

2015—2016 SCHOOL YEAR



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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LATHAM, NEW YORK

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**“The key to improved learning for students is continuous, job embedded learning for educators.”**

--DuFour, DuFour, Eaker and Many (2010)

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### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PHILOSOPHY:

“Organizations that improve do so because they *create and nurture agreement on what is worth achieving*, and they set in motion the internal processes by which people progressively learn how to do what they need to do in order to achieve what is worthwhile.” Richard Elmore

The North Colonie community seeks to promote ongoing opportunities to enhance teacher performance and improve student learning. With a primary goal of improving conversation around an understanding of the complex task of teaching, professional development opportunities will allow all educators to become more reflective practitioners

As part of a meaningful professional learning plan, we support:

- An emphasis on improved student learning
- The promotion of professional, collaborative endeavors
- The mentoring and support of new teachers
- The importance of self-reflection and analysis of practice
- The availability of resources available to contribute to one’s learning
- The widespread availability of relevant, ongoing opportunities to engage in learning activities to improve practice
- The value of educational innovation in a supportive environment
- Opportunities to explore, question, and debate in order to integrate new ideas into classroom practice.
- Experiences grounded in knowledge and research about teaching and learning

These efforts are subject to the leadership and guidance of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the Director of Instructional Technology, and the Chief Innovation Officer, supported by a team of instructional technology resource teachers and ELA and mathematics coaches. District-level priorities are supported by building principals and 7—12 content area supervisors.

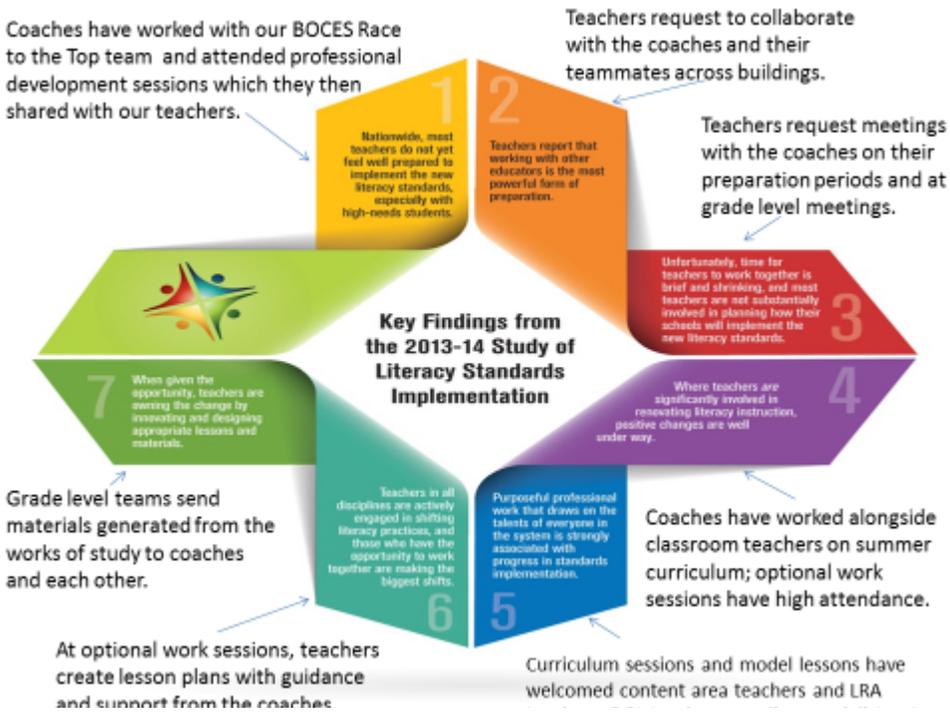
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## BACKGROUND

Currently we provide four (4) Superintendent’s in-service workshop days which engage all teachers in staff development for seven (7) hours times four (4) or 28 hours annually. This totals 140 hours over a five-year period. After-school department meetings and building faculty meetings occur at least monthly. These are all mandatory in-service opportunities. We also offer a voluntary Professional Learning program for which participating teachers receive credit toward salary incentives. Teachers may select from a range of opportunities offered outside the school day as well as throughout the summer. The course offerings are updated by the Office of Human Resources and can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/a/nccsk12.org/nccsintranet/>

