HISTORY
SOCIAL SCIENCE
FRAMEWORK

FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

CHAPTER 22

Professional Learning

This chapter considers the systems in which educators and students can be supported to learn and grow. It puts forth a vision of the school as a learning community in which all adults are engaged in the ongoing cycle of learning, reflecting on, and improving their own practice (Little 2006; Ermeling and Gallimore 2013; Garmston and Zimmerman 2013; Learning Forward 2011). For teachers and school leaders to create classroom instruction for students that is motivating, engaging, integrated, respectful, and intellectually challenging, they too must participate in a learning culture that has these same qualities. This learning environment mirrors the type of learning desired in California classrooms: it motivates and engages teachers' efforts, integrates their learning, respects their knowledge and capabilities, and challenges their intellect. As students grapple with complex texts and concepts, persist through difficulties, and set their own goals for learning, so too do their teachers and leaders. Ensuring that California's students experience high-quality history–social science instruction requires specific and sustained attention to the implementation of the evidence-based practices described in this framework. This chapter describes the adult learning, leadership practices, and disciplinary resources necessary for such implementation.

Professional learning is the vehicle for all school staff—teachers, administrators, specialists, counselors, teacher librarians, and others—to learn to effectively implement the curricular and

instructional practices proposed in this framework (Killion and Hirsh 2013; Darling-Hammond et al. 2009). Over the years, professional learning has had many names—*professional development, staff development,* and *training*—and has taken many forms—workshops, conferences, college courses, institutes, book study, lesson study, classroom observations and shadowing, coaching, conversations with colleagues, co-teaching, assessing student work, collaborative planning, action research, online learning, learning walks, and more. Professional learning is the process in which education professionals—teachers, administrators, and others—actively learn (through critical analysis of practice, reflection on their own teaching, consistent collaboration with colleagues, and other interactive tasks) the knowledge and skills needed to improve teaching, leading, and student learning. Professional learning may be formal or informal, but its goal is always to improve student learning and achievement.

Leadership in a professional collaborative learning culture is distributed and shared. It is not limited to principals or other administrators and, in fact, promotes teacher leadership as a powerful means of establishing a healthy and collaborative school culture. Responsibility for student success is held in common and transcends departmental and grade-level boundaries (Garmston and Zimmerman 2013; Kruse and Louis 2009).

Distributed leadership is closely connected to professional learning and includes professional collaborations, coaching, and data-driven decision-making, as well as opportunities for teachers to share their expertise in more formal ways. Teachers, for example, may present to colleagues a new teaching technique they have implemented and share their reflections of the process. By the same token, school and district leaders must envision themselves first and foremost as responsible for ensuring that all classrooms are environments where each and every student thrives. This requires leaders to position themselves as advocates for teacher learning, collaboration, and continuous reflection.

As noted above, professional collaborative learning to ensure student success is key. Frequent and meaningful collaboration with colleagues and parents/families is critical for ensuring that all students meet the expectations of the *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools* (History–Social Science Content Standards), the *California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*

(CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy), and the *California English Language Development Standards* (CA ELD Standards). Teachers are at their best when they routinely collaborate with their teaching colleagues to plan instruction, analyze student work, discuss student progress, integrate new learning into their practice, and refine lessons or identify interventions when students experience difficulties. Students are at their best when teachers enlist the collaboration of parents and families as partners in their children's education. Schools are at their best when educators are supported by administrators and other support staff to implement the type of instruction called for in this framework. School districts are at their best when teachers across the district have an expanded professional learning community they can rely upon as thoughtful partners and for tangible instructional resources.[1]

Over the past decade, much has been written regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective teaching. Teachers are, above all, lifelong learners. Ongoing learning is essential to effective teaching, and professional learning opportunities are crucial to gain and deepen professional knowledge and professional judgment in teachers (Mindich and Lieberman 2012). Over the course of a teaching career, teachers are likely to see many changes—changes in the needs of their learners, in expected outcomes, and in the knowledge valued by society. As a result, teaching must adapt and continually improve while maintaining curiosity, flexibility, and imagination on the part of teachers and their students. For students to achieve the History–Social Science Content Standards, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, and the CA ELD Standards, teachers need effective preparation and ongoing professional learning to support their own success as learners and, in turn, to support their students' learning.

Researchers have argued that teacher professional learning is the key to improving outcomes for students. In their report for the National Staff Development Council and Stanford University's Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010, 1) note, "Rigorous scientific studies have shown that when high-quality [professional learning] approaches are sustained by providing teachers with 50 or more hours of support *per year,* student test scores rise by an average of 21 percentage points." International studies also underscore the need for ongoing professional

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1. *ELA/ELD Framework,* 238.

development (OECD 1998, 2005, 2009). They note that development of teachers beyond initial preparation can update individuals' knowledge of subject matter, improve individuals' pedagogy in keeping with new standards and research-based teaching techniques, enable individuals and schools to apply changes in curricula or other aspects of teaching practice, to exchange information between educators and other groups (such as academics, community groups, various industries, and so on), and to help less-effective teachers become more effective.

