



Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World Professional Learning Plan

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Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World Professional Learning Plan

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Message from the Commissioner

Countless variables influence student outcomes. One variable that we can immediately and continually improve is the quality preparedness of our teachers. Professional learning helps sustain a passion for teaching and improves instruction. Alaska already has an infrastructure of specialized professional learning providers. By aligning programming to address the priorities outlined in Alaska's Education Challenge, this plan will outline how providers can leverage their strengths to improve outcomes for every student. Thank you for your commitment to our students, our schools and our future.



Respectfully,

Dr. Michael Johnson
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World Professional Learning Plan

Executive Summary

The *Design Professional Learning for the Virtual World (DPLV) Plan* was created to guide the leadership of educator learning in the State of Alaska (SOA), in alignment with Alaska's Education Challenge. The work was led by a Professional Learning Task Force composed of representatives from around SOA, which in turn consulted with broad sets of stakeholders around the state. The goals and structures in this plan reflect not only the priorities of the DPLV Team and the stakeholders consulted, but also nationwide best practices in the design, delivery, and ongoing management of learning. These priorities can and should evolve over time, and the processes described in this plan will allow SOA to adapt and grow as the state embeds new systems and reaches new levels of performance.

The State of Alaska's organizational demands for professional learning, and by extension the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), are increasing significantly. This plan outlines these expanded responsibilities and the required investment needed to deliver against the performance goals and expanded scope of operations. The plan builds on the solid foundation of service and high quality professional learning currently provided by DEED, Region 16 Comprehensive Center (R16CC), and University of Alaska Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) and its partners, and seeks to extend this delivery over time to address additional educator learning opportunities across multiple staff categories.



Our plan for the future is robust, and addresses State of Alaska needs with a prioritized structure and a clear plan to address both content and ongoing processes for continuous improvement. This is a great investment for SOA, for our teachers and staff, and for our students.

Overall, this plan signals a shift from the past, and the terms used to describe the work coincide with that evolution. Whereas *professional development* has traditionally been considered an episode or an event that focuses primarily on what we are doing to promote learning, *professional learning* focuses on the outcomes of that learning: What is the *learning*

that is taking place? How are we engaging people in a process that promotes *learning* beyond knowledge or skill acquisition and toward implementing the practice? How will the *learning* influence educators' own practice in their role? How will the *learning* drive a change in practice to help students perform better?

Professional learning is a continuous ongoing process of looking at how we change, adapt and grow as educators. We look forward to the work ahead.

With gratitude,

The SOA Designing Professional Learning Team

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Purpose of the Plan

“Every student learns when every educator engages in effective professional learning.”

Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward

The purpose of this Design Professional Learning for the Virtual World (DPLV) Plan is to outline the sustainable solutions for the State of Alaska’s immediate challenges and for a professional learning infrastructure that transcends the 2020-2021 pandemics. The SOA collaborated with teams of like-minded leaders from other states and districts to understand how short-term COVID lessons can inform long-term professional learning plans and build a contextualized, comprehensive professional learning plan.

As schools face new and changing conditions, educators are responsible for ensuring that student learning continues. The plan focuses on equity through innovative strategies and creates policies and practices for effective professional learning. The DPLV team worked with professional learning tools and resources aligned to the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning. Outlining the goals and activities to implement models for learning based on lessons learned from the emergency shift to online, remote or hybrid learning, the DPLV plan aligns to Alaska’s Education Challenge and intentionally includes work across the state.

The SOA *Design Professional Learning for the Virtual World Plan* includes three sections:

- Foundations
 - Problem statement
 - Professional learning vision
- Professional Learning Goals
 - Key goals
 - Milestones
- Professional Learning Operations
 - Short-term activity plans
 - Team members and key stakeholders

A professional learning system tightly integrates the multiple structures and systems that influence the learning of teachers and school leaders, all in service of improving instruction and student learning.

These components are interconnected and together create a comprehensive system of support for educator learning. The SOA’s plan is designed to increase the effectiveness of professional learning and enhance the potential for strengthening and refining the day-to-day educator performance.

