Professional Development Framework

ALASKA STEPP

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District uses the Alaska STEPP, which stands for Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnership, and is an online, school improvement planning tool. The Alaska STEPP is built around the six domains of effective schools: Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment, Professional Development, and Leadership (DEED, 2018).

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District uses the Alaska STEPP to:

1. Develop a TEAM to study your DATA
2. Create a Needs Assessment
3. Learn to navigate the tool in order to assess the INDICATORS and Create a Plan with a TEAM.
4. Enter the information in the online STEPP tool.
5. Assess, Plan, Continually Implement & Monitor.

What Research Says About Effective Professional Development

Research literature confirms that teachers and principals are the most important factor affecting student achievement (APA, 2016). Positioning teachers for success in the classroom starts with a smart, well-built teacher professional development program. While seminars, conferences, trainers, webinars, online learning and other forms of professional development are great at providing information and motivating teachers, they are not a sustained and systematic approach to improving teaching practice unless there is a plan for follow up, follow through and training the others in an ongoing process (Moore, Robinson, Sheffield & Phillips, 2017).

Fleming (2015) states, best practices indicate that successful teacher professional development programs contain these elements:

- **Choice** – Teachers are like students; they need and appreciate choice. Choice within a given framework or focus allows teachers to determine their personal priorities.
• **Flexibility** – In addition to choice, teachers need to be allowed to make modifications to make the new learning work best in their own classroom environments.

• **Small Steps** – Learning is incremental. It takes time to change practice and to be lasting it must become a part of the teacher’s routine. Professional development for teachers that allows them to practice, in small steps, supports this idea.

• **Support and Accountability** – Change in teaching practice is challenging and requires both support and accountability. Developing a community approach provide teachers the opportunity to develop personal action plans, report back to the group what happened as a result of implementing those plans, reflect and receive feedback (support) from colleagues who are working on the same changes in practice.

To create a strategic teacher professional development program, it’s important to ask these seven questions (Fleming, 2015):

1. **What are your top two or three instructional goals for the year, both at the school or district level?**

   Your staff learning goals must be driven by your goals for students, so be sure to check with all stakeholders, including district and school leaders as well as teachers. Check data from all sources available including summative and interim assessments, attendance records and curriculum maps. The more information that goes into the planning of teacher professional development, the more aligned it will align with goals.

2. **How do our instructional goals translate into learning outcomes for all staff, specific teams, and individual staff members?**

   Decide what you’d like everyone to achieve, then drill down and determine what goals might suit specific teams and individuals. You may find some teams or individuals, such as special education or intervention specialist, will likely benefit from targeted goals of their own.

3. **What teacher professional development options are already available to us, both internally and externally?**

   Take stock of all options already offered by your district staff or assessment providers and take advantage of those that can help you achieve your instructional goals.

4. **How can we make sure we have time for teacher professional development?**

   You need to proactively carve out the time necessary for meaningful professional development. Successful professional development is a regular and ongoing activity.

5. **What can we do to make the learning practical?**

   Connect learning activities to teachers’ daily work to make teacher professional development stick. Teachers should leave their development sessions with insights, strategies and tools that they can use in the classroom right away.

6. **How will we know if our teacher professional development plan was successful?**
What metrics will you use to measure success? Build those into the program to continually evaluate your progress, and be prepared to adjust or refine it based on the results you see.

7. How can we engage staff through the three phases of professional development: planning, implementation, and evaluation?

Make sure that your staff members see the teacher professional development efforts as a process which lets them actively identify, and work towards, their learning needs.

**Professional Growth Plan for Educators**

Having a framework of professional standards is not unique to the profession of teaching. Many other professions have well developed performance standards and established procedures for guiding those involved in that profession. These standards and procedures are the public’s guarantee that members of a profession are competent and highly qualified. By creating a professional framework of high standards and well planned methods of professional growth, educators convey to the public, and to themselves, that they are committed to high levels of professional competency and conduct. In developing a framework for evaluating certificated employee performance and professional growth, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District reaffirms the commitment to excellence that has existed in the District for many years. This process also confirms the strong belief that excellent schools are a direct result of the professionals that work daily with the children of the community. It is the belief that the development of a framework for professional practice will serve the needs of all educators. In the case of a novice teacher, it will promote growth and provide needed guidance for day to day improvement. For the veteran educator, the framework will provide the collegiality and support needed to constantly improve and refine one’s practice. In all cases the framework provides a common set of core teaching standards that give focus to the evaluation process and professional growth.

This program is unique in that:

- It supports the belief that professional growth leads to an outstanding staff, and that the staff is essential for effective schools and excellence in education.
- It is based on the strong correlation between professional development and student achievement.
- It provides opportunities for staff members to work together and to support one another.
- It is driven by teacher goals and student learner objectives.
- Standards for professional practice are clearly established.
- The process sets clear standards teachers need to demonstrate as part of their continued professional growth and employment.

In the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District evaluations and professional growth shall be an ongoing process based on established standards. The purpose shall be to improve instruction, facilitate learning, and provide continued professional growth of all certificated staff.

The evaluation of certificated staff is an involved process that incorporates informal and formal observations, input from a variety of sources (i.e. demonstrations of professional skills in the community; demonstration of professional skills on the job; input from the community, staff, parents, and students) and formal evaluation.
Professional Development Calendar Planning

Professional development should be sustained, intensive, collaborative, job embedded, data driven, and classroom focused (ESSA: Section 8101(42), 2015). Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District has aligned professional development to school improvement efforts based on needs established at the end of the 2016-17 school year as documented in the Alaska STEPP. Increased student achievement in math and ELA, improved social and emotional learning (PBIS) and using data to drive decisions were established as three main areas of focus and continue to date. Professional development in these areas were rolled out or continued in 2017-18.

Throughout the 2017-18 school year information was gathered from the principals and teachers during scheduled curriculum, data and trainings about what the needs were in the areas of math, ELA, social and emotional learning and data. This input was collected and with a three year STEPP plan in place continued trainings by KOI Education (PBIS), Trauma Informed (social and emotional learning), Dr. Karen Karp (math training), StoryTown Training (ELA-elementary), Discovery Learning (all subject areas), blended learning (one on one initiative/Chasina Worman, information specialist) and data analysis are and will continue to be KGBSD’s professional development focus.

As an effort to assure professional development is sustained, intensive, collaborative, job embedded, data driven and classroom focused a professional development calendar has been created for 2018-19 that provides professional development in the areas of math, ELA, social and emotional learning and using data to drive decisions based off of the previous year’s professional development calendar. Trainings, workshops, webinars, online trainings and state/national conferences are all considerations for sustained, intensive, collaborative, job embedded, data driven and classroom focused a professional development with a plan in place for all professionals who attend trainings to describe and plan how they will train, communicate and collaborate with each other.
References


