

## Leadership of Professional Development and Learning

### Guidance at a glance

This guidance is for senior leaders with responsibility for continuous professional development and learning (CPDL) for teachers, whether in a standalone school or group of schools such as a federation, multi-academy trust or teaching school alliance.

It is designed to assist senior leaders review their CPDL provision and develop their CPDL curriculum with its focus specifically on CPDL for teaching staff, although the principles apply to all staff in schools and colleges.

CPDL is the process of planned, differentiated and collaborative learning opportunities within a school or group of schools.

Well led and carefully designed CPDL for all staff, particularly teachers, and with a strong focus on pupil outcomes, can have a significant impact on pupil achievement. In making CPDL a strategic priority in school improvement, teaching and learning are continually reviewed and developed, enabling schools and groups of schools to quality-assure the daily learning experiences of pupils and teachers. In this way, schools actively create a culture in which staff routinely see themselves as learners and evaluators of their impact on pupil learning.

The greatest cost to any school or group of schools is staff - this is also the greatest investment. In a climate of budgetary constraints, it is tempting to reduce CPDL costs, however, investing in staff has a significant return for student achievement.

This paper looks in greater detail at the following:

**Section 1** Good professional development and learning: the evidence

**Section 2** Reviewing your CPDL provision

**Section 3** Developing and designing your CPDL curriculum

**Section 4** A framework for evaluation and impact

**Section 5** Further information

## 1 Good professional development and learning: the evidence

There is an increasing body of evidence about what constitutes good professional development and learning. In September 2014 the Teacher Development Trust (TDT) commissioned a review of the international research into what constitutes effective professional development for teachers. *Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development* provides a rigorous update and overview of lessons that can be learned from international research into effective professional development.

The key finding was that the most significant impact on pupil achievement comes when CPDL activity is carefully designed and has a strong focus on pupil outcomes.

The main points of the review are summarised as follows:

- **The duration and rhythm of effective CPDL support requires a longer-term focus:** at least two terms to a year or longer is most effective, with follow up, consolidation and support activities built in.
- **Participants' needs should be carefully considered.** This requires stepping away from a 'one size fits all' approach, creating content for teachers that integrates their day-to-day experiences and aspirations for their pupils.
- **Alignment of professional development processes, content and activities** ensuring there is a logical thread between the various components of the programme and creating opportunities for teacher learning.
- **CPDL content should consider both subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy** in order to achieve the full potential of CPDL with clarity around learners' progress. In addition, content and activities should help teachers understand how pupils learn, both generally and in specific subject areas.
- **Effective professional development is associated with certain activities.** These may include explicit discussions, experimenting and testing ideas in the classroom and analysis of and reflection around the evidence and relevant assessment data.
- **External input from providers and specialists must challenge orthodoxies** within a school and provide multiple, diverse perspectives. Facilitators acting as coaches and mentors can provide support, for example modelling, observation and feedback.
- **Empowering teachers through collaboration and peer learning:** teachers should have opportunities to work together within their own schools and with other schools, to refine new approaches and tackle teaching and learning challenges.
- **Powerful leadership around professional development is pivotal** in defining staff opportunities and embedding cultural change. School leaders should not leave the learning to teachers, they should be actively involved themselves.

## 2 Reviewing your CPDL provision

This section outlines a possible four step process for reviewing your CPDL provision, suggesting specific activities you may want to undertake and specific questions you might want to ask.

You may not wish to start at this point. If you decide there is no need to review the existing provision but want to start the process of developing and designing a new CPDL curriculum, please refer to Section 3.

### Step 1: Discuss the review of CPDL provision with the senior leadership team

In a standalone school this is probably straightforward. However, in a group of schools it may require more effort to get buy-in across the group.

You may wish to outline:

- what the evidence says about what constitutes good CPDL
- your own staff experience of CPDL
- the benefits of good CPDL for both staff and students
- the concept that the CPDL curriculum supports the wider school curriculum
- your proposed process for reviewing the current provision

The following points could also be considered with the senior team:

- the purpose of CPDL in this school or group of schools and how it is determined
- whether CPDL is a key feature of the school or group's improvement plan
- whether CPDL is aligned with the staff appraisal system
- the budget for CPDL and how this is deployed across the school or group of schools
- the methods of evaluation in place to measure the impact of CPDL on pupil achievement
- the role evidence plays in understanding how pupils are responding to teachers' professional learning

### Step 2: Convene a small task and finish group to review CPDL provision

Think carefully about membership of this group as it is likely to be dependent on how your school or group of schools is structured. Try to ensure that the group is inclusive and will be perceived as such by the wider staff group. You want to demonstrate that you are doing this with people, not to them.

