

Activity 3: Surfacing Needs and Ideas for Differentiated Professional Learning

Purpose:	Through discussion and planning, the following activity will help participants articulate their own professional needs and/or areas of expertise as well as surface the broader needs and expertise of the community.
Length of Time:	90 minutes
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chart paper • Markers • Post-it notes • <i>Handbook for Professional Learning</i> • Issue Brief on <i>Job-Embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get It Done Well</i>
Essential Questions:	What is Job-Embedded Professional Learning? How can the community contribute to its development and promotion?

Background:

The research of Joyce & Showers (2002) has revealed that collaborative, job-embedded, and differentiated professional learning focuses on: targeting the learning, varying formats for the learning, coaching the learning, sharing the learning and celebrating progress.

Differentiation and flexibility in professional learning focuses on teachers being able to improve their individual practice. It can provide teachers with options to select individualized, grade-level, subject-area, or team-based opportunities to ensure professional learning opportunities are relevant and useful.

Differentiated PD/PL promotes accountability in that individuals in the self-selected groups are accountable to each other. Coming together as a result of similar needs and goals and working toward common ends, fosters commitment to the group/team and builds trust, community and sense of purpose.

Session Preparation:

Session presenter(s)/ PD planning committee can use parts of the *Issue Brief on Job-Embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get It Done Well* to become familiar with Job-Embedded Professional Development. Additionally, prepare a large three column chart with the headings below:

Expertise I want to share	What I want to know more about	What would help me meet my learning goals

Activity Steps:

1 Warm-up (20 minutes):

- Describe job-embedded professional learning and discuss its advantages:
 - What would make it effective?
 - What experiences have teachers had with it?
 - How could they see it strengthening their work?
 - What reservations do they have about it?
- Ask the participants to think about the idea of differentiated professional development. Elicit reactions from the participants. Refer to the introduction to provide additional context.
- Tell the participants to think about their teaching in terms of the columns listed in the chart. After giving them some time to think, have them share their thoughts with a partner or in groups of 3.
- Stop and Jot: Distribute post-it notes and ask participants to complete a post-it note for each of the columns. Participants then place their post-it notes onto the large chart.
- *OPTIONAL*: Participants can add their subject and grade level on the post-its if you want this activity to result in grade or subject-level work or to identify trends and common issues within a grade or subject.

2 Sort and categorize (40 minutes):

- Divide participants into three groups and ask that each group sort:
 - The responses in the left-hand column by topic.
 - The responses in the middle column by topic.
 - The responses in the right-hand column by strategy.
The sorted categories will generally yield enough topics that can be used to plan for future professional learning.
- If there are many different topics, challenge the groups to sort further until broad or most essential topics have been identified.
- Once broad topics have been identified, take the opposite approach and make the categories as narrow and specialized as possible.

3 Make it actionable (30 minutes):

- Develop a plan that makes the results from this activity actionable and sustainable in your school:
 - How will teachers share their knowledge?
 - How will teachers learn new knowledge?
 - How will teachers keep track of their learning?
 - How will teachers share what they've learned?

Note: Planning Committee, consider aspects of job-embedded professional development (JEPD) when reviewing what teachers have surfaced and planned.

Resources: Differentiated Professional Development in a Professional Learning Community by Linda Bowgren and Kathryn Sever, 2010, Solution Tree Press.