However, professional learning is particularly susceptible to budget fluctuations, especially for teachers who teach disciplines other than English language arts and mathematics. Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010, 8) found that "teachers in the United States receive far less professional development, mentoring, and planning time than teachers in the world's high-achieving nations." While the number of new teachers participating in induction programs has steadily increased over the years and there have been small increases in professional learning in the "content of the subjects taught, the uses of computers for instruction, reading instruction, and student discipline and classroom management," there has been a shift from programs of nine to sixteen hours to eight hours or fewer. In addition, "well under half of teachers reported access to professional development on teaching students with disabilities (42 percent) and teaching ELLs (27 percent)" (Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson 2010, 2–3).

For English Learners (ELs), the problem of inadequate, fragmented, or irrelevant teacher professional learning warrants critical attention. ELs have language, literacy, and disciplinary literacy learning needs that require specialized instruction that many teachers have not yet mastered. However, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (cited in Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson 2010, 62), only 12.5 percent of teachers have participated in more than eight hours of professional learning about how to work with ELs. In one study, teachers of ELs characterized their professional learning as poorly planned, executed by presenters with little experience or knowledge of ELs, not applicable to their course content, and outdated (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll 2005). Research reviews of effective professional learning for teachers of ELs suggest that this professional learning occurred over extended time (one to three years) and focused on hands-on practice, teaching methods that were immediately applicable to the classroom, and in-class lesson demonstrations with a teacher's own or a colleague's students (August and Shanahan 2006).

Benchmarks of Effective Professional Learning

Darling-Hammond and others (2009, 5) found that "collaborative approaches to professional learning can promote school change that extends beyond individual classrooms." The researchers also note that effective professional learning

- "is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice;

- focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content;

- is connected to other school initiatives;

- builds strong working relationships among teachers."

Desimone (2009, 183) identifies from recent research five features of professional learning that are "critical to increasing teacher knowledge and skills and improving their practice, and which hold promise for increasing student achievement : . . (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) duration, and (e) collective participation [work in grade-level, departmental, and school teams]."

Standards for professional learning provide a useful tool for evaluating efforts to organize and facilitate professional learning for teachers and others. In 2011, the professional organization Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council) revised its standards. The seven standards that follow describe the characteristics and conditions of effective, high-quality professional learning.

- **Learning Communities:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

- **Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

- **Resources:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning. This includes discussions about allocating sufficient time for effective instruction.

- **Data:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

- **Learning Designs:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

- **Implementation:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

- **Outcomes:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Research on effective professional learning (Desimone 2009) and on effective implementation, or change (Fixsen and Blase 2009) points to collective participation and facilitative administrative action as important elements of success. *Collective participation* occurs when teachers in the same school, grade level, or department participate in the same professional learning. This collective participation has the potential to promote collaboration, discussion, and shared responsibility (Borko 2004; Darling-Hammond and Sykes 1999; Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth 2001; Lewis, Perry, and Murata 2006; Stoll and Louis 2007; Wilson and Berne 1999). Collective participation resonates with Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning, which suggests that learning, rather than being solely an individual process, is social and collective and that many people learn in communities of practice. Most researchers and reformers agree that communities of practice have the following characteristics: Teachers work together to

- reflect on their practice, forming social and professional bonds;

- develop shared understandings about practice and work to refine particular effective practices;

- collaborate on problems of practice using evidence, such as student work and assessment data;

- view their teaching from a critical stance, confront challenging topics (such

as approaches they have tried but that have failed), and engage in difficult conversations (such as beliefs and attitudes about groups of students);

- provide mutual support and mutual accountability; learn to deal constructively with conflict;

- focus on their improvement to achieve student improvement.

Knowles' (1973) seminal research on adult learning points to adult learners' needs for independence, autonomy, and relevance to their specific setting. Team members' perceptions of the usefulness of the work are critical. Effective collaborative professional structures bring the adults in a school together to work on shared concerns, needs, and strategies and build consensus and ownership for the groups' tasks and outcomes. Student data serve as the catalyst for action and further research in effective collaborative professional structures. Analysis of data leads to examination of instruction as well and is "systematically connected to cycles of planning and teaching related to specific learning needs" (Ermeling and Gallimore 2013, 45).

Coaching is often an outgrowth or part of these collegial structures and can take many forms. It can be mentor, instructional, peer, or supervisory coaching. Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) document the efficacy of coaching that includes modeling, observation, and feedback. They also note that coaching associated with student achievement gains is usually conducted as a part of a coherent school reform effort. Joyce and Showers first documented the impact of coaching in professional learning (1980, 2002) arguing that 90 percent of learners would transfer a new skill into their practice as a result of theory, demonstration, practice, corrective feedback, and job-embedded coaching. The challenge for most schools in implementing coaching is finding the resources to support it. Districts and schools will need to make hard decisions about resource allocation as they move forward.

