DESIGNING AND EVALUATING EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: A PATH TOWARDS IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

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A Little Bit About Me…

Peter Bonaccorsi

- BMus: Music Education, Boston University
- MA: Elementary Education, University of Connecticut
- CAGS: Admin & Supervision, Southern CT State University
- Ed.D.: Educational Leadership, Nova Southeastern University

- Began teaching music in 1977 (Massachusetts & Connecticut)
  - Taught at K-12 and college levels (U.S.C.G.A.)
- Began my administrative career in 1986
  - Teaching Principal of a K-6 school (66 students and 4 FT teachers)
  - Asst. Principal of a 1-5 school (450 students and 22 FT teachers)
  - Principal of a 2-5 school (730 students and 67 FT teachers)
- Professional focus
  - Mentoring of Principals and Aspiring Principals
  - Professional Development – Design, Implementation, and Evaluation
  - Response To Intervention
  - Educational Leadership
  - Federal Relations (Currently serving as NAESP State Representative for NH)
Heron Pond Elementary School

• Located in Milford, NH
  • Built in 2001 for Grades 2-4, Expanded in 2006 to include Grade 5
  • 40 classrooms, maximum capacity 900 students
Today’s Expected Outcomes

Examine Guskey’s 5 levels of professional development evaluation.

• Gain an introductory level of knowledge and understanding about each level and how each pertains to:
  • planning targeted professional development.
  • evaluating targeted professional development.
  • connecting targeted professional development with student learning outcomes.

• Experience some of Guskey’s evaluation levels.

Where shall we begin?
Julie Andrews would sing…

“Let's start at the very beginning. A very good place to start.”

The Sound of Music by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II (1965)
What Others Think About Where To Start

• “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”
  
  Arthur Ashe

• “We cannot conceive of matter being formed of nothing, since things require a seed to start from...”
  
  William Shakespeare

• “Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start.”
  
  Nido Qubein – President, High Point University
• Before you start some work, always ask yourself three questions - Why am I doing it? What the results might be? and Will I be successful? Only when you think deeply and find satisfactory answers to these questions, go ahead.

  **Chanakya** – 2c BC Indian teacher, philosopher, and royal advisor

• What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.

  **T. S. Eliot**
“In planning professional development to improve student learning…plan ‘backward’, starting where you want to end and then working back.”

A Bit About Thomas Guskey

Thomas R. Guskey, Ph.D., is Professor of Educational Psychology in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky.

• Ph.D. from the University of Chicago
• M.Ed. from Boston College
• B.A. from Thiel College
  • Began his career in education as a middle school teacher.
  • Served as an administrator in Chicago Public Schools.
  • Authored/edited 18 books and over 200 articles published in prominent research journals.
A One Question Quiz

“…professional development leaders [are] charged with ensuring that educators have the knowledge and skills needed to help all students reach the high levels of learning described by these newly defined standards.”

Thomas R. Guskey
(2002)

Of what standards is Guskey speaking?

A Quick Fist Or Five Survey
Fist = Negative response
Five = Positive response

1. Is your chair comfortable?
2. Is the room the correct temperature for you?
3. Do you think I am knowledgeable about what I am about to discuss?
A Quick Look At Guskey’s 5 Levels

1. Participants’ (Teachers’) Reactions
2. Participants’ (Teachers’) Learning
3. Organization (School & District) Support and Change
4. Participants’ (Teachers’) Use of New Knowledge and Skills
5. Student Learning Outcomes

When Evaluating Professional Development…

We start at the beginning, Level 1: Teachers’ Reactions, and work progressively through each subsequent level until we reach Level 5: Student Learning Outcomes.

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When Planning Professional Development...

We start at the end.

“...to improve student learning...plan ‘backward’, starting where you want to end and then working back.”


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**5. Student Learning Outcomes**

4. Teachers' Use of New Knowledge and Skills

3. Organization Support & Change

2. Teachers' Learning

1. Teachers' Reactions
A Closer Look At Guskey’s 5 Levels and How They Impact Planning Professional Development Activities
3 Essential Questions To Ask When Planning PD Activities

1. How does this activity relate to the school mission?
2. What are the intended student learning outcomes?
3. What evidence best reflects those outcomes?

