The Superintendent's

Quality Professional Learning Standards

Approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Professional Learning Support Division
California Department of Education

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A Message from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

As State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I am pleased to announce my adoption of the proposed Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS). *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State*, the Educator Excellence Task Force report sponsored by the California Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, identifies professional learning standards as a cornerstone of California's professional learning system. Specifically, the Task Force recommended that California adopt standards and quality criteria for professional learning to guide systems at the state, regional, district, and local school levels.

The QPLS lay the foundation for creating a coherent set of professional learning policies and activities that span the career continuum of an educator, which leads to improved educator knowledge, skills, and dispositions and, ultimately, increased student learning results. The standards describe the criteria for quality professional learning and point educators and stakeholders toward evidence-based elements and indicators to use when they make decisions about how to create and/or improve professional learning in their own systems. By adapting or adopting these standards, educators and other stakeholders embrace a shared expectation of what quality professional learning is and how it should be supported. Working from this common vision, everyone connected to increasing educator excellence—teachers; principals; district, county, and state education agency staff; university professors; professional learning and technical assistance providers; and policymakers and other stakeholders—can transform California's professional learning system into one that ensures that every student benefits from an excellent teacher and principal.

As we all move forward in the weeks, months, and years ahead, we learn more and more about creating and sustaining a strong professional culture that shares responsibility for continuous improvement and increasing student achievement and well-being. The QPLS help us to use the best of what we know to focus our efforts on steady growth and support for our state's professional educators. It is this investment in teachers and administrators that ensures excellence in our schools and success for students in the Golden State, particularly as we implement the new Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and new assessments.

Tom Torlakson

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December 2013

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Introduction

Expert educators, both teachers and administrators, are perhaps the most important resource for improving student learning. Students depend on competent and caring educators to support them in their development and achievement. In recognition of the critical relationship between educator effectiveness and positive student outcomes, the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) convened the California Educator Excellence Task Force, which published the report *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State (GbD)*. The recommendations in this report call for the development of a coherent and stable system of professional learning, a critical factor in improving educator capacity so that all students learn and thrive.

The *GbD* report recommends a system of professional learning that brings together the goals of the state, districts, and schools, as well as individual educator needs, while recognizing and addressing the unique assets and needs of California's diverse student population. Specifically, the report calls for a focus on students with disabilities; students from minority cultural, racial, and linguistic subgroups; and students from low-income families (California Department of Education, 2012, p. 53). The report also stresses that quality professional learning must provide a continuum of opportunities for educators to learn and practice skills that advance expertise throughout their careers, from preparation through expert practice.

The Superintendent's Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS) present the elements of a quality professional learning system that, if well implemented, will benefit educators focused on increasing their professional capacity and performance. The standards are not meant to be used to evaluate any educator in any aspect of his or her work. Rather, the QPLS are intended to help educators, local educational agencies, and the state develop and contextualize professional learning system goals and plans.

The Superintendent's Quality Professional Learning Standards

Professional learning standards are the cornerstone of quality professional learning, identifying essential elements of quality professional learning that cut across specific content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and dispositions. The QPLS serve as a foundation for the content, processes, and conditions essential to all educator professional learning. The Superintendent has identified the following seven interdependent professional learning standards to promote quality teacher learning and development:

- **Data**

  Quality professional learning uses varied sources and kinds of information to guide priorities, design, and assessments.

- **Content and Pedagogy**

  Quality professional learning enhances educators' expertise to increase students' capacity to learn and thrive.

- **Equity**

  Quality professional learning focuses on equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on addressing achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups.

- **Design and Structure**

  Quality professional learning reflects evidence-based approaches, recognizing that focused, sustained learning enables educators to acquire, implement, and assess improved practices.

- **Collaboration and Shared Accountability**

  Quality professional learning facilitates the development of a shared purpose for student learning and collective responsibility for achieving it.

- **Resources**

  Quality professional learning dedicates resources that are adequate, accessible, and allocated appropriately toward established priorities and outcomes.

- **Alignment and Coherence**

  Quality professional learning contributes to a coherent system of educator learning and support that connects district and school priorities and needs with state and federal requirements and resources.

