

HOW TO MEASURE MEANINGFUL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



As you evaluate your professional learning throughout the year, consider these four indicators of impactful professional development.

1. Teachers Are Talking About It

When learning has value, teachers continue discussing it long after the session ends.

- Listen to hallway conversations.
- Observe PLC meetings.
- Pay attention to staff discussions.

Are teachers referencing the learning naturally? Are they sharing successes, asking questions, and encouraging one another? If the conversation has stopped, implementation may have stopped as well.

2. Classrooms Look Different

Great professional development changes classroom practice.

Students are more engaged.

Teachers are asking different questions.

Learning targets are clearer.

Instruction is more intentional.

As principals, one of our greatest responsibilities is to look for evidence that learning has transferred from the training room to the classroom. Professional development isn't complete until students experience its impact.

3. Teachers Feel More Confident

Confidence fuels growth. The best professional learning doesn't overwhelm teachers with more to do—it equips them with practical strategies they can use successfully.

As confidence grows, teachers become more willing to try new approaches, collaborate with colleagues, and refine their instruction. When teachers believe they can improve, they do.

4. Students Benefit

At the heart of every professional development decision is one question: How will this improve learning for students?

Every investment of time, resources, and energy should ultimately point back to student success. If students aren't benefiting, it's worth asking whether the professional development is producing the desired outcomes.



Your Role as the Principal Regarding Professional Development

Principals don't just approve professional development. They create the conditions that allow learning to flourish. By visiting classrooms, asking reflective questions, celebrating growth, and encouraging collaboration, you help transform professional learning into everyday practice.

Remember, your follow-up often determines whether professional development becomes a lasting improvement or simply another event on the calendar. Because professional development isn't successful when teachers attend. It's successful when teachers apply. And when teachers apply what they've learned, students thrive.

The true value of professional development isn't measured by how many teachers attended—it's measured by what teachers continue doing after the session ends.

School Challenge for Measuring Professional Development

Choose one professional development topic your staff has learned this year.

Now ask three teachers individually:

What is one strategy from that training you're still using?

How has it impacted your students?

What additional support would help you continue growing?

If teachers struggle to answer those questions, it's not a reflection of their commitment—it may be a sign that the learning needs more follow-up, coaching, or collaboration. This month, commit to checking for implementation—not just participation.

Practical Recommendation

Create a "Learning Walk" focused on one professional development goal.

Instead of looking for everything during classroom observations, choose one instructional strategy your staff has been learning.

Visit classrooms for just 5–10 minutes, looking only for evidence of that strategy. Afterward, send each teacher a short note celebrating what you observed and offering one encouraging suggestion.

When principals focus observations around professional learning, teachers recognize that growth—not evaluation—is the priority.

Next Step

This week, identify one professional development initiative that has the potential to make the biggest difference in your school.

