

Supporting Teachers with Design Thinking

Goodbye professional development. Hello professional learning. Some of the key differences are empowerment, voice, choice, relevance, and meeting people where they are. Providing ample opportunities for teachers to voice their opinions—whether negative or positive—as well as creating transparency in the process is especially crucial. A professional learning system also needs to generate trust if teachers are going to feel safe taking risks and changing practices.

Another important aspect of professional learning is not only generating productive feedback, but actually using it. Feedback protocols—such as how teacher feedback influences adjustments in learning—help teachers consider the type of feedback they are providing and instill confidence that their feedback will be thoughtfully considered.

Professional learning is a shift from traditional professional development in that staff members are included more in the design and implementation. But while offering more voice and choice is great, there has to be a clear purpose to successfully change practice.

Professional Learning Tips

- Meet teachers where they are
- Use feedback to build trust and accountability
- Be clear about classroom use and what classroom tools might look like
- Don't assume teachers learning new practices are going to make connections
- Be prepared for a variety of learning styles

Design Thinking can help fuel a cycle of teaching, learning, and assessment. Design Thinking focuses on the five-stage model proposed by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school). The five stages of Design Thinking, according to d.school, are: Empathize, Define (the problem), Ideate, Prototype, and Test.

By introducing Design Thinking into the core of professional learning, it takes root in a teacher's pedagogy, laying the foundation for students to become independent learners. The Design Thinking process is completely iterative, with effective practices to support more agency and independence in learners. The key is for teachers to work with these principles enough so that they become routines.

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A Learning Forward model can revitalize professional learning communities. The seven criteria or traits of the Learning Forward learning continuum are:

- 1 Agreed upon norms and expectations for behaving and operating in a learning community;
- 2 Agreed upon direction, working towards specific outcomes for students and adults;
- 3 Sharing successes and struggles of one's own professional practice;
- 4 Working together to develop a shared understanding and common assessments;
- 5 Deep conversation about student work that focuses on success for each student;
- 6 Process of collecting data for the purpose of improving practice, and,
- 7 Actions to be taken for students who are not successful or challenged are identified, implemented, assessed and adjusted as necessary.

Educators become motivated to introduce these practices into their classroom because they see they are making a difference in their own learning: seeing the intersections and making connections. By possessing a growth mindset, these teachers are able to take advantage of growth-producing feedback.