The seven QPLS represent essential components of a comprehensive, research-based, quality professional learning system that is appropriate for California. Each broadly stated **standard** is made more concrete by identifying three to five major **elements** that are building blocks of the standard. For each element, **indicators** further detail what quality professional learning looks like in practice. Each of these standards, along with its corresponding elements and indicators, is described in more detail beginning on page 7.

What is Professional Learning?

The *GbD* report draws from research and literature to distinguish between "professional development," as it has been traditionally delivered, and "professional learning." The report explains that much of the professional development that educators have traditionally experienced has been poorly planned and implemented and has had disappointing results. Such activities have often been externally derived and delivered, disconnected from system goals and educator practice, episodic, and not tailored to the specific needs of students, educators, and schools. Finally, even when professional development is effective in helping educators master discrete content or instructional strategies, it does not contribute to a broader process of transforming their practice.

On the other hand, well-designed, research-based professional learning can be a primary lever for improved educator practice and student results when it is:

- Rooted in student and educator needs
- Focused on content and pedagogy
- Designed to ensure equitable outcomes
- Ongoing, intensive, and embedded in practice
- Collaborative, with an emphasis on shared accountability
- Supported by adequate resources
- Coherent and aligned with other standards, policies, and programs

What Does Professional Learning Look Like?

In an effective professional learning system, school leaders learn from experts, mentors, and their peers about how to become true instructional leaders. They work with staff members to create the culture, structures, and dispositions for continuous professional learning and create pressure and support to help teachers continuously improve by better understanding students' learning needs, making data-driven decisions regarding content and pedagogy, and assessing students' learning within a framework of high expectations.

Teachers meet on a regular schedule in learning teams organized by grade-level or content-area assignments and share responsibility for their students' success. Learning teams follow a cycle of continuous improvement that begins with examining student data to determine the areas of greatest student need, pinpointing areas where additional educator learning is necessary, identifying and creating learning experiences to address these adult needs, developing powerful lessons and assessments, applying new strategies in the classroom, refining new learning into more powerful lessons and assessments, reflecting on the impact on student learning, and repeating the cycle with new goals.

(Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 3)

How to Apply the Quality Professional Learning Standards

The QPLS present a common point of reference to help state and local educators and policymakers make decisions about professional learning. While each individual learning standard is important, the standards are designed to complement each other, as each standard represents only a segment of the comprehensive criteria describing quality professional learning. Educators using the QPLS in developing and accessing professional learning are likely to find, for example, that a decision about adding a collaborative educator study group will trigger the need to review an earlier decision about schoolwide priorities and/or the time, money, or staffing resources available to support the new activity. Developing and sustaining quality professional learning usually requires stakeholders to engage in iterative discussions to negotiate priorities and alignment. The QPLS are valuable in helping stakeholders keep the focus on professional learning decisions that build the capacity of educators, both teachers and administrators, to improve teaching and learning. The standards were not designed to be used as a checklist or workbook for creating one-size-fits-all professional learning. Rather, they should be used by stakeholders as research-based criteria to inform and customize their own professional learning design and implementation plans to fit their priorities and specific context. Implementing the QPLS requires that teachers, principals and other school leaders, district leaders and staff, county leaders and staff, the CDE, the CTC, institutions of higher education, and cultural institutions and organizations across California work together to ensure that professional learning is of the highest quality and is readily accessible to all educators throughout their careers.

Linking the Quality Professional Learning Standards to Other Standards and Initiatives

California has many sets of standards and expectations to guide policies, programs, and personnel effectiveness. The QPLS describe program quality by identifying the content, processes, and conditions inherent in effective professional learning. They work in tandem with student content standards that establish an outcome for professional learning, increasing educators' capacity to assist students in reaching expected learning outcomes. Professional learning standards also support educators in learning about and implementing practices outlined in expectations for teachers and administrators. While each set of standards described below serves a unique function, it is, at the same time, complementary to other standards sets.

- Student curriculum content standards (e.g., Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards) establish expectations for what students need to know and do in each discipline

area and grade level, and help educators focus on developing the content-specific knowledge and pedagogical expertise most needed to help students meet California-adopted standards.

