at specific conventions related to each employee's responsibilities.