Part I: Foundations

DEED Mission

An excellent education for every student every day

DEED Vision

All students can succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.



In support of DEED and Alaska's Education Challenge

PACE works together with partners to advance highly effective professional learning for educators that continually improves the educational experiences and learning of Alaska's children and all children. R16CC engages state, regional, tribal, school, and community partners to improve the quality and equity of education for each student by providing evidence-based services and supports.

DPLV Problem Statement

The opportunity is how to collaboratively develop an equitable and sustainable system of culturally responsive professional learning which maximizes the potential and impact of digital learning, leverages the current environment, and scales evidence-based practices aligned to identified measurable goals in Alaska's Education Challenge, promoting increased coherence across systems.

Vision for Professional Learning

A responsive, coherent, and effective statewide system of professional learning based on evidence-based practices for all educators to ensure an excellent education for every student every day.

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Part II: Professional Learning Goals

The State of Alaska strives to establish a culture of professional learning that enhances teacher and leader content knowledge, instructional effectiveness, equity, and cultural relevance to positively impact student outcomes through a coherent and relevant system of support. These goals reflect the priorities of the DPLV team and stakeholders consulted throughout the process.



DPLV PLAN 2020-2022 Goals

75% of identified PD Providers will align their offerings to the AK Ed Challenge by June 2022

- June 2021 – Professional Learning Roundtable
- September 2021 – Professional Learning Roundtable II
- January 2022 – Professional Learning Roundtable III
- April 2022 – Professional Learning Roundtable IV

50% of identified PD Providers will consistently contribute to the statewide Professional Learning Calendar by June 2022.

- June 2021 – Introduce calendar entry form at Professional Learning Roundtable
- July 2021 – Follow-up on calendar entries with Professional Learning Roundtable participants
- Aug 2021 – Establish social media campaign to highlight event calendar
- January 2022 – Request offering for spring and summer events

By June 2022, three or more districts will be engaged in collaboration on statewide professional development days.

- July 2021 – Obtain inservice schedules from data team
- Aug 2021 – Determine potential districts to invite to statewide inservice day
- Fall 2021 – Pilot a statewide inservice day
- Feb 2022 – Notify districts of intend to establish statewide inservice days

Note: Additional metrics from Alaska’s Education Plan may be used to supplement this list.

Part III: Professional Learning Operations

In addition to the goal categories, the DPLV team gathered input on key considerations for operationalizing the plan. Implementation teams were organized to discuss aspects of the systems and structures critical for implementation.

Stakeholder Engagement

The State of Alaska (SOA) engaged with Learning Forward to support the development of the Design Professional Learning for the Virtual World Plan (DPLV PLAN) to guide the improvement of teachers' teaching and leadership practices and, ultimately, student outcomes.

Cecilia Miller, DEED Education Specialist, led the formation of the DPLV Team and coordinated stakeholder input and engagement. The DPLV Team was comprised of members representing a range of roles from DEED, PACE and R16CC.

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, the team participated in Learning Forward's Design Professional Learning for the Virtual World network (DPLV). Consultants Michelle Bowman, Paul Fleming, Elizabeth Foster, Melinda George, and Nick Morgan facilitated virtual convenings, coaching sessions, and consultancies with other DPLV members to discuss and develop the professional learning goals as well as the operational systems and structures necessary for accomplishing the goals.

The SOA recognizes the need to ensure that relevant and appropriate practices and structures are in place to drive and support the professional learning system. As many of these processes are incremental to current practice, the DEED will continue to clarify and enforce the following areas:

Calendar Events	Statewide Inservice	Professional Learning Roundtables
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure events are added• Identify gaps in events offered• Promote calendar on social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify districts to participate• Create an agenda• Recruit content providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand the participation and networking opportunities• Support effective professional learning• Focus on Alaska's Education Challenge goals

In summary, DEED acknowledges that these operational aspects of the professional learning system are being addressed through the goals and ongoing work of the district to ensure optimal implementation of the *Design Professional Learning for the Virtual World Plan*.

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Goal Monitoring, Ongoing Accountability, and Planning

“District monitoring of implementation and effectiveness is just as important as the identification of goals and strategies.”

(Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014, p. 16)¹

One of the primary reasons state reforms fail is that more time is spent on the *design* of the plan and strategies than on implementation and progress monitoring (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 16). To that end, the SOA will engage in routine and systematic goal monitoring to assess progress and to determine what is necessary for effective implementation of this plan.

The process will defend against a root cause of the frequent failure or underperformance of many well-intentioned plans in states around the country: namely, that the plans cease to be living documents that guide ongoing learning and improvement. Ancillary to this overarching plan is a set of detailed activity plans for each goal. These activity plans will contain milestones, metrics, process steps and timing, and clear roles and responsibilities to allow for ongoing tracking of progress. The process will therefore simultaneously act as the accountability vehicle for key individuals that have responsibility or other supporting roles to play in executing the actions plans for each goal.

A primary objective of the ongoing accountability and planning process will be to review progress on the goals and to adjust timelines and resource allocation based on progress and the overall prioritization of the DPLV team. The primary format will be a live meeting of the DPLV team, occurring twice per year at the outset, which can be modified depending on cadence of key milestones. Each meeting agenda will be designed to review goals, milestones, and evidence of progress. Each meeting will require the exchange and analysis or discussion of data, and will allow for continuous improvement cycles based on the evidence gathered. In addition, the DPLV team is committed to providing updates to the Commissioner and other organizations’ leadership teams to frame key issues and summarize progress.

The following questions, adapted from various sources, may be used to guide the goal monitoring process:

- What progress has been made toward each goal, and what evidence do you have of this progress?
- What steps will you take to continue progress on each goal and when will you do it?
- What progress has been made on the activities related to the goals?
- If you are unable to make the progress you anticipated, what were the roadblocks?
- What have you done already to overcome the roadblock? What have you not done?
- What can you realistically control or change?
- What adjustments or changes (if any) would you like to make to the goals?
- What additional resources or support are needed?
- How do you feel about the progress?

The monitoring process will also serve as a means of accountability for key individuals that have responsibility or other supporting roles to play in implementing the action plans for each goal.

Appendix

Facilitators

Cecilia Miller	<i>DEED Education Specialist</i>
Michelle Bowman	<i>Vice President, Networks & Content Design, Learning Forward</i>
Paul Fleming	<i>Senior Vice President, Standards, States & Equity, Learning Forward</i>
Elizabeth Foster	<i>Vice President, Research & Standards, Learning Forward</i>
Melinda George	<i>Chief Policy Officer, Learning Forward</i>
Nick Morgan	<i>Senior Program Consultant, Learning Forward</i>
Theress Pidick	<i>Senior Consultant, Learning Forward</i>

Design Professional Learning for a Virtual World Team

Jennifer Harty	<i>UAA Professional and Continuing Education Coordinator</i>
Amy Jo Meiners	<i>Region 16 Comprehensive Center Education Specialist</i>
Jeff Smith	<i>Region 16 Comprehensive Center Alaska Lead</i>
Tammy VanWyhe	<i>DEED Innovation & Education Excellence Director</i>

Implementation Team Members

Joy Abbott	<i>Math/Science Content Specialist</i>
Brittnay Bailey	<i>English Language Arts Content Specialist</i>
Allie Gardner	<i>State Recognition and Support Administrator</i>

Leadership Communications

Grant Robinson	<i>DEED Public Information Officer</i>
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DPLV Partner Systems

Alaska Department of Education	Loudon County Schools (TN)
Broward County Schools (FL)	Miami-Dade County Schools (FL)
Cobb County School District (GA)	Northshore School District (WA)
Fort Sam Houston Independent School District (TX)	Parkway School District (MO)
Fort Wayne Community Schools (IN)	Stafford County Schools (VA)
Frederick County Schools (VA)	Tulsa Public Schools (OK)
	Learning Forward Affiliate Leaders (AK, FL, GA, MO, TX, VA)

Resources

Definition of Professional Learning

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the term professional development means activities that—

