

Continuous Professional Development and Learning

(By 2020) ...Professional learning is continuous and iterative. Professional learning programmes routinely revisit underpinning knowledge to deepen learning and refine practice. There is very little professional learning that is 'one-off', with the exception of information-giving events. Most professional learning programmes are delivered over a period of time, are overtly relevant to teachers and involve collaborative peer learning and accreditation."

Extract from ASCL's *Blueprint for a Self-Improving System*

First principles

- 1 Continuous professional development and learning (CPDL) is the professional learning process that focuses on student outcomes and which staff (teachers and associate staff) undertake as a consequence of planned, differentiated and collaborative learning opportunities.
- 2 The core principles underpinning this policy have been informed by national and international evidence¹ on effective CPDL. They are set out in more detail in the appendix. Effective CPDL:
 - improves teaching and learning and is outcomes and impact focused
 - is well-led and planned
 - is evidence-informed and involves evidence-creation
 - is a collaborative endeavour, sustained over a period of time, with expert input or facilitation
 - includes leadership development
- 3 Given the evidence on effective CPDL, the responsibility for professional development and learning should be entirely the remit of teachers, schools and groups of schools working in collaboration with each other through multi-academy trusts (MATs), federations, teaching school alliances and other partnerships.
- 4 The CPDL curriculum should include all staff in the school or group of schools – teachers and associate staff. CPDL must be owned by those undertaking it. The Teachers' Standards make clear that all teachers are expected to take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development and learning: "Appropriate self-evaluation, reflection and professional development activity is critical to improving teachers' practice at all career stages. The standards set out clearly the key areas in which a teacher should be able to assess his or her own practice, and receive feedback from colleagues. As their careers progress, teachers will be expected to extend the depth and breadth of knowledge, skill and understanding that they demonstrate in meeting the standards."²

1 Notably Timperley, H., Aaron Wilson, A., Barrar, H, and Fung, I. 2007 Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES], University of Auckland, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/48727127.pdf>

2 Teachers' Standards, DfE, July 2011, updated June 2013. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301107/Teachers_Standards.pdf

- 5 The government should not impose an entitlement model or centrally mandated training programmes. An entitlement for teachers to a certain number of hours of CPDL puts the emphasis in the wrong place. The evidence shows that it is the quality and type of CPDL rather than the quantity that impacts positively on student learning. CPDL is an entitlement for teachers only in as much as it enables improvement and innovation that impact on outcomes for students.
- 6 The role for government is to create the enabling conditions for CPDL through ensuring schools are properly and sustainably funded so that CPDL budgets are not cut when hard financial decisions have to be made.

Analysis of the current system

- 7 For many teachers, the kind of CPDL outlined in the appendix is infrequently experienced. The most compelling evidence for this is the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), which found that only 50 per cent of teachers in England report effective training in their subject fields. This is low by international standards – the average is 71 per cent for high performing countries.
- 8 According to the TALIS report, participation in higher quality CPDL (defined in the report as involving colleagues, having active learning, requiring collaboration with others and taking place over an extended period rather than one-off events) varies between 19 per cent and 45 per cent. The report concludes that there is clearly room for improving in the organisation of CPDL in England.
- 9 In conclusion, the quantity of CPDL does not compare well with its perceived effectiveness. The extent of effective CPDL opportunities – those felt to have a moderate or large impact on teaching – is lower in England than in many other countries, including high-performing countries.
- 10 The range of external CPDL offered to the education community is wide and the quality variable. This is also reflected within schools, where the processes for professional development and learning vary from shallow to world-class.

CPDL in a self-improving system – policy proposals

For government

- 11 Create a sufficient, equitable and sustainable National Fair Funding Formula such that all schools and groups of schools are able to resource CPDL.
- 12 Support the development of a College of Teaching with a specific remit to secure better access to high quality professional development and learning.

For the profession

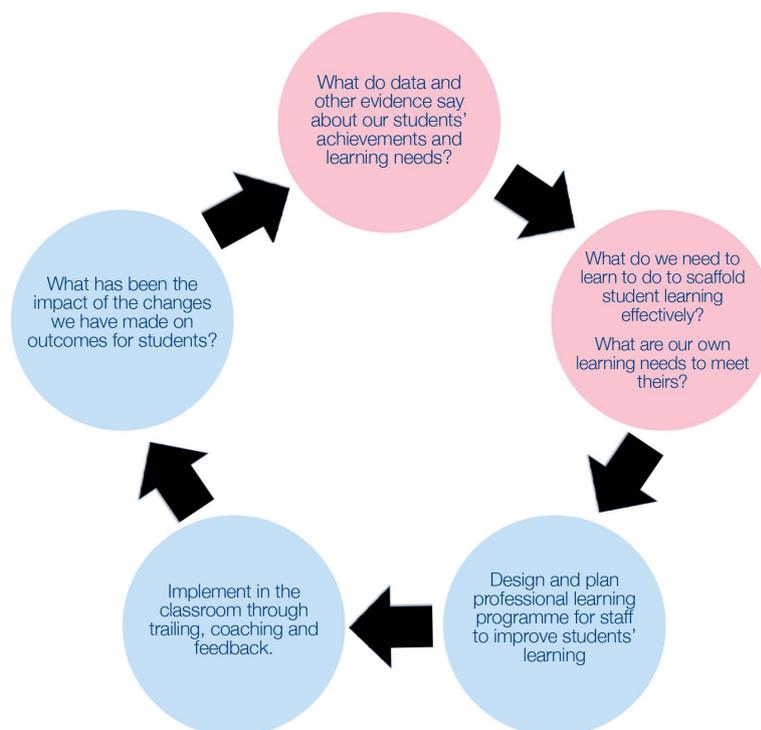
- 13 Develop a professional learning ladder from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) through to newly qualified teacher to accredited master's/research programmes at subject or leadership levels.
- 14 Schools and groups of schools should make CPDL a strategic priority, ensuring investment in professional learning for all staff, developing powerful, evidence-informed programmes involving active learning, collaboration with others and taking place over an extended period rather than one-off events. These should be regularly and routinely evaluated to determine their impact on student outcomes. School leaders should actively create a culture where teachers routinely see themselves as evaluators of their impact on student learning.