- Standards for teachers and administrators (e.g., *California Standards for the Teaching Profession*, *California Professional Standards for Education Leaders*) establish expectations for effective educators and help to focus the content of professional learning and development on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that educators need to increase capacity and improve their performance.
- Professional learning standards (e.g., the QPLS) identify characteristics of quality professional learning that are most likely to support educators in building individual and collective capacity to meet professional, school, and student performance expectations.

The QPLS are program standards designed to be useful to all persons connected to increasing educator capacity—including teachers; principals; district, county, and state education agency staff; institutes of higher education; professional learning and technical assistance providers; and policymakers. These standards help to create a coherent set of professional learning policies and activities that span the career continuum of an educator; improve educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and, ultimately, increase student learning results. The standards are intended to help users contextualize their own goals, plans, and evaluations when making decisions about how to create and/or improve professional learning in their own systems. These standards are in no way intended to replace professional personnel standards for individual educators. Instead, the QPLS describe the system of quality learning experiences that, if well implemented, will benefit educators focused on increasing their professional capacity and performance.

Together, the professional learning standards, elements, and indicators guide educators and policymakers in framing and implementing effective state policies and coherent professional learning and support systems across the state. The QPLS present a common foundation of evidence-based practices to apply when making decisions about professional learning for teachers and administrators. By adapting or adopting the QPLS, educators, policymakers, education officials and other stakeholders will have a shared expectation of what professional learning is and how it should be supported.

Quality Professional Learning Standards, Elements, and Indicators

Data

Quality professional learning uses varied sources and kinds of information to guide priorities, design, and assessments.

The QPLS data standard reinforces that it is good practice to use information and various sources of data to anchor decisions about planning, implementing, or assessing quality professional learning. Those responsible for improving educator effectiveness identify the starting point for improvement; apply the best-known ways to improve knowledge and skills; and assess short- and long-term results. To help every student succeed, educators begin by looking at data describing: what students know and still need to learn; current professional capacity to address next steps; and the overall picture of school program effectiveness. With these data in hand, educators establish priorities that support extending and strengthening their capacity to address individual student needs and strengths. The emphasis is on using data from educators, rather than about educators, to identify systemwide professional learning needs and priorities. When educators review professional learning experiences and results over time, they have the information required to evaluate whether professional learning efforts are having an impact on educator effectiveness and, ultimately, student performance.

Element A: Addressing Students' Capabilities and Needs

Quality professional learning is continuously informed by multiple measures of student data.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Uses formative and summative student achievement data, disaggregated by race, gender, English language learner status, special needs, foster youth, and/or poverty indicators, to identify critical student needs that require improved instruction, support, and leadership.

2. Incorporates disaggregated school climate data to identify student social, emotional, and health and safety areas requiring increased educator knowledge and skill.

3. Utilizes family and community information to assist educators in meeting students' needs.

4. Includes staff, community, family, and student opinions as perception data to inform decisions.

Element B: Addressing Educators' Capabilities and Needs

Quality professional learning develops from an understanding of educators' current capacity and future development needs.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Includes data shared by educators about their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help determine strengths and gaps in content and pedagogical knowledge.

2. Develops educators' ability to meet students' academic, cultural, social, physical, and emotional needs.

Element C: Program/School Quality

Quality professional learning uses schoolwide information to determine the current policies, practices, and outcomes that are the most essential priorities for educators' professional learning.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Uses information from school initiatives and improvement efforts to identify knowledge and skills that educators need to implement recommendations.

2. Assesses how well current programs are aligned with federal, state, and district expectations for safe and secure environments, in order to determine priority actions.

3. Applies family and community feedback to identifying needs.

Element D: Continuous Review of Quality and Impact

Quality professional learning continuously improves through regular and long-term review of its purposes, components, processes, and outcomes.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Uses participant feedback to assess levels of participation, satisfaction, usefulness, and learning.
2. Collects and reviews evidence of changes and/or improvements in collective practice.
3. Uses quality and impact data to determine needs, track progress, and refine schools' and districts' professional learning plans.

Content and Pedagogy

Quality professional learning enhances educators' expertise to increase students' capacity to learn and thrive.

