

VSTA Guidelines for Self-Directed Professional Development

Professional Development is a process of continuous growth, through involvement in programs, services, and activities, designed to enable teachers, both individually and collectively, to learn and grow professionally in order to enhance teaching and learning.

BCTF Definition of Pro-D

In 1972, Professional Development days (non-instructional days) were added to the school calendar at the request of the teaching profession after years of advocacy from the BCTF. The inclusion increased the number of days of work for teachers with no loss of instructional days for students. Pro-D days in the school calendar recognized that teachers needed time during the school year to hone their skills, improve practice, and stay current with changes related to teaching and learning.

BCTF Training Resources Handbook 2007-08 (P. 63).

The BCTF encourages locals and teachers to utilize voluntary, self-directed professional development planning.

BCTF Policy 30.A.22 – Professional Growth Plans

Self-Directed Pro-D provides the opportunity for a teacher to determine his / her own learning goal (s), identify activities and resources required to pursue these activities, commit the time to pursue these activities, and reflect on what is learned, in order to enhance his / her own professional expertise.

VSTA Definition of Self-Directed Pro-D

Recent research into professional development indicates that well-planned, time-allocated, and sustained self-directed Pro-D results in more effective professional learning than one-off workshops and conferences.

Teachers take Pro-D seriously and recognize the necessity of continuous learning and reflective practice. The BCTF Principles of Professional Development state, in part:

1. Members have an ongoing responsibility to develop professionally,
2. Members have autonomy in making choices about their own professional development, and
3. Professional development planning is guided by member's needs.

**(All 7 principles found in BCTF Members Guide – Policy 30.A.09., p.128)
VSTA Tackboard April 26/07**

Self-Directed Pro-D is a model that promotes teacher self-reflection and choice, and it provides a practical framework for enacting teacher-identified needs and interests. Through Self-Directed Pro-D, the teacher has control over his / her Professional Development experiences and is motivated by tasks or problems that he /she finds meaningful.

Ideally, the teacher creates a self-directed professional development plan for him / herself after reflecting on strengths and needs. Such a plan is meant to be fluid, with

the ability to grow and change over the course of the year (or years) in response to experiences and opportunities encountered. An exciting possibility of self-directed Pro D is the chance to work collaboratively with colleagues, to learn, investigate, and share with one another. While some self-directed Pro-D plans may be entirely individual, others can take the form of group action research, collaborative learning teams, peer mentoring and coaching relationships or lesson studies. The possibilities are endless.

(VTF-VSB Self-Directed Pro-D Planning E1)

Benefits of Self-Directed Pro-D:

- ❖ Increased staff satisfaction
- ❖ Encourages self-reflection, commitment and responsibility
- ❖ Higher motivation
- ❖ Increases personal responsibility for one's on-going (professional) development
- ❖ Teachers have the freedom to interpret and pursue interests and what they consider important
- ❖ Teachers can develop their own professional growth plan
- ❖ Professional culture develops in the school
- ❖ Shared experiences lead to better understanding / appreciation of colleagues
- ❖ Allows individual teachers to take responsibility for their own learning

(From: Benefits of Self-Dir Pro-D from Reactions to the Panel Discussion on the Self-Directed Pro-D from April 2, 1998 meeting of Secondary teachers and Administrators)

Additional Benefits:

- ❖ Teachers identifies needs and interests
- ❖ Teacher can create a plan which reflects strengths and needs
- ❖ Self-Directed Pro-D can also include:
 - Collaborative learning teams with other colleagues
 - Peer mentoring
 - Group Action Research

(Self-Dir. Pro-D Planning – VTF-VSB Pro-D Handbook E1)

Self-Directed Professional Development includes:

- ❖ Professional reading / Discussions with colleagues
- ❖ Attending conferences
- ❖ Being a sponsor teacher or mentoring a beginning teacher
- ❖ Developing innovative programs for use in the classroom
- ❖ Joining a teacher research group
- ❖ Exploring resources though the Internet
- ❖ Participating in curriculum development
- ❖ Writing or taking a subject related course
- ❖ Visiting a subject related bookstore or university library

Procedures:

- ❖ Teachers can prepare a self-directed plan and would include the objective, rationale, strategies and activities, resources needed, location, reflection, and future plans for follow-up.
- ❖ The plan would be submitted to the Pro-D chair in advance, and kept in confidence.
- ❖ A self-directed Pro-D plan can be used either for a particular Pro-D day, a full year, or several years.
- ❖ The Pro-D committee is made up of 1 representative from each department and 1 administrator, each holding a single vote.

Accountability:

- ❖ The Pro-D committee may plan Pro-D functions that are for the full staff of a school.
- ❖ A teacher may undertake a different professional development activity from that planned for the whole school; however, it is the teacher's responsibility to inform the committee of his / her plans in advance in order to facilitate the planning process.
- ❖ Individual teachers and the Professional Development Committee have a responsibility to ensure the quality of professional development activities in a school.
- ❖ It is the position of the VSTA that teachers engaged in self-directed Pro-D should inform the administration whether they would be on campus that day.

VSTA Tackboard – April 07