Creating collegial structures in schools is vital for successful integration of the History–Social Science Content Standards, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, and the CA ELD Standards. Integrating history–social science, ELD, and disciplinary literacy and ensuring that a designated time for ELD is used purposefully requires that teachers—across disciplines—collaborate frequently to assess student needs and accomplishments, analyze the results of formal and informal assessments, and

plan instruction, including multidisciplinary units, for multiple settings. For students who are ELs, standard English learners, advanced learners, or who have disabilities, collaboration amongst classroom teachers, specialists, counselors, and other support staff is critical. Sharing responsibility for student learning means that all teachers, including history–social science instructors, are responsible for meeting the needs of students and providing appropriate instruction. ELD instruction and literacy instruction do not occur in just one setting; they occur in all classrooms as well as in designated settings.

Planning lessons and units together is an effective collaborative practice. Lesson planning should incorporate the cultural, linguistic, and background experiences students bring to the classroom, the assessed needs of students, and look ahead to year-end and unit goals. Unit planning is a complex process that requires teachers to simultaneously consider the specific instructional activities (e.g., hands-on investigations) students will experience; the texts students will read, interpret, and discuss; the big ideas and essential content understandings students will acquire; the types of language students will use in speaking and writing; the various tasks that will support students to engage meaningfully with content, texts, and one another; the culminating tasks teachers will guide their students to successfully perform; as well as the History–Social Science Content Standards, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, and the CA ELD Standards.

The qualities of effective professional learning are clear. The challenge for California educators is to create, disseminate, and implement programs of professional learning for history–social science teachers that reflect these qualities. Ultimately, effective professional learning should mirror effective classroom instruction. The same kinds of active engagement with critical thinking and problem posing; collaborative discussions about intellectually stimulating and relevant topics; use of rigorous and appropriate texts; respect for diversity of cultures, languages, and perspectives; and other features found in effective classrooms should be found in professional learning sessions.

Schools and districts should begin by determining their assets and needs and then create short- and long-term plans (up to five or more years) for professional learning that builds consistently over time but can also be adapted and refined as needed. Schools and districts need to consider where teachers

are within their career trajectories and support them accordingly. Translating knowledge into classroom action propels the process of implementation; teachers can be supported in that process by coaches, leaders, and other professional collaborations. Effective professional learning also parallels effective professional collaboration; teachers learn from one another as they also learn from specialists and coaches.

Sources of Professional Learning

Professional learning can be provided and facilitated by a variety of individuals and organizations, including school leaders, school districts, county offices of education, California Subject Matter Projects, local colleges and universities, technical assistance agencies, the California Department of Education, independent consultants, and most importantly, teachers themselves. *The sources and locations of professional learning can be many (see sample list below);* what is critical is that *their selection be based on a comprehensive plan for professional learning coordinated at the district and school levels and informed by teachers and other staff.* Districts and schools should consider the steps of implementation and the standards of professional learning outlined earlier in this chapter in designing a plan that addresses both immediate and long-term goals.

- The **Buck Institute for Education** presents workshops and provides resources for problem-based learning modules to economics teachers.

- The **California Council of Economic Education** has programs featuring activity-based professional development throughout the state as well as travel abroad programs sponsored by the National Council on Economic Education.

- The **California Council for the Social Studies** holds annual conferences that feature teacher workshops and scholar presentations.

- The **California Department of Education** has prepared a series of online professional learning modules for the English Language Development and Common Core State Standards, including two modules specific to the literacy standards for history/social studies, available on the Brokers of Expertise Web site (http://www.myboe.org/) (no longer valid)

- The **California Geographic Alliance** is part of the National Geographic network of alliances and supports California educators through professional development workshops, conference presentations, and institutes designed to increase geographic literacy among K–12 students.

- Both the **California History–Social Science Project** (CHSSP), headquartered at the University of California, Davis, and the **California International Studies Project,** headquartered at San Diego State University, offer professional development programs in a variety of school-year and summer programs, including ongoing coaching and lesson study facilitation. The CHSSP also regularly offers a variety of Common Core and ELD-aligned Webinar programs and free curriculum, available for download from its Web site.

- The **Center for Civic Education** provides workshops and institutes for teachers in which focused content is combined with student programs.

- The **Constitutional Rights Foundation** provides support for civics-based education programs.

- California's **Education and the Environment Initiative** offers free online and face-to-face workshops for standards-based and Common Core aligned curriculum addressing California Environmental Principles and Concepts.

(Contact information for these and other history–social science professional learning providers is available from the California Department of Education: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/re/ and http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/hs/).

The Human Rights Resource Center of the University of Minnesota provides free access to online curricula and lesson plans through the *This Is My Home* K–12 Human Rights Education Initiative and Curriculum and other resources (https://www.law.umn.edu/human-rights-center).

Educational materials on international humanitarian law can be accessed on the American Red Cross Web site at: http://www.redcross.org/humanityinwar/resources.

Links to other high-quality online sources of human rights education materials, including curricula, lesson plans, and other resources, may be found on the Educational Resources site of the Human Rights Educators USA Web page (https://hreusa.org/hre-library/).

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