Quality professional learning focuses on the knowledge and skills that educators need in order to help students bridge the gaps between their current level of knowledge, skill, and understanding and expected student outcomes. Therefore, opportunities for professional learning must focus educators' learning on teaching specific curriculum. In addition, skillful educators must have a deep understanding not only of the disciplines they teach, but also of the progression of subject matter across grade levels, and of the ways students learn the content and apply it to engaging and challenging problems.

Educators must build a repertoire of instructional strategies that enable them to address new student standards—standards that require deeper, specialized knowledge of instructional strategies that are based in research, new technologies, better formative assessments, and improved ways of serving California's diverse student population. Professional learning also requires educators to develop expertise in designing and modifying curricula and instruction based on evidence of student progress; monitoring and adjusting implementation and change processes; learning how to collaborate with colleagues and experts; and providing constructive feedback.

Element A: Curriculum Content and Materials

Quality professional learning builds educators' knowledge and understanding of subject-matter curricula and materials so that all students meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Focuses on learning the content required in meeting state and district outcomes for students.

2. Deepens and extends subject-matter knowledge within educators' own discipline and across other disciplines.

3. Builds educators' capacity to use curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, equipment, and technology that support the teaching and learning of subject-matter content.

4. Increases educators' use of universal and linguistically and culturally responsive materials.

Element B: Pedagogy

Quality professional learning expands educators' instructional and assessment skills, practices, and behaviors so that all students meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Builds educators' repertoires of evidence-based instructional approaches for various content areas and diverse student learning needs.

2. Creates multiple opportunities, in different settings, for educators to practice and receive feedback on new skills.

3. Uses instructional techniques and strategies that educators then use with students.

4. Develops educators' abilities to use formative and summative assessment information to plan and modify content and instruction.

Element C: Learning Support

Quality professional learning develops educators' attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions to ensure that all students have differentiated support to meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Demonstrates how to modify and scaffold instruction based on data and knowledge of how students learn and develop.

2. Supports educators in building flexible learning pathways and processes for students; inclusive classrooms; and alternative programs.

3. Develops knowledge of, and skills for, how to address students' academic, cultural, social, physical, and emotional well-being.

4. Increases educators' capacity to strengthen students' participation, engagement, connection, and sense of belonging.

Equity

Quality professional learning focuses on equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on addressing achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups.

In order to help every student meet new and more rigorous performance expectations, educators must understand the challenges and opportunities each student faces in achieving them. When educators have access to quality professional learning, they gain new knowledge and skills to extend their own experiences related to different equity perspectives, including race, gender, language, sexual orientation, religion, special abilities and needs, and socioeconomic status, on learning. Quality professional learning supports educators in examining their personal attitudes and biases and understanding their roles in creating equitable student learning and performance outcomes. Together, educators learn about and practice how to apply theories and principles of equity that can contribute to equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students. When educators use an equity lens to address teaching, learning, student discipline, school culture, family involvement, and other programmatic areas, they increase their impact on schooling for all students, especially those who are vulnerable or historically underserved.

Element A: Academic Equity

Quality professional learning increases educators' capacity to improve learning outcomes for all students, focusing on those with special needs; those with cultural, racial, and linguistic differences; those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds; and those in foster care.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Uses summative and formative achievement and perception data, disaggregated by gender, race, language, special needs, foster youth, and poverty indicators, to identify critical student needs that require improved instruction and support.

2. Enables educators to plan and implement evidence-based instructional strategies that are responsive to students' diverse backgrounds and needs.

3. Helps educators understand that building on students' abilities, perspectives, and potential contributes to increased student learning.

Element B: Systemic Equity

Quality professional learning helps educators develop equitable and inclusive policies and align them with implemented practices.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Ensures that all educators have equitable access to effective professional learning and support.

2. Highlights school and district policies that lead to systemic inequities for students, and addresses how to change those policies.

3. Identifies educational programs in which students are overrepresented or underrepresented in proportion to their percentage of a district or school's entire population, and helps educators deal with those inequities.

Element C: Climate Equity

Quality professional learning facilitates safe, fair, and respectful school environments for all students and improves educators' understanding of the cultural, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of each learner.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Demonstrates what a strong, positive school culture looks like and how it can maximize opportunities for students to learn.

2. Supports educators to build trusting relationships with students, their families, communities, and one another; provide messages of high expectations; and create opportunities for meaningful participation.