- (A) are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and
- (B) are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused, and **may include** activities that—
 - "(i) improve and increase teachers'—
 - "(I) knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach;
 - "(II) understanding of how students learn; and
 - "(III) ability to analyze student work and achievement from multiple sources, including how to adjust instructional strategies, assessments, and materials based on such analysis;
 - "(ii) are an integral part of broad school-wide and district-wide educational improvement plans;
 - "(iii) allow personalized plans for each educator to address the educator's specific needs identified in observation or other feedback;
 - "(iv) improve classroom management skills;
 - "(v) support the recruitment, hiring, and training of effective teachers, including teachers who became certified through State and local alternative routes to certification;
 - "(vi) advance teacher understanding of—
 - "(I) effective instructional strategies that are evidence-based; and
 - "(II) strategies for improving student academic achievement or substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers;
 - "(vii) are aligned with, and directly related to, academic goals of the school or local educational agency;
 - "(viii) are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, representatives of Indian tribes (as applicable), and administrators of schools to be served under this Act;
 - "(ix) are designed to give teachers of English learners, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support services to those children, including the appropriate use of curricula and assessments;
 - "(x) to the extent appropriate, provide training for teachers, principals, and other school leaders in the use of technology (including education about the harms of copyright piracy), so that technology and technology applications are effectively used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in the curricula and academic subjects in which the teachers teach;

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"(xi) as a whole, are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional development;

"(xii) are designed to give teachers of children with disabilities or children with developmental delays, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and academic support services, to those children, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, multi-tier system of supports, and use of accommodations;

"(xiii) include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice;

"(xiv) include instruction in ways that teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents and families;

"(xv) involve the forming of partnerships with institutions of higher education, including, as applicable, Tribal Colleges and Universities as defined in section 316(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)), to establish school-based teacher, principal, and other prospective teachers, novice teachers, principals, and other school leaders with an opportunity to work under the guidance of experienced teachers, principals, other school leaders, and faculty of such institutions;

"(xvi) create programs to enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance under part A of title I) to obtain the education necessary for those paraprofessionals to become certified and licensed teachers;

"(xvii) provide follow-up training to teachers who have participated in activities described in this paragraph that are designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned by the teachers are implemented in the classroom; and

"(xviii) where practicable, provide jointly for school staff and other early childhood education program providers, to address the transition to elementary school, including issues related to school readiness."

The ESSA definition of professional development affirms that educators' professional learning must be collaborative, job-embedded, sustained, data-driven, and primarily focused on school- and classroom-level professional learning. The ESSA definition also differentiates short-term training – which is often required to help teachers stay abreast of current developments, new programs, policies and practices – and long-term professional development that is designed to help enhance teachers' knowledge and improve their practice over time.

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Training vs. Professional Learning



Professional Learning Data and Research

To gather information and understand the current state of professional learning across the state, Task Force participants examined Learning Forward’s “Components of a Comprehensive Professional Learning Plan” and reviewed Learning Forward’s *Standards for Professional Learning*.

1) Professional Learning System Components

The “Components of a Comprehensive Professional Learning Plan” produced by Learning Forward enables staff to better understand current practice to help strengthen the quality and effects of professional learning. The 22 components each contain a set of questions or probes to elicit information regarding current practice. Task Force participants were introduced to the components and discussed the most pressing leadership and management gaps and challenges. The team identified the following components as most relevant to Pittsburgh’s context and current state.

Vision, mission, and beliefs for professional learning: Describes the vision, mission, and beliefs for effective professional learning and its relationship to educator effectiveness and student achievement.

Definition of professional learning: Defines professional learning and positions it as a comprehensive system of improvement, occurring continuously, and engaging educators in collaborative learning primarily at their worksite with additional opportunities outside their worksite.

Standards for Professional Learning: Delineates research-based standards for professional learning that are used to monitor and measure effectiveness, efficiency, and equity in the professional learning.

Governance for professional learning: Delineates lines of authority for professional learning and defines processes for decision making.

Roles and responsibilities for professional learning: Delineates the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and other contributors to effective professional learning.

Data-informed professional learning: Uses student, educator, and system data to inform decisions about needs, content, designs, and effects.