In addition, we provide ample opportunities for job-embedded professional learning. Each building has two technology resource teachers. Under the direction of the Chief Innovation Officer, the technology research teachers meet monthly and then return to buildings to share ideas, model lessons, and collaboratively plan with classroom teachers so that instructional technology can be seamlessly infused into learning opportunities for students. Moreover, the District continues to support the work of four instructional coaches, two in English Language Arts and two in Mathematics. The coaches, who are master teachers on special assignment, were originally added to help support the roll out of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Linda Darling Hammond, reminds us, “Every single time we try to do reform by changing the curriculum, changing the management structure, changing the budgeting process, whatever, without paying attention to helping teachers learn how to teach kids well, the reform fails.” We are proud to say that in North Colonie, we have always valued professional development and opportunities for teacher growth, and the sweeping educational reforms of the last few years have made that focus a clear priority. With the introduction of the Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, New York State promised significant professional development opportunities which did not materialize in timely or effective ways for all school districts throughout the state. Recognizing a need, particularly at the elementary level where teachers who are generalists were suddenly confronted with challenging curriculum demands in two content areas, North Colonie supported the creation of the instructional coaching program. In year one, the coaches worked to help teachers digest the new demands and understand what the standards were expecting. In year two, the coaches expanded the ways they supported teachers. For example, before the state released the curriculum modules, our ELA coaches created high quality curriculum frameworks to help teachers identify appropriate resources, align lessons with standards, and clarify student exemplars. In much the same way, the math coaches worked to design common core lesson frameworks, organize pacing guides, create common assessments, and develop means to interpret and respond to assessment data. In short, the coaches provided and continue to provide the kind of embedded, relevant professional development that the state could not possibly be expected to provide.



For new teachers receiving initial certification after February 2, 2004, our district in-service training already meets the 175-hour mandate (for the first five years.) In addition, our special courses and program offerings go well beyond 175 hours. For example, continued reading and writing staff development, differentiated instruction training, technology workshops, grade level meetings, ELA/Math and other New York State assessment scoring, Building Council training, mentor training, each include many hours of training.

Furthermore, the negotiated contract between the North Colonie Teachers' Association and the district, while providing to new teachers the required 175 hours of professional development every five years, recognizes that all teachers have a professional obligation to participate in professional development in order to remain current with their profession and meet the needs of students. Subsequently, the regulations that are required of new teachers, serve as a guideline for all teachers.

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## 2015—2016 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

“Evidence is mounting that we need to shift from targeting expectations and consequences at individual teachers to strengthening the structures that help educators work together...”

--National Center for Literacy Education, 2014

➤ **CONTINUE TO CREATE FLEXIBLE, VARIED, AND RESPONSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS AT ALL STAGES OF THEIR CAREERS**

For many members of our faculty, the traditional after school class is still a viable means of professional learning. For others, however, the timing of the offering is what constricts them, not the range of offerings. As such, beginning in the summer of 2015, we will offer a range of professional learning opportunities during July and August. Additionally, we will continue to use our technology to our advantage by creating a series of video tutorials to instruct and support faculty and staff on everything from the basics of the Google platform to updating the electronic gradebook.

Throughout the school year, it is imperative that professional learning opportunities be varied both in content and delivery method. Among the opportunities we will support:

- Teacher-proposed , flexible study circles
  - Book study
  - Lesson study
  - Student work review
- On-line tutorials
- On-line Resource Library
- Professional Collection
- Workshop Days
- Mentoring
- Make it and Take it Workshops (*Writing Lesson Plan Exchange*)
- Project Planning with iTRT’s
- Collaboration with our Instructional Coaches
- Shadow Days

Finally, when financially possible, the district does support teachers and administrators attendance at conferences.