- 15 Professional learning and development should be facilitated through well-established relationships between groups of schools and higher education institutions working together in strategic partnerships.

Appendix: Principles of Effective CPDL

Principle 1: effective CPDL improves teaching and learning and is outcomes and impact focused

- 16 The national Teachers' Standards make clear that all teachers are expected to "take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development".
- 17 The diagram below³ demonstrates a cyclical process beginning with a consideration of students' learning needs, with a focus on how teacher professional learning and knowledge promotes and supports student outcomes.



Principle 2: Effective CPDL is well led and planned

- 18 International research provides a clear link between effective leadership of CPDL and student outcomes. Robinson et al⁴ evaluated the studies of interventions in teacher professional learning which had a positive impact on student learning and then identified the role played by leadership. Most effective were engagement of leaders in publicly promoting and participating in CPDL, with headteachers leading professional learning activities and talking with staff about learning.
- 19 Leaders who actively engage in CPDL have a focus on learning and teaching, understand more about what teachers' experience and give support through resources, have a deeper appreciation of the stages and duration of the change process.

3 Adapted from Timperley, H., et al, cited above.

4 Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. and Lloyd, C. 'School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why.'

20 In recent research Bella et al⁵ noted that in high performing schools, leaders:

- have a clear focus on cross-school explicit pedagogical strategies
- make collaborative learning a big focus
- invest more systematically in professional learning
- invest more heavily in mentoring and coaching cross-school
- give subject knowledge a high priority
- show strong, central leadership of CPDL
- model learning.

21 Effective CPDL is structured and planned strategically at school or group level, and linked to the improvement plan and the cycle of institutional, team and individual self-review and development. It is an integral part of performance review. CPDL needs to be differentiated to meet the professional learning needs of each individual teacher as well as staff teams. Individual, team and school/college improvement or development plans should indicate clearly the CPDL to support improvement strategies.

22 Resourcing CPDL requires financial planning, linked closely to the institution's or trust's development plan and budget. Groups of schools working together either through MATs, federations or teaching school alliances offer an effective and efficient way of increasing capacity for high quality provision.

23 ITE and CPDL should be viewed as a continuum of professional learning. Therefore leadership of CPDL within a school or across a group of schools might also include leadership of ITE through for example, participation in School Direct, a teaching school alliance or School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provision.

Principle 3: Effective CPDL is evidence-informed and involves the creation of evidence

24 Effective CPDL is evidence-informed. CPDL should draw on the underpinning knowledge and theory that is core to being an effective teacher. Strong subject knowledge alongside pedagogical knowledge is key to teacher effectiveness.

25 International research has identified a number of conditions and principles associated with professional learning that impacts substantively on student outcomes. This typically involves teachers engaging with new knowledge which builds theoretical understanding between teaching and student learning.

26 Teachers however are also involved in creating evidence (ie doing research) through their engagement in CPDL. So effective CPDL may be part of a structured research programme, provide pathways into accredited programmes and/or involve a partnership with a higher education institution. School partnerships, for example teaching school alliances, have the potential to bring groups of teachers together in enquiry-based research and development programmes.

Principle 4: Effective CPDL is a collaborative endeavour, sustained over time, with expert input or facilitation

27 Evidence from the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE)⁶ demonstrates the power of collaborative professional learning, between at least two teachers and/or members of the wider school staff, particularly when sustained over a period of time.

5 Bella, M. and Cordingley, P. 'Characteristics of High Performing Schools.'

6 'How Do Collaborative and Sustained CPD and Sustained but not Collaborative CPD Affect Teaching and Learning?' Curee, 2005.

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- 28 Most effective, positive teaching and learning outcomes involve CPDL activities taking place either exclusively in the teacher's own classrooms or in combination with an off-site programme which then has a follow-through in classroom practice.
- 29 The evidence shows that individually orientated CPDL, where there are no explicit plans to use collaboration and/or no activities to sustain collaboration, has low impact. The absence of collaboration with peers is a critical factor in the failure of the programmes to achieve its stated aims.
- 30 There is a place for one-off briefings and information dissemination in order to update staff on, for example, statutory responsibilities or school/system wide changes but this is not to be confused with professional learning which serves to change or develop professional practice. Input through one-off days can however form part of a professional learning programme if planned as part of a wider whole school (or department) programme with robust systems in place for reflection, follow up and embedding.
- 31 Effective CPDL is also usually supported by external input and/or facilitation, which can include coaching and/or mentoring. The evidence suggests external feedback and networks improve and sustain professional learning.

Principle 5: Effective CPDL includes leadership development

- 32 The CPDL opportunities across the school or group of schools should involve leadership development opportunities. Leadership development is key to creating a pipeline of high quality future leaders.