3. Develops educators' repertoires of approaches to support the cultural, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of each learner.

Design and Structure

Quality professional learning reflects evidence-based approaches, recognizing that focused, sustained learning enables educators to acquire, implement, and assess improved practices.

As is the case with students as learners, educators as learners benefit from multiple opportunities to learn. Those responsible for developing quality professional learning design it to address the learning priorities of educators, supporting them to continuously improve practice across their careers. At the core of decisions about how to design and structure quality professional learning is the principle of planning and organizing processes that actively engage educators in inquiry centered on authentic problems and instructional practices to improve student performance. Quality professional learning is also designed to be job-embedded—that is, situated as realistically as possible in the work setting of the learner so that theoretical learning and its practical application are directly linked. Learning activities may take on various forms—for example, a study group, coaching network, web-based workshop, learning community, collaborative committee, or curriculum development group. They may vary in time duration, be scheduled within or outside of the regular school day, or be synchronous or asynchronous technology-based designs. However, all quality professional learning must provide for intensity, follow-through, and continuity. Taken together, the various designs and structures provide educators opportunities for differentiated learning experiences that are best suited to their individual and collective goals.

Element A: Focus and Time

Quality professional learning is purposeful, focused, and sustained over time.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Focuses on clearly identified purposes and needs related to educators' capacity to increase students' learning outcomes.

2. Is ongoing and requires consistent effort.

3. Requires dedicated time, within the school schedule, for educator learning, practice, reflection, and collaboration.

4. Leverages extended time opportunities for educator learning, practice, reflection, and collaboration.

Element B: Embedded in Practice

Quality professional learning provides many opportunities for educators to analyze their practice and apply new learning.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Utilizes real problems of practice as a base for new learning.

2. Clarifies how to apply and use new learning.

3. Incorporates deliberate practice of new learning with frequent reflection, feedback, and support, so that knowledge and skills become fully integrated.

Element C: Differentiation

Quality professional learning is relevant—building on the skills, knowledge, and learning needs of educators across career stages, grade levels, assignments, and contexts.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Builds on educators' schoolwide and district goals, and educator needs and perspectives.

2. Develops educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions at every career stage, continuously developing educator capacity from novice to accomplished.

3. Responds to educators' contexts by considering grade level; subject matter; and school setting, performance, and demographics.

Element D: Active and Varied Methods of Learning

Quality professional learning employs diverse, research-based learning designs, with an emphasis on the active engagement of educators.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Ensures that educators interact with content and with one another during a continuous learning process.

2. Involves educators in a variety of learning processes that are focused on schoolwide goals and educators' interests, needs, and learning styles.

3. Applies evidence-based practices, is grounded in research, and provides educators with opportunities to analyze, apply, and engage in research.

4. Uses technology to enhance and extend learning opportunities.

Collaboration and Shared Accountability

Quality professional learning facilitates the development of a shared purpose for student learning and collective responsibility for achieving it.

Learning is an active, social process of constructing understanding and meaning. Professional learning research confirms this concept and shows that educators improve when they work in community to build common goals, exchange practices, and share accountability for outcomes. While educators can individually engage in some types of professional learning, tasks such as evaluating and solving problems of practice or implementing evidence-based instructional practices are usually best accomplished peer-to-peer or collectively. When successfully facilitated, collaboration among educators capitalizes on their multiple perspectives and experiences and distributes responsibilities across the group so that there is sustained interest and long-term focus on problem solving and improving practice.

To have the greatest impact on increasing educator and student results at the school site or district level, quality professional learning must include broad, collaborative participation from, for example, the principal, content and special-assignment teachers, nurses, librarians, counselors, technology specialists, and other instructional and support staff. When additional expertise or support is needed to address professional learning goals, educators may choose to work with collaborators who are external to the site and who can offer needed options that are meaningful, relevant, and results oriented. Roles of participants vary widely across districts and schools, depending on the local context. However, educators, regardless of roles, share responsibility to effectively address student learning needs and are accountable for continuously developing individual and collective expertise to do so successfully.

Element A: Collaborative Culture

Quality professional learning builds a culture of collaboration and mutual trust by facilitating opportunities for educators to work together to strengthen their practice and improve student learning.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Establishes professional communities of practice to support mutually agreed-upon student learning goals and outcomes.