Level 5 – Student Learning Outcomes
The GOLD Standard

- What was the impact on students?
- Did it affect student performance or achievement?
- Did it influence students’ physical or emotional well-being?
- Is student attendance improving?
- Are dropouts decreasing?
Level 5 – Student Learning Outcomes

How Will Information Be Gathered?
1. Student records (data, data, data)
2. School records (more data)
3. Parent/Teacher input
4. Portfolios

What Is Measured or Assessed?
1. Student OUTCOMES
   - Cognitive (performance & achievement)
   - Affective (attitudes & dispositions)
   - Psychomotor (skills & behaviors)
Quick Side Trip…

- Are you REQUIRED, by your district or state, to RATE and/or RANK your teachers?
  - NCLB
  - NCLB Waivers
  - Race To The Top

- If so, Level 5 can be very intimidating to your teachers.
  - What can you do to help them?
If Your District Rates Teachers…

- What was the impact on students?
  - Did it affect student performance or achievement? (Cognitive)
  - Did it influence students’ physical or emotional wellbeing? (Affective)

- “It” is the PD activity. If “it” positively impacted student outcomes then “it” was successful. If not, then “it” was unsuccessful and teachers should not be held accountable because of a failed PD effort.
Level 4 – Teachers’ Use of New Knowledge and Skills

- Did teachers effectively apply the new knowledge and/or skills?
# Level 4 – Teachers’ Use of New Knowledge and Skills

## How Will Information Be Gathered?
1. **DIRECT** observations
   - Formal and informal
   - Conversations
   - Plan books
2. **Surveys**
3. **Reflections** (written/oral)
4. **Recordings**
5. **Portfolios**

## What Is Measured or Assessed?
1. **DEGREE** and **QUALITY** of implementation
   - Walking the walk
   - Automaticity
   - Systemic integration
Level 3 – School Support & Change

Remember…support & change can also come from the district level

(I suggest this is the second most important level)

- Was implementation advocated?
- Was the support public and overt?
- Were sufficient resources made available?
- Were successes recognized and shared?
- What was the impact on the organization?
Level 3 – School Support & Change

Remember…support & change can also come from the district level

How Will Information Be Gathered?
1. School or district records
2. Minutes from follow-up meetings
3. Surveys
4. Interviews with school or district administrators

What Is Measured or Assessed?
1. The SCHOOL’S
   - Advocacy
   - Support
   - Accommodations
   - Facilitation
   - Recognition
Why Is Level 3 So Important?

Without the support of the “higher-ups”: principal; superintendent; school board; community; state…

Would you be willing to take the risks necessary to become fully invested in the new or expanded training initiative?
Our Level 3 Evaluation

• Take a moment to reflect upon these questions.
  1. Did your district overtly or publicly support your attendance at the conference by:

    A. Energetically agreeing with your request to attend this conference?
    B. Allowing you to use professional time, not vacation or personal time, to attend this conference?
    C. Funding all or part of your costs associated with attending this conference?

• A true Level 3 evaluation takes place back in your school or district some time after the initial professional development activity has been completed.
Level 2 – Teachers’ Learning

• Did the teachers learn and/or acquire the intended knowledge and/or skills?
# Level 2 – Teachers’ Learning

## How Will Information Be Gathered?
1. Paper & pencil instruments
2. Simulations
3. Demonstrations
4. Reflections (written/oral)
5. Portfolios

## What Is Measured or Assessed?
1. **NEW** knowledge and skills of the teachers
   - Instructional strategies
   - Behavioral interventions
   - New curriculum
Our Level 2 Evaluation

• Please find a partner and collectively…

1. Identify as many of Guskey’s 5 levels of PD evaluation as you can.

2. Explain how will you know if student learning outcomes have been positively affected by a professional development activity?
Level 1 – Teachers’ Reactions
(Our Fist or Five Survey)

- Did they like it?
- Was it worth their time and effort?
- Do they think it will be useful?
- Was the presenter knowledgeable?
- Was the room temperature comfortable?
- Was the food tasty?
- Were the chairs comfortable?
Level 1 – Teachers’ Reactions