➤ **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS TO LEARN FROM OTHER TEACHERS IN DISTRICT**

Research and real world experience tell us that professional learning in the local context is most effective in helping educators to implement promising classroom practices to meet new and changing educational standards. To this end, the District has made it a priority to create collaboration time during the school day in all teachers' schedules, grades K—12. The collaborative work aligns with district goals and objectives, but participants have significant choice about which specific opportunities to pursue. Many teachers choose curriculum-focused work, but other undertakings involve research on the part of participants to study myriad topics ranging from engaging the reluctant reader to classroom based interventions to support students on the spectrum.

In response to two district initiatives, we will create two district-wide guiding coalitions who will study a single issue in order to make recommendations for professional learning. The first will be a coalition supporting students and families who are struggling with the impact of poverty. The coalition's work will be to work as a representative group in order to help create a North Colonie plan to help support our students and families in poverty. Specifically, the coalition will:

- Unpack the myths and stereotypes surrounding students in poverty
- Research models and ideas for cognitive intervention strategies
- Research successful models for parent and community involvement

in order to make recommendations and provide professional development opportunities for our larger school community.

The second coalition will focus on the needs of English Language Learners and the ways in which we can support all teachers in their work with our ELLs. The coalition will work as a representative group in order to help create a North Colonie blueprint for success for our English Language Learners which is aligned with the new mandates from the state. Specifically, the coalition will:

- Research models and ideas for professional development for both ENL teachers and classroom teachers
- Research successful models for parent involvement
- Research models for successful co-teaching to support the needs of English Language Learners

in order to make recommendations for our larger school community.

Finally, the District continues to support a mentor program for new teachers. Each new teacher is assigned a mentor; their professional partnership begins in August, prior to the start of the school year. New teachers have ongoing daily opportunities to confer with their mentor and have the ability to request two half-days throughout the school year to gather for intensive work. Recognizing that a great deal of mentorship in year one may have to do with logistics and management, the District has expanded its commitment to mentorship into a second year of opportunities. New teacher/mentor pairs may also request up to two half days in year two to continue their ongoing practice.

➤ **CONTINUE TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF TO LEARN ABOUT CHANGES IN THEIR ACADEMIC FIELDS AND CORRESPONDING BEST PRACTICES IN PEDAGOGY**

Governor Cuomo's Common Core Implementation Panel recommended that districts ensure that teachers receive the training and support they need and deserve in response to the changing state standards. Each year, the District commits to summer curriculum development. For the 2015—2016

school year, the District gave priority to offerings aligned with courses which would be facing new or changing standards. As such, priority was given to Algebra II and Trigonometry as well as English as a New Language, specifically focused on co-teaching models of instruction.

Throughout the year, teachers are given release time to work together. At the elementary level, a significant amount of time will be devoted in the 2015—2016 school year to science curriculum. With a change in program to align more clearly with the forthcoming science standards, teachers will need opportunities to debrief and share regarding all aspects of science related not just to curriculum, but instructional practices and assessment as well. At the secondary level, priorities will be given to English Language Arts as teachers need to prepare for scoring the first district-level administration of the Common Core English regents.

➤ **DEVELOP A STRONGER ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL TO ALIGN INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES WITH STUDENT NEEDS**

One concern, particularly with the 3—8 assessments, is the fact that teachers believe results are not timely and cannot be used to inform instruction. Moreover, the lack of transparency with the actual tests themselves makes it difficult for teachers to identify any trends or patterns upon which to reflect. This year, the District will contract with CASDA in order to provide support for the analysis of the 3—8 ELA results. CASDA will provide teacher and student specific reports as well as conduct workshops for each grade level team and all of the principals. Finally, CASDA will work with the grade 6 team to develop, administer, score and analyze a midyear assessment. From this assessment, CASDA will give recommendations for whole class instructional design as well as intervention supports for individual students.

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## EVALUATION

- We will measure plan and professional development opportunities against the Professional Development Rubric provided by New York State Education Department.
- We will use our Google survey tools at the end of the year to determine which professional offerings should be continued as well as which need to be planned for the upcoming school year.
- The Director of Human Resources, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and the Chief Innovation Officer will continue the development of the Professional Learning Webpage, giving faculty and staff the opportunity to propose classes to teach and request classes to be offered in real time.