### Step 3: Define the principles and lines of enquiry for your review

The task and finish group might want to review existing provision using ASCL's five principles of effective CPDL:

- That teaching and learning improves and is outcomes and impact-focused.
- That it is well-led and planned; CPDL is structured and planned strategically at school or group level rooted in school or group improvement planning.
- It is evidence-informed.
- It is a collaborative endeavour, sustained over time with expert input or facilitation.
- It includes leadership development.

For further information, please see ASCL's policy paper *Continuous Professional Development and Learning*.

Members of the task and finish group could be deployed throughout the school or group of schools to undertake the inquiry, collect evidence and report back. Naturally, you will want to talk to staff at all levels – you will always find good practice and good ideas, innovators and incubators through this process. In this way, you are stimulating a school or group-wide debate about what effective CPDL looks like and building a culture in which CPDL can take hold.

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Once your review is complete, pull together your findings in the form of a short report, possibly structured under the headings of the five principles outlined above. Ensure your report includes recommendations for ways forward. It is likely you will wish to propose to use these findings to develop a CPDL curriculum for your school or group of schools.

### Step 4: Report your findings to the senior team

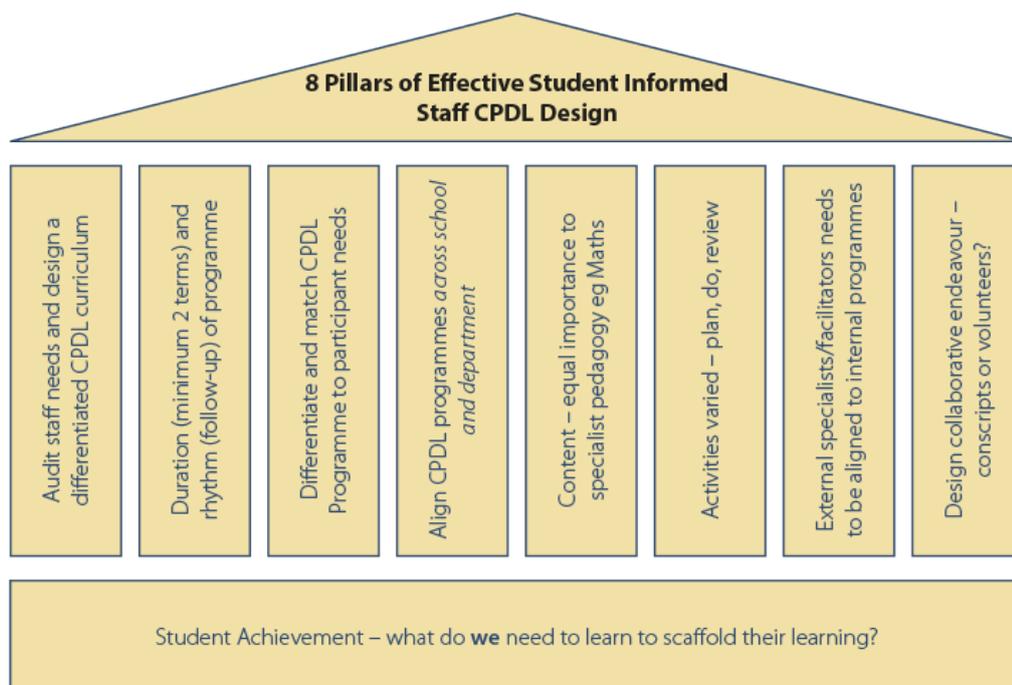
You will want to allow sufficient time for a full and open discussion. This might include:

- a presentation of the task and finish group's findings
- a recommended way forward – see Section 3 on developing and designing your CPDL curriculum
- an explanation of why the task and finish group thinks this would be the best decision for your school or group
- an opportunity for senior team to ask questions, raise concerns and make suggestions

You should aim to end the meeting with a firm mandate to develop and design a CPDL curriculum.

## 3 Developing and designing your CPDL curriculum

This section is informed by the TDT's report and refers to the 'eight pillars of effective CPDL'.



*Informed by 'Developing Great Teaching' - TDT, June 15*

### Pillar 1: Audit staff needs and design a differentiated CPDL curriculum

Over the next five years implementing the curriculum, assessment and qualification reforms will present significant challenges to teaching and learning. Schools will need to:

- develop teacher capability to deliver reformed GCSEs and A levels, including a focus on preparing pupils for the new style of examinations

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- develop teachers' ability to undertake assessment that evidences pupil progress in learning
- build capacity in middle and senior leadership related to curriculum design and development

A useful starting point is to conduct an audit of staff needs against the curriculum and assessment vision of the school or group of schools, pupil learning needs and the requirements of reforms. This enables staff needs to be carefully considered; it requires stepping away from a 'one size fits all' approach to CPDL, thus creating content for teachers and other staff that integrates their day-to-day experiences and aspirations for their pupils with a shared and powerful sense of purpose driven by the school's vision.

