

President's Perspective: Professional Learning Helps You "Make It Happen"

By Nancy Flatt Meador

While the world watched the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, the word "perfection" no doubt came to mind. Think of the hours of practice Olympic athletes undertook in order to be the best in the world.

How can we become the best principals and teachers in the world? We should treat professional learning like Olympic training. Quality, targeted, and meaningful professional learning can be the pathway that "lights the torch" in our schools.

There are numerous ways to create a professional learning plan that is tailored to your school's particular needs. You can, for example:

- Evaluate your staff's strengths and areas of need;
- Determine what's working and what's not working;
- Use student data to narrow your focus;
- Survey your faculty and staff to determine interests and needs;
- Seek additional input from parent and student groups; and
- Work with your leadership team and consider district expectations.

For Your Staff

Just like the children we serve, adults have distinct learning styles. When planning professional development activities for your faculty and staff, think about the best ways to connect to your school's learning culture. Professional learning can include a mix of speaker presentations, webinars, book studies, small group work, meetings, and conferences.

It is also critical to offer follow-up support after professional learning activities. Take the time to observe the implementation of new strategies. In addition, routinely revisit professional learning topics to keep the momentum moving forward. Augment your support with walkthroughs, observations, individual conversations, lesson plan reviews, grade-level team meetings, and

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faculty meetings focused on professional development.

For Yourself

Principals should also make sure to consider their own professional learning needs. While principals often rely solely on district-provided professional development, they should consider what is available beyond the local level.

I want to personally encourage you to attend NAESP's 2014 National Conference, July 10-12, in my hometown of Nashville, Tennessee. You will be joined by thousands of principals, assistant principals, aspiring administrators, and leadership teams as they engage in three days of game-changing professional learning. NAESP's annual conference is the only place you can make the contacts, share the ideas, and discover the solutions that will inform your whole school year.



In addition, NAESP stands ready to assist you with quality professional learning to enhance your practice through its National Principals Resource Center (NPRC). The NPRC is committed to providing principals with the best professional resources to work successfully with teachers, parents, and students. Stay on top of the latest education trends with the NPRC's array of books, webinars, and Hot Topic research articles. Visit naesp.org/nprc to discover a multitude of resources and opportunities.

Planning and implementing meaningful professional learning will not only make a difference in your school climate and culture, it will also help you take your leadership to the next "Olympic" level.

After all ... Principals Make It Happen!

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