

Professional Development

OVERVIEW

The North Carolina Professional Development Standards identify three primary components: Context, Content, and Process. Context Standards address the organization, system, and culture in which the new learning will be implemented. The following tenets of Context Standards are delineated in North Carolina's Professional Development guidelines:

- **Learning Communities:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
- **Leadership:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.
- **Resources:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

The "what" of professional development is articulated in the Content Standards. In the Executive Summary from First in America Special Report: Improving Student Performance through Professional Development for Teachers," Charles Thompson cites content as the quintessential factor in improving overall student achievement. Content Standards' schema identifies the following three features as imperative:

- **Equity:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
- **Quality Teaching:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
- **Family Involvement:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

Process Standards refer to the "how" of professional development, describing the learning processes used in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and addressing the use of data, evaluation, and research. These standards include – but are not limited to – the following considerations:

- **Data-Driven:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- **Evaluation:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
- **Research-Based:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision-making.
- **Design:** Professional development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.

- Learning: Professional development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.
- Collaboration: Professional development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

While the State of North Carolina makes no regulatory directives relative to these Standards, they have and will continue to serve as the framework for identifying professional development in Success Institute Charter. This focus will ensure that professional development opportunities are congruent with the needs of our educators and administrators; and embrace the rigor, relevance, and relationship directive from the Department of Public Instruction.

Belief Statement

- Professional development is at the core of total school improvement and systemic educational reform. Success Institute believes the following forms the foundation for creating a master professional development plan:
 - Success Institute Charter School's primary focus is student learning.
 - Students learn in different ways and require a variety of instructional approaches and assessment strategies.
 - Continuous system improvement is crucial to enable students to become productive citizens and confident, self-directed, life-long learners in a global community.
 - High expectations for rigor, relevance, and relationships foster student development and achievement.
 - It is our responsibility to provide a safe, orderly, and inviting environment for learning and working.
 - Character development is imperative for the continued growth and health of our community.
 - Our students are entitled to dedicated, caring, and highly-skilled teachers, administrators, and support staff.

Purpose

The rationale for the Professional Development Plan is three-fold. First, it guides Success Institute into focused, purposeful, embedded professional learning opportunities. Secondly, it addresses the state requirements of reading each renewal cycle for teachers in grades K-8. Third, it affords administrators and the prospective administrative cadre the opportunity to obtain the state-required in Teacher Recruitment and Retention each renewal cycle. It is the ultimate goal of Success Institute to foster a Professional Development Plan that addresses the needs of our constituents within the collegial confines of our district, thus ensuring the caliber of instruction and congruence with the vision and mission of the District. Finally, this document serves to underscore the imperative nature of life-long learning for educators. As the challenges of competing in a global society, meeting the myriad requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, and addressing the growing testing demands of the North Carolina ABCs of Accountability continue, the face of this document will change to meet the needs of the District.

It is reasonable to expect that teachers have exposure to each topic relative to their assignment within the first year of their tenure with Success Institute Charter. We believe that all teachers need:

- content knowledge as it applies to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study;
- understanding of the national, state, and district accountability and assessment measures;
- knowledge of graphic organizers (i.e. Thinking Maps);
- understanding of the importance of character education to the academic, social, and emotional well-being of the student;
- background and regular updates on compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), 504 regulations, IEP accommodations and modifications and the dynamics of the Student Intervention Team;
- overviews on content area reading related to their grade level;

Grade-span-specific courses focus on:

- K-2 Assessment in Literacy and Math;
- 4-8 teaching on the 60-minute block.

Pedagogical Skills have been further divided into three broad classifications: Lesson Planning, Instructional Presentation, and Student Feedback/Assessment. The pedagogical aspects of Lesson Planning in the Professional Development Plan are steeped in the early work of Dr. Robert Marzano's work on classroom instruction, Dr. Benjamin Bloom's work – on higher order thinking, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's impetus on 21st Century Skills, that all the above-mentioned components form a comprehensive compendium of skills for lesson design.