Other resources: Requires other resources such as staff, technology, and materials to increase access to, efficiency of, and effectiveness of professional learning.

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2) Standards for Professional Learning

The *Standards for Professional Learning* provide a description of the attributes of effective professional learning. They are the essential elements of professional learning that function in synergy to enable educators to increase their effectiveness and their students' learning.

The *Standards for Professional* (see Figure 1) outline the characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Learning Forward, with the contribution of 40 professional associations and education organizations, developed the Standards for Professional Learning. The Standards are currently being revised to reflect research updates since they were last released in 2011 and to provide more information about and emphasis on equity and high-quality curriculum and instructional materials in professional learning.

The Standards make explicit that the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels (see Figure 2).

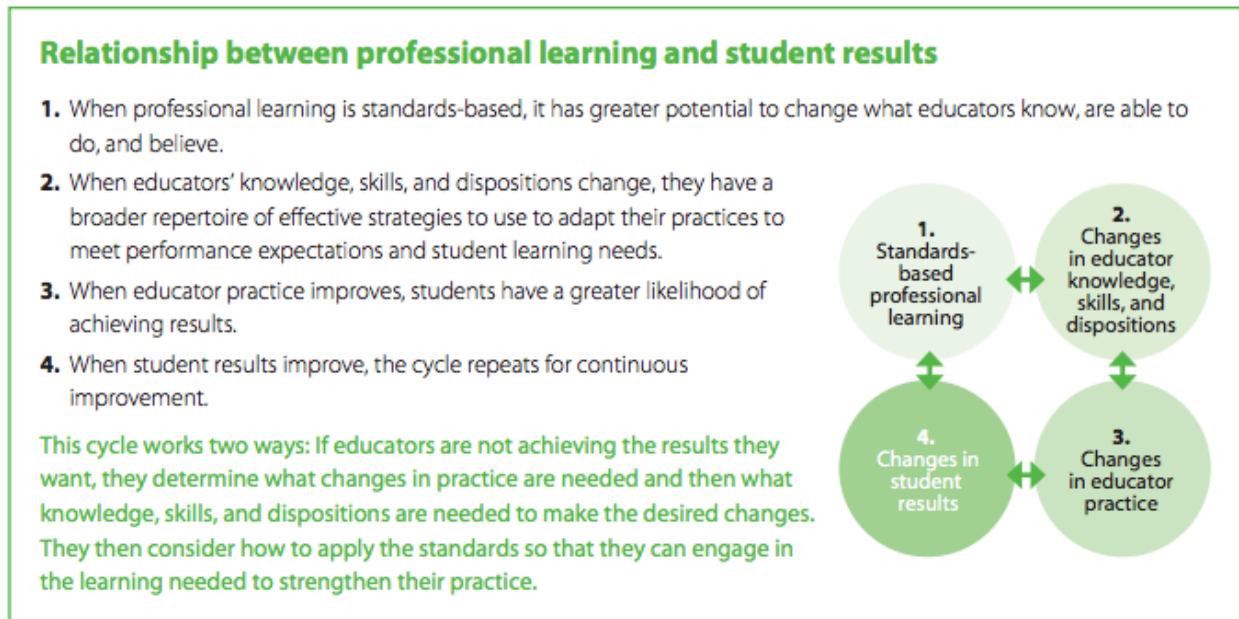
The DPLV Team studied and reviewed Learning Forward's *Standards for Professional Learning* and used them to guide the plan's development.

Figure 1- Standards for Professional Learning

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING			
<i>Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...</i>	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.
	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.

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Figure 2 – Standards’ Link to Student Results



End Notes

¹Ikemoto, G., Taliaferro, L., Fenton, B., & Davis, J. (2014). *Great principals at scale: Creating district conditions that enable all principals to be effective*. Retrieved from: <http://newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Great-Principals-at-Scale-Report.pdf>

²Bryk, A., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., LeMahieu, P. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

³Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Ballantine Books.

⁴TNTP. (2015). *The mirage: Confronting the hard truth about our quest for teacher development*. Retrieved from https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP-Mirage_2015.pdf