
Preface

In this age of dwindling resources and high-stakes accountability, many schools and districts are feeling pressed for time and squeezed for funds; they are being forced to teach more content in the same amount of time and, most tragically, cut their staff-development budgets in ways that curb opportunities for teacher learning. Yet, according to *The Report of the Task Force on Teacher Leadership* (2001),

No single principle of school reform is more valid or durable than the maxim that student learning depends first, last, and always on the quality of the teachers. Experts may disagree about how highly to value the size of a class or school, how the system functions, or whether it is adequately funded—but nobody’s list of education’s priorities fails to place teacher quality at or very near the top. (p. 1)

Hence, even under these current conditions, school districts must focus on the continued learning of their teachers.

Our purpose in this book is to help educators—including teacher leaders, principals, coaches, district staff-development directors, and superintendents, as well as state policy makers—understand how to cultivate powerful job-embedded, professional development opportunities from within the four walls of the school, particularly when time and money are tight. In designing professional development, educators who use this book will learn to accomplish much more with less and garner a higher return rate on staff-development investments they do make.

Our intent is to provide an overview of a number of different strategies that work well for job-embedded professional development and share creative ways to find time and resources to make these different strategies a reality in a school. Rather than providing an in-depth look at one particular strategy or tool, we have collected information about many powerful forms of professional development, so educators can make informed decisions about which strategies are most important for the particular purposes of their work. In crafting this text, we hoped to cultivate a greater

understanding of the breadth of powerful job-embedded, professional development strategies educators can have in their toolboxes and a working knowledge of when to pull out which tool for what purpose. This book will help educators match each professional development tool with the particular needs of a school or district, rather than make the case for one approach or another.

Key ideas from both the research literature and practicing educators have shaped the approach to job-embedded professional development that we take in this book.

- First, to create real and lasting change in schools, leadership must come from all members of your school community. We can no longer rely on the principal and leadership teams to make important changes. Thus, teacher leadership must be valued and cultivated within the four walls of your school.
- Second, real change for your students will only come when pressure is paired with clear support. Unfunded mandates cause only frustration and from the onset are doomed for failure. We can and must provide the time and resources to make it possible for teachers to do their important professional learning work.
- Third, improving practice is possible when educators, like you, intentionally and systematically collaborate to enhance student learning.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is organized into three separate parts, each with a distinctive purpose. Part I, “What Is Powerful Job-Embedded Professional Development, and How Can You Make It Happen?” contains three chapters that work together to lay the foundation for an effective job-embedded, professional development program in your school or district. Chapter 1 defines job-embedded professional development and describes a number of important building blocks that are essential to this form of learning. Chapter 2 addresses productive ways teachers and principals can conceptualize their roles and work in schools within a framework of job-embedded learning. Finally, and perhaps most pressing in this age of dwindling resources to support teachers’ professional learning, Chapter 3 is devoted to the issues of time and money. This chapter offers practical ideas for garnering the resources necessary for job-embedded learning to unfold in schools.

In Part II of this book we turn to the description of a number of job-embedded professional development strategies. These strategies include book studies, Webinars, podcasts, online libraries, research-in-action days, coteaching, protocols, open-space technology, knowledge cafés, lesson study, teacher inquiry/action research, coaching, and professional learning communities. In Chapters 4 through 10, we define these strategies and

include statements from educators across the nation who have used these tools and can attest to their success. We also provide one or more illustrations of what each tool might look like in action as well as additional resources you can turn to for a more in-depth look. Each one of the strategies explicated in the chapters in Part II becomes a tool you can utilize to actualize job-embedded professional learning. As you work your way through these chapters, you will be building a professional toolbox you can use to incorporate job-embedded learning into your work as district staff developer, principal, teacher leader, coach, superintendent, or policy maker.

Finally, Part III of this text helps you utilize your professional development toolbox in effective ways by discussing ways to match professional development strategies with professional development needs (Chapter 11) and ten lessons learned to achieve job-embedded, professional development success (Chapter 12).

This book recognizes that student learning depends on the quality of the teachers who teach them and demonstrates how job-embedded professional learning is the vehicle for enhancing teacher quality. By working your way through this text, you will become better prepared to offer solutions to the dilemmas educators committed to teacher learning face today. The book also illustrates that paying attention to teacher learning by finding the time and tools for job-embedded professional development is the only vehicle that will ultimately enhance student learning in our schools today.