Offerings under the Instructional Presentation category focus on strategies to meet the unique academic needs and learning modalities of individual students. They include but are not limited to

- differentiation;
- inclusive practices;
- mental models;
- graphic organizers;
- project-based learning;
- active engagement;
- Advanced Placement issues;
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (A.V.I.D.);

The third classification, Student Assessment/Feedback, reflects an overriding concern expressed by the Success Institute Charter Curriculum and Instruction. The SI administration cites concerns over the perceived disconnect between student assessment and state testing dictates, the committee was adamant that myriad assessment measures are imperative when evaluating student growth. Consequently, this category reflects both formal and informal assessment measures that include:

- data analysis;
- running records;
- overt responses;
- Personalized Educational Plan development and monitoring;
- Student-led conferencing.

District Strategic Plan categories are Student Achievement (Content Knowledge), Technology, Teacher Retention (Employee Support), and Safety. Each of these areas has a direct correlation with one or more measurable goals in the Success Institute Charter Strategic Plan.

Moreover, each reflects major North Carolina State Board of Education initiatives: Student Achievement – ABCs of Accountability and Rigor, Relevance and Relationships; Technology – 21st Century Skills; Teacher Retention Survey"; and Safety. Student Achievement addresses the four core subjects of literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science. Content-specific courses and venues for vertical articulation are also found under this category.

Technology offerings focus on the integration piece into the core curriculum. It is the school's belief that technology is an essential component of a robust instructional program. Additionally, the school maintains that every certified staff member should actively seek methods for integrating technology as part of his/her daily instructional repertoire. Courses will be added and/or amended as technologies advance and their applicability at the school level increases.

Teacher Retention/Employee Support must be a focus to ensure an adequate cadre of skilled and efficacious educators. The Beginning Teacher Institute provides a two-week induction program for first-year teachers. Monthly focus sessions and an online discussion board provide Beginning Teachers with support throughout the year. Sustained support through a mentor program is offered for beginning teachers during their first three years of

teaching. Lead Mentors at every school ensure additional support for Initially Licensed Teachers (ILTs). Lateral Entry staff receive a comprehensive, two-week training on immersion in pedagogy and classroom management.

- Safety addresses the myriad concerns associated with a safe and orderly school environment. The focus of this component includes:
- creating and implementing a Safe School Plan;
- CPR/First Aid training
- Following procedural guidelines for medication dispensation.

Baseline Sources Used for Needs Analysis

Success Institute Charter School professional development activities are designed to reflect the comprehensive school improvement planning process. The following sources are essential data sources for the direction and ongoing evolution of the Professional Development Plan:

- North Carolina ABC Accountability reports;
- No Child Left Behind – Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data;
- K-2 Assessment;
- NC WISE – Student attendance information;
- CECAS – Comprehensive Exceptional Children’s Accountability System;
- District feeder area vertical articulation meetings;
- Curriculum and Instruction Advisory Council input;
- North Carolina EOG and EOC results;
- Local Diagnostic Pretests (LDPs);
- SAT data;
- Advanced Placement testing results;
- North Carolina online testing;
- Survey data to glean input from teachers and administrators.

Service Delivery Model Options

The following Service Delivery options have been approved for Success Institute Charter employees. It should be noted in the majority of instances that the exact number of contact hours/renewal credits has not been designated. It is the District’s belief that all professional development opportunities should be tailor-made to fit the needs, clientele, and interests of each school or cadre of employees.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) – an environment in which educators “are united by a common purpose, shared vision, collective commitments, and specific, measurable goals; where collaborative teams engage in action research and collective inquiry into the big questions of teaching and learning; where continuous improvement cycles are built into the routine practices of the school; and where gathering evidence of student learning is a constant focus.

- Short-term Workshops/Presentations/Lectures *While it is the goal of Success Institute Charter to encourage sustained, embedded professional development, it is understood that local, state, and federal edicts require training that is specific in scope and therefore not conducive to long-term workshops.
- Long-term Workshops – Courses must require a minimum of ten (10) contact hours for district-level approval.
- College Courses – Courses may be online or on-campus. Courses must be pre-approved if renewal credit is being requested.
- Conferences or Institutes -- Participants must be willing to sign a contract with their home school to share information gleaned at a conference. If the cost of the conference is underwritten by the school, it is an expectation that the participant will present the information at a district-wide session.