How Will Information Be Gathered?
1. Surveys administered at the **END** of the session

What Is Measured or Assessed?
1. **INITIAL** satisfaction with the event
   - Gut reaction
     - Emotional reaction
     - Irrational reaction
     - First reaction

Remember…
Perception *IS* Reality.
ANY QUESTIONS SO FAR?
When Planning

Level 5
Student Learning Outcomes

Level 1
Teachers' Reactions

Level 2
Teachers' Learning

Level 3
Organization Support & Change

Level 4
Teachers' Use of New Knowledge and Skills

When EVALUATING
This model draws heavily from the work of Thomas Guskey’s framework for evaluating professional development of K-12 educators (1998, 2002), as well as Donald Kirkpatrick’s classic system for evaluating industry training (2006).

The model also integrates the research of Christine Smith and Marilyn Gillespie on effective professional development for ABLE practitioners (2007).
## Side-by-Side Comparison

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<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Impact</td>
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Once the PD Activity is Planned and Implemented, Now What?

Evaluate the PD activity to determine if a gap exists between our beliefs about effective PD and the evidence we have to validate those beliefs.
Do you have the…

1. …courage to ask TOUGH questions?
   • What…
   • What if…
   • Why…
   • Why not…

2. …skills to find HONEST answers.
   • Search for the evidence
   • Trust the data
Some Unsettling Thoughts About PD Activities

• Schools rarely implement innovations one at a time; instead, they implement multiple innovations simultaneously.

• School leaders seldom collect reliable evidence on effectiveness of their professional development offerings.

• Best Practices are mostly generalizations.

• “Based upon scientific research.” What research?

• OUCH!!!
  • “…valid and scientifically defensible evidence on the relationship between professional development and improvements in student learning is exceptionally scarce.” - Guskey, 2009
For Example: At Heron Pond Elementary

- We KNEW that our identified students’ reading assessment scores were not strong enough.
  - Our EVIDENCE was our NECAP results as compared to school of equal demographics in New Hampshire. We were in the bottom 5.

- **Our Reading Goal**: Improve our students’ reading assessment scores by offering the teachers targeted professional development. *We targeted writing skills*. We BELIEVED this approach would help us meet our goal.
We Started by Answering Guskey’s 3 Questions

2. What are the intended student learning outcomes?
   • Improve identified students’ knowledge and use of writing skills.

1. How does this activity relate to the school mission?
   • To provide a quality education that challenges all students to succeed.

3. What evidence best reflects those outcomes?
   • NWEA (Fall to Spring)
   • Publisher’s unit assessments (Reading Wonders)
   • Teacher-generated assessments
What Did We End Up Doing?

• We set up a series of monthly professional development activities. Each targeted a specific writing skill tailored for each grade level.

• Teachers implemented the targeted skills and collected student writing samples.

• This process was repeated monthly with a new or refined targeted writing skill selected based upon the students’ writing samples.

What were our results?
HERON POND ELEMENTARY
NWEA READING RESULTS
2013-2014
NWEA Gains 2013-2014
Heron Pond Progress Reading

- Ambitious: 57%
- Progress: 35%
- No Progress: 4%
- Regression: 4%
Ambitious: 79%
Progress: 15%
No Progress: 3%
Regression: 3%
Grade 4

- Ambitious: 71%
- Progress: 29%
- No Progress: 0%
- Regression: 0%
Some Favorite Einstein Quotes

• Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

• Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

• A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.
In Conclusion…

“Powerful professional development that incorporates these five essential understandings will not lessen the challenge involved in this process [to improve student learning]. It will, however, ensure that efforts remain focused on the issues most vital to success.”

Thomas R. Guskey (2005)
Our Level 4 and Level 5 Evaluations

*Only time will give us the evidence we need.*

- **Level 4**
  - Did you, today’s participants, effectively apply the new knowledge and/or skills that you learned by going back to your schools and/or districts and implementing Guskey’s 5 levels?

- **Level 5**
  - What was the impact on students?
Contact Information

Please, e-mail me the evidence for your Level 4 and Level 5 evaluations.

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