### **Pillar 2: Duration and 'rhythm' of professional learning**

The duration and rhythm of effective CPDL means that it requires a longer-term focus – research suggests that at least two terms to a year or longer is most effective, with follow up, consolidation and support activities built in.

There is a place for briefings and information dissemination in order to update staff on, for example, statutory responsibilities or school-wide changes, as part of a planned mixed model approach alongside other learning activities which serve to change or develop professional practice. Input through one-off days can form part of a professional learning programme if planned as part of a wider whole school or group programme.

The 'rhythm' of professional learning refers to the follow-up, consolidation and support activities that reinforce staff learning. The aim is to develop a grasp of the rationale underpinning a strategy learned through CPDL, then test that understanding, particularly in the classroom, to change practice and receive support through, for example, mentoring or coaching through the implementation phase.

Research informs us that teachers ideally need to actively pursue a new idea or skill for at least two terms, or more than 50 hours, to see a long-lasting change. Sustained experimentation and refinement is the preferred method to embed a theoretical idea in everyday classroom practice. A course or individual activity can stimulate and kick start this process or act as a point of refreshment or reflection during the learning process, but should be built into a plan, with associated systems in place to continue the learning back at school or college.

### **Pillar 3: Differentiate and match CPDL programmes and activities to participant needs**

The content of effective professional development should consider both subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy in order to achieve the full potential of CPDL, with clarity around pupils' progress.

Your CPDL curriculum should ideally be differentiated to match the needs of departments or faculties and to ensure that subject knowledge and pedagogy is at the heart of professional learning. For the primary sector, thematic CPDL programmes, for example addressing literacy and numeracy, are likely to build subject knowledge. Thematic CPDL programmes are, of course, also appropriate to the secondary sector.

Undoubtedly, your CPDL programme will also take into consideration staff at different stages of their career. For example, beginner teachers and NQTs will need different elements of CPDL than an experienced teacher.

### **Pillar 4: Align CPDL programmes across the school or group of schools**

An effective CPDL curriculum aligns professional development processes, content and activities ensuring there is a logical thread between the various components of the programme and creating consistent opportunities for teacher learning.

Aligning programmes across schools or groups of schools will be challenging, particularly if differentiating and matching CPDL programmes and activities to participants' needs. A subject or faculty-based approach will help this to happen.

### **Pillar 5: Decide on content**

The content of effective professional development should consider both subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy in order to achieve the full potential of CPDL, with clarity around learners' progress. In addition, content and activities should help teachers understand how pupils learn, both generally and in specific subject areas.

Research evidence suggests that generic pedagogy is insufficient, particularly in maths teaching. You may want to work with middle leaders to develop subject specific pedagogy as part of your CPDL curriculum. This may include:

- subject knowledge
- pedagogical knowledge
- assessment knowledge: clarity around learner progression, starting points and next steps

It is important to create an environment in which CPDL participants can consider existing theories, beliefs and practice and be able to challenge existing theories in a non-threatening environment.

### **Pillar 6: Decide on activities**

Effective professional development is associated with certain activities which include explicit discussions, experimenting and testing ideas in the classroom and analysis of and reflection around the evidence and relevant assessment data.

Experimentation in the classroom, followed by coaching and an element of reflection and review has the greatest impact on teaching. CPDL learning off-site needs to be brought back into school through a series of application methods so that the internal and external learning relate.

### **Pillar 7: Consider the role of external specialists and facilitators**

External input from providers and specialists is most effective when it challenges orthodoxies within a school and provides multiple, diverse perspectives. Facilitators acting as coaches and/or mentors should provide support through modelling, observation and feedback.

Coherence is needed, a 'logical thread' across the curriculum, thereby enhancing the depth of learning for the teacher or staff member. Having a respected and knowledgeable external facilitator is useful in challenging internal cultural assumptions and guiding the implementation of ideas, facilitated through coaching and mentoring.

### **Pillar 8: Design for a collaborative endeavour**

Empowering teachers through collaboration and peer learning is important. Teachers should have opportunities to work together, try out and refine new approaches and tackle teaching and learning challenges.

A shared sense of purpose during CPDL is also an important success factor. Participants benefit most from experimentation and trying things out together, using the classroom as their own learning laboratory. Access to some form of collegial support for solving problems is essential, along with input from an expert leader or a group-developing expertise.

