

SREB

Standards for Online Professional Development

*Guidelines for Planning and Evaluating Online
Professional Development Courses and Programs*

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Guidelines for Planning and Evaluating Online Professional Development Courses and Programs

Teachers need high-quality professional development to help their students meet states' new academic standards and to meet the goal of having a **high-quality teacher in every classroom**. Online instruction provides teachers with quality professional development through “anytime, anywhere” access to courses and workshops.

While there is a wealth of information in the literature about what is required to provide quality professional development, the use of new technologies to provide teachers with access to quality online professional development is new. Building on the research regarding traditional, face-to-face professional development, online professional development affords teachers, schools and states opportunities never before available. These *Standards for Online Professional Development* have been developed to help schools and states as they begin to use the Internet to provide teachers with much-needed professional development.

The *Standards for Staff Development* document by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) provides widely accepted and highly regarded standards for professional development. While these standards were developed with face-to-face professional development in mind, they also reflect important aspects of quality professional development, regardless of how it is provided. This document expands NSDC standards to include important issues and topics unique to online learning.

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e-Learning Context Standards

The Context Standards address key issues regarding who is to participate and what leadership, support and resources are necessary to provide quality professional development. This section adds the online perspective, expanding the National Staff Development Council Standards to include additional context standards and indicators illustrating how these standards are implemented.

Online Professional Development Program Standards	Online Professional Development Program Indicators
<p>Learning Communities – The program provides opportunities for educators to build online learning communities and to work together in pairs or teams, with access to follow-up discussions to share information.</p>	<p>Opportunities for participants to collaborate online during and following courses and workshops are provided.</p> <p>Online professional development goals are aligned with the states’ and schools’ academic standards, as well as goals for student academic achievement.</p> <p>Acceptable participation requires adherence to communication standards, and legal and ethical use of the Internet.</p>
<p>Leadership – School and state leaders view online professional development as an integral part of the organization’s overall professional development plan.</p>	<p>School and state leaders advocate online professional development for teachers, administrators, school boards and community leaders.</p> <p>Online delivery is integrated into the organization’s comprehensive professional development plan.</p> <p>Organizational leaders actively participate with staff in online professional development activities.</p>
<p>Resources – Schools and states provide adequate and ongoing funding for the online program as part of the overall professional development plan.</p> <p>Schools and states provide adequate resources of time, personnel and support systems for online professional development.</p>	<p>Budgets for professional development include funds for online course development and revision, course evaluation, program management, instructors, technical support, and software and hardware upgrades.</p> <p>A technology coach or mentor program is provided to support successful participants’ use of online professional development.</p> <p>The online professional development program provides the same incentives for the online participants as for participants of other professional development opportunities who receive incentives, such as stipends or credits toward recertification.</p> <p>The essential technology infrastructure is in place to support online professional development programs.</p> <p>Participants should be provided with any needed technology training to enable their successful participation.</p> <p>Schedules allow sufficient time for participants to collaborate, reflect online and implement new teaching strategies in the classroom.</p> <p>Partnerships with colleges and universities, businesses and other organizations are used to meet participants’ professional development needs.</p>

e-Learning Process Standards

The Process Standards address key issues regarding what goals are to be achieved and how they will be accomplished. This section adds the online perspective, expanding the National Staff Development Council Standards to include additional process standards and indicators illustrating how these standards are implemented.

<p style="text-align: center;">Online Professional Development Program Standards</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Online Professional Development Program Indicators</p>
<p>Data-Driven – Program priorities include participant online learning goals that are based on a careful analysis of disaggregated student data.</p>	<p>School professional development teams determine online program priorities based on current adult learning needs and gaps in student achievement.</p>
<p>Evaluation – Evaluations include diagnostic, formative (ongoing sharing between participant and instructor) and summative (to summarize participant learning), and online access is used to ensure that adult participant needs are met.</p>	<p>Program is designed to include online assessments with timely feedback to evaluate participant learning measured against program goals.</p> <p>Student grades, test scores and other schoolwide indicators — such as enrollment in classes, discipline reports and retention rates — may be used to measure the impact of online professional development programs.</p>
<p>Research-Based – Program supports online participant use of research to determine academic needs of students and successful learning strategies.</p>	<p>Program assessment data are routinely compared to national research in these five areas:</p> <p>Participant reactions to online professional development. (Was it time well spent? Was it meaningful to the participants?)</p> <p>Participant learning. (Did the online participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills and attitudes?)</p> <p>Organizational support. (Does the organization recognize and value the use of new skills gained in the online professional development?)</p> <p>Participant implementation. (Do the online participants actually implement skills and strategies in their classroom?)</p> <p>Student impact. (How is student achievement affected by the skills and strategies acquired in the online professional development program by participants?)</p>

e-Learning Process Standards (continued)

