

Professional Learning

Scope/Preamble

The purpose of this policy is to support the Fresno Unified Core Beliefs and Commitments and Aligned Instruction Theory of Action. The focus of this policy is to build the skills and knowledge of all employees regardless of position to come together as a community of learners and thus greatly strengthen the capacity of the entire district to fulfill its educational mission for the benefit of its students. Simply put, Fresno Unified considers all employees to be adult learners and further considers adult learning to be a necessary condition for student learning.

Fresno Unified is committed to creating and sustaining a meaningful system of professional learning support for each employee. The goal is to enable all employees, regardless of position or title, to contribute to student achievement. The most important outcome of this policy is to make school a great place to be.

Professional learning is more than just professional development. Professional learning is centered on empowering employees to engage in continuous improvement and extend learning throughout the entire district. In a well-functioning school district, professional learning is part of a seamless process of tightly linked instruction and improvement for adults and children.

In order for professional learning to work as a cumulative learning process, it has to be connected to the practice of improvement. Improvement is a discipline that requires focus, knowledge, persistence and consistency over time.

The link between the professional learning and accountability policy will succeed to the degree that these policies engage all employees in acquiring the knowledge and skills that they need to solve problems and meet expectations for high performance. For the performance improvement that Fresno Unified expects from its employees, Fresno Unified has an equal responsibility to provide employees with the skills and capacity that they need to meet that expectation. Likewise, for every investment that Fresno Unified make in employees skills and knowledge, employees have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate improved performance. This principle of reciprocity is the glue that links our accountability policy to this professional learning policy. This involves collaboration with all key stakeholders.

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Effective professional learning is focused on the improvement of student learning through the improvement of the skill and knowledge of educators and those who support them.

To ensure that professional learning opportunities are making a positive difference for students, ways to measure success will be developed and implemented. Thorough evaluation of the professional learning system will include assessment of:

Participant reaction and learning;

Organizational support;

Transfer and use of new knowledge and skills; and

Impact on student learning.

Professional learning must be tailored to address the challenges encountered by our students and our teachers in our classrooms as well as broader systemic objectives. Similarly, effective professional learning is connected to questions that educators ask about the impact of their instructional practices on students.

The practice of professional learning should embody a clear model of adult learning that is explained to those who participate. Those who lead professional learning will specify what new knowledge and skill employees will learn as a result of their participation, how this new knowledge and skill will be demonstrated in their professional practice, and the impact it may have on their career advancement.

Professional learning requires attention to what skills employees need to improve student learning, how people come to master those skills, and what resources and capacities are required to support continuous improvement. It also requires encouragement for people to engage in the difficult and uncertain process of changing their practice.

Learning is often best achieved through collaborative rather than individual activities.

The essential purpose of professional learning will be the improvement of schools and school systems, along with the improvement of the individuals who work in them with the ultimate goal of increasing Fresno Unified School Districts ability to succeed in its educational mission for all of its students.

This policy will be reviewed annually. Management Oversight Workshops will be used to assess the overall effectiveness of this policy and will be scheduled on a regular basis.

Policy FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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