The TDT advises, "Work with colleagues to plan and observe. You're much more likely to succeed in improving your teaching habits if you work with colleagues. You need to find time to identify ideas, share and discuss the progress of new ideas regularly including trying out new approaches, plan lessons and interventions together,

observe each other, examine work samples and assessments and keep adapting and improving. To do this you must allocate time for the regular giving and receiving of constructive feedback.”

Powerful leadership around professional development is pivotal in defining staff opportunities and embedding cultural change – school leaders should not leave the learning to teachers, they should be actively involved themselves.

### 4 A framework for evaluation and impact

When planning programmes and activities, it is also good practice to create an evaluation framework to use at the beginning of CPDL curriculum design. Evaluating the impact of CPDL is important as:

- it improves classroom practice to benefit pupils’ achievements
- it enables staff to reflect on their learning processes and achievements
- it is formative, providing feedback on what has and hasn’t been effective, thereby informing future CPDL
- it is used when evaluating budget spends and projecting future costs, enabling judgement on value for money

The TDT report states: *“Throughout the learning process you should keep evaluating how the learning experience of your pupils has changed. Just because you’ve changed your practice doesn’t necessarily mean they’re learning any more effectively. Use a variety of ways of evaluating learning: tests, homework, surveys, work-samples, observations or video and of course simply asking pupils.”*

The following CPDL evaluation framework is adapted from the (former) Teacher Development Agency:

- Impact evaluation should focus on what participants learn, how they use what they have learnt and the effect the learning has on pupils.
- Planning for CPDL and the evaluation of its impact should be integral to performance management.
- There should be an agreed timeline for evaluating outcomes, accepting that some outcomes, such as pupils’ achievements or improved performance, may take longer to become evident than others. Unanticipated outcomes will also be considered by the review.
- Planning and implementation of the impact evaluation should be a collaborative process between the individual and key staff involved in performance management.
- The evidence base and success criteria for the evaluation of impact should be agreed.
- Impact evaluation should be considered in the short, medium and long term; longer-term professional development activities should involve formative reviews of impact at agreed stages.
- The processes for evaluating the impact of CPDL activities should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are effective and proportionate.
- The evaluation of impact should include a cost-benefit analysis of the professional development and learning activities or programme.

## 5 Further information

ASCL Professional Development can help you review your CPDL provision and develop your CPDL curriculum for all your staff. It provides a wide range of support from one day interventions to longer term programmes including a wholly bespoke service to closely match needs. To find out more please contact [consultancy@ascl.org.uk](mailto:consultancy@ascl.org.uk)

### ASCL publications

ASCL policy paper *Continuous Professional Development and Learning*  
[www.ascl.org.uk/policy/ascl-policy-papers/ascl-policy-continuous-professional-development-and-learning.html](http://www.ascl.org.uk/policy/ascl-policy-papers/ascl-policy-continuous-professional-development-and-learning.html)

ASCL *Leader* magazine: *Learning to Lead* (July 2016)  
[www.leadermagazine.co.uk/articles/learning\\_to\\_lead/](http://www.leadermagazine.co.uk/articles/learning_to_lead/)

### Further reading

*Developing Great Teaching*, Teacher Development Trust, June 2015  
<http://tdtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Developing-Great-Teaching-Summary.pdf>

*What Makes Great Teaching: a review of the underpinning research*, the Sutton Trust, October 2014  
[www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-Makes-Great-Teaching-REPORT.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-Makes-Great-Teaching-REPORT.pdf)

*Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development*, Teacher Development Trust, September 2014 <http://tdtrust.org/about/dgt>

*TDT Advisor*, Teacher Development Trust <http://tdtrust.org/goodcpdguide/overview/>

TDT Network <http://tdtrust.org/nten/home/>

*Teacher Enquiry is the Key to Learning*, Philippa Cordingley and Anne Groll, 2014  
[www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/\[site-timestamp\]/IfL%20Article%20v3.pdf](http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/[site-timestamp]/IfL%20Article%20v3.pdf)

*Effective practices in continuing professional development*, Peter Early and Vivienne Porritt, 2010  
[www.nationalcollege.org.uk/cm-mc-lset-resource-effective-practices-ch-3.pdf](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/cm-mc-lset-resource-effective-practices-ch-3.pdf)

The Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit  
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/>

*What Difference Does it Make? Evaluating the impact of professional development in schools*, Alma Harris et al.  
[www.almaharris.co.uk/files/cpd-article.pdf](http://www.almaharris.co.uk/files/cpd-article.pdf)

*Teacher Professional Development Evaluation Guide*, M. Bruce Haslam, Policy Studies Associates, Washington DC, 2010  
<http://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/evaluationguide.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