<p style="text-align: center;">Online Professional Development Program Standards</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Online Professional Development Program Indicators</p>
<p>Design – Program uses appropriate technologies to present materials in a variety of ways, addressing a range of learning styles.</p> <p>Program integrates face-to-face professional development with online professional development where appropriate.</p>	<p>Instructors select and use teaching strategies — including multimedia technologies and online tools — appropriate to the intended results of the program.</p> <p>Instructors choose face-to-face activities and online activities appropriate to participant needs.</p> <p>Instructors utilize online tools, such as discussion boards, e-mail and virtual classrooms to support mentoring, collaboration, implementation and reflection.</p> <p>Programs support learner schedules by providing “just in time” online professional development.</p> <p>Online course structure and navigation processes are clear, appropriate to the content and easy to use.</p>
<p>Learning – Program incorporates a variety of online learning experiences to meet the learning needs of participants.</p>	<p>Online learning experiences are designed to meet participant needs and learning styles.</p> <p>Online learning experiences are linked to participants’ teaching assignments and curriculum areas.</p> <p>Assessment of participant online learning may include documented use of new knowledge and skills through videos or e-journals.</p> <p>To meet the learning needs of participants, online professional development programs should include a variety of learning experiences — such as video, audio, simulations, CDs, Web resources and access to experts in subject matter — as appropriate.</p> <p>Program provides means for online participants to solve technical and implementation issues, including successfully accessing courses and responding to participant questions.</p> <p>Combining online and face-to-face instruction (blended instruction) may be used to accommodate varied learning styles.</p> <p>Participants have opportunities for reflection and follow-up within the design of the program.</p> <p>Program includes a continuum of online courses to accommodate the varied readiness levels of participants.</p>
<p>Collaboration – Interactive communication tools — such as forums, chats and discussion boards — are used to develop and maintain a collegial online learning community.</p>	<p>Strategies are used that promote sharing and working together to achieve common goals.</p> <p>Course design provides opportunities for collaboration.</p> <p>Online instructors have specific understanding of the challenges and strategies for building an online learning community.</p>

e-Learning Content Standards

The Content Standards address key issues regarding quality and equity of access. This section adds the online perspective, expanding the National Staff Development Council Standards to include additional content standards and indicators illustrating how these standards are implemented.

Online Professional Development Program Standards	Online Professional Development Program Indicators
<p>Equity – Differences in learners’ cognitive and social characteristics, content background, attitudes and motivation, and technical abilities are addressed using appropriate online strategies.</p> <p>Issues of equity in access to technology, infrastructure and course participation are addressed at the program and course level.</p>	<p>Online content and delivery are flexible and inclusive, to engage diverse learners and learning styles.</p> <p>Programs are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. All online course materials are provided in a format that can be used by participants with a range of abilities and disabilities.</p>
<p>Quality Teaching – Program improves participant content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy.</p> <p>Program instructors are highly qualified in their subject area and well trained in online course design and/or online facilitation.</p> <p>Program prepares participants to use a variety of classroom assessments.</p>	<p>Program goals are aligned with state and local teacher-quality goals to improve participant content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy.</p> <p>Online program develops participants’ skills to implement research-based instructional strategies.</p> <p>Program initiatives are aligned with state and local goals to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards.</p> <p>Program models effective teaching in the online environment by meeting the learning needs of each participant, using collaborative learning activities and timely responsiveness to learners.</p> <p>Program provides participants opportunities to develop and implement a variety of classroom assessments.</p> <p>Program is delivered by an online instructor with content knowledge and the ability to communicate effectively in writing, as evidenced in the course syllabus, learning activities, instructions, threaded discussions and e-mail.</p> <p>Program is provided by an online instructor with knowledge of online learning strategies. Using these strategies ensures quality and frequency of participation.</p> <p>Program is delivered by an online instructor with a commitment to respond to participants with timely feedback to online activities and answers to questions.</p>

National Staff Development Council’s *Standards for Staff Development* is available at <http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm>

Standards for Online Professional Development is available at www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/toolkit/Standards