2. Sets clear purposes, goals, and working agreements that support the sharing of practices and results within a safe and supportive environment.

3. Integrates a common understanding of the terminology and group process skills involved in establishing and sustaining a professional community of practice.

4. Structures collective learning around an evidence-based cycle of continuous learning and improvement, maintaining a consistent focus on shared goals.

5. Supports educators in making practice more transparent, through peer observation, common planning, and experimentation with feedback.

Element B: Shared Accountability

Quality professional learning builds the capacity of educators to commit to shared ownership and accountability for effective professional practice and student learning.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Emphasizes educators' responsibility to hold themselves and their peers accountable for upholding professional standards and improving student learning outcomes.

2. Expects educators to identify personal challenges and receive constructive support from their peers that expands their personal and collective expertise.

3. Extends educators' commitment to try new approaches and share results with their colleagues.

4. Presents opportunities to recognize and use the expertise of educators within schools or districts.

Element C: External Networks

Quality professional learning includes external collaborations that provide effective options for educators with diverse experiences and needs to improve their practice.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Builds educators' skills in working with and evaluating external professional learning providers.

2. Includes families, community members, regional partnerships, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, and others as professional learning providers and partners.

3. Structures opportunities for educators and external collaborators to exchange promising practices and resources.

4. Capitalizes on relationships with networks that have specialized expertise or resources, in order to extend educators' access to resources not available locally.

5. Uses technology to support cross-community communications and extend educators' access to learning and resources.

Resources

Quality professional learning dedicates resources that are adequate, accessible, and allocated appropriately toward established priorities and outcomes.

Professional learning is critical in increasing educator and school effectiveness and student growth. Opportunities for educators to engage, individually and collectively, in quality professional learning are possible when there are adequate resources such as staff, materials and technology, and time—all of which depend on availability of funding. Access to, quality of, and effectiveness of educator learning experiences depend upon whether and how these resources are prioritized to align with identified professional learning needs. To make decisions about equitably allocating resources for professional learning, those responsible must have a thorough understanding of varied student and educator learning needs and must thoughtfully consider which priorities will lead to improved outcomes for all students and educators. Because resources for professional learning come from many sources—including government allocations, public and private agencies, and educators themselves—distributing, tracking, and monitoring these resources is challenging. Understanding the sources, uses, and effects of professional learning resources and accurately tracking them provides educators and policymakers with information needed to make decisions about resource allocation and ways to improve the quality and results of professional learning.

Element A: Fiscal Capital

Quality professional learning is supported by sufficient, sustainable funding leveraged from both current and new sources.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Is recognized and prioritized as a key lever for developing educator excellence across career stages and increasing student progress.

2. Capitalizes on the integration and application of multiple sources of funding, in order to target identified professional needs.

3. Applies a process to monitor how finances are used, the impact of investment on desired outcomes, and future allocations.

4. Uses outcome measures and perception data to establish its value as an effective investment, leading to ongoing financial commitments and/or incentives to search for additional funding sources.

Element B: Human Capital

Quality professional learning utilizes various sources of expertise and experience to address individual and collective learning goals.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Recognizes the leadership capacity of internal staff to present, facilitate, or coach targeted professional learning.

2. Capitalizes on flexible staffing arrangements that allow for peer-to-peer learning.

3. Engages external expertise when necessary.

4. Requires external professional learning providers to be vetted against rigorous criteria.

5. Includes parents, community members, regional partnerships, institutions of higher education, county offices of education, and others as professional learning providers and partners.

Element C: Time

Quality professional learning maximizes time for educators to engage in learning and collaboration, both within and outside of the school day.

Indicators

Quality professional learning:

1. Requires that time for collaboration and learning is made available in an ongoing and systematic way.
2. Develops a cycle of activities spaced over time, including theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, reflection, and coaching.
3. Necessitates that current educator schedules increase time for collaboration and learning.
4. Uses time within the school day for practice-embedded learning, but also provides release time when needed.

