

Professional Development - The Keystone for Success in Education: Article 6 of 8 in Series

We've likely all heard the theory behind the relevance of three. Past, present, future. Body, mind, spirit. Earth, wind, fire. And, if you've been keeping up, my three conundrums from the last article. And the list goes on, almost indefinitely. In regard to the topic of this article series, Common Core and Technology, a group of three also exists: hardware, software, and professional development.

This week's article focuses on the role and importance of professional development among teachers in regard to technology. For most people, education is a calling, and as such, there are innate qualities that provide for success throughout a professional career. However, once a teacher completes an undergraduate program and begins teaching, it becomes extremely important that continued professional development occurs. With professional development, a teacher may learn and grow continuously, resulting in a veteran teacher with 15, 20, 30, or more, years of experience, as well as years of additional education. Conversely, in the absence of quality and aligned professional development, school districts and students are subjected to teachers that may have 15, 20, 30, or more, years of experience alone. Clearly, the differences in each scenario are substantial and the importance of quality professional development is highlighted.

It is the shared responsibility of the teacher, the principal, and the school district to ensure teachers are supported in career-long development and improvement. The State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will enact a new statewide evaluation system next year based on tiered expectations for beginning, maturing and veteran teachers, and administrators, as a result of this career continuum. Much more is expected as careers mature than is expected of new educators.

This year and next, West Platte has identified three focus areas for professional development among our staff: 1. Common Core State Standards Initiative readiness; 2. Technology readiness; and 3. Character education integration. To help teachers address these goals, the West Platte Board of Education has provided the following professional development schedule this year: 7 full PD days and 6 half PD days. The Board also offers a program called Extra Work for Extra Pay. This program provides \$3,000 in compensation for 100 hours of additional work, including professional development. The Board has invested in a technology integration specialist to assist teachers with embedded training every day. The Board has engaged in off-site training with Cooperating School Districts of Kansas City for Common Core, and has aligned with a character education training specialist from *CharacterPlus*. Altogether, the West Platte Board of Education has recognized the role of professional development and it has shown it is deeply invested in recruiting, training, and retaining a high-quality staff for our students.

In his book titled, *Transforming Professional Development into Student Results*, Dr. Douglas Reeves outlines five targets for impactful, systemic Professional Development: 1. Taking specific steps to move from vision to implementation; 2. Focusing on the three essentials of teaching curriculum, assessment, and leadership; 3. Making action research work; 4. Moving beyond training models; and 5. Using student performance assessment systems for teachers and administrators.

Great teaching doesn't just happen. Great teaching is the result of the desire to be great. It is the result of the willingness to dedicate the time and effort to be great. It is the result of support and leadership required for great teaching and great schools. Ultimately, great teaching is defined by its results in student growth and achievement! Great teaching is not easy, but it is tremendously rewarding and it can happen in any classroom with the right attitude, the right desire, the right ability, and the right support! Great teaching can also be recognized by awards, such as the National Blue Ribbon, the Missouri Gold Star, and the National School of Character. These are a few of the honors that the West Platte Board of Education has identified as goals for our students, teachers, and school in the years to come.

An interactive “anchor” presentation which covers professional development and all topics addressed in this article series may be accessed on the all new West Platte website: wpsd.net. This anchor slideshow will connect you with a variety of multimedia and in-depth details on this movement. On behalf of our students and teachers, thank you for your time to investigate this initiative. I encourage you to seek out these articles and additional information over the next few weeks. We look forward to partnering for progress with you in the Common Core Era!

Seeking a World Class Education,

Jerrod Wheeler, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools