



# WHERE ARE WE NOW?

## Questions to Help Us Review Current Professional Development Policies and Practices

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?

- Are support professionals performing professional or administrative tasks requiring significant skills?
- How much time is set aside for professional development?
- Do the state colleges and universities provide courses accessible to ESP?

### 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).