Element D: Equipment and Materials

Quality professional learning ensures the availability of a variety of tools so that educators have equitable access to relevant and effective learning opportunities.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Provides technology (hardware, software, and web-based) to enable educator learning, practice, and use of equipment and materials.
2. Ensures availability of equipment, print materials, and other supplies that support educators in meeting individual or collective learning goals.
3. Meets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and web-content accessibility standards.
4. Leverages resources across programs, schools, districts, and county, state, and federal providers to expand use and maximize benefits of equipment and materials.

Alignment and Coherence

Quality professional learning contributes to a coherent system of educator learning and support that connects district and school priorities and needs with state and federal requirements and resources.

To create an aligned system, policymakers and educators develop a common purpose and a commitment to coordinate these efforts across federal, state, district, school, and educator plans and learning opportunities. Initiatives that define and implement standards for education continue to be a strong policy lever to support all students to achieve at high levels, whether these efforts take the form of national curricula that define equitable expectations for all students or increased state expectations for school systems, schools, and educators. When combined with standards for school leadership, teaching, and student learning, the QPLS focus adult learning on high-leverage strategies that increase individual and collective educator and student effectiveness.

Quality professional learning, when implemented well, links federal, state, and local policy requirements and initiatives, across multiple systems. Building a coherent system of developing and supporting effective educators throughout their careers requires quality professional learning.

Element A: Policies and Regulations

Quality professional learning integrates policy expectations into strategies that are focused on identified needs within local contexts.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Uses local goals and state direction in following federal laws and guidelines to improve individual and collective educator and student performance.

2. Frames educators' development through preparation, licensing, induction, and continuously improving practice.

3. Extends educators' capacity to implement content and pedagogy that prepare all students for national, state, and local curricula and assessments.

4. Offers learning and practice activities that are directed toward meeting educators' professional and performance standards.

Element B: District and School Alignment

Quality professional learning provides ways for districts and schools to link educators' growth goals, expertise, and resources across multiple initiatives, programs, agreements, and improvement efforts.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Develops from clear, written district policy.

2. Reflects classroom, school, and district goals for student and educator growth, to which policies, structures, and practices are aligned.

3. Is combined with other system elements in comprehensive district and school professional growth plans.

4. Is a critical component of districts' educator support and evaluation systems.

Element C: Professional Career Continuum

Quality professional learning is a part of a seamless system that provides increasingly more complex opportunities for educators to learn and practice skills that advance expertise throughout their careers, and that makes leadership roles available as educators progress.

INDICATORS

Quality professional learning:

1. Prepares educator candidates to assume novice educator roles.

2. Supports novice educators' induction and their ability to apply theoretical learning to real-world assignments and reflect upon results and next steps.

3. Continuously extends experienced educators' capacity to meet professional expectations and to meet the needs of all students through a coordinated system.

4. Enables skilled veteran educators to assist novice educators and peers and to lead schoolwide and districtwide initiatives.

Appendix A: Quality Professional Learning Standards and Elements

Data

Quality professional learning uses varied sources and kinds of information to guide priorities, design, and assessments.

Element A: Addressing Students' Capabilities and Needs

Quality professional learning is continuously informed by multiple measures of student data.

Element B: Addressing Educators' Capabilities and Needs

Quality professional learning develops from an understanding of educators' current capacity and future development needs.

Element C: Program/School Quality

Quality professional learning uses schoolwide information to determine the current policies, practices, and outcomes that are the most essential priorities for educators' professional learning.

Element D: Continuous Review of Quality and Impact

Quality professional learning continuously improves through regular and long-term review of its purposes, components, processes, and outcomes.

Content and Pedagogy

Quality professional learning enhances educators' expertise to increase students' capacity to learn and thrive.

Element A: Curriculum Content and Materials

Quality professional learning builds educators' knowledge and understanding of subject-matter curricula and materials so that all students meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

Element B: Pedagogy

Quality professional learning expands educators' instructional and assessment skills, practices, and behaviors so that all students meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

Element C: Learning Support

Quality professional learning develops educators' attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions to ensure that all students have differentiated support to meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

Equity

Quality professional learning focuses on equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on addressing achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups.

Element A: Academic Equity

Quality professional learning increases educators' capacity to improve learning outcomes for all students, focusing on those with special needs; those with cultural, racial, and linguistic differences; those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds; and those in foster care.

