WHERE ARE WE NOW?


Directions: Use this tool as a guideline to measure your current professional development programs and needs. These questions are designed to stimulate your thinking and give you the information you need to lay a foundation for growth.

1. How is professional development defined by staff, district administrators, state officials and legislators? How is it defined in our bargaining agreement and in law and regulation?
   - What activities fall within these definitions?
   - Are prevailing definitions consistent with current thoughts about high-quality professional development?
   - Is participation in professional tasks that lead to acquisition of new knowledge or skills treated as professional development?
   - How much responsibility for professional development is placed on a teacher, on a support professional, on the school, and on the district?
   - Who currently decides the amount and content of professional development?

2. What growth opportunities are currently being provided for support staff?
   - Is support provided for new ESP employees (for example: mentoring)?
   - Are growth opportunities built into our current workdays?
   - Do support professionals have regular opportunities to work together?

3. What are the incentives for support professionals to participate in professional development and to improve their practice?
   - Is professional development linked to personnel evaluation and certification?
   - Does the district reimburse college tuition for graduate study?
   - Are ESP salary increases linked to professional development?
   - Does professional growth bring increased responsibility, status, or recognition?
   - How do the incentives affect support professionals in different career stages?

4. Who sponsors and provides formal professional development?
   - In terms of professional development, what are the roles played by the school, district, higher education institutions, state education agencies and our association?
   - Is there collaboration among these agencies to improve quality and reduce redundancy?
5. How is ESP professional development planned and coordinated?
   - Is there a state plan and are there state priorities?
   - Do schools and/or districts have to develop plans? If yes, what are the criteria for approving the plans?
   - Are local professional development activities tied to school improvement?

6. What is regarded as “good practice” in ESP professional development?
   - Are there “standards” or guidelines?
   - What do outstanding districts or local associations do?
   - What activities do support staff feel have the most value?

7. To what extent are current ESP activities consistent with principles for effective professional development? Do they:
   - Happen on an ongoing basis?
   - Support school or district initiatives?
   - Offer support professionals opportunities to be active learners?
   - Offer intellectual engagement with ideas, materials and colleagues?
   - Demonstrate respect for support staff as professionals and adult learners?
   - Provide for sufficient time and follow-up support for support staff to master new strategies and content, and integrate them into their practice?
   - Ensure that professional development is accessible and inclusive?

**Note: This material was adapted from “Helping Teachers Teach Well: Transforming Professional Development” by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (1995).**