

Staff Development Guide

Although undertaking a long-term, intensive professional development program may be a bit daunting, it can be done if it is will-planned and thoughtfully executed. This will be an ongoing process, which will be reviewed 2 weeks prior to the end of each semester and the last week of July. This is intended to be a fluid process of improvement through meeting staff and student needs. A greater understanding of the 21st Century Skills is needed to allow a more relaxed and successful end result.

Slow and Steady – Year 1

Months 1-3. Study groups within the school meet to discuss the learning sessions they have done on a selected theme within the expanded Characteristics of Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills umbrella. Study groups may choose to focus in depth on particular aspects of the topic. For example, study groups might read the article included in this issue and other books or articles on differentiation. (Articles at www.nsd.org/library/resources.cfm will help you get started.

Months 4-5. Study groups develop a set of questions to guide their inquiry into the selected theme (differentiation). These questions primarily focus on the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors that teachers put their learning into practice of Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation), how teachers put their learning into practice in their classrooms, and how it will transform teaching and learning.

Months 6-12. A team of teachers agrees to receive in depth training in strategies for Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation) and begins to experiment with it in their classroom. Other teachers may join them in applying strategies during this time. Teachers meet b-weekly to discuss their application of strategies and to analyze their own and students' work.

Year 2

Months 13-18. Teachers who have been trained and who have practiced Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation) in their classrooms become trainers for other teachers. In small teams, they present various strategies for Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation) to their colleagues.

Months 19-20. Each team or department creates a plan for implementing specific strategies for Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation). For example, the science department members study various strategies, determine which strategies align most closely with their curriculum standards and courses, and make a commitment to conduct action research about how the selected strategies work within their classrooms.

Year 2-3

Months 21-30. Members of teams or departments meet to design lessons and units and choose various instructional resources to implement their selected Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation) strategies. They determine the viability of the strategies by examining student work and achievement on common assessments and state tests.

Months 31-36. Team or department members create a plan to implement additional strategies within their classrooms and repeat both the planning, the strategies to implement the data to be identified.

In the Meantime

In addition to the work of the teams during these years, school leaders work with teachers to determine what successful Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation) looks like in their school. A team creates a tool such as a checklist or rubric that describes features of Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation). The checklist or rubric is field tested and revised (<http://rubrics4teachers.com>).

Once a tool is developed, teachers and school leaders use the tool to assess the success of differentiation throughout the school. Teachers may observe one another and use the tool to guide the feedback they give one another. Principals may use the tool for formal observations or e-walks. The tool will be reviewed for meeting needs both present and projected.

The Leadership Team and Teacher Quality Team may also serve together on an oversight committee to review the success of Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills (differentiation) within the school, ensure that appropriate resources are available for teachers, provide extended professional learning experiences for teachers who want to expand their involvement in Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills, and make training and support available for teachers new to the school who may not have the same knowledge and skills more veteran teachers have. In addition, the oversight committee might work with the School Improvement Advisory Committee to explain the value of Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills for staff and students, provide information and examples, and address concerns and questions that arise from the community, community, or from the faculty.

This multiyear professional development plan that concentrates not only on helping teachers understand Effective Instruction for 21st Century Skills, but also on implementing it within their classroom, significantly increase the likelihood that instruction and resources will become routine practice within the school.

Professional development often fails to have a long-term impact on teaching practice and student learning because it lacks coherence, support over time, and a comprehensive plan designed specially to move from the information level to implementation within the classroom. Designing, implementing, and supporting comprehensive professional development requires school leaders to set expectations for implementation, provide ongoing support and varied opportunities for adults to learn and practice new behaviors, and monitor implementation and effects on student learning. Focusing professional development over time on topics of critical importance will produce results in terms of teacher competence and confidence and student learning. It is our goal that this process will be continually adjust to but not forsaken from for the good of Mediapolis Schools.