Element B: Systemic Equity

Quality professional learning helps educators develop equitable and inclusive policies and align them with implemented practices.

Element C: Climate Equity

Quality professional learning facilitates safe, fair, and respectful school environments for all students and improves educators' understanding of the cultural, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of each learner.

Design and Structure

Quality professional learning reflects evidence-based approaches, recognizing that focused, sustained learning enables educators to acquire, implement, and assess improved practices.

Element A: Focus and Time

Quality professional learning is purposeful, focused, and sustained over time.

Element B: Embedded in Practice

Quality professional learning provides many opportunities for educators to analyze their practice and apply new learning.

Element C: Differentiation

Quality professional learning is relevant—building on the skills, knowledge, and learning needs of educators across career stages, grade levels, assignments, and contexts.

Element D: Active and Varied Methods of Learning

Quality professional learning employs diverse, research-based learning designs, with an emphasis on the active engagement of educators.

Collaboration and Shared Accountability

Quality professional learning facilitates the development of a shared purpose for student learning and collective responsibility for achieving it.

Element A: Collaborative Culture

Quality professional learning builds a culture of collaboration and mutual trust by facilitating opportunities for educators to work together to strengthen their practice and improve student learning.

Element B: Shared Accountability

Quality professional learning builds the capacity of educators to commit to shared ownership and accountability for effective professional practice and student learning.

Element C: External Networks

Quality professional learning includes external collaborations that provide effective options for educators with diverse experiences and needs to improve their practice.

Resources

Quality professional learning dedicates resources that are adequate, accessible, and allocated appropriately toward established priorities and outcomes.

Element A: Fiscal Capital

Quality professional learning is supported by sufficient, sustainable funding leveraged from both current and new sources.

Element B: Human Capital

Quality professional learning utilizes various sources of expertise and experience to address individual and collective learning goals.

Element C: Time

Quality professional learning maximizes time for educators to engage in learning and collaboration, both within and outside of the school day.

Element D: Equipment and Materials

Quality professional learning ensures the availability of a variety of tools so that educators have equitable access to relevant and effective learning opportunities.

Alignment and Coherence

Quality professional learning contributes to a coherent system of educator learning and support that connects district and school priorities and needs with state and federal requirements and resources.

Element A: Policies and Regulations

Quality professional learning integrates policy expectations into strategies that are focused on identified needs within local contexts.

Element B: District and School Alignment

Quality professional learning provides ways for districts and schools to link educators' growth goals, expertise, and resources across multiple initiatives, programs, agreements, and improvement efforts.

Element C: Professional Career Continuum

Quality professional learning is a part of a seamless system that provides increasingly more complex opportunities for educators to learn and practice skills that advance expertise throughout their careers, and that makes leadership roles available as educators progress.

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Appendix C: How the Superintendent's Quality Professional Learning Standards Were Developed

Charged with implementing recommendations in in the report *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State (GbD)*, the CDE convened a group of educators from across the state, the Core Design Team (CDT), to guide the development of the QPLS (see the CDT member list below). In drafting the standards, the CDT made sure to reflect ideas from the entire *GbD* report, with an emphasis on Chapter 5 ("Opportunities for Professional Learning"). The CDT also researched professional learning standards from other states, districts, and professional organizations, particularly Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (2011).[1]

The CDT continually referenced the California context, ensuring a focus on the state's diverse student population. Drafts of the QPLS were presented to several stakeholder groups and went through two periods of broad review. Stakeholder comments were collected and analyzed for commonalities, and those consistent with the purposes and parameters of the standards were incorporated into this final version.

The members of the CDT would like to thank the many people who provided feedback on the various iterations of the QPLS. The responses and suggestions received were valuable and helpful not only for the final version of the QPLS but for subsequent guidance documents currently under development.

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[1] The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009) and the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (California School Leadership Academy at WestEd & Association of California School Administrators, 2000) were used as reference points, as were expectations for educators related to implementing the Common Core State Standards and the English Language Development Standards. A selection of research about effective professional learning, especially California-based studies and research, was reviewed. In drafting the QPLS, the CDT continually referenced the California context, ensuring a focus on the state's diverse student population.

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The Superintendent's

Quality Professional Learning Standards

Approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Professional Learning Support Division
California Department of Education

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