- In-service Direct Professional Learning -- Success Institute Charter will incorporate a Trainer of Trainers model, ensuring that in-house presenters and specialists deliver instructional requisites within the system.

Action Research – Action research is an ongoing process of systematic study. This study includes:

1. Stating a hypothesis
2. Developing an action plan
3. Collecting data
4. Analyzing and evaluating
5. Formulating a conclusion

Mentoring – Professional development will be given for training updates. Mentors will not receive renewal credit for working with a beginning teacher.

Travel—Personal travel may be accepted for renewal credit if the participant can justify the congruence to the NCSCOS and is able to demonstrate how the travel experience will enhance his/her students' education. Requisites for renewal credit will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Teachers will be required to demonstrate classroom application. Success Institute Charter will underwrite the cost of personal travel.

North Carolina License Renewal Requirements

North Carolina licenses must be renewed every five years. This process ensures that school personnel continually update their professional knowledge. Each licensee is responsible for knowing and satisfying license renewal requirements. Failure to renew a license makes one ineligible for employment. Either 10 semester hours or 15 renewal credits are required to renew a license. Coursework must be directly related to the licensee's area of licensure or professional responsibilities as a public school professional.

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, a unit of renewal credit is equivalent to one-quarter hour or one in-service credit from a North Carolina public school system. Generally, a unit reflects ten contact hours.

- One semester hour is equivalent to 1.5 units of credit.
- For a license to remain current, all credit must be earned by the expiration date of the existing license.
- To renew an expired license, 10 semester hours or 15 units of renewal credit must be earned within the most recent five-year period.

Protocol for Requesting Professional Learning

Teachers be posted online, or the Director may choose the following options: a) request that the individual submitting the course provide additional information; b) approve the course but deny Highly Qualified status; or c) disapprove the course. Once a submitted course has met all established criteria, it will be placed online.

Requirements for Highly Qualified

As part of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, teachers in core academic subject areas must be Highly Qualified. The federal definition of a "Highly Qualified" teacher is one who is fully licensed and/or certified by the state; holds at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution; and demonstrates competence in each content area in which the teacher teaches. Veteran teachers of core academic subjects had until June 30, 2006, to become "Highly Qualified." To be designated as a "Highly Qualified" teacher, new elementary and new special education teachers must pass a rigorous state test (PRAXIS II). Middle school, high school, and special subject teachers can be designated as a "Highly Qualified" teachers by passing a rigorous state test (PRAXIS II) or by having an academic major (or its equivalent) in the content area, or having a graduate degree in the content area, or by having National Board Certification in that area. Teachers who have been designated "Highly Qualified" in other states are considered "Highly Qualified" in North Carolina.

Beginning Teacher Institute

Success Institute Charter provides a support system for beginning teachers through its Beginning Teacher Support Program. This support system begins with a summer Beginning Teacher Institute for both Lateral Entry and college education program graduates. These novice teachers participate in ten and five days respectively of orientation to the system's goals, North Carolina Standard Course of Study, effective teaching strategies, student learning styles, INTASC Standards, the evaluation process, Success Institute Charter and community, and the Performance-Based Licensure process. Additional focus is placed on lesson and unit planning, teaching methods, and licensure processes.

Evaluation Procedures

Professional staff development will be evaluated in the following formative and summative manners:

- Feedback from building-level administrators;
- Administrative observation of knowledge application in a classroom setting;
- Student performance results on state assessments;
- Participation in summer institute(s);
- Yearly data from Student Intervention Teams;
- States consultant feedback;
- Feedback from SI Board of Directors.

Summary Comments

Success Institute Charter is committed to providing ongoing, high-quality professional development for its certified staff members. The Curriculum and Instruction Department, in conjunction with the administration, will work in tandem to ensure that professional learning opportunities keep pace with students' needs in a rapidly evolving, global economy. Moreover, the school wholeheartedly supports a "Trainer of Trainers" model where high-efficacy teachers are encouraged to share their pedagogical and curricular gifts.